

SPELLCRAFT 781

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

Chapter 781: Hero Of The World

Everything had led to this moment.

After absorbing all the power that had been left behind for him to inherit, a path opened up for him, and he was brought to this moment in time.

Aether spoke to him, and he understood.

Everything suddenly became clear to him.

As such, even as his body became restructured, and he arose—like a flare piercing the darkness—there was no room for confusion or fear in his heart.

His countenance displayed excitement, and a broad smile filled his face, instead.

Even against the ultimate evil that threatened to end everything he knew and loved, Kuzon's glow did not fade.

"Thank you all for waiting. I'm back now." He spoke with confidence.

Silence followed his words. Confusion and shock, no doubt, confounded the people that witnessed his resurrection. However, none of that bothered him.

The only source of concern for him, at the moment, was the malevolent being that floated right in front of him.

And, just as he gave it all his focus, the Nether returned the attention.

"You are... a Midas. Hmm... Kuzon Midas. Something about you is... different."

"I'll take that as a compliment. It seems my reputation precedes me." Kuzon responded with a shrug.

"It doesn't matter. You'll end up dying anyway. Just like Jared. Just like everyone here."

"Is that so? Then I guess I'll have to do all I can to stop you!"

"You? What can you do?"

A wider smile formed on Kuzon's face, and a golden brilliance instantly shrouded him.

In a flash, his entire body turned golden, and a glorious crown floated above his head. Adorned in a gold emperor's robe, along with the many—nigh uncountable—sparks of golden light that danced around him, Kuzon's majesty was revealed.

To his left was a sceptre, and to his right, a sword. Seven stars danced beneath his feet, and everything about him brightly shone with pure golden authority.

"T-this is...!"

"Absolute Emperor's Transfiguration. It's the best I can do." Kuzon calmly spoke, his golden eyes still focused on the Nether.

Not only had his Aether reached an unimaginable degree, but his very constitution was perfect to the very core.

'[The Emperor] and [The Empress] have been fused with me. As such, I can freely affect anything around me, and nothing can affect me.'

It was the very definition of being invincible.

"Arcanas don't work on me." The Nether, almost as if reading the boy's mind, based on his smug expression, responded with a growl.

"But these aren't Arcanas. At least, not anymore. They're now a part of me. You'd better believe that they'll work." Kuzon's energy kept climbing to a dangerous degree.

"You can't beat me." The Nether kept his menacing glare intact.

At this point, the dark clouds were already dissipating. Once again, the world's descent into darkness was interrupted.

"I know. Regrettably, even this power isn't enough to get rid of you. However, I can play my part... and stall you."

"Stall me? For what?"

At this point, a thunderous roar surged from the dark entity's lips. His eyes were wide with amusement, and the very world shook with each cackle he made.

Dark thunders raged, and the heavy wind blew around like whips—his power was manifesting.

"Your heroes are dead. There is no one left in this world who can beat me. The only one who stands a chance is you, but your power is insufficient."

The Nether was right.

"I grow stronger by the moment, and I shall consume this world, becoming even more powerful. Every second you waste will only serve to make me more powerful. Stall all you wish... it shall only cater to my ends!"

Once more, he was correct.

"I will enjoy killing you, and destroying this world—even more so than I enjoyed it the last time. Hahahaha!"

The Nether kept up his laughter, drowning in the ecstasy of his assured victory.

And then—

"WHOOOOOOOOOSSSHHHHHHH!!!!<

'H-huh...?'

A gaping hole, the size of a fist, appeared on the Nether's body. Dark purple blood oozed out of the hole, causing the dark being to tremble in slight terror.

Just slight terror.

"Are you done?" Kuzon's voice echoed, his hand raised high for the Nether to see.

Sure enough, dark purple stains could be seen on his golden fist—at least, before everything dissipated as a result of the immense Aether that shrouded him.

"I see what you did..." The Nether mumbled, his wound healing instantly.

A single blow—one that transcended even the speed of time—was sent to his body. That was what injured him.

'He's fast!' Thought the dark being.

He would need to be more careful.

"M-Master!" Ciel yelled for him, but the Nether could not concern himself with her at this moment.

He had to pay close attention to his opponent. Else...

"Take care of her. I'll handle the Nether." Kuzon told his allies and they all nodded.

At this point, it was already clear to everyone just how capable he was. His speed, his strength, his overall power... everything had already transcended the bounds of humanity.

The Primordial Stage.

Kuzon was already within it, and he was not simply at the start line.

"You told me earlier that I would be stalling in vain, but you're wrong." Kuzon grinned.

As he prepared for his next strike, and the Nether also made his move to respond, the Absolute Emperor was certain that help would come.

"He's not here now, but... he'll certainly show up."

It didn't matter how long he had to stall, there was no way the heroes of this world were all gone. After all, 'he' was still alive.

In a sense, anyway.

"Until he arrives, I'll be your opponent."

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"Haaa..." Neron sighed with exhaustion.

His breathing was heavy, and his expression told the reason why.

He was tired.

Neron's body was trembling, and his usually composed facade was nowhere to be seen. Having been trapped in eternal darkness, he was now like a different person.

"You're something else, Neron..." Legris Damien emerged from the darkness, along with innumerable versions of himself.

"Even with all the restrictions, you've killed millions of my variants."

Neron's gaze did not leave the speaking Legris. The dangerous glimmer in his eyes told of a powerful, unbreakable resolve.

After a brief moment of silence, only interrupted by his ragged breath, he finally uttered his first statement in a long time.

"Yeah... and you're next."

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Chapter 782: The Awakening [Pt 1]

The legion seemed to be without end.

Time and time again, Neron had killed an infinite version of Legris' who had assaulted him. Yet, they only kept coming.

He slaughtered them in droves.

Utilizing the several Mana Cores and Sub Cores in his body, he killed them as they attacked.

Unfortunately, even he had his limits.

Time was ineffective here, so his body no longer operated on the same loop as it once did. Whenever he was damaged, he needed to use healing Magic on himself.

