

SPELLCRAFT 651

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

Chapter 651: The Fairy King's Past [Pt 2]

The legacy of the past crumbled before his very eyes, but it was too late for Beruel to repent.

He and what were left of his followers were exiled from his own Kingdom. It felt like a dream, but... Beruel knew it was all real.

Pain. Confusion. Regret. Fury. Fear. Anxiety. Rage.

Multiple emotions swirled in his heart when the dust settled and he found himself with barely anything left.

However, the one emotion he never felt even once was hate.

Despite all Jane did, all that he lost, all that went down between the two of them... Beruel's heart never changed towards her

He didn't want to admit it initially, but he had known all along...

"... I still love her."

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One after the other, within the span of years, his Fairy Subordinates rapidly began to reduce.

Without the effects of their Mana Rich environment, they couldn't maintain their youthful state.

Thus, they either decided to return to the Fairy Kingdom—now dubbed the Sanctuary—or to die slowly with the leader they believed in.

Beruel, who had no direction, could not stop anyone from doing what they wished. He had lost that power and authority years past. All he wanted to do... was to get back at Jane, one way or the other.

Despite everything, he still hadn't given up his ideology.

He still believed men were superior. He still believed his ancestors were right.

"Give a woman some power, and she ruins everything!"

Hadn't that been the case with Jane Ursula? Wasn't that the reason his Kingdom fell into ruins?

"I'll start my own Fairy Kingdom and show them just how different and superior it is to Jane's!"

Beruel knew just how intelligent his adversary was. He also understood the population of his forces, compared to the bulk of the Fairy Sanctuary.

Still, he chose not to care!

"I will do it! Our ancestors' legacy lives within me. I am the rightful king!"

It took a while of searching, but Beruel finally found a region that was bustling with energy. It started out as a seemingly random cave, but it ended up leading to an ancient ruin.

The energy he, as well as the rest of his subordinates felt, wasn't Mana. It was something far greater. Since Fairies were naturally inclined towards Mana, the power felt even more appealing.

Beruel in his curiosity and excitement, decided to venture further to seek out the source.

And his subordinates gladly followed!

After so many years of sojourning as a nomadic group, they had finally found a place to call home.

The ruins needed a lot of work before it could be justified as a Kingdom built by the Fairy King himself, but Beruel had no doubt in his ability—especially if he could find the source of power he felt.

They all raced towards the energy source—innocently driven by their goal to create a better world; an utopia without the bane that caused the other one to crumble.

Unfortunately...

... This innocent dream died in that cave.

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"How many survived?"

Beruel's body was badly scathed, and blood dripped from his ear and other parts of his body.

Unlike him, who had been lucky to get away with such mild injuries, Fairy corpses littered the ground.

Needless to say, he only survived because of his immense speed—and perhaps luck as well.

"I-I am the only one, King Beruel."

Beruel should have already known that, given the fact that only he and the young Fairy in front of him were still standing while they saw their comrades laying still on the floor.

Blood oozed from their corpses, and some had burn marks that were so bad, it looked like they would turn to ash at any moment.

The several traps in the ruins had surprised everyone, and they had been pretty much doomed to fail since they had rushed in without thinking.

"Do you hate me?"

The Fairy King could not believe he was asking this of his subject. Subjects lived for the King. They could never hate him! They were always loyal to him—even till the bitter end.

But Beruel had seen his subjects turn on him. In the coup, a majority of the denizens of his Kingdom abandoned him as King. Even among the ones who initially stood by his side, many eventually abandoned the cause and tried to cling to survival rather than loyalty.

It was unbelievable how quickly the tables turned.

And now, with the death of everyone except he and a single subordinate, Beruel could not help but ask the question.

However, even to his surprise, the subordinate knelt and bowed his head.

"No, Fairy King. I do not despise you. Everything you've done this far has been to provide your people with a sanctuary. You have tirelessly labored for us. After following and protecting you all this time... how could I despise you?"

Beruel's eyes widened at that very moment. He couldn't believe it—or rather, he had never heard such a genuine response before.

It was so different from the answers that he had previously received that Beruel thought it was breathtaking.

Usually, people would say;

"I can never hate you, you're the Fairy King!"

"The Fairy King is always loved by all!"

"Did someone say that? My King, do not believe their words..."

Yet, this subordinate was different.

"... Besides, my King... you won your prize, didn't you? The source of that strange energy."

That's right, Beruel had forgotten. Locked in his shaking palm was a card—an Arcana—known as [The Chariot].

The ruin had been a Dungeon, and he'd had no idea until it was too late.

His subordinate had survived due to sheer luck, and also because he was the least competent among the others. He hadn't been fast enough to trigger any of the traps before the others did.

"Haha... you're right." Beruel found himself whispering.

But what good was his prize without his subjects?

"H-uh...??"

As he thought of it, the idea seemed to make more sense and take a more definite form.

'B-but father said the subjects exist because of the King...'

The sight around him and the feelings in Beruel's heart, however, seemed to turn that iron-clad mindset to null.

It simply didn't ring true any longer.

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Chapter 652: The Fairy King's Past [Pt 3]

Now that he looked around him and saw the carnage—and saw only one survivor—Beruel did not feel much like a king.

He had gained his prize, but so what? What was a King without subjects?

That was when the first lie of his ancestors became known to the Fairy King. He finally understood an error he'd failed to see all along.

"The subjects don't exist for the King. The King exists for the subjects."

His subordinate was still bowed before him, but Beruel no longer thought of the young Fairy as a slave to him, the master.

No... the relationship didn't feel that way any longer.

'I-I'm happy you survived. I'm happy you still consider me worthy...!'

That meant his authority as King didn't come from his being special. No, it came from the people who were willing to treat him as special. His people had been the ones at the top all along.

'It seems Jane was right, in her own feminine way.'

Of course, lots of biases remained, but Beruel was willing to admit the error of his ways—at least in this regard.

"What is your name?" The kneeling subordinate was asked.

"Murel. Murel Levan."

The Fairy King smiled and approached Murel, placing his unoccupied hand on his shoulder and nodding.

"Well, then, Murel... will you keep following me?"

Much to Beruel's pleasure, the subordinate agreed. Thus, both he and Beruel began to learn and harness the power of the Chariot. They had intended to use it to take back their Kingdom, but then Beruel's health became compromised.

Together, they built the fortress where he would remain sustained. A new body was made for him to utilize instead of his older one.

Unfortunately, being no expert at Soul Magic or any kind of Magic-Science Hybrid, other than mechanization and technology, Beruel had no idea how to transfer himself to his new body.

Jane Ursula had made something like that, but he could only somewhat copy her model. Without her unique ability, he was never going to be able to escape his mortality.

