



Though a smile was on his face, Kuzon was actually quite angry at the Fairy King.

But, unlike the young Midas's slight dissatisfaction, the opponent was raging in fury.

"You... you killed my subordinate!" His wings glimmered with multiple colors as his regal outfit swayed with the wind.

A staff hovered in the air, and he seemed ready for business.

"Ah, which one was it? The Fairy that was the weakest out of your little group? What can I say?"

"This bastard... you'll die in the most miserable way."

"That guy's death wasn't satisfying in the very least. It was just boring. Want to know why?" Kuzon stepped forward, and as he did so, golden strings swirled around him.

"It's because he was weak. Let's hope you don't fall short of my expectations."

The Fairy King didn't waste any more time as he instantly lunged for Kuzon.

His speed was insane, and the fact that he oozed bloodlust would make anyone's skin shiver.

However—

"Predictable..." Kuzon murmured.

Instantly, his strings formed the appropriate model to handle the incoming Fairy.

Like threads weaving into one another, his strings could form whatever Kuzon desired—as long as he knew their concepts or structure.

Their durability also depended on the Mana he poured into them.

Of course, as a Royal, Kuzon did not like exerting more force than necessary. By reading his opponent, he knew just what level of power to use.

Which was why he didn't bother to utilize [The Emperor] or Xenia, his familiar.

He looked at his ring and bracelet. They were both treasures that housed different abilities, but he wasn't really using them at the moment.

"DIEEEEEEE!!!" Beruel used his lance to pierce through Kuzon's threads and kept his charge.

"No, thanks."

The golden strings instantly weaved back to existence, and several of them charged at Beruel.

"Out of my way!" Instantly, another blast burst from the Fairy King.

It devastated the environment, sending shockwaves for miles.

Once the golden threads were utterly decimated, Kuzon now seemed in sight and Beruel went for the kill.

However—

"U-uh...?!"

—He was stopped mid-air.

"Everyone always falls for the same trick. You get so carried away with the threads you can see that you forget the ones you can't."

With his hands in his pocket, Kuzon floated until he reached Beruel's location in midair.

"You know... my Original Magic is called [Marionette] for a reason."

Yes, Kuzon could use threads for most of his combat, and he could even coat himself in it for enhancements.

However, his strings had other uses.

"I can easily control your body however I like, like a puppet through a string."

All he had to do was to link his Mana with his opponents, using the strings as a conduit.

Once that happened, he would force Resonance and allow himself to take charge of the opponent's body.

"Keukk!"

"Do you get it? I'm currently in control of this body..."

The boy's grin widened as he whispered into the Fairy King's ear.

"... Just like I was in control of your subordinate. You know, it was fun seeing him peel out his own wings and killing himself in the most gruesome way possible."

There was no form of remorse in Kuzon's voice... just pure sadism.

"You bastaaaarrrrrddd!!!" Despite everything, the Fairy King did not move.

Rather, he couldn't.

But—

"Kuzon, watch out!"

>WHOOOOOSSSHHHH<

—The forgotten lance that Beruel wielded came out of nowhere and pierced Kuzon from behind.

>SPLOOOOSH<

Instantly, blood poured out of the young Midas, causing him to open his mouth in shock.

"KUZOOONNNN!!!" Ana screamed, but suddenly felt someone tap her on her shoulder.

"Relax. That's not me."

Beside her emerged Kuzon, the real one—or was it?

"K-Kuzon? But... wait a sec..." Ana closely observed the one that was hit, but it turned out to be another one of Kuzon's constructs.

"Bastard!" Fairy King Beruel growled.

"Well, playtime is over. I'll be coming to visit you soon." The golden haired boy shrugged, ready to end things.

"You think you'll ever reach me? You're strong, I admit... but you won't be able to crack through everything and reach my location."

In response to that statement, the boy remained silent.

Beruel was right, after all.

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

#### **Chapter 562: Kuzon's Plan**

"Haha, so you realized, didn't you?" Kuzon finally spoke, after a few seconds of silence.

"What kind of fool do you take me for?"

"...."

The young man snickered, not saying anything more.

"You won't find me! Not in a thousand years! I'll keep haunting and hunting you until you pay for what you did."

"By sending those weaklings? Keep joking."

"Tch. If not for my responsibilities to the Cult..." Beruel growled.

"Excuses."

"Yeah? Well why don't we see about that when I'm done!"

"I don't need to wait that long."

The Fairy King, though suspended in midair, sneered at Kuzon and Ana, as though forgetting who the person tied up was.

"You won't be able to do it."

"Yeah... I know I can't. I've tried, and with my skillset, it's impossible. But..." Kuzon glanced beside him and spotted Anabelle's innocent expression.

Quickly carrying and raising her, Kuzon presented his trump card to the Fairy King.

"I have someone who can."

"W-what are you doing? P-put me down!!!" Ana screamed, struggling to break free from Kuzon's hold.

She wanted to cry of embarrassment as she struggled in his grip.



'So cute!' Kuzon grinned internally enjoying every moment of the tease.

"Then I'm staying here." Spreading his hand all across the sofa, he made himself comfortable.

"D-do what you like! Like I care! Just tell me what you were talking about back then."

"Ah, well remember when you said I have been doing nothing ever since we've been together?"

"Yeah. Cus that is the truth."

"Well, I was actually cracking this code from Beruel's Clone—the one he sent after your group." Kuzon brought out a chip.

It looked similar to the other thing hr brought out of the clone that attacked then not too long ago.

"Can I see?"

Kuzon gave the chip to Ana and continued explaining.

"I'm good at many things, but not mechanics. I tried using Magic to do it, using all the Spells I could, but none are working.."

His goal was to use the chip to backtrack it's location until he arrived at the source—Fairy King Beruel himself.

"If the thing had self-destructed when Jared was with it, the chip would have also been obliterated. That's why I intervened and got it in time, destroying the rest of his body."