Infested with Nether, he had to utilize the surplus quality of Mana he had, compressing them until he had the Aether he needed. [The Hermit] was useless here, and he needed all the power he could muster to fight against the countless Legris Damien he fought.

'Each one is almost as powerful as a Grand Mage. Which makes this difficult.'

He had to keep recreating Mana Cores and Subcores as he exhausted his supply while fighting so many opponents. His Familiars were put into overdrive, and he used all the combinations in his arsenal—millions and billions—to kill the foes before him.

Yet... they never seemed to end.

"They're over a billion now, Neron. You've killed over a billion variants of me." Legris' voice echoed in the vast space.

Nether pervaded every corner, and if he relaxed for even a fraction of a moment, Neron was certain it would consume him.

"You've badly damaged this Limbo, you know?"

"Damn... the damage is so extensive that it's unbelievable."

"To think you still haven't regained your full memories, yet you're this strong."

"I really need to end you quickly."

Voices upon voices overlapped, their frustration evident in their tone.

"Then end me. What's stopping you?" Neron yelled, utilizing an immensely powerful combination of fire, wind, and lightning to destroy a variant that charged at him while making use of his many clones to keep the others at bay.

"If only it was that simple."

"Unfortunately, it's not."

"This is the most I can do."

"I can only do what I can do."

"All of these are me."

"We are one."

"I can only attack as much as possible."

"You're just too annoying!"

"Like a rat!"

"If only you weren't so strong!"

The only advantage Neron had was his quality, in opposition to their quantity.

There was strength in numbers, but when all of them gathered to fight a far more powerful foe, it ended up as a stalemate.

Legris couldn't beat Neron, but Neron couldn't kill Legris.

This dance had continued for so long that both parties had lost track of time—both of this world and the one beyond it.

"You're already getting tired."

"A few more rounds, and I'll win."

"Your body can't handle anymore."

"Whether I kill you, or you kill yourself, it doesn't matter."

"In the end..."

"... I'll be the ultimate victor!"

"I'll finally rid myself of you, Neron!"

"Hahahaha!!!"

This burst of laughter pervaded the dark expanse, and it brought about something unusual from Neron.

"Keke..."

A chuckle?!

Neron was now still. He no longer resisted, but he simply stood in a single position.

And... he was laughing!

"You're laughing?"

"In this situation?"

"What's so funny?"

Several Legrises lunged at Neron, refusing to miss this opportunity, but they were so easily blown away by the immense surge of Aether that burst from his body.

"Hahaha!"

"You're being so wasteful of your Aether!"

"How much do you have?"

"You're running low, aren't you?"

"Finally given up?"

"Come on, say something!"

Neron's chuckle only grew louder as Legris taunted him. Both voices overlapped until one finally overpowered the other due to its sheer volume.

Soon, no one spoke or moved.

Only Neron's laughter filled the dark abyss. It went on and on and on—echoing like the sound of a ripple in a boundless well.

Then... it slowly came to a halt.

"Haa... Legris..." Neron's voice still contained hints of exhaustion, but his relieved smile seemed to indicate otherwise.

It was common sense to assume that he was in trouble, but why did it feel like it was the exact opposite?

"I've already gotten what I wanted. It took some time, thanks to all the interference you caused, but I finally got the hang of it."

Legris—no, all of the Legrises—felt confused.

"What are you talking about?" They all chorused.

"Well, you know me, Legris... old friend. I hate losing."

What did that have to do with anything? Was Neron stalling? Legris knew something was amiss, but he couldn't place his finger on it.

It felt like... he was missing something.

"[The Hermit] is useless here because the concept of time doesn't exist. I can use Aether just fine, and I can perform other actions just fine. But certain elements, like space, gravity, and so many other things are meaningless here." Neron said.

He must have deciphered all of these things amid the battle.

Then again, what of it?

What was the relevance of these observations? Ultimately, he was going to die here.

"It would seem as though I'm out of cards, Legris. Or... am I?"

Suddenly, a card manifested right in front of Neron, shrouding him in grey-like energy. The glow was dull and small, but it slowly began to have more lustre... more colour!

"N-NO!" By the time Legris realized it, the process had been initiated.

It was already too late!

"NO WAY!"

"YOU.... NO!"

"HOW COULD I HAVE...?!"

This was what he had been missing this whole time. This was the error he had made.

Legris had always assumed that [The Hermit] was Neron's Trump Card. That was how it had always been. How could he have expected a second Arcana?

And this wasn't just another Arcana. It was the very one that could unravel everything!

It was—

"[The Fool]" Neron smiled as the glow grew brighter than ever.

"It was a close call, but... I'm finally ready."

Legris' eyes bulged in desperation and shock as everything within him pounded in fear.

Pure, unbridled fear!

"STOP HIM!" All the Legrises yelled, and they instantly charged towards Neron in their droves.

But, as was mentioned earlier...

"Hahaha, well... I guess that's one way of putting it."

"You bastard! You and Ciel tricked me! You... why...?!"

"It was unavoidable. I don't care either way, but apparently, she's the one who wanted this outcome."

What exactly could he benefit from this chaos? Ciel, the madwoman who was in love with the Nether, was reunited with her Master. But what of Legris?

"W-why...?"

"Well, the work is done. Sooner or later, I'll get what I want. It's a shame, though. This world is doomed..."

What did he want?

"N-no..."

"Yes. The Nether is here, after all. It's only a matter of time."

Neron could only shudder and wither away as he felt even more despair.

He cursed himself, regretting everything he had ever done. How he had joined the Nether Cult and rose to the First Seat.

How he'd participated in the massacre of the Midas Race.

How he'd helped gather all the Arcanas to bring about the very end of everything.

The world. Existence. Himself.

Everything was going to end!

"I..."

Millions of thoughts echoed in his mind. However, out of the many emotions that consumed him, two remained the strongest.

Regret... and HATRED!

Neron raised his head and his pure black eyes slowly showed a glimmer of light.

"... I won't allow it!"