The best he could do was create duplicates of himself and utilize them for his own whims.

Through Resonance, he could feel whatever the clone felt, and he could relive the experience of walking and flying as he did in the past.

Unfortunately, Beruel couldn't do that with his own body any longer.

He had no hope to eventually do so, and his pride would never allow him to beg Jane for a cure.

He and his subordinate instead took it upon themselves to search for other Dungeons in order to find an Arcana that would be able to cure him. If they could find one to resurrect his dead subordinates, or to take over the Fairy Sanctuary, then those would also be well appreciated.

It was during one of these searches that they came across another individual who was also interested in the same venture.

This individual took an interest in Beruel, and gave an offer that was nigh impossible to reject.

An Immortal body for he and his subordinate. The possible revival of his dead followers, and also the retrieval of the Fairy Sanctuary. Once all the Arcanas were gathered, all of Beruel's wishes would come true.

The individual he met was a woman in white, and she presented herself as the direct representative of the Cult Leader. It was, in fact, the Leader who personally scouted Beruel.

He spoke to the man in charge via Magic Communication, but the lady in white was physically present during the discussion.

They called their proposed group the Nether Cult—and he was going to be the Third Seat.

Beruel, who had hit a wall when it came to his search for the mystical cards that wielded immense power—and also saw that the Cult already had a few in their possession—decided to join.

Thus, he became an integral member of the Nether Cult, but was eventually moved to the Fourth Seat by the genius of the Midas Race—Kido Midas.

Their group slowly increased, and it was only when Beruel was certain of its security that he involved Murel, his subordinate.

He ensured Murel remained in the bottom ranks—never rising to the top or gaining much attention.

It was better for him that way.

Years passed and Arcanas were secured, though at a slow pace. When Beruel demanded a swifter collection of the god-like objects, the Lady in White, who was still the proxy of the Cult Leader, stated that it was yet to be the right time.

The Cult Leader only spoke to them virtually, never appearing in their physical meetings. Instead, he sent his proxy.

It was only until the recent years that he showed up, and his power was enough to make everyone in the room recognize his authority—despite how young he appeared to be.

Considering how Beruel had known of the Cult Leader for decades, at this point, he understood that it was impossible for him to still be a child.

Therefore, his child-like form had to be a ruse.

When the Cult Leader appeared, things began to take quicker steps.

The Demon Race got involved in their conquest, and before long, the Midas Empire was destroyed.

The Eastern Kingdom was infiltrated, War broke loose, and a very serious search for the Arcanas became a reality.

Unfortunately, even at that... the Nether Cult failed to obtain all the Arcanas.

Murel died in his service to the Nether Cult, thus leaving Beruel all alone.

He couldn't stop now. He had lost too many years and too many people to stop in his conquest.

He had to obtain all the Arcanas!

He had to right his wrongs...

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"So that's how it is." Ana muttered.

"I... I..." Beruel didn't know what to say.

He was just as surprised as the other two present when the memories of everything began to flood in.

Thanks to Kuzon's [The Emperor], even Beruel's subconscious was forced to resurface, and the apparently forgotten memories were exposed.

The tyrant King was shown.

The kind Master was revealed.

The lonely Fairy was exposed.

Thus, Beruel's past was concluded.

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Chapter 653: Ana's Deal [Pt 1]

Ultimately, Beruel's story was told with all three members of the room present--all of which were stunned by the discovery.

"So, what will you do now?" Kuzon smiled, glancing at Ana.

A grin was on her face, just as he had expected. He could already guess her answer to the question.

"Well, I suppose it's worth a try, isn't it?" She now moved closer to the distraught Beruel.

Placing her small hand on his sunken shoulder, Ana looked at the old fellow in the eyes and asked him with genuine intent and a very excited face.

"Fairy King Beruel... do you want to be young again?!"

"U-uh...?"

"You see, I'm feeling very generous today, so I want to help you. Of course, there'll be terms and conditions. But, what do you think?"

Beruel was still in a daze. He couldn't comprehend why and how the little girl in front of him could say something so absurd.

'She's casually placing her hand on me, and she's speaking in this familiar tone. We've hardly met, and yet...'

Even without Beruel's bigot tendencies, he still felt the girl was being rude to him. Still, just as with Jane's actions in the past, Beruel couldn't find himself hating it.

His tired eyes stared at the girl, and while millions of thoughts ran through his mind, he decided to humor her efforts.

"I'll try anything at this point. What terms are you suggesting?"

"Become my lab partner!"

"W-what?!"

"If I help you become young, you'll have to devote your first ten--no, let's say twenty--years to me and my cause. Once that period is over, you can do whatever you like." Ana smiled, excitedly placing both hands on her hips.

'Is this girl serious?' Beruel found himself asking.

How could she think of making someone like him--the Fairy King--a simple lab partner? This surpassed any insult Jane had made to him.

'Ah, well, not quite...'

"Of course, you'll leave the Nether Cult and become one of the good guys. You can do that much, can't you? I mean, that's why you joined them, isn't it?"

"You're forgetting I also joined the Nether Cult for the purpose of reviving my past subordinates and taking back my Kingdom." Beruel's eyes narrowed at the young girl.

His resolve to tread a dishonorable path, so long as it helped to achieve to his goals... this girl was mocking it! He couldn't stand for such a deal that clearly proved disadvantageous to him.

"I'm surprised you think you have a choice here. What do you think, Kuzon?" Ana chuckled as she glanced at the boy behind her.

"I think he's being delirious if he thinks we won't take away his Arcana and leave him stranded so we can destroy his evil organization. I mean... I said this already, but their goals won't be achieved."

The little energy on Beruel's face suddenly drained when he heard Kuzon's statement. He looked at the two kids and wondered what kind of evil spawned them.

"Y-you guys..."

"Don't worry, Beruel. I'm sure you're a meticulous man, so you must have collected the flesh and blood samples off your dead comrades."

"Subordinates. And yes, I did. I also tried replicating the cells while artificially creating bodies for them. Of course, without their souls, those are practically useless."

"Well, Jared has an Arcana called [The Hanged Man]. It can revive your dead comrades so long as those samples are present. The fact that they have bodies prepared even makes it easier, don't you think?"

"W-wha--?!"

"I mean, you don't have to be in the Nether Cult. I can save you, Jared can save your fallen subordinates, and as for your Fairy Kingdom, well... when you regain your body and subordinates, you can deal with that yourself."

"A-ah, I see..."

"But only after your time with me has expired. Plus, I don't really like the idea of taking back the Fairy Sanctuary. Jane is such a nice lady, and everyone there is so happy."