"I see..." Ana was distracted by the chip, though she still listened to Kuzon attentively.

"So, as I struggled to backtrack the chip, I knew Beruel would make another move. It was only a matter of time, so I decided to wait until he did so."

"Hold on... I thought you said you were waiting for me to speak to you before making a move."

"Well, there's that factor too. As much as I like your company, I wouldn't have brought you with me if you're not going to be useful.

"Hey!" At this point, Ana's glare was evident.

If Kuzon didn't vindicate himself fast, then...

"Come on, don't look at me like that. Shouldn't you be happy? I don't consider you a burden, after all."

"Uh?" Ana looked at him with a changed expression of surprise.

"I actually need your help. That's what I mean. Now that I've gotten another chip from the enemy, that makes two parts. With this, the chances of success should increase."

"Hold on, what exactly do you want me to do?" Ana stared at the smiling boy.

"Help me find Beruel... the real one."

For a moment, no one spoke.

They both looked at each other—Kuzon smiling, and Ana dazed.

As much as she disliked being used by people, Ana couldn't help but feel some degree of pride and inexplicable joy rising from her small chest.

It was almost like the time when Jared told her to work on the Demon-Obliterating device with Maro, Aloe, and Neron.

However, this time it was different.

"Are you sure you need only me? You'll have better chances with a group." Ana said in a low tone.

"I'm sure. No other genius could have defeated Lydia of Blanc, and definitely not with half-assed tech."

Ana blushed a little.

"I've also been observing your clothes... down to your underwear."

A wave of shock enveloped the room, and Ana's face grew red the moment she realized what the boy had just said.

"KUZOOOONNNN!!!"

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

#### **Chapter 563: The Cult Moves**

"Kuzon!" Ana covered herself with her hands while gaping in shock.

"Don't worry, I didn't go beyond that. I promise. Besides, you know hiding your body with another part of your body is pointless, right? I can just choose to see through everything." The boy's eyes glowed golden as he grinned widely.

"You pervert!" Ana once again hit him desperately with her hands.

'Nailed it!' The boy thought to himself.

"But, on a serious note... I've observed your outfit, and I know you designed them yourself. They're brimming with technology and pin-point accuracy."

Ana stopped her pointless hitting and sighed while nodding.

It seemed Kuzon was right.

"I don't know about other things, but I don't think anyone is more fit for handling such delicate technology. Besides, I trust you, Ana." Kuzon drew closer to the girl's face.

A bead of sweat formed on her face, but Ana could feel her heart beat in exhilaration.

She was currently breaking into new grounds in her secret research, but this was the kind of opportunity she was waiting for.

The kind of recognition she desired.

Ana didn't know how to feel about Kuzon, but he was certainly sincere about needing her help.

It made her happy for some reason.

"Let's work together to defeat this guy." He gave a thumbs up with determination swirling in his eyes.

Ana could not help but feel the same.

"Y-yeah! Let's do it!"

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"Looks like they've gotten one of the Arcanas already." A female voice sounded in the dark room.

Within it, there were only two people.

One was the supreme leader of the Nether Cult, and his right hand woman.

Though they were the only ones physically present, the other members were connected through Magic Communication.

In essence, it was virtual.

"I'm sorry about that. I guess they got it right under my nose." The person who spoke was none other than the current 7th Seat, Reed Sterling.

Jared and his team caught him unawares and retrieved an Arcana before he could. This could be considered an epic failure in the eyes of the Cult.

"Rectify your errors." The Cult Leader spoke, causing his influence to resonate deep into Sterling's heart.

"G-got it!"

"So? Has anyone had any luck on their ends?" The Cult Leader spoke to everybody else.

"No."

"Nope."

"Not here too."

"Not at all."

"I'm afraid not."

"No, sorry."

"Negative."

Their unsatisfactory responses caused the usually calm Cult Leader to give into impatience.

His fingers clacked in the table in front of him, and he didn't seem all too pleased.

"It's not our fault, though. Wouldn't you use your Clairvoyance to help make the search easier? It's not exactly a piece of cake to find Dungeons." Kido's voice rang out.



It sounded rude, but no doubt it was what everyone was also thinking.

"Yeah. Kido has a point. We usually operate with your Clairvoyance guiding us."

"Ohh? Karlia, you finally agree with something I say? I'm flattered. Does that mean you've changed your mind about... that?"

"Shut up." Karlia's voice snapped.

"That's enough." The Cult Leader sighed.

As he commanded, there was decorum in the meeting.

For a few moments, nothing but silence echoed throughout. One would think their host had gone off to sleep.

However, as suddenly as he fell silent, he finally spoke.

"We can't rely Clairvoyance currently. There are several distortions in the world currently. It makes it hard for Clairvoyance to work in certain places..."

"Distortions? But your Clairvoyance is absolute. What distortion could—"

"It's most likely the work of Jared Leonard, the Singularity. We should have killed him when we had the chance..." The tone of the Cult Leader was directed toward one person—at least, that was implied.

"Yeah, it's my bad. Once again, I apologize. Haha." Legris Damien's voice rang out.

"In any case, he's most likely using technology to distort the environment, making it difficult to use Clairvoyance. Usually, even Magic wouldn't be enough to stop me, but it seems he's using something else..."

That was indeed a very worrisome predicament.

"Couldn't we consider that the places that have been distorted are where the Arcanas are located?" A voice rang out.

It belonged to Stefan Netherlore, the youngest in the group.

"No. That can't be. It's most likely a trap... a misdirection." The Cult Leader's voice echoed.

"Besides, there are over a hundred distorted locations. I'm sure he'd rather we waste our time thoroughly searching them than looking for the actual places."

"No, wait a minute. I agree with Stefan's logic." Legris Damien spoke up.

A wave of silence greeted his interruption.

Everyone knew the Cult Leader was always right.

He had never been wrong about anything, and that was what made the organization function so seamlessly.

For the 6th Seat to challenge that, then...