Suddenly, the entire area was enveloped in white light, and the shock was enough to send ripples of distortions to every corner of the world.

He finally caught the attention of both the Nether and Legris Damien—both of whom reacted with immediate precision.

Neron had now become a threat!

And not just any kind of threat. It was the only threat that could stop what was happening—the only kind that existed in the world.

It was the power of the Singularity, Neron Kaelid!

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"After I killed you, I defeated the Nether, and orchestrated all of this." The majestic Neron spoke with a smile.

"I admit, it's a bit elaborate, but... what can I say? It was the only way."

Legris—all of them—could no longer hide the emotion that accompanied the sight of Neron's awakening.

"But now... I'm counting on Jared to stop the Nether. After all, that's the reason why he's in this world at this time."

With that said, Neron's focus went to the horde of Legrises that existed in this realm. The time of reckoning was already at hand, and it was inevitable.

Everything had come to the closing act.

"All I need to do is take care of the cleanup."

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Chapter 784: The Reunion Of True Love

A place was shown.

It transcended all forms of description. Words weren't sufficient enough to encompass the nature of this expanse.

Before the concepts of colour, shape, size, and other forms of imagery existed, this realm already did. Dwelling out of such bounds, it remained.

In this place that had no explanation, a young man stood.

He had black hair and his likeness was that of an adult male. He had blue eyes, and his face was something to behold. His tall stature and his well-balanced physique would make him a catch anywhere.

However, this young man appeared troubled.

Why wouldn't he be?

He was in a place that even he could not explain. He could not explain where he was, and neither could he comprehend how he got there. Confusion, mixed with a bit of fright, enveloped him like a blanket.

Thus, he stood still, waiting for answers,

"Where am I?"

No one responded.

"What am I?"

Answers did not come.

"Who... am I?"

He received silence once again.

In this state of confusion, completely overwhelmed by everything he couldn't understand, he seemed to be doomed to an eternity of madness.

However...

"W-who's there?"

... Salvation arrived.

A woman appeared at a distance, instantly drawing his attention.

Her silky white hair and violet eyes resonated within him, and her smile sent shivers travelling through his body.

Her body was as elegant as her face—pure and unsullied—and she stood beautifully still, watching him keenly.

"W-who... are you...?" He asked.

Something told him he knew the woman. He could feel something inside him long for her, and he could feel many twisted knots unravelling. However, he still couldn't recognize her, or what she meant to him.

Then, she started to move.

Slowly, she walked towards him.

With each step she took, a longing—no, an unbearable thirst—assailed him.

More than anything, he wished she would come quickly. He wished to hold her and tell her words... even though he didn't know what to say.

"W-who... are you...?" Was all he could say, until she finally stood right in front of him.

Now mere inches apart, he craved her even more. One more step forward and their bodies would clash, but he could not move. He could not touch her.

He could only watch.

"W-who are—"

"You know who I am." The woman's voice teased his ears, and her hand caressed his cheek.

The sweet sensation of her words offered him comfort, but her touch made him desire more. This desperation drove him further into insanity.

It was a feeling he could not explain.

The woman had told him that he knew who she was. If that was indeed true, then...

"W-who am I?"

A most precious expression filled her face as she smiled so beautifully at him. It caused something in his chest to race and race and jump with excitement.

He wanted it to end, yet he wanted more of it.

"Lewis Griffith. You are Lewis Griffith." Her sweet voice echoed in his ears, and suddenly, memories surged up in his head.

He felt the sensation of countless images overlapping and sticking into his head. However, something about everything felt incomplete.

"You are Jared Leonard."

More memories emerged from deep inside him. Memories of his new life kept popping into his head until there was no longer any hidden memory.

They all returned.

"Now, tell me... do you know who I am?"

At this point, Jared—also identified as Lewis—nodded. A smile formed on his trembling lips and his hair slightly moved in a wavy line as he nodded.

"Who am I?"

He felt something hot stream from both his eyes. They flowed down his cheeks, dropping from his jaw. His face felt hot, and he felt like his heart would burst.

After so many centuries, he was finally seeing her again.

"Emilia... it's really you."

Her long white hair flowed, as though being brushed by the wind, revealing her pointy Elf ears.

"Yes, Lewis. It's me."

Standing face to face with her, after so many years, there seemed to be nothing left for him to say. Or rather, there seemed to be so many things to say that his mind was too muddled, leaving him with no words to express himself.

He had never felt so frustrated.

"Emilia... I'm..." After trying so hard to initiate a conversation, but failing woefully, Lewis could only arrive at one conclusion.

"... I'm sorry."

More tears fell from his eyes as he stared into her deep violet eyes. It oozed with so much compassion and love that it broke his heart and healed it, over and over again, the more he looked.

"I... I made a mistake, and... I shouldn't have... I should have returned. I should have come back for you... for our child. I should have... I didn't... I couldn't... you..."

"Shhh..."

Suddenly, her finger touched his trembling lips, and he found himself growing silent, sombre, and calm.

"I understand."

No, how could she accept his apology so easily? Lewis could not comprehend this... this level of forgiveness.

He knew who Emilia was. He loved how pure she had been, even when she had been alive. But, how could she hold such a degree of affection now?

"B-but it's my fault you died... and our child... its all my fault, and I—"

"How long have you had to carry these thoughts?"

Her question hit him like a sledgehammer.

"Did you blame yourself for everything, even in death? Do you consider yourself irredeemable? Undeserving of forgiveness?"

Lewis wanted to speak, but he truly did not know what words to utter. What could he tell her? What could he say?

"I... I..."

"Your heart's desires were heard when your soul was brought here. There was one person whom you loved more than anything—that one person was sent to welcome you and return you to yourself..." Violet's smile widened as she drew even closer to him.

"That person is me. Aether has sent me here for a reason, Lewis. And that is because you love me more than anyone or anything else."

His eyes widened instantly. He'd never realized it, but her words rang true in the depths of his thoughts.

"And that is enough for me. That is why I understand. Because... I also love you more than anyone or anything else."