Beruel's eyes widened upon hearing Ana's last words.

"J-Jane? You've met her?!" The pitch of his tone increased at this point.

"Y-yeah, what of it?"

"How is she? What does she look like now? Ah, she can make herself virtually immortal, so it's practically the same. But she could still have gotten Plas-Gic surgery, so there's a possibility she looks different. Does she still wear her lab coat everywhere? What hairstyle does she have now? What is her...?"

Ana slowly stepped back from the rambling Fairy King's obsessive questions.

His bloodshot eyes widened even more as he asked for more details, creeping out the young girl. To her, Beruel looked nothing more than a perverted old man.

"W-well..." She could only laugh awkwardly.

"Looks like someone's smitten. Our dear Fairy King still likes Miss Jane so much."

"N-no! I'm not! I mean, I don't like... her at all..." Beruel's voice trailed.

For a shut-in old man, he sure was exhibiting a lot of pep and energy. Besides, how could he lie to them when they had all heard his story not too long ago.

"Then, how about this, I promise to tell you all I know about Jane if you decide to accept the bargain. I could even ask her stuff you want to know."

"A-ah, is that so...?"

"Yep. The thing is, I don't think you're a bad person, Beruel. That's why I'm giving you this chance. I think you're brilliant and, well, useful. I want to work with you and develop the ultimate mesh of Magic and Technology. Doing that, I'll finally be able to surpass Lewis Griffith." Ana's eyes were shining with excitement at this point.

For a moment, silence prevailed. Everyone stared at Ana's bizarre announcement with an odd look. It almost seemed like she was out of her mind.

"Wait, what? You want to surpass Lewis? You? Hahaha!"

"H-hey! Why are you laughing."

"I knew Lewis back in the day. We shared contradicting opinions in terms of women and culture, but we got along finely. Do you know why?"

"Uh, why?"

"Because he was brilliant!"

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Chapter 654: Ana's Deal [Pt 2]

"Lewis Griffith was brilliant. A human without Magic would have been considered less than dung in my eyes, but this particular man... had simply been outstanding."

Ana nearly rolled her eyes.

She knew Lewis Griffith was amazing, and she had read enough of his thesis and propounded works to know it would take a great deal of work to surpass him.

However, his achievements weren't absolute!

"I'm breaking into new waters that'll revolutionize everyone's perception of Magic!"

"Oh? Pray tell."

"I'll tell you after you join me."

The deadlock between the two seemed to be inevitably growing stronger with each passing moment. It seemed neither would budge, at this point.

"I would advise you not to underestimate this girl, Beruel." Kuzon's voice finally broke into the silence as he walked closer to the man as well.

"Hm? Even you too, young Midas?"

"Indeed. She has exceeded my expectations more than once today. She's a genius, an unrivaled one. I doubt Lewis Griffith was able to achieve even remotely close to what she has accomplished when he was her age."

"W-well..." Beruel was at a loss for words.

Was his bias preventing him from seeing the obvious truth in front of him? Was this human girl really that great?

"She was able to sort through your encrypted signal and locate you. She was also able to disconnect you from all your clones. She was able to defeat a Demon Lord far stronger than her. She has created Golems and Automatons that operate independently—acting on pure algorithms, yet they're able to act appropriately in every given situation."

Beruel was shell shocked. He hadn't expected so much from the girl. His widened eyes kept Ana in his focus, and he observed as she excitedly puffed her chest with pride.

"That's not even half as impressive as her current feat. She isn't wrong about revolutionizing Magic. Ana discovered a new source of energy that is different from Mana and Miasma, and she did it purely based on research."

Beruel's eyes were bulging at this point, and it seemed like they would pop out of his baggy sockets.

"Y-you mean—!!!"

"Yes. She discovered Aether."

"B-but that's impossible! Wait, she used the Arcana, didn't she?"

"No. Not at all. Ana has no Arcana at her disposal. She discovered it purely based on research and evidence. Not only that, but she was able to use this Aether as a base for tracking down your location and also interfering with your communication network to—"

"H-hey! Kuzon, don't tell him everything! So the new energy was Aether? Darn it, Kuzon! Why did you have to say it to him? Now I have no leverage!" Ana interrupted Kuzon's explanation with her surprised rants.

"Haha! Well..."

"How do you know so much, though? Don't tell me... it has already been discovered and built upon? Damn..."

Beruel's thoughts were a mess, at this point. He was struggling to comprehend how a mere child like her could have gone so far in the pursuit of Aether.

'I don't even think Jane has achieved this much in that department.'

"Young lady, can I ask you a question? If you give me a satisfactory answer, I'll accept your bargain, no questions asked. I'll also abandon my plans for a conquest."

Beruel's eyes were dead serious at this point. He was still shell shocked, but he had to hear the truth from the horse's mouth.

"How did you discover it? Just... give me a clue, at least." His tone was sullen, and his body trembled in anticipation.

This was obviously a big deal. It was beyond impossible that a little child like her would have achieved so great a height in Magic that she attained Aether.

Plus, Kuzon said she didn't possess an Arcana—which was how Beruel came into contact with it.

So how...?

"It seems like you guys know more about it than me, though. I'm still in the starting phase. What even is Aether?"

Kuzon chuckled a little, instantly attracting a deadly glare from Ana.

Beruel wondered what to say. Even he didn't have a proper definition of the concept. It was beyond him. The little he knew about the power was what had been shown to him.

He knew it exceeded Mana and Miasma. He knew it was absolute. He knew it was the ultimate source of power in the world. However, what exactly could he use to define it?

In the end, Beruel's gaze fell on the young Midas.

"Aether is the source of all life and energy. Some call it the Root. Some call it the Origin. It is the very essence of everything around us. Mana and Miasma are simply offshoots from it."

Beruel's face cracked into a smile once he saw Kuzon solve his dilemma.

'As expected of a Midas.' He thought to himself.

The Midas Race was known to be supreme in Magic. Their deep knowledge and connection to Aether was the most probable reason.

"Aether is the purest kind of power to obtain, making it far more dangerous and useful. It's what allows the Arcanas to control the laws of this world."

Ana's eyes widened as she heard about what she had been studying. It was far bigger than she imagined. However...

"You already know that much, huh? It sucks that I wasn't the first to discover it."

... What was the point of her research when information on the subject matter already existed?

"You'll be surprised by how much we are yet to know about it, Ana." Kuzon smiled.

"Uh?"

"Answer my question, young lady." Beruel added his voice to the mix, now getting impatient since Ana hadn't addressed him yet.

However, with a single glare from the young female, even Beruel found himself shrinking back a little.

At the very least, a bead of sweat fell from his head.