"What do you mean, Legris?" The Nether Cult Leader asked calmly.

"Well, Jared has been known to evade us multiple times because he usually does the unexpected. From misdirection to surprising innovations, he manages to surprise us because he doesn't operate in the way you'd expect." Legris began.

As someone who had the most experience dealing with Jared, Legris' words carried weight.

After all, even he had lost to the kid.

"So, you're implying that since it's illogical that the Arcanas would actually be in those distorted places, then we should check them to be sure?"

"Exactly. I believe Stefan brought that up because he knows Jared well too."

"I see... you make good points. Apologies for shooting down your suggestion, Stefan."

"A-ah, it's nothing." Stefan's voice sounded slightly flustered, but the boy did not break his composure.

"Alright. I'll share the locations of the distorted areas with some of our members. Vaizer. Legris. Stefan. Reed. The four of you will be in charge of investigating those areas."

The members who were called out all responded affirmatively.

"The rest of you, keep looking. Kido. Karlia. Beruel. I'm counting on you. Also be available at any given time. You could be assigned to the distorted zones if they turn out to be genuine."

Once again, affirmative responses rang out.

"Very well, then. This concludes the meeting."

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

#### **Chapter 564: The Dark Desert**

"Where are we?"

I looked beside me and watched as Ana looked all around us.

There was nothing to be seen for miles except sand.

The sand, however, was black. Black grains of sand were trampled upon by our feet, and the spread out for miles.

"This is the Dark Desert. It's a vast body filled with nothing but black sand. It is said that this entire place used to be the territory of a nation before they gave themselves to Dark Magic and became ruined as a result." I smiled.

Looking at how there was nothing to be seen but darkness, the story seemed even more plausible.

The sun was hardly shining, and dark clouds spread for miles.

It appeared to be early evening despite me being certain that were in in the daytime.

"Oh? I've never heard of that story before." Maria's voice sounded beside me.

I glanced in her direction and spotted a confused expression.

'Well, Maria was taught so many things about the Eastern Kingdom. If there is such a story marking a historical monument, she is expected to know about it. But, I'm not surprised that she isn't aware of this place...'

"Well, were currently not in the Eastern Kingdom. This is the Southern Continent, you know?"

"A-ah, the South?" She seemed even more surprised.

"Yeah. Arcanas aren't concentrated in the Eastern Kingdom, you know? They're all over the world. I'm pretty sure one of the groups will have to go underwater to get an Arcana."

"What? For real?".

"Yeah. I don't know their exact locations, but after compiling all my life's research and also using Automaton to scour the areas, I've reached a reasonable conclusion."

Even if I couldn't get the exact place, I could map out the surroundings. Afterward, all we had to do was find the place.

According to this particular Arcana, several stories and tales have spoken about it. How;

'In the darkest of days and blackest of nights, the sands of time possess no light. Thick clouds block the way, and it appears to be a land of the depraved.'

Cross-referencing several other stories that indicated an absence of life and a sea of darkness, I managed to link everything together and arrived at the Dark Desert.

"It matches all the descriptions, although some of them were exaggerated..." I sighed.

Stories, though considered silly, were the hallmark of realities.

It wasn't easy sorting through everything, but since I was dedicated to finding out more, I looked for the everything—even the seemingly irrelevant ones.

'Looks like it paid off.'

Still, though...

"... Where exactly do we start from?"

There was only one way to find out.

"I'm going up." With that, I floated above and began getting a better view of the Desert.

It was truly a large expanse of nothing but black sand.

I could see no semblance of life, and the entire place simply looked eerie

'Where could the Arcana be?'

I doubted it would be so easy to get a law-bending artifact, but I was truly hoping to easily get one.

"I guess we have to try this one out." I brought out a card from my pocket.

It was, of course, the [Strength] Arcana.

'I've still not mastered its use, but its also resonating with this place... I must be in the right area.

The [Strength] card glowed golden, and it started beeping.

I couldn't initially understand it until a slow realization dawned on me.

I sharply descended, rendezvousing with Maria, who was waiting patiently.

"Sorry for taking too long."

"It's fine." Her voice was calm, as usual.

Her expression didn't also show that she harbored any offense—though I had already learned it a long time ago not to trust what kind of reaction Maria made.

"So, did you get any clues?"

In response to her question, I nearly shoved the [Strength] Arcana in her face.

"This one is resonating with the Arcana that is here. If I can resonate with it, I should be able to find out where the new Arcana is."

"Ohh..." In response to my words, Maria nodded, ready for what would come.

"Here I go!"

Closing my eyes, I Resonated my Primary Core—which had become a Fused Core—and connected with the Card.

I got a faint trace, but it wasn't enough... not nearly!

'I need more.... more.' Twitching my eyes, I began connecting more of my Cores—both Mana and Miasma.

Fortunately, the [Strength] Arcana did not refuse either.

The more Cores I resonated, the more I was able to get a clear image.

'A-h...?!'

In my head, I saw brightness.

It was a sharp contrast to the desert I was currently in, and I found myself enveloped with absolute light.

'... This is—?!'

I remembered at that moment... that there were to sides to the story if the Arcana.

While an aspect talked about the darkness surrounding the object, another side referred to another essential factor.

'At the end of the darkness, there is light. Journey to the very depths of despondency and see hope. Walk through the valley of shadows and fear no evil. The good that purges evil. The purity of everything... search and find it.'

I could finally understand why.

Right before my mind's eye, I could see just what the story meant.

'I-it's so beautiful...'

With a smile in my face and an inexplicable feeling in my heart, I found the place.

And then—

"Haa... haa..."

—The Resonance was cut off.

"... That sure took a lot out of me." I murmured, feeling very drained.

The [Strength] Arcana required synchronizing with its user to function, but it took a lot of my energy, if I was being honest.

Still, it was worth it!

"Did you find it?" Maria's question snapped me away from my momentary delirious state.