More tears streamed down his eyes, and Lewis could not stop them this time. His entire being melted in Emilia's presence, and he felt like he would drown in the rush of emotions he felt.

"That is why you need to stop blaming yourself, Lewis. Do you understand?"

Her eyes were moist.

It seemed like she was in pain, just by watching him.

That broke him more than anything. There was no way he could cause Emilia pain—not again!

"I understand. Thank you... for forgiving me." He smiled.

"Of course. I love you, Lewis."

"And I lo—" He halted mid-statement.

A rush of guilt coursed through Lewis, and he suddenly remembered everything that had led up to this moment.

It was regrettable, but...

'I can't say those words. Not anymore.'

"I understand." Emilia's voice echoed in his ears, her smile encouraging him.

And then, before he knew it... he too was smiling.

"Thank you, Emilia."

For a moment, they stared at each other. It seemed like an eternity was encapsulated in a single moment, but neither of them let go of the other's gaze.

Until finally...

"I have so many questions," Lewis whispered.

After spending an ideal amount of time here, he could no longer resist the dozens of gnawing questions that plagued his curious mind.

"Where are we? What is going on here? And finally... WHO ARE YOU?"

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Chapter 785: Within The Root [Pt 1]

"... Who are you?"

As my voice echoed in the indescribably vast expanse, the white-haired Elf in front of me kept smiling. Her clear face depicted no surprise or offence.

She honestly looked just like Emilia. However...

"What do you mean?"

"You're not Emilia. Something doesn't feel right." I muttered, taking a few steps back.

I noticed that I could now move my body properly, but now wasn't the time to be focused on such trivialities.

"So, please tell me the truth. What's going on here? Where exactly is here? And who are you?"

I was sure I died at the hands of the Nether. When all my memories returned, I remembered how the Nether destroyed my body, soul, and all the other duplicates I had made.

With my soul destroyed, I wasn't even supposed to exist. Yet, here I was talking to someone who claimed to be Emilia, in a place I didn't know of.

Everything felt off.

"I see. You have an incredible perception. Or, rather, maybe I made an error in my presentation of your lover..."

She finally admitted to being an imposter. That brought relief, but at the same time, pain. I had truly wanted to be wrong. I had genuinely wanted her to have been the Emilia I knew and loved.

That way... perhaps all I had said thus far would have been real.

"You didn't make any mistakes. I just felt that something was off. Besides, the very fact that you didn't fumble about was a major indication that you aren't her. People aren't perfect... and neither was Emilia."

"I see. Well said."

This lady in front of me didn't seem evil. She also didn't seem to have any terrible intentions. Something within me felt attracted to her, and I honestly felt that she did not mean any harm. However, how could I trust someone I didn't even know?

Besides, if I was still alive, then—

"Can I return to the normal world? I died, and... the people there need my help! Since my soul hasn't been destroyed, then—"

"Calm yourself." Before I even realized it, her hand was on my shoulder.

I didn't even know how she got to me so quickly. It felt as though she had always been there. In fact, when I looked around, it felt as though she was all around me too.

I was honestly too puzzled to comprehend what was going on.

"There's no need to hurry. I know everything that is happening. Besides, I have sent a friend of yours to keep the Nether occupied at this moment. You know the young Midas, don't you?"

"Kuzon is alive too?!" I burst out in surprise, my eyes bulging.

"Indeed. And he's doing a good job at holding the Nether at bay."

My eyes widened even more as she made that statement. My chest tightened upon hearing that Kzon was holding off an entity as powerful as the Nether.

'Just how powerful is Kuzon?'

"I will decide on whether to return you once we are done with this conversation. You will make a choice, and depending on that choice, there will be a consequence."

I could understand her words, but without knowing her identity, or whatever this place was, it was difficult connecting what she was saying to anything coherent.

"You asked me who I was, didn't you? Well, I am Emilia, and at the same time, I am not. I am the culmination of every soul and entity in this world. I am this universe, this reality—The root of the tree of this reality."

As I heard this, more memories flashed into my head—especially my conversations with Solomon, and the discoveries I had made. The more the memories flooded me, the closer I came to the truth.

"You know who I am." She said.

As I looked at her, our eyes connecting in silent understanding, I nodded slowly. It all made sense now.

"You are Aether. The very essence of the world."

In response, she nodded calmly.

"Indeed. Emilia's soul is a part of me. So is yours, and everyone else that exists in this world. I am all of your essences, and everything that has ever existed in this reality rose through my birth."

In essence, she was god itself!

"You're currently in the Root. This is the starting point of this reality—where everything branches out. Some call it the core of existence, while others call it the world's soul. This is the pivotal point of everything that springs forth... my Domain."

As she spoke, she took a step back, and suddenly, majestic lights were projected from her. Golden and white fragments of light, like fireflies, danced all around her.

Finally, her real form materialised in front of me.

Aether had a flowing white gown, with bright golden embroidery around it. Her skin was pure white, and her hair was bright white. Her features were mostly human-like, but this level of pristine god-like beauty placed her beyond anything I had ever seen.

She was beyond transcendent in everything.

As she floated, her gown flowed like clouds of white mist, and golden sparks covered her body. Pure energy—unfathomable—flowed through her and all around her.

"This is who I am." Her voice, now taking on an indescribably pleasant tone, teased my ears once again as she smiled kindly at me.

I was dumbstruck, at this point.

"I have also told you where you are. All that's left is... what is going on."

She was correct. However, something else was gnawing at me. Something that was quite selfish and not really pertinent to the matter on ground, but my mind could not rest regardless.

"You seek to know about the wellbeing of your lover, Emilia." Aether's voice interrupted my conflicting thoughts.

I wanted to deny it, but considering I was in the presence of a literal god, I decided against it. Instead, I admitted to my selfishness.

"Yes. Yes, I do."

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Chapter 786: Within The Root [Pt 2]

"Emilia is now a part of me. Every dead soul returns to me. They become one with me, and I use all of their materials and processed information to produce more souls. It's a cycle of life."