"Well, whatever. It doesn't matter at this point." Ana sighed.

Suspense squirmed in Beruel's heart as he awaited her answer.

"I found it by examining the body part of the Demon Lord I defeated. I was able to extract a sizeable portion from her body before killing her."

It was her first proper chance to study Miasma and how it operated. Who would have thought that it would lead her to yet another source of energy.

—Aether.

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Chapter 655: Aether's Discovery

Ana realized the opportunity of a game changer when she got her chance to study Miasma.

After defeating the Demon Lord, Lydia, she had been able to get samples from her—including a huge chunk of her body that contained tons of exhaustible materials for research.

Thanks to the heteromorphic nature of the Demon Lord of Blanc, Ana was able to carry out tons of experiments with the flesh samples—watching as it changed as long as she preserved the cells from dying off.

It was time-consuming, and it took a large portion of her time. But—

"I did it! This is it, right? Miasma!"

—Her hard work had actually paid off.

She was able to understand the fundamental nature of Miasma thanks to her exposure to the Demonic Energy. Her hope? To surpass Lewis Griffith, and even Jared, but also discovering a way to use both Mana and Miasma that no one had thought of before.

Thus, she studied the two energies side by side—down to their atomic structure and microscopic qualities. The interaction between the two energies was that of repulsion, but she had to understand why?

What made them so distinct? Just how distinct were they?

This question nearly drove her to the edge of insanity, but she persisted.

Finally, she realized something.

"They share one similar element. A corresponding link. The fragment is small, but they're fundamentally similar..."

Ana initially assumed it to be a fluke, but after examining many samples, she was able to confirm her suspicion.

Mana and Miasma were related by a connecting link.

"There's something present in one energy system that's also present in the other."

Unfortunately, anytime she tried to bring them together, the opposing elements of Mana and Miasma would interfere and the two energies would cancel each other out.

It was frustrating, to say the least.

Just what was this connecting factor? It was so miniscule that it would have escaped her notice had she not been actively searching every nook and cranny.

She had to isolate it in some way.

Ana felt very lucky that Lydia's body was very regenerative once connected to the proper nutritional source. It didn't decay, and she was able to restore lost parts as long as more sustenance was pumped into it.

The best part about the specimen was its ability to adapt to whatever Ana wanted. When Lydia was still alive, she could utilize both Mana and Miasma thanks to her shapeshifting abilities. This change occurred down to her most basic level, so Ana was able to generate completely different results based on what she wanted to test out using the Demon Lord's flesh.

Thus, she did.

Upon isolating the element from the energy by slowly draining the excesses, she was able to have two light sources—fragments so miniscule that she wouldn't have been able to notice them normally.

She examined the one from Miasma, and then the one from Mana. They were the same. Then, the next thing to do was capitalize on their similarities and bring them together.

Thus, that day marked Ana's encounter with the sublime energy that permeated the world. The power of Aether.

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"I created more samples and underwent the same process—isolating the new energy —until I had enough to make it visible as a power source. It was pure white, and the concentration of power was unlike anything I had ever felt."

Kuzon and Beruel silently listened to Ana's explanation. They might not have displayed it, but the two men were awfully impressed.

The Fairy King even felt downright stupid in the presence of Ana's genius

"I figured if humanity could tap into this power, we'd be able to advance our Magic use as a species, you know? Sigh. I've not achieved nearly enough in my research, and there's a lot of work to be done, but..." Ana's gaze fell as she stared at Kuzon.

"But what?"

"You said it yourself. It has already been discovered. There's a lot you know about it—at least, more than I do."

Ana's cheeks were flushed with frustration. It was only natural that she would feel upset, considering she just lost her only ticket to a victory against Lewis Griffith.

"He probably even discovered Aether and didn't include it in his works. I wonder how he would be able to discover it without any Mana, though. Even I found difficulty—"

"Lewis Griffith probably never discovered Aether. If he ever came across the energy, that means someone showed it to him... and that's next to impossible."

Ana's eyes widened as she stared at Kuzon. His smile was genuine and he shrugged.

"It's impossible to even dream of coming close to interacting with Aether unless you have a Special Grade Mana Core. You have to have a vast amount of Mana, and you have to be special in some way."

The young girl's eyes could understand Kuzon's words, but she couldn't comprehend what they meant.

"Aether is the Hallmark of power. Only when Mana or Miasma is refined to the utmost degree will Aether manifest. Those other sources of energy are adulterated, inferior versions."

Beruel nodded in agreement. While he was never able to use Aether beyond the manifestation of his Arcana's ability, he still had a fair idea of how it worked.

That was how he was able to infuse the energy from his Arcana into his newly made clones—granting them that power.

"The Midas Race studied Aether and learned to harness it. That's not because we isolated the particles from Mana and Miasma like you did, but because we refined our Special Grade Mana Cores and artificial Mana Cores to the limit."

"I-I see..." Ana responded to Kuzon.

She still didn't understand why he was telling her all of this. It was only proving her right as to how she was steps behind in Aether's discovery.

"You were able to do all of this from the scratch, Ana. That makes your process of discovery amazing—better than anything anyone has ever done. Do you know why?" Kuzon moved closer to the girl.

"Why?"

"Because this is a method that guarantees the utilization of Aether by the ones who aren't special. Think about it. If you can harness Aether... what does that mean for the rest of the world?"

Ana's eyes widened in surprise. She hadn't seen it in that dimension. Kuzon had just opened her eyes to a new possibility she had never thought of before.

A way to achieve her goals and best Lewis Griffith. Still, though...

"... Are you saying I'm not special, Kuzon?"

"Haha, well... you are special to me."

Ana's eyes narrowed at the golden-haired boy and he took that as his cue to step back, raising both hands in surrender.

It was enough to cause Ana to break into a smile.

"Thank you, Kuzon. Really... thanks."

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Chapter 656: Foe Turned Friend [Pt 1]

"So, tell me, Beruel... after hearing all of that, aren't you dying of curiosity?" Kuzon smiled, turning his focus to the dazed Fairy King.

"W-what...?"

The old Fairy was trying his hardest to hide it, but how could he deny the deep impression that Ana had made on him?

She was unlike any other.

"Don't you want to see how she'll go about improving your current condition? Even better... don't you want to see what she'll be able to achieve? The limits she'll be able to exceed, especially with your assistance?"

Beruel couldn't deny the prospects.

Ana was still young—she barely looked anything like a teenager, but Beruel didn't think she was a child either.

There was a lot of room for growth.

'Especially in some... proportions.'

"H-hey! What are you looking at? Why are you squinting your eyes? What's taking you so long to think about it? I answered your question, right? Make your choice already!"