"Y-yeah. I've not exactly found it, but I know where it is..."

"Where?"

"You'll see." I smiled.

My mind wondered what Maria would think once we got there.

"So... how do we reach the place?"

I was sure she—no, pretty much anyone—would find it hard to believe what I was about to say.

However, it was the truth.

"It's located underground, deeper than you can imagine."

"Eh?" I heard her voice squeak.

"Yeah..." Pumping my Mana, I readied myself to begin work.

"... Let's dig!"

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

**Chapter 565: The Cathedral [Pt 1]**

>BOOOOMMM!!!<

A wave of black sand burst in several directions as I unleashed my Mana.

The ground shrunk, heaps of the sooty material scattering across the area. Still, I saw nothing but more sand underneath.

"Guess we'll keep digging... and quickly." I smiled at Maria.

My partner nodded at me with determined eyes, even though her face remained stoic.

She undulated her Mana too, sending a different feel into the air.

The both of us began using our respective energies to blast away the sand until we created a massive crater in the middle of the desert.

It took us very long to reach the very bottom.

At this point, a sheer amount of sand had already covered us from the top, but thanks to Maria's Mana field, we weren't buried by their overwhelming quantity.

'I've lost count of how long we've been digging... and how deep we are.' My mind echoed as we were surrounded darkness.

It was enough to make me doubt whether I truly had the right idea of where I was going. However, the moment I had those thoughts, I realized that we were most likely on our way to the exact location.

With Maria's Mana Field providing illumination, and our constant blast of Mana sparking in the blackened ground, we kept pushing.

Until... finally...!!!

"T-this is—!"

As we dug further, a bright light—like a precious gem—glowed and nearly blinded me.

The sound Maria gave told me it was most likely the same for her.

"We're probably there already! Let's push forward!" I told Maria, and she nodded.

With one final push, me and her burst through the remaining black sand in our path.

>BOOOOMMMM!!!<

More of the gleaming white light greeted us, and it was almost as though we were shrouded in diamonds.

"A-ah, so this is what they mean..." I reached out my hand for the light, and I spotted my partner do the same thing.

'... When they say there's light at the end of the tunnel.' With broad smile, I felt the warmth of the light, and for a moment, my entire body was consumed by it.

Everything went blank afterwards.

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"—red!"

I turned, a bit drowsy for some reason.

"Ja—!"

Someone kept shouting something in the background, but it really wasn't my concern. I simply wanted to relax.

"Jared!!!" Accompanying the voice was a stinging sensation to my face.

"A-ah!?" I sharply rose from whatever position I was in, invigorated by the slap on my cheek.

My eyes scoured the area for the culprit, and I could only find one person.

"M-Maria...?" My eyes widened as I looked at her.

She was standing right in front of me, looking rather nervous or uncomfortable.

Her skin was as lovely as usual, and their pale glow was especially accentuated in the glow of the surroundings.

However, what made her stand out the most was...

"What are you wearing?"

... The unique outfit she had on.

Maria was currently in a pure white gown, having a very loveable design and it also stretched back for a long distance.

There was an unveiled fabric hanging on her face, and a crown was locked in her hair.

She wore lovely jewelries and looked magnificent, but... I couldn't explain why I felt uncomfortable.

"I don't know. I woke up like this a few moments ago. Besides, you're dressed a bit strangely too."

"Eh?" I looked at my outfit and realized that I was in some form of tuxedo.

The suit was exquisitely made, no doubt, but it was too fancy for me. Plus, the design on my outfit matched the one Maria had on.

Instinctively, I looked around, and I was met with yet another shocker.

'What... is this...?'

It appeared we were in a completely different place than I expected.

I could see a very large hall in front of me, with pews nearly arranged in two sides—right and left respectively, with a broad walkway separating them at the center.

The red carpet was amazing, and I looked at the beautiful floor designs as well.

The ceiling and walls were pure white, as though made of marbles, and I saw strange murals all over them.

The windows and everything were all luxurious.

It was an amazing sight.

'But where is this place? Why are we dressed like this? Also... what's with this setting?'

Maria and I were currently on the altar of the hall, and I had no idea why she was holding flowers as well.

'Hold on, were those flowers there a few seconds ago?' As my mind wondered, I felt a presence suddenly appear in the room.

Maria's facial expression also changed, telling me I wasn't the only one who felt it.

"We gather here to witness and celebrate the union between Jared Leonard and Maria Helmsworth."

The voice came from in front of us, so I instantly glanced in the direction.

In front of us was a man, exquisitely dressed.

He was covered in white linen, having gold jeweleries all over him, as well as certain designs of rubies and precious stones around him.

He had an aged look, but a youthful smile remained plastered on his face.

"Shall we begin with the vows?" He added, his eyes closed behind his glasses as his lips parted.

'Who is this person? I didn't sense him before. Where did he come from?'

As if that wasn't enough, I felt several presences suddenly pop up all around the room.

'What is this?!' My mind rang as I looked all around.

The pews were filled to the brim with people. They were all seated, and the glows in their eyes—smiles on their faces too—showed they were excited to witness this scene.

'What? These are—!'

I could see several people that I knew... both from my past life and current reality.

People who were meant to be dead, and those who were still alive.

I saw Karlia, Emilia, Gerard, Ford, Dom, Raphael...

... And then—

'They're here too?!'

—I saw two people seated at the back.

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

**Chapter 566: The Cathedral [Pt 2]**

I saw two people from my past that shaped my life in the most bizarre and peculiar way.

'Lilith... Solomon...' They were seated at the very back, but seeing them smiling in anticipation made me feel... so emotional.



I looked at the front pews and saw Neron, Serah, and a few other friends and allies.

There were some faces I didn't recognize, but once I glanced in Maria's direction, I realized they probably belonged to her memories.

My brain immediately went to work so I could figure out what exactly was happening.

'Why are we here again, Jared? Remember!'

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"Do you, Maria, take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?" The man in front of us asked.