Aether's voice was fluid and smooth, calming me with every word she uttered.

"Certain races and individuals receive various properties and allocations based on the requirements of dispensation. However, it is up to my discretion, based on the balance of this reality, to allocate it to the souls as is necessary."

Everything she said raised questions about existence within me, but I saved them for later.

"So... Emilia is..."

"Gone. In a sense. However, for her, she's one with me. And that simply means eternal bliss in my bosom."

I smiled, nodding slowly. In the end, it seemed that everything I had experienced with Aether was simply a one-sided charade.

"I know everything about Emilia since she is a part of me. Everything I told you is what she would have said. I took her form because I wanted to better explain things to you and put your unstable soul at ease."

"I-I see..."

"When you die, and become one with me, you'll see her again. In a dream-like paradise, forever."

I understood that she was trying to be comforting, and this was mostly the product of a perverse human mind, but the way she put those words sounded a little weird.

"You're right. Thank you."

Aether was comforting me, and I genuinely appreciated it. The fact that I could see Emilia again, and be with her, was enough for me.

"One thing, though. Emilia would want you to keep living. Not to be constrained to the past, but to freely embrace the future. I know you think she was miserable after you broke up, but she eventually got over everything and lived happily with her daughter and family. She didn't die sad or broken. She was fulfilled."

"Thank you for telling me all of this." I smiled, fighting back the tears that had already begun to form in my eyes.

"You're welcome."

We both stared at each other for some time, in what I could only describe as a necessary moment of silence.

She recognized that I needed the time, and she gave it to me.

Until, finally...

"I'm ready."

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"You were brought here for a reason. Even though the Nether destroyed your Soul—and all the copies—I saved one before it was too late." Aether began.

"H-how?"

"You saved a backup within some of the Arcanas. All Arcanas are connected to me, so it only follows that I can use that link to transport them directly to me."

My eyes widened in surprise. Now that I thought of it, [Strength] granted me a steady supply of Aether that had to come from somewhere.

'So it was directly linked to her!'

"I had to cut off my connection with the others that were consumed by the Nether before it became too late. In any case, that's how I brought you here."

If it weren't for Aether, I would be utterly destroyed. Words could not express my gratitude.

"Your soul was unstable, though, due to the shock. I had to return it to its prime form by resonating with you. That way, you returned to yourself."

Understanding all that she told me, I realized the reason for all her actions. Even if I was angry that she had impersonated Emilia—which I wasn't—I could now understand why.

"Your Soul is now in a different form, thanks to my interference. In the past, it had both the qualities of Mana and Miasma, but after stabilizing it, it has taken on the form of pure Aether."

She explained to me how Mana and Miasma were simply impure versions of Aether, and how Aether was their natural, original, and apex stages.

"Like a pool of water that has become muddled with foreign elements, so is Aether that has taken on the form of Mana, Miasma or both."

Apparently, only Singularities possessed pure Aether Souls—or those who had attained enlightenment and rid themselves of all the excesses in the soul.

"But, I am a Singularity, right? I didn't have a pure Aether Soul." I objected. "Also, if all Souls possess Mana, why are there so many inept people? I could never crack that puzzle until I died. Why is that?"

Aether gave a slight chuckle—one that rang of understanding, and not pride.

"Indeed. The reason for your status as a Singularity goes beyond the innate nature of your Soul. Rather, it has to do with its state."

I didn't understand the difference, but it seemed I was on the verge of being enlightened.

"My power still flowed through your Soul despite its nature. That's why you survived till now. Besides, there's another reason... and that's the foreign Aether that seals your Soul from interference or observation."

I was more confused at this point.

"These factors brought about your Reincarnation and are what makes you a Singularity." She concluded her response to my first question.

However, there was still the issue of being inept.

"Inept people experience dissonance between their Soul and body. You harness the power of your Soul through your body—whether consciously or unconsciously." Aether began.

"By default, the contents of your Soul begin to leak into your body, spreading all around it to make Mana or Miasma particles. In rare instances, when the Soul is purely Aether, the energy that is released will be Aether."

Just as one didn't need to control their blood circulation or other processes that occurred inside the body, all of this happened naturally.

"The Core is also formed naturally, and it continues to progress that way, eventually leading to an Awakening." Aether added.

Unfortunately, it seemed the inept people were simply incapable of this process. It made me wonder why so many Inepts existed, though.

And Aether's answer to that was what I didn't expect.

"Balance. Oversaturation of power leads to destruction. Underdevelopment of it, however, leads to devolution. As such, there has to be a middle ground." Aether began.

"Those who possess this innate ability are privileged. Those who do not, are meant to serve as a balance."

I understood all she said, even though it felt a little frustrating. If she was in charge of choosing the routes, then why...

"Why didn't you make me capable of Magic? I would have been able to do so much more in my first life! The things I could have done... the developments I could have brought about... they would have been so much more!"

It made sense that I would be among the chosen ones if such a system existed, right?

"That is precisely why I chose not to. The world is like an endless stream, and I ensure the flow is not disrupted. Advancement in Magic at that point would have created a tidal wave in a calm stream of water." She replied.

In simple terms, it had been too dangerous to grant me the gift of Magic.

"For the sake of order and balance, you could not be allowed to possess Mana."

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Chapter 787: The Truth Behind Reincarnation

"B-but—"

"You also hid certain discoveries from the world because you knew it wasn't ready. You must have understood..."

I could no longer deny her words once she brought that up. Since she was the essence of the world itself, her reasons must have been justifiable and beyond just me.

"So why was I reincarnated? Wouldn't that still yield the same result? My actions in this new life have caused tidal waves, or have they not?" I asked with curiosity— and perhaps a bit of skepticism.

If her true aim was balance, she would not go out of her way to return me to the stream of the world, now would she?

"A tidal wave is preferable towards the end of the stream, don't you think?"

The end? Did she mean the Nether?

"There is a lot you do not know, Lewis Griffith. It is now time for you to find out." Aether spoke, drawing closer to me.

