

SPELLCRAFT 71

Chapter 71 - Grand Hall

We all saw the grand hall from afar before venturing within. It was a tall and wide building, comparable to the colosseum we had our tests. Though, I had to admit that this was smaller. Its elegance made it superior to the one we had seen previously, though.

Brimming brightly in the sun stood the castle-like Ainzlark Academy Grand Hall where the general assembly would be held.

Hurrying in our footsteps, we made it to the hall's entrance. It was designed as a two-door entrance, and upon arriving, Klaus and the other woman— whose name I finally found out to be Isabelle, opened both sides of the door and granted us entry.

"Whoah...!" Escaped from the mouths of many.

I maintained my poker face, but being honest, excitement welled up within me as well.

'Ohh, nicee!' My mind rang.

The hall had a very large interior. Designed elegantly, the shiny white paint that covered the surface of everything made the large place look brighter than it actually was. Several chandeliers hung on the ceiling, and from both sides of the walls we walked past— flags of multiple colors were spread.

I recognized the insignia of some of them. The Royal Family, Ainzlark's Original, The Magic Society, predecessors of Ainzlark who revolutionized the world— some of which I knew personally. There were a few flags I didn't recognize, most likely due to my incomplete knowledge of the modern world of Magic.

My eyes finally caught something close to the end of the line of flags... it felt oddly familiar and resonated with me for a second.

Finally, my eyes bulged when my recollection caught up to me.

'T-this is!'

Looking at the elegantly sewn flag that had the designs of a pair of goggles, books, and a pen, I instantly knew. The logo belonged to me!

'Ah, I see... so those bastards really did as they said they would...' I smirked smugly.

Before I died, the head of Ainzlark was beside me— among the king and other notable members of society. The younger man, considering my age back then, had told me that he would immortalize me by making sure my flag was among the legends in Ainzlark's history.

'Looking at it now... this feels weird...'

I didn't have the time to revel in the past, though, since we were on a move. My eyes finally descended and I noticed the hall was already nearly full. Eight rows were arranged in an orderly fashion, and standing in their designated positions were the students.

'Looks like we're late...' I mused.

The students all had uniforms on them, though of different colors. We already learned about it in our orientation. First years wore white-colored uniforms. Blue was designated for the second years while red was given to third years.

All uniforms were exquisitely sewn, having no flaws whatsoever. Since nobles and the highest members of society had children here, it was to be expected.

Of course, we all had our uniforms on— it was given to us on the first day and hung in all our wardrobes. The uniform remained there just for this moment.

Yes, I was donning my pure white uniform, as though expressing the core I possessed. It was pretty cool since golden threads were laced around it to form designs.

I had a cool blazer on, with a waistcoat to cover the pure white shirt underneath. The golden designs on my uniform made it look beautiful, extending to many areas in lines. Even the tie worn around my collar had golden designs on it. I had a school badge on the left breast pocket of my blazer, showing the same insignia as the Ainzlark logo on one of the flags.

The other uniforms had golden designs on them too, similar to one another. The only change in uniforms was the color— I supposed.

Now navigating our way around the hall, some of the eyes of our seniors glanced back— while others didn't seem interested. Of the eight rows lined up in an orderly fashion, counting from the left side, three had red-colored uniforms. They were followed by three with blue colored uniforms.

Looking to the far right, I saw the last two straight lines. They were dressed in white— the same as ours.

'So that must be them, uh?' My thoughts trailed and a slight smile formed on my face.

We were already informed of the three major departments in Ainzlark Academy. There were three courses one could offer at this institute.

Magic Arts. Martial Arts. Scholar Innovative Arts.

The other two departments had fewer members than us, but were still legitimately first-year students. They held different exams from us— having only a total of 30 passing from both their departments.

'Looks like things are pretty cutthroat no matter the department...'

In the first place, the bulk of examinees applying to the other two departments were those who had been rejected for Magic. Thinking they had better try their luck in other departments, the fools who took the exams ended up being unsuitable for neither. In the end, only the few who actually had talent in either Martial Arts or were extremely gifted in 'Scholarhood' would be accepted.

"Looks like I'll be having some fun times with them as well..." I grinned in slight satisfaction.

Klaus and Isabelle directed us to the row of white-dressed students. They were separated into male and female rows— unlike our seniors who were most likely lined up according to their class. Upper Class, Middle Class, Lower Class... I knew that could be the only explanation.

'Oh well... let's join the line first...'

With the help of the supervisors already present with the thirty white-clad students and our own, we were able to orderly merge with them. Our numbers were a total of 130. We had a total of eighty-nine boys and forty-one girls— a pretty funny contrast, in my opinion.

Suddenly, the hall that was brimming with life and energy died down. In a flash everyone stood, motionless. Their faces were all directed to the elevated stage in front of us.

Someone was entering the stage, or rather, appearing before all of us.

I recognized the man well... he was-

Chapter 72 - Lower Class (Pt1)

“I welcome all the students gathered here!”

The voice that boomed out caused all the young-looking people who stood in orderly lines to straighten up their postures and don serious expressions.

Now was no time for laughs or any sign of ease. The Academic Supervisor, and a senior lecturer himself, Damien Lawcroft was standing right before them.

On an elevated platform that looked like a wide stage, the man stood upright— having a slightly dissatisfied look on his face. Looking around the students, his eyes scanned them at what seemed like lightning-fast speed.

There were a total of eight lines, all stretching backward. The first six lines were in accordance with the Class System. They belonged to the members of the senior stages 2 and 3. As for the new entrants, they had two lines— for boys and girls.

Looking green and more nervous than the others, the first years gulped and shuddered in the presence of the overwhelming presence the man before them carried— with a few exceptions, of course.

Damien smiled softly as he saw those who maintained their cool in the senior classes, down to the new entrants. The strong-willed ones who would be the future of the magic society. Those in the high class all had a confident air around them compared to others.

Even among the new entrants, mixed amid those who jittered their teeth and looked around the hall to distract themselves from the unease felt down to their bones, those who weren't fazed were present.