On his hand was a scepter, and he was holding a large book in the other.

His warm smile made me feel uncomfortable, but most especially so was his question.

'Husband? What?' I glanced at Maria, failing to understand what was going on.

Was this a wedding?

'Ah, he did mention a union earlier...'

Truthfully, I had been trying to figure out what the heck was going on that I totally forgot what was going on for a while.

'So, according to what I've deciphered, this is a cathedral. And that man... is a Pope...?'" I observed him more critically before making my conclusions.

There were several stories in this world, and a Pope often appeared in the fictional ones. Apparently, he led an organization known as a 'Church' and served a concept called 'God'.

A Church had its customs, and one of those was how they organized their weddings.

'They're making us get married here? Why?'

I clearly remembered we came here to get an Arcana.

'Why are they simulating this scenario?' They even managed to project the people from our memories and placed them as an audience.

I truly did not know how much longer I could take it, considering...

'Emilia and Karlia are both watching, and they expect me to get married like this? What the heck?!'

I knew those two weren't real, but it still felt awkward as heck.

Was it because I still had lingering feelings for the two of them? Maybe...

'Will we obtain the Arcana if we get through the vows?' I asked myself.

Maria was looking at me, probably waiting for my decision on the matter.

'For now, let's play it safe.' I thought to myself and nodded to my partner.

"I d-do."

The pope widened his smile.

"And do you, Jared Leonard, take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?"

I gave another glance at Maria.

She truly was stunningly beautiful. I was captivated beyond words, and her unsure expression made my heart race faster than normal.

My eyes glanced in the direction of the pews and I watched those whom I had... relationships with.

'They're all smiling. Karlia, Emilia... Lilith.' I looked in the direction of the pale-skinned woman at the very back.

'They're just memory fragments or something, Jared. Don't get distracted.'

I returned my gaze to Maria and took a deep breath.

It wasn't like this marriage was real anyway. I had to get this over with quickly so we could retrieve our prize.

'That's all that matters now.'

"I do."

The Pope's smile grew even wider.

"Then, is there any among the audience who is against the union of this beautiful couple? Speak now or forever hold your peace."

I rolled my eyes at this point.

Everyone was smiling and happy for us—at least, that was the setting. Who would pop up now and say they were against the—

"I'm against this!"

"Me too!"

"There's no way I can allow this!"

"M-me too!"

....!!!

Several people rose to their feet and protested against the union of the wedding.

'E-eh...?!'

Maria looked as dazed as I was as we looked at the people who rose.

"I want Maria as my bride. There's no way I can support Jared's union with her, even if he is my protegee!" Neron declared.

'What the... what kind of messed up simulation is this?!

"But you have Serah already!" I accidentally yelled out in annoyance.

"I want to have two wives. Is there anything wrong with that?"

"Serah, are you cool with that?!" I glanced in the direction of the red-haired woman beside him.

"I love Neron with all my heart. If that's what he chooses, I will support him no matter what. That is why I am also against this union!" The dumb version of Serah rose to her feet and declared.

I felt like pulling my hair out, but I controlled myself.

There were so many other people who were refusing the marriage.

I expected my previous lovers to protest, but none of them did.

Rather, the most bizarre people were the ones who spoke up.

"Lewis is mine and mine alone!!!" Jane Ursula yelled.

'Not my best friend too!' I wailed internally

"No! He's mine. I want to cut up his body parts and use them for my research!" Lemi grinned manically.

'My own daughter!' My tears intensified.

"Ever since the moment I lost to him, I've never stopped thinking about him. I love you, Jared." Legris Damien puckered his lips as he spoke.

Okay, now this was out of control.

'My nemesis too? What is this?! It's going too far!'

People like my mother, Liliana the maid, and crazy enough, Ciara Epilson—who wanted Maria, by the way—all sprang up to protest.

There were a few faces I didn't know, but they most likely belonged to Maria's side.

"Uncle!" I heard her shout—indicating a member of her family was also causing trouble.

Speaking of family...

"I-I'm in love with Maria!" Stefan shouted. "There's no way I will allow her to be taken away from me!"

'Stefan? You too?!'

He looked like he did when he was in Ainzlark Academy, so it was a bit funny matching him up with Maria—who had grown to some degree.

'At this point, I don't think this stuff makes sense any longer.'

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

**Chapter 567: A Little Game**

"I don't get this anymore...'

Giving up internally, I looked at the pope. He was probably going to call off the marriage, or at least put it on hold because of this big mess.

"What the fu—" When I saw the look on the man's face, I realized that he was relishing the situation.

So many people were against our union, and it seemed even more were expressing their displeasure as time passed.

'I don't know what this situation is based on, but it makes no sense at all! I don't even understand how this will lead us to get the Arcana.'

I followed logic and rational thought in my thinking process, but everything was so random—almost as though an idiot came up with the script.

'According to Merlin, he made the Labyrinth Of Despair to challenge people who would be worthy to obtain [Strength]... so that means whoever made this place is also an Apostle of Aether...'

Why he would generate a simulation like this was something I couldn't figure out.

"Very well. Since there are so many opposed to the marriage, there is only one option."

'Will we have to fight? Maybe silence the opposition? What could it be?' I thought anxiously as I watched the Pope widen his smile.

The audience also fell silent, strangely enough.

Their discord became harmonious, and it seemed they also agreed with the Pope's declaration.

'These guys... they're all in this together.' I suspiciously glared at the audience and the Pope.

It was a terribly made scenario, if I was being honest.

But, it was better to follow it to get what I wanted.

"The only way to prove the strength of your bond and silence your opposition is by going through the trials of the Pope."

I gulped.

Were we going to fight him?

I began sizing the Pope up. He didn't look particularly strong, but... I couldn't take any chances.

It was weak-looking folks like him that ended up wielding great power.

"You will confess in the trial, and your confession shall be your justification."