I felt a heavy weight suddenly bind my insides, but at the same time, I felt an unravelling like nothing I had ever experienced before.

"Your reincarnation and the current threat that seeks to destroy this world are not unrelated. They are tied together by a single factor."

This was it! After so long wandering in the darkness of ignorance, I was finally going to get answers! Suspense swelled within me, and the weight slowly began to fade away.

I listened, both curious and anxious about what she would utter next.

"The mould that holds all of this together is Neron Kaelid. He is the reason behind your reincarnation—the cause of this new reality."

The moment Aether said this, my mind went blank. I couldn't even think for the first couple of seconds.

"W-what...?"

After a brief moment of paralyzing shock, I remained locked in an endless swirl of conflicting emotions and clashing perceptions.

After considering what Aether said, and the implications they had, I arrived at the only conclusion I could reach.

"T-that... makes no sense!"

The more I thought of it, the less plausible the idea seemed—not like I was in a perfectly sound state after getting a bombshell like that dropped on me.

"You say so because you do not comprehend the reasons and causes that have led up to this point."

Aether most likely knew what she was talking about. After all, she was basically a god, and compared to her knowledge of everything, I was too ignorant to debate with her.

However, if what she said was true, that meant Neron deceived me.

"He acted like he had no idea. He completely... no... I can't just..."

Neron was one of the very few people whom I had grown to trust. He was capable, dependable, and actually trustworthy. Our joint passion for magic and our aligned interests made us good friends—even beyond our relationship as teacher and student.

When I was with him, it didn't feel like I was with a senior or junior. It just felt wholly natural.

"If he knew—no, if he caused my Reincarnation from the start then..." Everything I knew about Neron was practically null.

How could I accept that?

"I know it is difficult to accept, but it is true. Neron was the one who caused your Soul to flow to the body of Jared Leonard, though I helped him out."

The more Aether revealed, the more it became apparent that she was willing to break the rules she earlier established—particularly the one about balance and waves.

If Neron was as powerful and skilled as she said, then why was he gifted with so much logic-defying power? I never really understood why he was so powerful.

I was a Reincarnated genius, who used my past memories to improve myself. Plus, this Singularity status of mine allowed me to go even further into the art of Magic, allowing me to surpass my past self.

However, what of Neron? Why was he so special?

"Neron is a Singularity." Aether revealed to me, causing another leap in my heart.

The more I heard, the less anything made sense to me.

"No, it's not as simple as that. He's not just a Singularity. Perhaps it's more accurate to call him the Original Singularity."

More confusion caused my head to hurt.

"So, you're saying... The reason I'm here—the reason I'm a Singularity at all—is because of Neron? And the reason he was able to affect all of this is because he is a Singularity?"

"Correct." Aether responded to my almost exasperated summary.

It seemed I would need a lot more explanation than I currently had. Aether must have realized this since she gave me a kind smile and nodded gently.

"I understand how confused you must be right now. However, I promise you, there is a reason for all of this. If you are ready, I will reveal all of it to you this instant."

She didn't need to hear my answer to know what it would be. Based on my expression alone, my desire for the truth was already pretty obvious.

"Neron was chosen by me as a Singularity—just as I chose Merlin all those years ago. He was chosen to be my avatar—to serve as my representative for what was to come."

If I was to guess, I would say the 'thing' to come was the Nether.

"You see, I am only the essence that flows through all things in this tree of existence. I cannot actively participate unless there is an agent through which I can act." She added.

I had pretty much already guessed this. The fact that Aether was so powerful, and she didn't stop the Nether Cult from achieving their goals, made that clear.

"Unfortunately, many things went wrong, and the plan derailed from its original model. To atone, and restore order, Neron had to change everything and select a new avatar. He chose you."

"M-me? Why? What happened? Why couldn't he do it himself? What went wrong?" More and more questions swirled around me.

Thankfully, it seemed that Aether was planning on answering all of them.

"The truth, Lewis, is that this world has already been destroyed, once before. Everything in this plane of existence should not exist."

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Chapter 788: The World That Was

In the past, the world was plunged into chaos because of an otherworldly entity known as the Nether.

This being contradicted the very nature of Aether, and it corrupted everything it touched. As a result of this, it brought unstoppable darkness and destruction to the world.

All hope seemed to be lost!

However, thanks to the bravery and sacrifice of the heroes of legends and founders of Magic—the Apostles of Aether—the Nether was cast out of the world and sealed away forever.

Order was restored to the world, and the nefarious plans of the evil one were foiled.

But, how could they know... that this threat would return once more?

One equally powerful being, however, was well aware of this!

Aether.

She knew of the return of the Nether, so she chose yet another for the task. The one whose Soul had been blessed from his conception, and whose thoughts far exceeded the realm of reason.

Neron Kaelid.

As one who oversaw the existence of the world, she could see all the branches that sprung from the same stem that came from the Root. She could observe all the realities that could spring forth from every singular point.

She could see the variants in her tree of reality.

Unfortunately, there was something she could not control—even if she could see it.

'Free will'

The fact that a person was bound by choice and they could choose the path they would ultimately embark on. In that vein, her new avatar could as well choose the path of evil or that of good.

But what did that matter anyway?

For every good choice he would make, there existed yet another where he would not make that choice. As long as that likelihood existed, she could prune the undesired choices and ensure the right reality became the central stem that connected the many branches of her reality.

However, there existed a major oversight—a problem even she didn't perceive. It existed beyond even the reason of a primordial entity such as herself.

It was an anomaly!

The Singularity known as Neron suddenly became beyond her reach. Something interfered with her supervision and the little control she had over the events.

At a particular juncture, Aether became unsure of the safety of her reality.

And then, the great tragedy occurred!

The world ended, and everything she sought to protect came into ruin.

It would have been preferable if there had been a reality where Neron had taken a different path that led to the world's salvation, but she could find none.

The whole tree had been in the process of being consumed by Nether, and it had been too late to cut off the infection as it had already spread past the branches—reaching the stem and heading for the root.

The more the Nether consumed, the more powerful he would be. The more powerful he was, the weaker she would become.