'Stefan Netherlore, Maria Helmsworth, Ivan Smith, Trevor Kysel...' Damien Lawcroft's thoughts trailed as he was noticing the riding buds among the students.

They were exemplary, all donning an exuberance that depicted the very essence of Upper-Class members of Ainzlark Academy.

His eyes suddenly came to a halt when he saw another student who gave off the same atmosphere as the others he had seen— no, his was far more intense. It was as though he was the very essence of confidence. No sign of hesitation, and a pure brilliant smile that made the others look like pretending fools in comparison.

'... Jared Leonard!'

Damien looked uncomfortable seeing me, one could guess the reason why.

He must have been informed of my clash with Ivan— after all, we were being monitored. Even Klaus treated me differently while on our way to the hall, looking at me more than a dozen times. It was a good thing, though. It meant I was already gaining a reputation that would inadvertently lead to my greatness.

His scowl deepened once our eyes came into contact, and I could tell he was upset at me. Of course, I knew of the whole faction governing this school. It wasn't explicit information, but by deducing the facts I had gathered so far— it made perfect sense.

During the orientation, I made sure to learn as much as I could about Ainzlark. It was an interesting place, but the procedures of teaching in the past compared to the present had a dissonance. Investigating further into it, I realized that there were two warring factions— I didn't know the details, but apparently one side was the one who brought about this new method of learning called the 'Class System'.

Damien was a member of the board, as well as the new Academic Supervisor. Certainly, he was all for this idea.

That meant he despised the fact that I was able to gain so much merit in my exams despite being a White Core Grade— even beating Ivan up. Still, he was an inevitable ladder I had to cross.

'Don't worry, Damien... I won't cause you any trouble if you stay out of my way.'

I somehow doubted that, though.

"As current students of Ainzlark, I am certain you are all aware of the workings of this institute. Even the new entrants have already been informed of most of the details concerning your stay here." Damien Lawcroft began.

"— I will be skimming through the most important ones."

He spoke concerning the duration of our education at Ainzlark Academy. Three years was the standard amount of time spent within the institute— after that was an internship that took a year. At the age of 16, one became a legal adult and could pursue any path that opened up for them.

I already had my plans, so this was not an issue.

Damien further emphasized the Class System, bringing out a list of names. A grin of satisfaction formed on his face as he began sorting out the good eggs from the bad. The first years were called to the stage according to our ranks and presented before everyone present.

"Joining the Upper Class, a total of twelve students." Damien began happily.

I knew the numbers would be so small, but I didn't expect them to be so few!

"Maria Helmsworth. Stefan Netherlore. Ivan Smith. Trevor Kysel. Lily Pienhart..."

The students trailed to the elevated platform by climbing the very short flight of stairs by the side. They all presented themselves before the seniors and juniors alike— just like honor students.

I felt a little sting of envy since I had every right to be among them, but suppressed my annoyance. The start hardly mattered in a race. I simply had to save my strength and channel it toward something more productive.

Damien's eyes went to me and he gave a disgustingly condescending glare, as though telling me not to even dream of achieving any great heights.

'I wonder how he'll feel if he realizes he's dissing one of the immortalized figures in this Academy...' I mused.

After he called upon them, Damien ordered the twelve to return, forming a separate line for them. Next, he called the Middle-Class Students.

By the time he was done with the names, I calculated a total of eighty of them. That was a huge spike from the first call.

'So, the Lower Class Students are a mere 38, uh?'

Well, all things considered, it was plausible. Most students would fall in the middle class, while the ones considered dregs— who barely got into Ainzlark, had to be fewer.

I was a little happy, though. Most of those in the Lower Class who hadn't been called to the stage yet were from the Martial Arts and Scholar divisions.

I didn't have to deal with the snubs of the Magic Arts Department. It was like a brand new chance to make comrades.

Tightly gripping my fist in resolution, I made up my mind to make a better impression on those who would be my future friends.

'We're all in this together, guys!'

Chapter 73 - Lower Class (Pt 2)

The Middle-Class Students were sent down the stage and also formed their line. The boys and girls from the remnant lines were told to merge, forming the Lower Class line— same as our seniors.

I waited for our turn to rise to the stage. It would be a funny experience staring down on so many young ones as a new entrant, but I was prepared for it.

"Alright. On to the next matter at hand... your Lecturers."

My eyes twitched a little.

Damien didn't call us to the stage. Instead, he decided to skip regular procedures and dive straight into the next item on the list.

'Oi... you're kidding me, right?'

A large portion of my rationality told me to let it go, that it was no big deal. However, I couldn't overlook his intentional error. Perhaps it was due to the childish emotions within my smaller body, or a degree of pent-up anger— I couldn't bottle in my increasing dissatisfaction with someone who claimed to be a Lecturer in this great Academy.

Using sound amplification magic, I cleared my throat and spoke out with absolute confidence.

"Excuse me, Sir Damien Lawcroft— Great Academic Supervisor and Senior Lecturer of Ainzlark Academy... I believe you've missed a line." My voice echoed throughout the large hall.

Instantly, everyone's eyes darted to me. Surprise, fear, disbelief— many emotions were mixed in their facial expressions. I chose to ignore all the eyes on me, even the ones from the new entrants such as myself. There was only one person I concentrated on.

"Oh? What is this?" Damien Lawcroft turned in my direction and walked on the elevated platform, nearing where my line was.

A condescending smile was on his face, a contrast to the frown that existed on mine. I glared at him— enough to tell him my stance on his impudence.

"The regulations state that you introduce all new entrants to the other students in the assembly. Whether or not we're Lower Class shouldn't matter. This is the most basic of basics, Sir Damien Lawcroft— we were taught all of this thanks to the excellent orientation you prepared for us."

A mix of disrespect coupled with reverence could be heard in my tone. While I took a courteous stance, it was clear that my true intentions were anything but— at least to Damien whose smile began to vanish the more I spoke.

"I see..." His lips pursed, showing a grim, forbidden look.

I had crossed a line.

However, with students numbering nearly five hundred all present in the hall— teachers as well, Damien Lawcroft couldn't act rashly.