'Wait, confess? As in a confession? I don't get it. Is this going to be a—'

"That's right, ladies and gentlemen! Let's get ready for a lovely game ooooofffff...." The Pope suddenly changed his tone, and before I knew it, my position and Maria's were altered.

We were suddenly seated on respective chairs, facing the audience. We were also strapped to our seats, and I couldn't break free.

'What the hell?'

Everyone who watched from the pews looked excited. Their faces were flushed with anticipation as the Pope seemed to drag on his sentence for a more powerful effect.

"... Truth or Share!!!"

"WOOOHOOOOOO!!!" The congregation smiled and cheered as soon as the Pope said that.

"... Eh?"

"It's a simple game, really. You either tell the truth when a question is answered... or you share a deep, dark secret with your partner."

'What in the—?!'

"The rules will be displayed right in front of you. Make sure you read them well. You have one minute to prepare, and the game begins in earnest."

I glanced in Maria's direction, worried and surprised. She also gave the same look, but before either of us could communicate, a large panel appeared before us.

Seeing that we had limited time, we both decided to read the rules first.

[Truth or Share: Rules Of The Game]

[We have two young people who want to be wed in Holy Matrimony.

But, being bound for life can be very hard and unsatisfying if you don't know enough about your partner.

Plus, so many people are against your union.

Prove them all wrong and show the power of your bond!

Let true love prevail!]

<RULES>

1. You must not speak to your partner throughout the game.
2. You will take turns asking your questions, and the other party will have to choose between telling the truth or sharing a secret.
3. Honesty is the best policy. You should never tell a lie, or else...
4. Do not ask silly questions or tell silly secrets. The questions and answers must be strong enough to convince the audience of the depth of your love.
5. Telling a lie or failing to meet the criteria of these rules will mean immediate disqualification. You won't be allowed to step foot in this cathedral any longer.

[If you do well and prove your faith, the Pope himself will bless you with his Gift.]

[Enjoy The Game]

I was appalled by the conditions.

Initially thinking we could just get away with asking silly questions, my reality was shattered upon discovering that things weren't as simple as I had hoped.

'I can't even communicate with Maria? Shit!'

I wondered what would have happened if I decided to come alone.

Would the trial have been different? Or would the Cathedral not have allowed me to enter at all?

I was confounded, but I still had no choice but to play the game.

After all... the note at the end of the rules mentioned being given a 'gift' by the Pope.

It was most likely going to be an Arcana.

'Let's just get this over with...' I sighed and glanced at Maria.

She also had a determined look on her face, so we decided to give it our best shot.

"Alright folks, looks like we're ready to begin!" The Pope appeared again.

He seemed too different from the calm man from earlier.

Now, he just seemed like a wild game moderator, trying to fire everyone up for the game he created.

'This guy...'

"Our audience is ready, and our young couple are also ready. Now then... shall we start?"

My heart thumped hard and fast for some odd reason.

This was a simple trial for getting my prize, but for some reason, it felt more than that. Having to be open to someone... being so vulnerable... it felt strange.

Too strange.

"As the saying goes, 'Ladies first.'" The Pope announced, giving Maria the first go.

I gulped, turning the gears in my head so I could provide the most optimal answer.

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

#### **Chapter 568: Exposing Secrets [Pt 1]**

'Since Maria is the one asking the questions, it'll probably be about love and stuff. Haa, if she asks me how I feel about her, how am I supposed to respond now?'

I was certainly attracted to her, but to what extent?

Talking about my feelings in such a weird situation, being observed by so many eyes... I wasn't going to enjoy this at all.

Maria's lips parted and I felt a few beads of sweat pop out from my skin.

In any case, things were about to get really awkward.

"Jared... how do you know so much about Magic?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Maria's mind had been swirling with so many thoughts.

Nothing was going according to how she expected at all.

After her last conversation with Serah, she was given the next card to play with Jared.

"Do nothing romantic. Don't take the lead this time." Was what her mentor told her.

Maria had been a bit confused when she was told this, but Serah went on to explain.

"Jared has to take action too. The fact that he asked you to come with him means he is probably going to make moves. So, you should sit back and relax. Let him make all the moves, and see how much you've progressed."

So as not to seem too pushy, it was best to let the other person take action as well.

Maria didn't think this, but Serah's advice was something even Serah didn't quote adhere to.

She chased after Neron unilaterally for so long, yet she dared advice her junior to exercise patience.

It was a bit hypocritical, but considering the fact that Serah had matured since getting together with Neron, it was possible she didn't want the young girl to make the same mistake she did.

Maybe....

'I shouldn't ask him anything related to romance. I should ask him something neutral, but also very deep. Hmm, maybe in the line of his interest?'

It was with this mindset that Maria asked the forbidden question.

A question that not even Jared could have expected.

\*\*\*\*\*

'Oh, shit!'

More sweat poured out of my body.

I was in serious trouble now, wasn't I? Maria had to ask the one question I couldn't be honest about.

'There's no way I can tell her about my past. How would I even bring it up in this situation?'

Would I say "Hey, I'm actually an old man from the past. Remember Lewis Griffith, the Great Sage? Yep, that's me!"

'Hell no!'

I didn't want Maria to see me as an oldie. Things would definitely break down between us if she found out.

But, then again...

'If she loses her feelings because of this, shouldn't that be more of a reason to go along with it? I don't want to lead her on, right...?'

No! No! No!

I had to think of this from another angle.

If I exposed my identity as Lewis Griffith, it would simply be weird. I would be causing too much damage.

"We need a response from you, Mr. Groom. It's a simple question, right?" The Pope suddenly got close to my face, startling me for a brief moment.

"So... answer it!" He snapped.

The audience also gave me fervent stares, and I could feel Maria's wide eyes looking at me diligently.

'It looks like I have no choice...'

"I.. I.."

With my eyes closed, I blurted out something I had been hiding for so long.