It had only been a matter of time before she was completely immersed in the corruption of the very opposite of her purity.

To Aether's surprise, however, the very one who had brought doom to this world was the same one who saved it!

Neron Kaelid actually rose up and utilized his connection with Aether to face off against the Nether—defeating him and halting his advance on the tree of existence.

Unfortunately, it had been too late.

The damage had been done. Everything that was wrought had taken so much toll that it had already swept a huge portion of Neron's universe into despair.

Still, it hadn't been the end.

Neron Kaelid utilized his Original—no, his Primeval—Magic, and completely reversed the state of the world.

He rebooted existence, dating everything back to the very beginning of his conception.

However, for reasons known only to him, he chose to erase his memories and seal away the powers of his potential future. He chose to alter the choices he made in the past and instead made unconscious alterations in this new reality.

As a result, things became very different in this new world.

However, that had still not been enough to stop the disaster to come—neither had it been enough to completely repel the cause of his initial deviation.

And... that was why he'd had to bring forth another element.

An element that would completely alter his destiny—as well as the fate of the world.

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"Of every single soul in history, he chose you, Lewis. He was quite confident that you would be perfect for the role of a Singularity." Aether explained.

Honestly, after hearing everything, I was too awestruck to speak. I had no idea Neron had carried such a burden and that even he did not know the effects of his past—no, rather his future—actions.

"Why would he choose me?" I asked in a whisper.

"It is as you said before. No one is as gifted in the art of studying Magic and as passionate in the art as you. You might consider yourself similar to Neron, but you have no idea how different you two are. He knew he couldn't fulfil it alone, so he chose you."

Despite all the overwhelming information, I finally understood something crucial. Something I had been feeling for some time now.

'I am not that special. But at the same time, I am.'

Even though I hadn't been chosen by the essence of the world, I was the one selected to save it—to save everyone.

It was something I had to accept, despite all my questions and reservations.

"May I ask more questions? It's about everything you told me, but less about my Reincarnation."

Aether nodded slowly, her face a gentle stream of light.

Based on her tale from earlier, the stakes seemed much higher than the effects of the Nether on my world. It seemed far more serious than that.

The Tree of Existence—what exactly did that mean?

"These branches you referred to in your story. They're what exactly?"

I had to know!

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Chapter 789: The World That Is

What did Aether mean when she called herself the essence of the world?

What was the Root of existence?

And finally, this great tree, and its many branches... what exactly did they represent?

These questions kept swirling around in my mind as I tried to wrap my head around the truth about Neron, and the world that was.

"Your reality is a stream that flows into a much larger sea that is connected to several others. There are immeasurable realities different from yours. Other than this world of yours—even beyond your universe—there exists other dimensions that are parallel to the one you know."

"W-what?!" My mind nearly exploded upon hearing all of this.

According to Aether, we were just one of a nigh-infinite system of existence—a single branch in the tree of reality.

It was fascinating—a new concept I had never even considered in all of my life. This truth contained infinite possibilities.

There was now so much to explore. The unknown seemed much deeper than I thought. It seemed I hadn't even begun to scratch the surface of Magic at all.

This had to be something one could only see when they had access to the Root!

"This... this is..."

Wasn't this supposed to fill me with despair? The very idea that I was nowhere close to solving the secrets of the world? That I was simply something as insignificant as a speck in a branch that expanded into infinity.

Wasn't that supposed to be depressing? Yet...!

"... THIS IS AMAZING! I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!"

I couldn't help but wonder just how diverse or completely new the concepts of these realities would be.

However, with these many thoughts came another sharp realization. No, it was more like an inquisition—a blot that existed in the image I pictured.

"So, this Nether... he comes from where exactly?" I asked.

The branches that Aether spoke of were all connected to her. She seemed to be the origin of pretty much everything that existed.

But, what about the Nether?

"I never said there was a single tree, did I?"

My eyes bulged the instant Aether said this. Did this mean that—!

"There are two primordial trees that spring from Origin. The tree of Life—the one I govern—and that of Corruption—which is ruled by the Nether.

Life and Death.

Good and Evil.

Light and Darkness.

Just as these elements contradict each other, our trees cannot coexist, and are in always conflict."

In awe, I silently listened. My mind was ever expanding to this amazing truth, but it seemed the subject weighed heavily on Aether.

The smile on her face was nowhere to be seen.

"The Nether Realm of existence is fundamentally different from this one. As a result, we are always—and should always remain—separate."

It seemed the Nether didn't think that was enough. Based on what he said before I was killed, he wanted more.

"The Nether seeks to consume me and finally reach Origin—the source from which we both sprung out." Aether gently spoke, her voice taking on an immensely serious tone.

However, my curiosity could not stop there.

"What exists in the Origin? Why does he seek it?"

"@ll T%!^&\$"

I could not properly hear or comprehend the words Aether said. It seemed completely beyond me. Still...

"What did you say?"

"@ll T%!^&\$" She repeated herself, but I still could not hear her words.

"You do not possess enough capacity to hear such truth that exists beyond the primordial. The Origin is far deeper and older than even the trees. You cannot know it."

Even though I wanted to have more knowledge, it appeared that I was bound by my own limitations. Knowing more than I did was impossible.

"Any more questions?" Aether asked gently.

She must have sensed my realization concerning the futility of my curiosity. However, the fact that Aether was still willing to answer some of my inquiries proved that there were things I was allowed to know.

And currently, there were two things I was extremely curious about!

"The original owner of this body... what happened to him in the original timeline? The one Neron erased?"

My family was very happy to have a brilliant child like me, but... I wanted to know what would have happened if I never got reincarnated.

"Jared Leonard originally wouldn't have had any talent in Magic. His constitution barely allowed him to form his Mana Core until he became twelve. Even then, he struggled to cast Spells and it caused a lot of friction within the Leonard household since they needed an heir who could utilize Magic.

It also caused a dispute between the Alphonse household since the arranged marriage between both families had been for the sake of producing an offspring that could practice Magic and elevate the Leonard family's name..."