Beruel still wasn't accustomed to being yelled at by a woman. In fact, he found it irritating and condescending.

He was a male! He was superior! He was in charge!

Well, Beruel just found the second female whom he didn't mind was being unbelievably rude to him.

First had been Jane, and now, Ana.

"I see... so that's how it is." Beruel chuckled throatily.

Of course, this was followed by a violent cough.

"Geez, don't push yourself. How long do you have to live anyway?" Ana's face displayed worry.

The way she was seeing things, it seemed he would pass out at any moment. His sickly body seemed unbelievably weak.

'I wouldn't want him to die before he gives me his answer.' Her thoughts trailed.

"Hmmm... let's say a few more decades or so..."

Ana's eyes widened in surprise, and an "Eh?" leaked out of her lips.

"If I'm lucky, maybe fifty more years? That's only assuming I don't exert myself any more than I already have."

Ana hadn't expected so much vitality to be left in the Fairy King's body. It actually made no sense to her whatsoever.

"Ah, I have a question. Why is your body large, like a human's? Shouldn't it be small like a normal Fairy?"

Beruel nodded at Ana and gave a tired sigh.

"It's to slow down the ageing process. The larger the mass, the slower the degeneration process is. If I had a smaller body, I'd grow old faster, due to my mass being smaller. Besides, our size is simply a result of evolution and setting. We can undo it if we really try."

"Eh?" It was the first time she had heard such reasoning, but Ana chalked it down to Fairy Biology.

'A smaller body means fewer nutrients to keep it active, though. I have to assume that his body is slowly decomposing and his cells are dying one after the other with barely any regeneration. If that's the case, then it makes sense that a bigger body would be more useful.'

"As for your proposal, human... I have decided to accept it."

Beruel's words instantly pierced through Ana's bubble of thought, causing her to grin with excitement.

"Perfect!"

"But, before that, there's something I have to ask from my future... partner..." He murmured hesitantly.

"Hm? What is it?"

"Y-your name? What is your name?"

Beruel was unsure of whether he had heard it before or not, but he simply didn't have any recollection of it.

For a moment, an awkward air of silence permeated the air, as he waited for Ana to speak.

Then—

"Pfft. Hahaha... hahaha!"

—Yeah, Ana burst into an amused round of laughter.

Beruel was mortified, but he kept his cool. If this was how he would always be treated, though, the Fairy King had to reconsider his position.

"My name is Anabelle Frederick! My friends call me Ana, and soon... this world will know me as the Greatest Sage!"

The girl burst into more laughter—albeit a confident one.

Beruel couldn't help but be charmed by her childlike and dreamy personality. He never had a real family or offspring, but... he felt like he wouldn't mind having a child like Ana.

A child that resembled Jane so well.

"Very well, Anabelle Frede—"

"What are you doing?" Ana's words cut him short.

"Calling your name...?"

"I said my friends call me Ana. From now on, we'll be partners—though I'm the senior partner—so we're automatically friends!"

Beruel couldn't understand her line of thought, so he simply chalked it down to naiveté. How could a female of her calibre demand his friendship?

Still...

"F-fine, Ana..."

... He didn't make any complaints. None at all.

"... I accept your terms and conditions. I'll dedicate twenty years of my life to helping you out with your projects and I'll not attack the Fairy Sanctuary. In exchange, you'll save me from this dying body and also convince your friend to resurrect my subordinates."

"Perfect! It's all recorded here!"

Right in front of Beruel was a Magic Contract Parchment, and it glowed the moment Ana revealed it.

That meant their agreement was recorded, and she had a means of enforcing it.

"That is of no concern to me. I'm a man of my word." Beruel shrugged. "Now, let's see what you can do, Ana."

The Fairy King was staring at her with a smile, and Kuzon was also doing the same.

Both men were curious about what she would do, and an air of suspense hung in the air.

"I'll use this."

Summoned from a ring of hers was a white ball.

The ball was as large as a human's head. It was round and smooth. However, and most importantly, it felt fresh and alive

"This is the refined lump I was able to harvest from Lydia's body. It's full of 'Aether' energy, as you call it, and it's fully organic, so it'll make for a perfect vessel for you."

Beruel's eyes popped wide open. Even from where he sat, he could sense the quality of the body.

It was perfect.

"Since the amount is small, you'll only be able to assume your small Fairy form—or any kind of form you desire, really. As long as the size remains within budget."

Thanks to the heteromorphic quality of the material, Beruel could assume whatever shape he wanted.

It was simply the most optimal choice.

Only one question remained.

"How do we transfer Beruel's soul to the new body?"

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Chapter 657: Foe Turned Friend [Pt 2]

"How do you intend to transfer his soul?" Kuzon's voice overlapped with Beruel's tone of awe as he kept observing his new vessel.

The young Midas gave a small smile of curiosity, and his narrowed eyes told Ana that he was interested in how she intended on doing it.

'She's going to surprise me, isn't she?'

Beruel glanced at the two before the question finally registered in his head.

"Ah, yes... the transfer. How will that work? I've tried many times to transfer myself to the numerous bodies I made, but... I can't."

Beruel wasn't an expert at Soul Magic, so he couldn't move his own soul from his body to another vessel.

"Even for those with some experience and skill in Soul Magic, it's difficult for them to transfer their own souls from their bodies. It's much easier to do it for others."

After all, when someone's soul left their body, they were sort of dead. They no longer had any control or means of manifestation in the world.

Beruel wasn't even an expert in Soul Magic, to begin with. Even though he had made so many clones, none of them could be his new vessel.

"Surely, you have a plan to do that. I'm surprised, though. To think a young girl like you could utilize Soul Magic. You're a genius." The Fairy King wasn't stingy with compliments at this point.

His excited gaze hadn't left the vessel.

"Well, I can't use Soul Magic. I know about the concepts, thanks to Lewis Griffith's books, Jane Ursula's project, and also Jared's recent Soul Brand Magic. So, theoretically, I know of it..."

"Eh?"

Beruel suddenly froze in his excitement and glanced at Ana with an expression that seemed to be a hybrid between horror and shock.

"What... are you... saying?"

If he heard her correctly, then Ana wouldn't be able to help him. What was the point behind this whole project? He'd thought she had a plan. Had she just been leading him on?

'No, no, that's not possible. She even resorted to that Magic Contract. I mean, if she doesn't fulfil her end, the contract will be nullified.' Beruel's thoughts rang.

Even Kuzon gave Ana a quizzical look.

With both men staring at her with such unfiltered surprise, Ana realized that she had to word her intentions more clearly.

"Relax. Just because I can't use it doesn't mean I don't have a plan."

The old Fairy sighed with relief. He had felt betrayed not too long ago.