"... I have actually felt attracted to you ever since we first met at the Ainzlark Exams. Your cute face and aloof expression... I like them a lot!!!"

I had to choose Share.

"OHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!" I heard the audience give a loud cooing sound as they smiled in exhilaration.

'Stupid bastards. Why would they be happy about hearing another person's secrets.' I thought in embarrassment, glancing in Maria's direction.

Her face was flushed with so much pink that I worried for her.

Her eyes looked watery, and she looked away the moment our gazes met.

'Ah, I forgot! We aren't supposed to communicate with each other outside the game.'

It seemed what I said was too much for her to bear.

'Damn it... what have I done?'

Now that I had said this, there was definitely no way I could tell Maria I was Lewis Griffith. If I did, she would be so disgusted at me.

I mean, who wouldn't be?

An old man having feelings for a young girl? For real?!

'But, I can't help my body...'



The only advantage my answer provided was that it set the pace for a topic of romance. Now that the mood was established, Maria's next question would definitely fall under that category.

'Now that it's my turn, I guess it's time to push it...'

"What's the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to you?" I asked with a smile.

'Now these are the questions you're supposed to be asking!' I thought to myself with a smile.

Maria's face turned even redder, making me realize I made a mistake.

"I-I'll choose Share..." Maria murmured.

'Eh? Is it that embarrassing?'

Somehow I grew more interested in what she was hiding.

"I actually... had slight feelings for Stefan when we were kids..."

"HOLYYYYYYY SHIIIIIIIT!!!" The congregation burst out in response.

"A-ah..." My jaw nearly dropped in surprise, but I made sure to pull myself together.

I never expected this bombshell.

'Is that why Stefan was against the marriage? Was the feeling mutual? Just how old was she when...'

My mind was swirling in thoughts, and before I knew it, it was Maria's turn to ask.

"H-How do you know so much about Magic?"

'What? The same question again?'

I thought she was going to ask something about romance. Why did she come back to a question I obviously didn't want to answer?

"Pope, isn't that—?"

"It's not against the rules to re-ask a question that hasn't been answered yet."

'Ah, what?!' Things were getting awry, for real.

Could it be that she already suspected something?

'If so, then how much does she know?'

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

**Chapter 569: Exposing Secrets [Pt 2]**

Did I slip up somewhere?

Could it be because of the several oddballs among the audience that definitely belonged to my memories?

'Ah, looks like I'll have to go for Share again.'

"I actually thought you and Stefan were betrothed. Because of how close you were, I thought you were in a relationship, and while I pretended not to care, I did... a little bit." Sweat poured from my skin.

How long would I need to keep this up?

There was no way I could reveal my deepest secrets. 'Truth' was also not an option.

Once more, Maria's face flushed pink as she gazed elsewhere. She was clearly affected by what I was saying, but I couldn't help it.

The loosest secrets I could divulge were those of emotions.

'Ah, things will be so awkward for us after this experience...'

Soon enough, it was my turn.

'I asked about the embarrassing stuff, but she chose Share instead...!' A smile formed on my face.

Since she chose to repeat the same question for me, wasn't it right I did the same for her as well?

"What's the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you?"

Yet another look of hesitance appeared in her eyes, causing them to glimmer like a bright blue sea.

I was mesmerized for a moment, but waited for my answer.

'I don't even know where this is going any longer. As long as we get through this...'

"I'll go for Share. I..." Maria glanced in my direction for a few moments, and turned away.

"...I-I don't feel comfortable when you talk to other girls too much. It makes me mad that you talk to someone else about something you could just discuss with me."

'Ah, what the—?!'

To be frank, I understood why she would feel that way.

I wasn't paying her enough attention, truly. And then, after the whole incident of her confession, it had been somewhat difficult for me to stare her squarely in the eye.

'Okay, Jared... why don't we go all out now? Since this is already a game—a platform for exposing Secrets and bonding—I can use this to my advantage.'

If things worked out well, Maria and I would grow closer as a result of our bonding experience here.

'Maybe I can get answers to some of my doubts...!' A small smile formed on my face.

"Who do you have feelings for?"

The question hit me as a surprise this time, and I stared sharply at the one who sent it in my direction.

Maria quickly stared away, hiding her face from me.

I couldn't get the right angle since I was strapped to a seat, so it was a shame. It would have been so cute, seeing her get flustered over the question again...

... Especially since the answer to her question was quite obvious at this point.

"You. I have feelings for you." My answer was truthful.

'Feelings do not equate to love. As much as I like Maria, and I'm attracted to her, can I call it love? Are my emotions as intense as the time with Emilia or Karlia?'

Even though I genuinely loved those women in the past, I ended up hurting them.

How sure was I that it wouldn't happen again? Those thoughts floated in my head.

'I guess it's my turn to ask the questions...'

I pursed my lips and let out a deep breath in preparation for the question I was to blurt out.

'This is practically giving my identity away, but...' I had to know!

"Would you still have feelings for me if I end up being an old man in a child's body? Just saying..."

No matter how anyone sliced it, I was giving a hint as to the possibility of my reincarnation. Plus, based on what I had shown so far, it was possible to believe I wasn't a normal kid.

"A-ah, I..."

I awaited her response.

If it was in the positive, then maybe... maybe I would be okay with furthering things. It would be wrong for me to get into a relationship with her and take advantage of her ignorance that I was an old man.

Also, if her response was negative, I would have to find a way to end the feelings that we had for each other.

"... I don't know."

'That's a 'No', isn't it?' I smiled within myself.

There were certain answers that one wouldn't expressly give, but they were valid responses nonetheless.

'Wait, this is a game...'

So, if she said she didn't know, wouldn't she have been knocked out already?

That meant she was being honest with me. She genuinely didn't know.

"I guess it's my turn..." Maria took a deep breath.

At this point, I braced myself for Maria's question. She had been unpredictable throughout this game.

But, even though I prepared myself... I wasn't expecting the next thing she asked.