This made my lips break from the scowl I had and turn into a soft smile. Seeing this infuriated Damien even more, but he was restricted in his actions.

'You're only our Supervisor. There's really nothing more you can do now that I've been accepted as a student. Plus, you're the one in violation of the protocols.'

With this line of thought, I awaited the man's next move. If he was only a bumbling idiot, then he would only achieve disgrace in front of everyone. However, if he had an ounce of sense, then—

"Ah, I see... it must have skipped my mind." Damien Lawcroft responded— just as I expected.

My grin became broader.

"Oh, that's fine sir. We all make mistakes."

A big 'ooh' and 'ahhhh' permeated the hall as everyone was surprised by my gall. The teachers, especially Klaus— whom I spotted from the corner of my eyes, all looked shocked.

Still, Damien kept his cool. Leaving where he stood, he returned to the center of the elevated stage and returned his gaze to the long parchment in his grasp.

“I shall now mention the name of the Lower Class Students.”

I nodded in satisfaction. The names of my new classmates poured out. As the students heard their names, they climbed the stage. Whether or not they belonged to a low class, they were still Ainzlark Students deserving of respect. Every single one of them topped the thousands who failed. The least amount of reverence should be given to them— that was the reason I refused to have the names of students in the Lower Class names skipped.

“... Jared Leonard.”

Hearing my name, I jumped a little in surprise. It still felt strange, but what of it? I climbed the stage in what I could only call a graceful manner. The piercing gazes of everyone around me would cause anyone to faint. No one wasn't paying any attention to me now.

Though this was an entirely different way to go about it, I had gained everyone's recognition. It was only a matter of time before I earned their respect.

Damien called more names and after he was done, he introduced us Lower Class Students— sending us back after he was done.

As I went back to my line, I heard a buzzing sound in my head. It was familiar, but the signature of this felt oddly different from the other one I experienced.

~Don't think you've had your way, brat. You're all still trash!~ The gruff voice echoed in my head.

Of course, it was from Damien Lawcroft. He told me what he didn't have the gall to say in front of all the students and staff gathered. It didn't faze me at all since I knew his words didn't ring true. Still, Damien had clearly proven he would be a stumbling block in my path. As such... he had to be eliminated!

'It's just as I said in the beginning... I won't cause trouble for you if you stay out of my way.'

It was a pity he has to do the opposite.

After we returned to our lines, Damien called out the teachers who would be taking our classes.

Like a 'poof' in the air, a couple of people appeared through teleportation behind Damien. It happened so fast that everyone was stunned— even the seniors. These would be our Lecturers.

I saw nine smartly dressed individuals. They looked formal and exquisite in their unique attires. Among them was Legris Damien. His eyes darted to me for a second and winked. I laughed a little at his gesture— the man hadn't changed a bit.

Chapter 74 - Lecturer

“As you all know, each 'Class' is assigned a Lecturer to teach them. Some additional teachers will be specialized in particular courses and electives— but the general courses will be taught by your assigned lecturers.”

We all paid rapt attention as Damien addressed us. I was especially concerned with the nine Lecturers who weren't exactly lined up in perfect order. For example, Legris was stationed close to our Lower Class on the elevated platform— but that didn't mean he would be teaching us.

'He's a senior lecturer, after all...'

"I will now introduce your Lecturers to you."

Mentioning their names starting from all the Upper Classes, Damien began allocating the lecturers. As expected, Legris was assigned to the Upper Class of the 2nd Years. All Lecturers assigned to high-end classes had to be very high in rank.

After he was done with the most important students, the Middle-Class lectures were allocated. I waited in patience. After he was done, only three lecturers were left. One of the three would be our teachers

None of them looked especially impressive. As one would expect from the least qualified lecturers, they were nothing compared to the others— dress-wise and the aura they emitted.

However...

My eyes darted to one of the three who appeared to be the least conspicuous. He had an air of nonchalance about him, and out of everyone else, he dressed the simplest. Having a plain shirt that wasn't tucked in at all, along with black pants with golden threads forming a straight horizontal line, his shoes were average.

'His tie looks nice, though...' I thought to myself, admiring the nice logo it had at the center.

Unfortunately, his tie was loosened around his collar, making him look rougher than normal. His buttons didn't even reach the top, stopping two steps short. His sleeves were even folded up, displaying a good portion of his arms— they were firm and evenly toned.

If anyone saw him, they would instantly wish he wouldn't be chosen as their lecturer. No, they would even wonder why he would be considered a lecturer in the first place. Even students were dressed better than he was.

However... I wasn't like the others. There was no way I could make a pedestrian judgment based only on appearance. He stood out too much, which made my curiosity piqued.

Furrowing my eyes a little, I ignored the others and focused on this man alone... he...

I saw his bored eyes slowly turn in my direction the moment I tried prying into him. This shocked me for a moment, but I refused to lose composure.

A smile formed on the man's face as he took his eyes off me— practically forgetting what I was about to do.

'Huu, I knew it. He's not normal.'

Damien called out the names of the Lecturers allocated to the Lower Classes, and to my classmates' dismay, the very ruffian who was nothing like a lecturer was chosen to teach us.

I heard grumbles and dissatisfied sounds coming from everyone, but amid everyone's annoyance by the choice, I felt strangely satisfied.

Something about the man called Neron Kaelid made me grin in excitement.

'There's no way I want an average teacher! This unique guy... he's perfect for our class.'

I saw Damien frown from the corner of my eye. He had donned a satisfied grin moments ago, but after seeing that I was happy with his choice for my class, that fulfillment in his face turned sour.

Professor Neron Kaelid moved closer to our class line, as the other lecturers had done for their various classes, bringing the both of us closer in distance. As though by coincidence, our eyes met and I was met with yet another amused smile from the man.

With a smile on my face as well, I didn't look away.

'Let's get along well, Teach.'

We were dismissed after the assembly was over. Classes started that very day, so we had to leave for our various lecture halls. According to the Academy's Class System, the Upper Class made up of all Years had their territory— the same applied to Middle and Lower Classes. The Dorms were also separated that way.