"The key to the plan, however, is not me... but Kuzon."

"Uh? Me?" Kuzon's eyes widened the moment his name was mentioned.

"Yes. If you utilize your Arcana, you can transfer the Soul from Beruel's old body to this one."

The room fell silent in a flash. Once again, the two males were in shock—not because they were impressed with Ana, but because of how ridiculous her idea sounded.

"You want me to use [The Emperor] on his Soul? Really? What do you know about my Arcana's ability?"

"It can control anything, right?"

"There are some conditions, but yes."

"Even incorporeal or energy-based substances can be controlled, right?"

"Well, yes..."

Ana smiled at Kuzon's response, indicating that she knew he could do the job.

"Why factor me into this plan at all? I remember not being interested in saving his life." The boy sighed in indifference.

In response, she shrugged while smiling.

"There's another way, but that's much tougher. The probability of its success is also low, and I'll probably need Jared's help to make it more certain. If you want me to resort to that, then—"

"Fine, I'll do it." Kuzon sighed.

Kuzon's swift response made Ana happy, causing her to clap her hands while giggling with excitement.

"That's perfect! Thanks, Kuzon!"

It wasn't like she had given him much of a choice, though. The girl had simply used his rivalry with Jared as a way to get what she wanted.

Besides, at this point, Kuzon wasn't averse to Beruel's cooperation. However, one problem had not yet been accounted for.

"For me to use [The Emperor] on anyone or anything, I must be superior. However, my Soul is far younger than Beruel's. That makes the equation imbalanced."

Ana smiled and shook her head in disagreement.

"Use your Familiar as a base. It's a Bond Soul, isn't it?"

"How do you know if it's ancient enough?" Kuzon raised his brow in curiosity.

"Gut feeling."

The golden-haired boy sighed at his partner's carelessness. He knew there were underlying principles behind her rash personality, but he couldn't help wondering about the lengths she was willing to go to in order to achieve her goals.

"Well, I guess that could work. To make the process smoother and painless, I'd advise Beruel not to resist."

The Fairy King was nervous at this point.

His eyes kept moving between Kuzon and his new body. He didn't know how to feel about the boy, considering how his subordinate died at his hands.

'Well, I collected Murel's body samples before his death. I wanted to create clones for him too. Thankfully, I still have them.'

That meant he could revive him too. It was due to this very reason that he was able to bury his burning rage—at least to an extent—against Kuzon.

Well, it was also because of what happened all those years ago... with the Midas Race.

"I understand. Do it."

A golden glow suddenly burst out of Kuzon's body, and his eyes glowed ever so brightly. In a flash, the room was brightly lit—even more than normal.

Kuzon moved closer to Beruel and placed his hand on the old Fairy's body. This caused him to instantly fall unconscious.

His body went from dry to completely pale and cold.

It became evident after a few seconds... Beruel was dead.

However, floating on Kuzon's second hand was a bright orb shrouded in his golden energy.

Kuzon's eyes settled on the pure white mold in Ana's possession, and he sent the bright cluster of light in its direction.

Like a guided firefly the light danced as it progressed, until it finally entered the lump. The white sphere glowed, and it swiftly flew away from Ana's grasp. It rose to the air and remained suspended for a moment.

Then...

... It began to take form.

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Chapter 658: Metamorphosis

"Haa.... haaa..."

The white lump began squishing and moulding itself as it hovered in the air.

First, it had a humanoid appearance, and then wings were formed behind it. Afterwards, details such as colours, clothes, shoes, etc., began manifesting.

Beruel's long, silver-coloured hair flowed behind him, and his handsome face appeared, bearing no resemblance to his previously sickly form.

His appearance was that of pure royalty—with a sceptre, a crown, and a royal garb that told of his status as king.

A king without a kingdom—but a king nonetheless.

His clothes were gold and purple, and he donned classy black shoes. Once every detail of himself was settled, his wings finally took full bloom.

Gold, silver, purple, and shades of black. All four colours formed beautifully large wings that told of Beruel's magnificence.

"Haaa... finally. It's been so long."

Beruel opened his eyes and greeted the world around him as he grinned widely—now in his new body as a genuine youthful Elf.

"I feel so alive!" His voice echoed throughout the vast room.

"Hahahaha! I'm so happy it worked. Amazing, isn't it?" Ana excitedly yelled, jumping around with her little body.

It brought her indescribable joy to see how successful her experiment was. Even though she'd had help from Kuzon, this was still ground-breaking for the young girl. It was the transfer of life.

A height she had never reached before.

"So, this is Aether. This power coursing through me... it flows so freely within my body. It's resonating so well with my soul." Beruel's tone was shivering, almost as though he was experiencing overwhelming pleasure.

"Stop acting weird, old man." Ana sighed. "Stay in one place. I want to observe you some more."

Beruel didn't seem to hear Ana, though. He simply flew around in his smaller body, enjoying the freedom that had been deprived of him for so long.

"Hahahaha!" His sparkly multi-coloured eyes took in the world around him, and they were filled with such life and wonder—unlike his old self.

Speaking of his elderly body...

"Gross. Was this really how I looked like? Thank goodness I didn't keep any mirrors around."

... The Fairy King was utterly repulsed by the ugliness of his old body. Fortunately, he no longer had any attachments to the shrivelled husk that had previously been his body.

"I finally understand the appeal of body switching. I feel brand new, honestly. All my organs—internal and external—feel so fresh. Haaa..."

The best part was the nature of his body's material. It was fluid and solid at the same time. He could become whatever he wanted. The possibilities were endless.

All in all, Beruel was happy. However, more than that, he was thankful.

"You have my gratitude, Ana. Your actions have disproved yet another one of my biases." Beruel swiftly approached Ana, gently touching her hand. Though with his small size, the whole thing simply looked funny.

"Haha, you're welcome."

"I should have seen it before. With you and Jane around, I suppose some females aren't inferior to males. Haha!"

Veins appeared all over Ana's face, but she controlled herself since the newly invigorated Fairy King didn't know any better.

Plus, Kuzon patted her shoulder from behind.

"All in all, it was a successful procedure. How badass is that?" The young Midas grinned with optimism.

"Y-yeah. You're right."

It was amazing how the whole scenario had started, and how they were all seemingly allies now.

'It's amazing... this change.'

"I owe you my life, young Midas. Thank you." Beruel proceeded to touch Kuzon's shoulders while donning a sincere smile.

"No problem."

"It's a tragedy what happened back then. I certainly hope you get the justice you seek."

"I'm not looking for justice, Beruel." Kuzon stepped away from the Fairy King, detaching the latter's hold on his shoulder.

"I want revenge. It's that simple."