"Jared, are you Lewis Griffith... the Great Sage?"

"E-eh...?"

'How did she know? I mean, I gave her a tiny hint not too long ago, but that was nowhere near concrete enough to be substantial grounds for suspicion...'

Besides, there were many times when one of two lovers would ask the other certain weird questions. Like;

"If I was blind, would you still love me?"

Using that reasoning, there was no way Maria could have deduced my identity.

"S-so, how did—"

"Remember, speaking to the other person is against the rules. You don't want to be disqualified, do you?"

I instantly shut my mouth the moment the Pope made this statement, and my brain went into overdrive.

'What should I say? What should I do? I'll just choose Share again...'

But, somehow, I didn't want to avoid the question.

I wanted to address it head-on.

'I want to know what she thinks...'

Perhaps I had already lost most of my logical abilities at this point, and was relying solely on emotions, but my heart wouldn't let me think properly.

To tell the truth, or to share a secret instead... the ball was in my court.

Unfortunately for me, if I didn't want to answer such a simple question, I was already admitting the truth.

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

#### **Chapter 570: Exposing Secrets [Pt 3]**

My chest kept pounding, and as I thought of what to say, I couldn't find anything else to do other than respond in honesty.

"Yes. I am Lewis Griffith." A gulp escaped my mouth the moment I tightly shut my eyes the moment I was done.

'Shit. What am I doing?!'

The atmosphere was awkward as heck, and I had never been so anxious in my life as Jared Leonard.

'Telling Maria how I feel is one thing... but also telling her I'm an old man, that's crazy!'

I had ultimately done the one thing I was trying to avoid.

'Shit! Shit! Shit!'

As I was cursing within myself, my turn came. The moment it came, I already knew what I was going to ask.

"How did you find out, that I'm Lewis Griffith?"

My mind was swarming with possibilities, but it was better to ask the source herself, wasn't it?

So, I waited in anxiety and suspense, Maria parted her lips and spoke.

"I wasn't actually the one who found out. It was... Ana..."

'Uh?! Ana? How in the world did she—?!'

"She has been suspecting it for some time. How you had access to Lewis Griffith's secrets, how you found his treasure trove by chance, how you're close to Jane Ursula—one of Lewis Griffith's closest friends—and how the Mad Witch herself calls you Lewis."

The more Maria spoke, the more I realized that I had been dripping clues for a long time now, but I underestimated their intelligence—especially Ana's—to pick up those subtle hints.

"She still isn't certain, though, but she's closer than ever in her suspicion."

Maria went further to tell me how Ana observed my interaction with Lemi.

When she got closer to her, the girl figured out the connection between Lewis Griffith and Lemi... thereby establishing a connection to me—since I was always doting on her.

The nature of my Original Magic, and how I was so knowledgeable about the Arcanas—even Magic, generally.

Once Maria broke it down, I was impressed how Ana was able to arrive at such a conclusion—using even the subtlest of hints as reference.

"She only spoke to me about it since she wanted me to keep a close eye on you. I don't know if she said anything to Lemi, though..."

'Oh no!'

If Lemi knew, it would explain why she had been so rash toward me lately.

Well, there were a couple of reasons for that, but it sort of made sense that she realized I was her father and began putting up an attitude... especially because I was still keeping it secret.

'Just how many things have been going on in everyone's head that I know nothing about?'

People were complex creatures, and maybe I had forgotten that.

'Everyone has various things going on in their mind... even Neron.'

My thoughts flashed to Jane, and I felt an ache within me for some reason.

Ultimately, I was too self-engrossed to see it, but... I had really neglected the emotions of everyone.

'That's probably why they neglected me.'

"I-I see..." I murmured, quickly silencing myself before the Pope put me in trouble.

"Last question from the guy, then we call it a wrap!" His voice boomed, causing my eyes to bulge slightly.

'This... is the final question?!'

There were so many new things I wanted to ask Maria—so many questions popped into my head.

At least, using this game, I could guarantee the correct answer.

In the end,

"D-do you..." I struggled to form the right words.

My eyes hesitantly glanced at her, and while her expression was blank and stoic, I felt she was probably mulling over everything that my identity represented.

"I'm too anxious to know what she thinks about it... I can't ask her that!"

Thinking about the question, on and on again, nothing fruitful came through.

Ultimately, I had to settle for the most basic question.

"Why... do you like me?"

There was a chance that Maria no longer had any feelings for me.

At this point, I wouldn't be surprised if that was the case.

I was way older than I represented myself to be. I lied to everyone, making them believe I was a special kid instead of an old sage.

There were so many things wrong in so many levels.

'But, the ball is in your court, Maria...' I stared at her.

Whether or not she still had feelings for me, I was certain things would be a mess after the game.

"I... I like you because you're special. I can't put my hands on it, but there's something about you that's not like everyone else. It might seem selfish, but that's the reason I like you... and why I want you."

Maria's eyes sparkled with interest—in fact, more so than ever.

"You're one of a kind... and I want you for myself."

My cheeks were instantly flushed with pink, and I looked at Maria with tensed surprise.

She was blushing as well, but her calm face made her appear more confident and sure of herself than I was.

'I can't believe this...'

Maria, despite knowing everything, still professed to have feelings for me... and she still even wanted me?

I couldn't comprehend it entirely.

'Maybe... maybe this is—'

"That's the last question for the game, everyone! I'm almost too sad to see it end." The Pope smiled as he charged forward, interrupting my thought.

Now standing between Maria and I, so I could hardly see her beautiful face, the tall man smiled and began talking.

"Now that we have concluded the round, it is time for the most important factor of this game..."

The audience was carried along by the man, and they all appeared to know what he would be saying.

"It's time for the judging phase."

A bead of sweat fell from my face and I fought to maintain my composure.

"Did they prove their love for each other? Will true love prevail, despite the challenges? I wonder..." He smiled beaming to the false projections of people in front of him.

The moment of truth was now upon us.