'That means I'll be living among Lower Class seniors... interesting...'

We already knew our dorms, and our dorm numbers had been given to us. Just as in the previous apartment, we didn't need keys to open them— a magic signature would have to do.

However, going to our various dorms would have to wait. At the moment, we needed to attend our first Lecture. There were multiple exits in the hall, so each class took one of each and exited the wide building, making way to their classrooms.

"This should be fun..." I whispered.

[Thirty Minutes Later]

Well, remember how I had said our first Lecture would be fun? Well... at the moment I wasn't so sure anymore. Why?

It was because we hadn't even started yet!

Everyone was given five minutes to reach their respective classes and another five to settle down. Afterward, lectures would begin in earnest.

As a result, those of the First Year, Lower Class, made it to our hall just in time. The first thing I thought of when entering the facility was that it was unimpressive.

Of course, since it was still a hall within Ainzlark, it wasn't run down or anything. It had the appropriate standard befitting the institute. However, that was all there was to it. Compared to the other buildings we had seen, this particular lecture hall could be considered trash.

It only had one entrance which also served as the exit. The interior was not decorated, having a plain brown color of wood that was used to furnish the place. The wood was in good condition, but still...

It was a spacious hall, though. There were more than enough seats for all the students gathered— a total of 50 Seats.

Since our numbers were only 38, there was no problem. Still, I couldn't help but compare this hall to my mental imagery of the other halls the higher placed students would be using.

I grudgingly accepted my current predicament and settled at the very front of the class.

'I'm no slacker!'

However, even after our lecture was supposed to have started, no lecturer showed up. It had been twenty minutes since we were supposed to begin class— nothing came forth.

'Is this really how I'll begin my first day in school?'

Chapter 75 - Introductions

BAM!

The only door leading to and out of the classroom was flung open as someone ventured in.

The sudden sound startled everyone— who had already given up on anyone showing up and were already engaged in conversation.

From the corner of their surprised eyes, they saw the one who entered the classroom. He had the usual causal air around him and his outfit was as radical as always. Walking in with a nonchalant stride, he walked to the center of the classroom stage where a lectern was erected.

A smile formed on my face as I followed the man's movements, as though my eagerness had been quelled.

'Where have you been? I've been waiting forever, Neron Kalied!'

While others were engaged in conversation— except for a few, I was bored out of my mind. It wasn't my policy to sit around doing nothing, but that was all I did for over twenty minutes.

'Next time, I'll just bring a book along with me to class...'

The students slowly ceased their talks and those who were standing subtly returned to their seats. Despite the man's appearance and tardiness, he was still a lecturer. No student dared to show defiance before him.

"I apologize for being late." Neron began.

This came as a surprise to many since Lecturers weren't known for their polite nature, especially one that looked rough like him.

"I was called by the Academic Supervisor as well as a few others concerning my outfit today..." His voice trailed.

This nearly drove a laugh out of me. All things considered, he was dressed inappropriately for a Lecturer. He must have received some chewing-out by his superiors.

“Now then, let’s begin!” His voice sparked and the air of unease seemed to drift away the moment a wide grin appeared on the man’s face.

To everyone’s surprise, as I noticed by looking around, the Lecturer we had wasn’t all bad. Not only had he apologized to us, but he also donned a bright and friendly smile to begin our time together.

“Alright, let’s get the troublesome stuff out of the way first. You should all introduce yourselves.”

He pointed to the back of the class, establishing the order for speaking. From the far right at the rear to the left at the forefront. Neron also mentioned what he expected us to say.

Name

Age

Department

Reason For Studying At Ainzlark.

There were no objections, so all 38 of us decided to speak.

One after the other, I heard the students introduce themselves. None of them were of any particular interest to me. After all, the ones who sat at the back were mostly the ones I knew from the Magic entrants. They weren’t really impressive— plus their personalities were trash.

As the introductions went on, I saw someone I became interested in.

“My name is Anabelle Frederick. I’m 12, and... um... I’m in the Scholar Department. My reason for coming to this Academy is... well...”

The few Scholars who had already introduced themselves all said the same things.

“The Grand Scholar, Lewis Griffith is an inspiration. I would like to walk down the path of a Scholar because of how awesome it is!”

“Knowledge is amazing! It’s only natural I want to further my knowledge.”

“A scholar understands the fundamentals and theories behind anything. Knowledge is power, and so I believe being a Scholar is the best option for me!”

All of them were bullshit!

‘How stupid!’ My mind rang the moment I heard their paltry excuse for a reason.

In the first place, most of these hypocrites would have become Magic-Users if they could. It was due to their lack of aptitude that they resorted to the next best option. Also, the common assumption of ‘knowledge is power’ was all rubbish!

Rather than having knowledge, the raw ability to pummel any opponent was what would truly be regarded as power. Besides, only fools were of the opinion that top Magic-Users didn’t have knowledge.

To operate Magic properly, knowledge was required. In essence, Magic-Users had both knowledge and power. Scholars were nowhere near being the best in terms of departments.

The last one who said that being a Scholar was the best option for him nearly cracked him up. He didn't really have an option, to begin with. They were all weak, both in mind and power.

I wasn't condescending at all, they already disqualified themselves— that was all. As a true Scholar who reached the pinnacle and became a legend, I could say it with all honesty. If I had become a Magic-User in my past life... I would have been able to achieve way more!

The path of a scholar is merely a glorified loser's road. No matter how grand their dreams were, as long as they existed in my shadow or used me as a standard, they were never really going to be fulfilled.

"... I want to surpass the greatest Scholar known in the Eastern Kingdom and become the best Grand Scholar to ever exist!"

I nearly coughed once she said that.

'Is this girl an idiot?!' Was the first thing that rang in my mind.

The look on her face showed how shy the little girl was. Her cheeks were flushed as she spoke and her short frame made her look fragile. I was certain I could break her easily without resorting to magic enhancement.

What first drew my attention to her was the fact that her name was the same as my mother's. Why did this girl, Anabelle Frederick, have to spew such fantasies? I continued to listen to her.