Despite how distracted Ana was with observing Beruel's body—observing every detail to ensure that it was perfectly suited for use, she couldn't ignore Kuzon's dark statement.

She slowly approached him with a hesitant expression. They had been apart for very long, so Ana couldn't say she completely knew Kuzon. Even during the times they had spoken together in the past, she'd hardly known anything about him. Still...

... Their short time together had convinced Ana that they shared a bond. Perhaps it was friendship, or maybe it was something more. Regardless, she didn't like the creeping darkness that seemed to shroud Kuzon and his past.

As well as the fact that she didn't know about any of it.

"I still don't know what happened to you in the past, Kuzon. What exactly went down?" Ana's voice was low and uncharacteristically calm.

While her eyes were filled with curiosity, she made sure to tame her impulses and instead addressed Kuzon gently. From the little she knew, his entire family, no, his whole race had been destroyed. The matter was a sensitive one, to say the least.

"I don't like talking about it." Kuzon's response was cold, and understandably so.

Ana knew she couldn't be selfish and demand that he spill everything to her. Even if she decided to be adamant, he could easily refuse. Besides, Kuzon had helped her a great deal already. Not only had he been the one to convince Beruel, but he had assisted in the process.

'He didn't have to, but he still helped me.'

Ana appreciated Kuzon's efforts, and all his support, which was exactly why she couldn't just be silent when her friend was hurting. His past, whatever it was, seemed to be his major motivation.

And the fact that he found it unsavoury to discuss meant it had to be very terrible.

'Should I just bring it up another time? Yeah, maybe that's for the best.'

Kuzon had to be tired from using his abilities a lot. He didn't show any signs of exhaustion, but Ana knew how much he had exerted himself. They had experienced enough drama for the day.

"Kuzon, I—"

"Well, would you look at this? Looks like a nice gathering..." A mysterious voice suddenly pierced the air.

No one had sensed anyone or anything before the manifestation of the sound, and the moment it emerged, a figure appeared out of nowhere.

He was floating directly outside Beruel's chambers. His face—especially his smile—closely resembled Kuzon's, and his golden hair floated behind him.

With a sudden appearance and overwhelming pressure, this entity caused the initially lively trio to stop dead in their tracks and watch in shock, surprise, and horror.

"... You don't mind if I join in, do you?"

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Chapter 659: The Midas Confrontation [Pt 1]

"You..."

Silence rang in the room as Kuzon's voice created an echo of anger, mixed with surprise and fear.

The tension felt so thick that Ana couldn't lift a single finger. She even had to remind herself to breathe. Her eyes had initially been fixated on the stranger, but they slowly trailed to Kuzon.

Seeing his face, she didn't know what had come over him.

Never before had he shown such an expression!

"Hey, Kuzon. It's been a while." The Golden-haired man smiled while speaking.

It seemed like he was the only one who was taking the situation with levity. His handsome face and well-ornamented body gleamed with delight as Kuzon's appearance devolved into something sinister due to his foul mood.

"KIDO!"

Ana was startled by Kuzon's raised voice. She was honestly terrified. The raw emotions Kuzon was displaying far outclassed anything he had ever shown.

And his rising energy didn't make things any better. The room felt like it had come to a standstill, waiting for someone to make the first move.

"H-how did you find this place?"

Beruel spoke in a grim tone, floating closer to Ana and Kuzon while glaring at the one known as Kido.

"How? Hmm... let's see. We Midas people have some sort of special connection. I can always sense Kuzon wherever he is."

"W-what?! You're kidding, right?" The Fairy King instantly burst into surprise.

It made no sense whatsoever to him. If they could sense each other, then why would Kuzon be searching for Kido for so many years?

Besides, if Kido was right, then the reason behind his appearance could all be blamed on Kuzon. As much as Beruel didn't want to resort to that...

"Of course, I'm joking. Hahaha!" With a burst of throaty laughter, Kido put an end to the tense silence—or at least, it was supposed to.

However, it didn't seem like anyone felt any less pressured. Even with Kido's charm and seemingly funny personality—that is, his friendly and casual demeanour—his overwhelming presence made everything about him downright terrifying.

"Now, then... Beruel—"

"KIDO... WHY ARE YOU HERE?!" Kuzon's loud voice interrupted the speaker, and this time it seemed that his anger had grown to another level.

"Two reasons. I came here to offer backup to Beruel since he's a member of the Cult. It's my responsibility to look after the weaker ones, after all..."

"H-hey!" Beruel barked, but his tone was powerless at this point.

"It doesn't seem like you need saving, though. Looks like you've become chummy with these people. The fact that you're in that younger form means you guys somehow reached a compromise, right?"

The previously bold Beruel shrunk back and looked away, with guilt written all over his face.

"And your second reason?" Kuzon asked, still teeming with angry tension.

"Ah, yes. I'm supposed to eliminate you. You're becoming a bother, so... you'll have to die." Kido spoke so casually that one could have almost overlooked the weight behind his words.

"It's about time, wouldn't you say? For your death, that is!"

"Hahaha! You've grown cheeky over the past couple of years, you know? Well, I'll just fill you in on something. This should be fun..." Kido raised his hand, and a golden compass appeared.

The compass glowed, and its arrow pointed in Kuzon's direction.

"I've always known where you were and what you've been up to thanks to this artifact. I just didn't care enough to kill you. Well, maybe there was a bit of sentimental feeling as well. After all... you're family." Kido gave a charming smile, tilting his head to one side.

This was the last straw, and Kuzon couldn't handle any more of it.

"KIDO! YOU...!!!"

>WHAP!<

A loud sound permeated the dark room, and even outside, where Kido floated. It was the sound of someone planting a stinging slap on a surface. Surprise filled everyone's faces as they watched the unexpected scene unfold.

"Get a hold of yourself, Midas boy. You won't be able to win if you keep this up."

It was none other than Beruel who had landed the slap on Kuzon. His expression was utterly serious, and even in his little form, his presence still rang of dignity and maturity.

Kuzon was silent. He received the slap without a word or any form of retaliation. His face was simply sullen.

"I understand wanting so badly to kill your opponent. It makes your blood boil, doesn't it? It makes you frustrated, doesn't it? You just want to rip the enemy to shreds and laugh atop their decimated corpse. However, if you give in to that pleasurable thought and indulge in your righteous rage, you'll never win. Especially against someone of his calibre."

Beruel sighed. It was only natural that the boy felt rage. He was, however, speaking as a much wiser and more experienced person. Despite how overwhelming one's emotions were, they had to be put under control.

"I see..." Kuzon's voice finally leaked out.

It was small and stiff, but most importantly, it was calm now—devoid of the excesses known as rage.