Once Aether was done narrating this body's future, I realized that my reincarnation was truly a blessing to my family. Knowing that alone brought me great ease and satisfaction.

My mother and my father... they were helped by Neron's actions.

"One more question." I spoke up, my heart pounding a little more than usual.

After all, this was something I had been mulling over ever since Neron was brought up. Since this was a new timeline, there was someone I wanted to know about—most especially his activities in the past.

That person...

"Legris Damien. What kind of person was he before Neron changed the world?"

... I needed to know everything about him!

So far, he was the most persistent person I had ever faced. He also seemed to be popping into my mind, and the many things I found out about the Netherlore household—as well as the Nether Cult—seemed to involve him in some ways.

Last, but not least, he managed to trap Neron somewhere.

There was no way he was one ordinary character! At least, by knowing who he had been in the past, I would be able to determine—

"I do not know."

Aether's words stopped my thoughts right in their tracks, and I let out a whisper of disbelief.

"H-huh...?"

This was a being who knew the secrets of existence—who explained primordial truths to me a few moments ago. Yet...

... Legris Damien's identity seemed to evade her?

"The man called Legris Damien... I have no idea who he is."

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Chapter 790: The Final Point

"I-I don't understand."

Aether was practically the god of all that existed in this whole tree of reality. If I were to use a word to coin it, it would be a multiverse.

She knew of past events and occurrences that would take place in the future. The branching timelines and alternate realities were all within her scope.

She saw everything!

"Yet you don't know his identity? What does that mean?"

"It is exactly as I have said. I bear the records of all that has existed and should exist in this tree of existence. It is both puzzling and perplexing that the one called Legris Damien is not a part of that. Though, there appears to be a plausible reason."

From what she said, I was already getting to the same conclusion.

"He's not from this tree of existence, is he?"

"Correct. He most likely originates from the tree of Nether. As a result, he is not within my scope of existence."

Aether knew Nether because of their conflicting relationship. However, it was understandable that she wouldn't know the people who dwelled within his reality.

"Do you remember when I spoke about an anomaly occurring with Neron? How he suddenly reached a point that even I could not handle? I believe it is related to Legris Damien."

My eyes widened as I took in this information. If she was right, then Legris was far more dangerous than I initially thought.

"He managed to disturb the natural order of things and it's somewhat because of him that Neron's path became so murky?"

"Indeed. I can only comprehend occurrences and characters within my tree of existence. Once corruption sets in, my senses are unable to perceive them and my power fails. Legris must have interfered with the natural order of things. The how and why is beyond me."

Aether appeared distraught—like how anyone would be if they had a little insect constantly pestering them while being unable to detect or stop it.

Legris had become a plague that continued to fester as a result of his anomalous existence in her world.

"But how did he manage to get here? The Nether required all the Arcanas to breach this place, didn't he? So how did Legris achieve it?" I muttered, rubbing my chin in confusion.

I knew Aether also had no clue, but it was something very curious indeed. I couldn't shake off the feeling that it was something close, yet far from my comprehension.

"Lewis Griffith, be cautious around him. If he was able to corrupt Neron, then surely the danger he poses still exists." Aether gave me a word of caution, and I heeded.

Though, a question constantly pressed me.

"If Neron erased the previous timeline, doesn't that mean everything is reset? Doesn't that include Legris Damien's memories? If we calculate that, then—"

"I'm afraid your reasoning is false. Neron only affects the time in this tree of existence. Time functions differently in the Nether World. It also has different sets of principles for its inhabitants." Aether interrupted my reasoning.

"Primordial entities like me, who exist beyond concepts like time, are not subject to it. The Nether is another exception to this law—though, he currently does not possess his full authority now that he has crossed over."

According to what Aether told me, she and the Nether were not subject to the laws in their respective realms. However, the way it applied to people like Legris astounded me.

"Neron reset everything in this world's timeline, but that has no effect on a being that is originally not from this world. Legris Damien's memories were most definitely not erased."

"If that's the case, then why would Neron let him be? Why can't Neron kill Legris and get it over with? Why would Neron erase his own memories?"

Aether shook her head slowly, smiling at me softly.

"You have killed him before, haven't you? Yet Legris always seems to appear. Neron also destroyed him in the future timeline. Yet, he never seems to completely vanish. Somehow, Legris has attained something akin to perpetual immortality."

Even when he was killed, he returned. If someone as powerful as Neron couldn't kill him, then I was beginning to get scared.

"You don't need to fret, Lewis. It is not your burden to worry about Legris Damien. That duty has already been assumed by Neron. Your duty is more immediate." Aether interrupted my thoughts with her soothing tone.

"I see. The Nether, huh? I have to defeat him. That's why I'm here."

"Indeed."

"H-how...?"

The answer still eluded me. If Neron was certain I could defeat that monster, surely he had a way to execute it. Currently, I was nowhere close to that monstrous entity in power, or anything else.

"By becoming a vessel."

"H-huh?"

"Become my vessel. Just as the Nether has a vessel that allows him to manifest himself in this reality, I can select an avatar to represent me and utilize my power."

I understood instantly. So this was what the plan had been all along. Using Aether to fight Nether. There was one issue, though.

"Can I handle the power?"

"It seems you understand the implications." Aether answered.

Of course, I did. Even the Nether's vessel—the Cult Leader—had to absorb all the Arcanas to become the perfect host. And despite that, his body seemed barely able to contain the Nether's power. It seemed like it kept acclimating as time passed.

"I have had two vessels throughout existence—Merlin and Neron. Neron was able to contain my power, thanks to his temporal loophole and Magic prowess at the time, and he was also able to reverse the state of this world. It was at the cost of everything, but that was his desire."

"What about Merlin?" I asked with my brows furrowed.

"Merlin was a completely different case. It will do you no good to compare yourself to him." Aether sighed. "In the end, this task is up to you."

Silence pervaded the hall, and it seemed Aether awaited my response.

"What will your decision be, Lewis Griffith?"