"... People often believe Lewis Griffith is the best Scholar to have existed. However, though he propounded many amazing and groundbreaking theories, I have found several holes and inconsistencies in his thesis and books. It was almost as if... they were incomplete..."

Another cough nearly escaped from my lips, no, this time it did. My loud cough interrupted what Anabelle was saying, causing everyone to stare at me since I was seated at the forefront.

'Welp... this is awkward...'

Chapter 76 - Introductions (Pt 2)

Anabelle Frederick made a statement that caused me to lose composure and cough loudly, nearly choking on my saliva.

"... It was as if his treatises were... incomplete!"

How did she know?!

Despite my huge achievements in the realm of magic theories and evolution, I never revealed all I had learned to the people of the time. Hiding some of my most valued documents, I had hoped someone would find them eventually. Also, if they didn't, I thought those who learned from me would build upon what I had already established and arrived at the truth sooner or later.

That way, I wouldn't be giving them all the answers on a platter. However, to my dismay, no one had done much to further what I already established. Most thought it was already perfect, or too complex to be improved.

As a result, in-depth magic theories and complexities remained at a standstill till this age despite new spells and branches of magic being developed. I was disappointed to learn of this the moment I could access better books in my household library.

Still, to think... a girl her age had figured it out. It was too shocking that I had to let out a cough.

'Welp, this is awkward...' My thoughts trailed.

The girl's eyes darted toward me. It was crystal blue, a sharp contrast to the yellow hair she had. She furrowed her brow and made a slight frown.

'She must think I was making fun of her or something!'

Her frown didn't fade as she turned away, returning her gaze to our Lecturer.

"T-that is all I have to say!"

Sitting down in a hurry, she remained in a terrible mood, one I had to guess was my fault.

'Oof, what have I done?'

Of course, I noticed it wasn't just me that reacted to her words. Most people around gave amused looks and even stifled their chuckles and sneers at her. In a way, all she had said brought only ridicule to her person.

Her image was already ruined on the first day. It felt wrong to me, especially considering how the girl looked like a child due to her small stature. We were all budding teenagers, but she still had the features of a ten-year-old.

'Well, what did you expect when you just went and spewed such a grand dream in front of everyone?' I softly smiled, looking at her lonely gait.

Still, my impression of her had changed. The fact that she mentioned the incompleteness of my legacy... made her worthy to be called a Scholar indeed.

'How interesting. It appears I've found a good one already.'

The introductions went on without any incident. As Neron had stated earlier, we had no right to criticize anyone's introductions by verbally or physically assaulting them. However, mere chuckles and snickers didn't count so many made fun of others using suppressed laughter and condescending facial reactions.

"My name is Edward Karl Leon. I'm thirteen years old, department of Martial Arts. I only have one goal... and that is to further the mastery of my blade. I will sharpen my sword and perfect my skills until Sword Arts are recognized throughout the empire— no, all around the world, once again!"

This introduction also struck a chord within me. I looked at the one who made such a grand statement. It was a boy having brown hair with equally brown eyes. His appearance looked mature for his age, and even with his uniform covering his body, I could tell that he had a finely-toned figure.

He had a slight scar on his left cheek that resembled a sword slash, and the way his eyebrows slanted—his eyes showing a deep resolve that was as firm as his posture, the boy was dead serious.

I sighed a little. His dream was certainly not impossible, but... a single person like him could never achieve it.

One of the new changes that had occurred after my death was the decline of Martial Arts and the rise of Scholarship.

Due to my influence, Scholars became highly revered. In essence, they rode my coattails and became quite respectable.

In contrast to this, Martial Arts like Sword Arts, Spear Arts, etc. Entered a state of decline.

This was because Magic had evolved to a high level that no one was really interested in dedicating years and efforts to strengthening the body, sharpening the senses, and relying on one's strength to grow powerful.

Just as I had thought when I was younger, Magic could cause miracles to occur with a single spell. However, Martial Arts were something that required hard work and dedication to produce results. Compared to Magic, it was much more difficult.

With my theories simplifying magic and bringing forth new possibilities, no one could boast of the same in Martial Arts. As a result... the people became lazy!

Magic was revered. Scholarship became respected. Martial Arts were neglected.

"Martial Arts may be more difficult in terms of training and practice. However... when it comes to results, it will never betray you! Many inconsistencies may occur in magic. In the end, you can only rely on your body! I want the whole world to once again see the value, no, the superiority of Martial Arts, especially Sword Arts!"

As the boy basked in his grandeur and showed his unwavering spirit, I rolled my eyes. While I respected his goals, they were too childish. Words like those only deserved to be spoken by the strong.

'How conceited...'

I had several friends who were Martial Artists, the best in their fields. I was especially close with the Sword Emperor, famed to be the strongest with a Sword throughout the land. However, even he admitted that humans had a limit and that he had reached his.

"If only I had more Skill in magic... I could achieve Transcendence..." Was something he often told me.

He was right!

'This kid fails to realize it yet, but... he's not entirely correct in his belief.'

Chapter 77 - Admonition

While Martial Arts was an essential aspect of power, it couldn't best Magic in terms of efficiency.

This didn't mean Magic was easier. Some magic spells and discoveries took years to study and perfect. Original Magic took one's entire lifetime to complete.

However, Magic was all about bending the laws of the world as a whole— Martial Arts could never hope to achieve that. That was a reason why people just preferred dedication themselves to Magic.

Still, I didn't disagree that Martial Arts needed a revival. It was extremely useful and even I wished to be very skilled at it since it covered some weaknesses of Magic.

'Well, let's see how it goes. I could educate this boy and mold him to be capable of achieving his dreams...' A smirk appeared on my face.

Once again, I felt many eyes on me. The boy named Edward Karl Leon also stared at me and frowned deeply the moment my smile registered in his eyes. Once again, I had to assume that my expression was a sign of disrespect to his ideal.

The introductions continued and no one else caught my interest. The only two I actually liked were most likely seeing me in the opposite light. One way or the other, I would need to win them over.

'They need me more than I need them anyway...'

Not long after, it was my turn to speak.