Kuzon turned in the direction of the Fairy King. His eyes still shone with rage, and veins appeared all over his face. However, plastered on his face was a smile.

"Thank you Beruel... you too, Ana." His grin widened.

It was quite impossible to tell if he was still as furious as before, but Beruel could understand after seeing the boy's face.

"That's more like it, young Midas."

"You know, whether or not you put your emotions under control, you won't be able to win." Kido interrupted the highly emotional and wholesome moment with his dose of reality.

The way he saw it, it was pretty much impossible for him to lose—either to Kuzon or all three of them.

"I wouldn't be too sure about that." Beruel grinned.

~So, do you guys have any plans?~ He went on to resonate his thoughts with the two teenagers.

For Beruel, Kido was an opponent he was not certain of beating, even with their help. However, a proper plan could save them. He didn't think much about it before, but he already considered Ana and Kuzon as his comrades.

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Chapter 660: The Midas Confrontation [Pt 2]

"Welp, it's now pretty obvious that you've betrayed the Nether Cult, Beruel. I have every right to eliminate you. As for Kuzon's girlfriend, I personally have nothing against you, but I'll just treat you as collateral damage."

"I-I'm not his—!"

"Yeah, yeah. You look just like his type. Hahaha." Kido waved off Ana's response with such levity that one wouldn't think he was trying to kill all three of them off.

It truly was paradoxical how he interacted with them.

Even Ana was surprised by her instinctive reply to him. It almost made it seem as though Kido was a likable father figure and not a mass murderer.

"Beruel, Ana, stay out of this. It's my fight, and I'll be beating Kido with my own ability." Kuzon stared at his two partners.

His focused eyes were enough to show them how much he meant it.

"W-what? No way! There's no way you can win! You can't—!"

"I don't remember asking for your input." Kuzon silenced Ana as he stared at his opponent.

For some reason, Kido wasn't attacking. He simply floated in the air, waiting for the three to resolve their conflict and fight him.

"We can simply retreat. With Jared's help, and Neron, and Serah... with everyone's assistance, we'll be able to win!" Ana protested desperately.

She didn't seem to care about Kuzon's indifference towards her. Her sense of compassion and worry for her dear friend outweighed the hurt she was feeling.

"That's enough."

In a flash, Kuzon snapped his fingers, causing the Spell Card in Ana's possession to glow. It shone brightly, warping space and surprising everyone present.

"K-Kuzon, what are you—!"

"Young Midas!"

The two couldn't move thanks to Kuzon's [Marionette], and the blue swirl magnified. They all knew their looming fate, but their reactions clearly depicted how they much were trying to resist it.

"Stop! Kuzon, don—!"

>VWOOOOOOOSSSSSHHHH!!!<

Even as the blue spatial rupture swallowed the immobile Ana and Beruel, they never ceased their complaints and protests. Shock filled their faces as they were helplessly transported somewhere else.

"You really think I'll let them escape?" Kido's voice interrupted the teleportation.

"It's not up to you," Kuzon responded with a more intense expression than before.

An undeniably immense pressure swept the room, and the entire place was covered with Kuzon's [Marionette].

"You guys..." The golden-haired boy turned to watch the look of disbelief on his allies' faces.

Only their heads were still visible at this point. It was being consumed by the portal, but they weren't completely transported before Kuzon could give his farewell.

"... Thanks for everything."

>SHWUUUSSHHH<

It seemed like Ana wanted to yell something—perhaps she did—but her voice was completely consumed by the swirling gate, and so was she.

"Haa..."

For a moment, silence permeated the area. Only Kuzon and Kido remained there, and they never stopped locking eyes. With one gaze filled with playful frivolity, and the other possessing boundless rage, they remained in this deadlock.

Until...

"That was a dumb move, you know? Letting go of your allies. You can't beat me alone."

Kuzon didn't say anything. He simply continued to stare at Kido—the man he had once respected.

"Well, even with the three of you it still wouldn't have changed the outcome. Still, Beruel's new body seems to be flowing with Aether, and his Light Magic is pretty good. I understand wanting to protect your woman, but weren't you too harsh? I mean, she seemed hurt."

"That's none of your business."

"Well, maybe. But it would suck if the last thing you did before your death was to upset her. I can imagine her having to live through all that."

Kuzon remained silent. Perhaps he was sorting through his thoughts on how to defeat the man who was currently suspended in the air. Kido's appearance had come as a surprise to him, as well as everyone else.

It wasn't difficult to understand why Kuzon would be stuck on how to make do with the situation.

"Well, she'll be joining you shortly, so I suppose it's not so bad." Kido noticed Kuzon's glare intensify once he made this statement.

"You'll never find them."

"Hahaha! Debatable. Besides, they're your good friends. I'm sure they'll return here as soon as possible. I should kill you quickly and then kill them too. I really should, right?"

"We'll see about that." Kuzon's statement seemed to ring of utmost confidence.

Golden sparks of lightning covered his body, and his golden hair glowed ever so brightly. His irises shone bright gold, and markings appeared around them—like tattoos.

"Ah, Mage Mode. Brings back memories. You could do that since you were a kid, right? My brother was so proud of you. Such talent, even for a Midas..."

Kuzon ignored Kido's gratifying statement and put his Original Magic into action. Pouring as much Aether as he could into his threads, he made the most durable kind and wrapped himself in golden-coloured clothing.

With his appearance now changed, after the manifestation of his Mage Mode and Original Magic, Kuzon proceeded to utilize his Familiar.

"Xenia, full power. As much as my body can handle..."

~It's not too late to retreat, Kuzon.~

"Xenia... please."

In response to his pleas, golden flames manifested around Kuzon. Flaming wings appeared behind him, flapping to create waves that easily destroyed the small room that was already melting away.

>BOOOOOOOOMMMMMM!!!<

With everything gone in the blink of an eye, Kuzon and Kido found themselves in the large but damaged hall.

With Kuzon now transformed into an ascended being, even the surroundings began to crumble. The only thing—or rather, person—that seemed completely fine—was Kido.

Kuzon's legs and hands were now pure golden flames, and his wings were gloriously keeping him afloat. His hair also seemed like bursts of flame, and he still retained the effects of both his Mage Mode and Original Magic.

This was the culmination of Kuzon's power.

"Not using your Arcana?" Kido commented with a brilliant smile of expectation coursing through his face.

"There's no point. It won't work on you since you have [The Empress]."

"Well, true..."

"I have a question, though." Kuzon's face was calm.

Even as the whole world burned around him, he no longer seemed bothered, troubled, or angry. He was quite simply lulled.

"Why aren't you doing anything... Kido?"