The entire first row was empty on both left and right sides. There was a pathway used to walk at the center and the classroom was designed to have elevated seats on step-like platforms.

Since there were five seats in each section (right and left) per row, that made a total of ten. The rows numbered five, giving fifty seats in total.

Of the ten combined seats at the forefront, I was the only one who occupied any— my seat was to the right. The other students sat behind me. I wasn't sure if it was due to the phobia of occupying front seats, or their reverence of me. Still, it was disappointing.

As I arose, everyone's eyes were locked on me. The unflinching gazes of the few dozen that wanted to hear what I would spout. The pressure was enough to unnerve anyone, but this much was nothing.

"My name is Jared Leonard Alphonse Sereth."

I saw many people recoil from my words. Apparently, they all wondered why someone from such an Inept noble household would be studying magic.

Since most of the people in the hall were either Scholars or Martial Artists, they weren't aware of my power yet. Some had a gnawing suspicion and a few whispers concerning me were passed around— but it still came as a surprise that my family was one that hadn't birthed a Magic-User in over two centuries.

"I'm 12 Years Old..."

With a confident grin, I spoke about the reason for enrolling in the Academy. Ainzlark was home to a lot of my experiences in the past. I had achieved so many victories and losses... but one thing was certain— this was the first place where I was acknowledged for the brilliant mind I possessed.

"My goals are simple... it's simply to learn more about Magic and grow as a Magic-User."

Everyone looked surprised, no, underwhelmed by my response. As someone who had spoken out during the assembly and made such a commotion, one would expect that I had a more grandiose ambition.

However, only fools would take what I said lightly.

Learning more about Magic? Grow as a Magic-User? Wasn't that what everyone came to the Academy to do? However, the extent of said learning and growth was dependent on the person.

My true intention was to stock up as much as I could during my short stay here and access all the information available. That would prove to be my stepping stone to the ultimate goal of becoming unparalleled.

'I will rise above a Grand Mage and become the most powerful Magic-User to ever exist!' Saying such a thing would be too conceited of me at this level.

A smile formed on my face as I sat. While I did not have the confidence to say anything of the sort at the moment, a time would come when my actions would speak louder than any word that could be uttered.

'I'll let them see it with their own two eyes... telling them now would be spoiling!'

Plus, blurting those kinds of words out would be cringe.

"Alright, that's all— I think," Neron said after a few seconds of silence.

I was the last to speak, so it was time to move on to the next topic on the agenda.

"My name is Neron Kaelid, your Lecturer for this year. You may be wondering a lot of things, but be at ease. I didn't ask for you to mention your household or mana core grade since none of it matters here. You're all known to be trash and I know this might cause a great deal of temptation to arise amongst you. Thoughts of superiority may begin to arise— that even among trash, you're better. However, I will not tolerate anything of the sort."

His long speech resonated well with me. He certainly expressed the spirit of Ainzlark Academy that I remembered.

"You're all new buds that need to be taken care of. I will not promise anything concerning achieving the reasons you have for enrolling here. Your growth shall be determined by your determination and efforts. However, I will say this..."

He let out a broad grin and stretched his hands as though expecting an embrace— no, it was of admonishment.

"You have all made it to this Academy through pure merit! That much is true... and for that, I can only render one word to you. CONGRATULATIONS!"

My eyes caught many people tearing up as a result of his words. They were certainly moved— I was too. Neron was able to say the one word most had not had the privilege of hearing... and he meant it wholeheartedly.

The fact that everyone here scored enough to enter the greatest Academy in the Eastern Empire meant we were not trash!

“Now then, you should all buckle down like champs! The Lecture begins!”

Chapter 78 - First Lecture

It was simply amazing— Neron’s Lecture.

I had expected him to be an average tutor and more of a powerhouse, but was excellent at the former as well.

After commending us, Neron addressed the most pertinent matters first. He projected our schedule on the wall behind him, making sure it was well above his head so he wasn’t obstructing his view.

‘Light manipulation Magic, eh? Nice mana control...’ I mused, remembering how the entrance results were announced in the same way.

Apparently, we had three magic lessons per day. Since this was an Academy that encapsulated a whole lot, there were other courses that involved areas outside magic.”

Courses like etiquettes, history, politics, etc. Were taught as electives. Main Courses were divided into two parts— General and Specialized. Since we were a class comprised of three departments, a system like this had to be implemented.

General Courses were to be taken by all Departments in our class while Specialized courses depended on our Departments.

Depending on the Department we were in, our Specialized Courses Differed. Magic-Users had Courses like Basic Mana Control and Basic Spell Creation while Scholars had more courses that dealt with theories. For Martial Artists, skill development and fitness courses were added. It was a complex, yet, well-distributed curriculum.

Well, almost anyway...

“You can choose as many as five electives. I wouldn’t overwork myself if I were you, though.” Neron added when handing out the forms to us.

He used a wind spell to control the fliers, allowing them to each land on our tables for us to fill.

Looking through the electives, I saw nothing especially useful among them. Electives weren’t compulsory, but it was a general opinion that it was better to study them.

While the merits were there— such as extra credits and an easier grading system that gave easily earned points to add to the combined score, the disadvantages for me outweighed those paltry reasons.

“It’s a waste of time...” A whisper accidentally leaked out of my mouth.

I already had a lifetime’s worth of knowledge concerning these Electives, and even as an affiliate Lecturer here I knew more than I could ever learn as a student. There was no need to bother myself about it.

Besides, courses like politics, history, etiquettes... even sewing— that’s right, it was a course, were things I could pick up in my pastime and learn by myself.

There was no way I would spend a great deal of my time learning such things now.

‘Yup! No Electives for me!’

That meant no free points or extra credit, but I didn’t mind. If I did perfectly well in all my Main Courses, it wouldn’t matter in the end. From the corner of my eye, I saw people biting their pens to figure out what Courses to pick but I beckoned to Neron thY I was done with my choice.

“Ah, I see... interesting...” He smiled a little after picking my form and reading its content.

I guessed he must have thought of me as one of two things— a genius or an idiot.

As others were still deciding, Neron moved on to other areas of importance. Sharing another set of flyers to each table, a piece landed on mine.

“The total list of courses you will be offering, both General and Specialized as well as their time. Electives are included in the back, so if you want to choose any or have chosen already, check the time you’ll be having them.

From my list, I could see that I would be having lots of free time on my hands.

[List Of Courses And Time]

{General Courses}

~ Homeroom — 9:00 AM

~ Course 1 — 10:00 AM (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday)

~ Course 2 — 12:00 PM (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday)

~ Course 3

— 2:00 PM (Daily)

The list went down even to my Specialized Courses. Neron had already recognized us based on Departments and had given us the sheet according to which categories we fell under.

By the time I finished reading, I was grinning at the list of courses I had to offer. They were nine in total— five general courses and four specialized ones.

{General Courses}

1. Basic Magic Knowledge. (The fundamentals of Magic. No matter the department, this course is important for everyone since magic is an essential part of the world)

2. Concepts Of Significance (There are wonderful theories and concepts that shape the modern view on several things. Magic, Martial Arts, etc. all stem from concepts)

3. Physical Exercise (Everyone must maintain an adequate level of fitness. Light exercises and aerobics will be performed daily)

4. Advanced General Studies (The fundamentals have been taught at home through the aid of tutors so advanced general knowledge of language, music, calculations, and other essential subjects will be learned)

5. Recreational Activities (Field study, botany, zoology, and various other environmental knowledge will be learned)

{Specialized Courses}

1. Basic Mana Control (Mana is the very lifeblood of magic that exists both in the surrounding and within every Magic-User. The fundamentals of controlling the magic within one's Magic Core will be taught)

2. Basic Spell Creation (Spells are the mechanics of magic. They are complex methods used for activation and transformation of mana into the desired forms of Magic. The very foundations for spells will be learned)

3. Contemporary Magic Arts (Magic has advanced far beyond what it used to be. With modern magic coming into the light— spanning from those used for everyday activities to the more complex and powerful ones, students will learn of these new wonders of Magic.

4. Magic Theories (Magic is derived from concepts and theories. Learning these theories will broaden your scope of magic even further).

Of these courses, I was most excited about the Contemporary Magic Arts since it represented the very essence of modernity, but that didn't mean the others weren't important as well.

I heard that more difficult variations of the Courses we were offering now would surface as we advanced to a higher level and new courses such as Magic Research and Magic Philosophy would be dealt with.

'I'm quite excited about the future!'

Chapter 79 - A Duel Challenge (Pt.1)

"... And there's one final thing you should all know!"

Neron's eyes were a little narrowed now and his expression didn't show any signs of pleasantries. Holding on to the lectern tightly, he pushed his body forward and addressed our class with earnestness.

"Your Familiar Selection Ceremony is in a month, and the Inter-Class Exchange is in three months. In that short span of time... you've all been properly oriented and you must have also read the brochure— so you realize what that means, don't you?"

An air of unease wafted across the classroom.

'It's sooner than I expected.' My mind rang.

We were told a lot of things during orientation, but those were only general knowledge. Our curriculum and schedule waited until we got to the actual class. From what our Lecturer was saying, we didn't have much time until the two most important events for new entrants would arrive.

Familiar Selection Ceremony and Inter-Class Exchange.

Still, I wasn't too bothered. It didn't change what I had to do on my end and no merit would come from letting the short time get into my head. I just had to work according to my own pace.

"With that in mind, I declare homeroom over! Get yourselves ready for the next Lecture." Neron muttered and left the class.

He took with him the forms of everyone who had registered for their electives and left us to ourselves.

My eyes gazed at the clock on the side of the wall and noticed that it was about ten minutes before our First Course would begin.

'Homeroom lasts for an hour, but it's usually not more than thirty minutes. The rest of the time is spent in preparation for the actual courses...'

Because Neron came late, he ate through more time than usual, giving us a less than desirable amount of time for ourselves. However, since he was the Lecturer who would be taking our main Courses, the burden still fell on him— after all, he would be the one going through the stress of speaking.

As I considered how to spend the little time I had left, a shadow descended upon me.

'Uh...?'

I had already noticed that several eyes were on me, and they were mostly hostile. However, it was outside my expectations that someone would challenge me this soon.

My eyes darted in the stranger's direction and I caught his appearance. That slightly bulging muscular body underneath the uniform— it was so obvious who it was!

Edward Karl Leon!

"Yes? Can I help you?" I took a calm, polite tone as he stopped a few meters short of my chair.

His eyes were burning with an emotion I couldn't quite decipher. It was most probably anger, though I could swear I did nothing to incur such a state.

"Jared Leonard Alphonse Sereth... you should apologize!"

His tone sounded serious and full of zeal, but the statement itself was too flat. Confused by what I had just heard, I cocked my head to the side and stared at him curiously.

"What?"

I didn't mean to say that, but it leaked out. I had been nothing short of polite since our brief meeting. In fact, he was the one being rude— so this brat was meant to be the one offering an apology.

However, as a mature individual, I allowed him to speak.

"I was watching you from my seat, noticing the way you looked down on everyone's hopes and dreams in this Academy. You even laughed at Anabelle's goals and sneered at mine. That's a rotten attitude!"

I sighed the moment he said this.

So this guy was still hung up on that? How bland. I had taken him for a more intelligent individual but it appeared he was only just a meathead.

“Y-you don’t have to, Ed, I’m fine!” A voice suddenly spoke out.

It was soft and shrill, an epitome of childhood and a feminine disposition. Yep, the one who protested was Anabelle.

Edward sharply turned in her direction, so mechanical that I could mistake him for an automaton.

“But, Ana, he mocked your goals— no, our goals! Remember what the Lecturer said? No one should give in to the temptation of superiority, yet this guy has already started it!”

Edward’s teeth were clenched. I could sense a deeply rooted frustration in him. This guy was not just pissed at me, but several others. Perhaps he was venting? No...

‘Ah, I see now...’

A broad grin formed on my face as I figured out the cause for his explosive attitude. Everyone in the class, who had just been watching the incident, suddenly gasped— most likely surprised by my brazen attitude even when confronted by someone on that very matter.

Edward turned in my direction and saw my smile, once again mistaking it for an act of arrogance.

“You... who do you think you are? You’re the same as all of us, aren’t you? Even if you have no grand hopes or ideals, you shouldn’t look down on the rest of us!”

I said nothing.

“I honestly thought you were a decent person when you stood up for all Lower Class Students and made that man call us to the stage... but, to think you were just an arrogant and rude guy instead!”

There were many things I could say or do to this person, but I doubted if any of them could completely change how he felt about me. What was currently affecting this boy’s psyche was a syndrome known as ‘self-righteousness.

In essence, Edward thought he was in the right and I was in the wrong. His ideals and perception of those two concepts automatically ensured he had every justification to get mad at me. Plus...

‘The way both he and that Anabelle girl conversed... they must know each other from somewhere. Are they friends, or...?’

My grin grew broader and I still said nothing. That must have been enough to push Edward to the breaking point. He raised his hand high above his head as though trying to resort to violence.

‘That’s a bad move, kid... you’ll be penalized.’

“Ed, no!” Anabelle, his friend, quickly shouted.

It was too late. The boy’s hand descended rapidly— in a few seconds, a loud ‘thud’ would be heard.

Chapter 80 - A Duel Challenge (Pt 2)

>WHOOOSH< Edward's hand descended in a rush. No one tried to stop him, no, someone did. However, Anabelle was too slow and too far away to stop the motion of his quick and powerful arm. I didn't move from where I sat and observed the trajectory of his arm. My lips curled up in a smile when I realized... his hand was never targeted at my face— or any part of my body for that matter. >WHAM!< His hand slapped the desk in front of me, creating a loud sound that reverberated across the classroom. Everyone displayed shock at the intentional miss of Edward since they were all already convinced that he would assault me. "Smart move. I thought you would actually hit me..." I whispered with a smile, enough for him to make out my words. "I'm not stupid. I know the repercussions of that. I have no intention of facing a penalty this soon." He replied calmly, though I could tell that the boy was a little unhinged by my calm reaction to his table slam. I didn't try avoiding his hit or blocking. My body didn't even show any sign of reflex, and that was because I knew he wasn't going to hit me from the start. "So? Are you done?" "Apologize..." Edward's teeth clenched together in annoyance. "No." "Apologize!" He demanded more violently, smacking his second hand on the desk. That didn't faze me as well. I was certain that he felt like the good guy with all that he was doing. Fighting for the feelings of everyone, especially the girl behind him. However, all of that was a mirage within his mind. In actuality, his actions so far were akin to bullying. If one was to neglect the smile I had on my face and my calm disposition, it would appear as though Edward was a bully who was forcefully infringing on my territory. I had technically done nothing wrong. Even the teacher didn't complain, but his crusader personality made him feel responsible for my supposed 'mockery' and he attempted to correct that. My interest in the boy was already waning. "If you don't apologize, then..." Placing his hand on his chest and touching the school's crest with his index finger, Edward resorted to something no one expected him to. "Jared Leonard Alphonse Sereth, I challenge you to a duel!" Everyone was stunned. 'Ahhs' and 'Oohs' poured out of their mouths as their interests peaked even more. That went to show how significant his challenge was. A Duel within Ainzlark was what regulated and permitted acts of violence between two students. It was impossible to entirely ban clashes between students in a learning environment where skirmishes were inevitable. So, this system was made to ensure a safer, more organized, clash. In simple terms, the two parties would select the location and time for their fight. They were also privileged to choose what kind of battle they wanted to engage in. For some, it would be swordfights or magic battles— Scholars preferred quizzes and problem-solving. In essence, what Edward had just done was to declare his intention to 'fight' with me legally. Anabelle quickly approached Edward, transversing her distance in moments, and held him by the arm. "Stop this, Ed!" Her voice was shrill, having a bit of desperation in it. She clearly cared about the conceited boy and didn't want him to create unnecessary trouble for himself. However... as expected, Edward ignored her concern and clung selfishly to his ideal. "I have to do it! This guy won't learn until someone puts him in his place." While it was boorish to proceed any further and the Martial Artist was a bigger fool of himself, I realized that this could be a good opportunity for me. My eyes darted at the clock and realized it was barely two minutes remaining before Neron reentered the hall. 'Ah, this guy wasted my time...' Dueling him would also eat up more time, but I soon weighed the merits and concluded that it would be worth it. "Fine, I accept your challenge. Pick the time and place, I'll pick the kind of match we'll be having." My response shocked most of the students. The Magic coursemates looked excited since they had already witnessed a fraction of my power. As for the others, they seemed to be feeling a little confident about Edward's victory. 'Well, they probably know his skills as a Martial Artist' It didn't matter, though. I was never one to choose a losing battle. There was only one possible conclusion concerning the proposed match... my overwhelming victory! "F-fine..." Edward was also flustered by my sudden acceptance, as well as my conditions. It was fair and well balanced in my

opinion, though. Allowing him to set the time and location, while I chose how we would fight was the most reasonable response. Still, he may have felt that I would resort to cheap tricks by forcing him into a Duel involving magic proficiency rather than the combat he was good at. His fears were misplaced though... I planned on playing fair— no, I could even give myself a handicap. "Let's do it at the back of the classroom, by the yard! After classes end today!" 'Fair enough...' I nodded in agreement. "As for the type of battle we'll be having...?" Edward's eyes narrowed at me with suspicion. I couldn't care less about his perception of me at this point, but it would prove to be a waste if the uncertainty of my choice made him run away. "Don't worry, it won't be detrimental to you..." After all, the true purpose of a duel was to measure the strength of both parties and judge who was superior. That would be defeated if one was at a disadvantage instead of on equal grounds. 'Of course, this only applies where the disadvantaged party loses...' My grin grew broader as Edward clicked his tongue while returning to his seat alongside Anabelle. In the situation where the disadvantaged one ended up achieving victory, it would only further establish their superiority. Overwhelming and unquestionable victory... that was my goal!