

SPELLCRAFT 821

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Chapter 821: Strategic Meeting [Pt 2]

The planning hall was a sacred ground that only the most relevant people could venture into. However, since these people were at the top of the food chain, of course, they were granted access.

With Jared leading them, they all ventured towards the moderately large hall, with murals still staining the wall, and tiles so exquisite you could see your reflection.

The room also had a centre table which five chairs gathered around.

Two chairs were to the left, two to the right, and a more majestic one stood firmly at the head of the table.

"Have your seats. Jared smiled, moving to take his prestigious position among the others.

Despite his warm invitation, no one dared to have their seat before he did. It wasn't due to anything he had imposed on them, but rather, it was simply their respect for the hierarchy.

Once he sat, they followed.

"Alright, then. Since we're all here... let us begin."

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"... And that concludes the report."

An eerie silence followed Elrich Lendertwale's voice. Everyone in the room sat completely still as they watched Jared nod slowly.

"So, still no progress on the Midas front, eh?" He sighed.

The Midas Empire had been their most challenging opponent throughout the conquest. All the other nations had fallen without much difficulty, but this group was proving to be a serious thorn in his flesh.

"It's because of their pesky barrier. That's pretty much all they have going for them." Abellion growled.

He, who had been the only Demon, apart from Karlia, to be spared from the massacre in exchange for betraying his own people, had sworn complete fealty to Jared—or perhaps, Lewis Griffith.

In any case, he was his loyal servant, and his master's desires were his as well.

"Our Spells can't do anything to them and our technology is also incapable of breaching it yet." Jane Ursula responded with a grin.

The Midas Empire's Barrier had to be the most peculiar one in existence. It pretty much nullified their Spells and it was constantly active.

That was the only reason why their race, as well as the Magic Beasts, still had any reasonable grounds.

"We already have enough manpower to defeat them, do we not? It will be tough, but I can see us winning. If the Magic Technology Division could just work on something on their end, then—"

"Hey, are you seriously blaming me, Gerard?" Jane's eyes flared as she glared at the Beast King.

"N-no, of course not! I was just saying..."

Like a puppy, he shamefully hung his head low and accepted his fate.

"My division is working tirelessly to produce so many things at once, including the main project. The little time we have dedicated to breaking the barrier has proven futile. Yet what would you have me do?"

"Okay, okay, sorry..." Gerard could already see himself being backed into a corner.

It was shameful that a woman was talking to him with such disrespect, yet he knew he couldn't fight back.

If she had been his wife, he would have beaten her half to death for daring to speak against him. He would have shown her her place in the hierarchy.

Unfortunately for him, she wasn't his to discipline.

The man who claimed the title of her lover... was someone he would never wish to cross.

"Relax, Jane. I'm sure Gerard meant no harm. Right, Gerard?" Jared's voice soothingly interrupted their discussion.

His warm smile and understanding eyes would have given peace and comfort to Gerard, but he knew the true meaning behind them.

Shut up or die!

"Y—yes sir!" He bowed vigorously.

Jane scoffed a little, grinning afterwards. Clearly, she was looking down on him.

'Damn it...' Gerard endured the humiliation, giving more importance to his instincts of self-preservation.

"As long as we all get along well, that's fine. Thank you for the report, Elrich."

The man with flowing white hair bowed courteously without uttering a word. As Jared's top Mage, he only needed to speak when he was told to.

The very man who gave him the right to immortality was the one who now dictated his freedom of speech. However, Elrich didn't mind.

As long as Jared showed him more Magic, and ensured he always had enough 'materials' for his research, he was perfectly fine with being his loyal subordinate.

"How about you, Jane? Anything special to report?"

"Yes. Quite important, actually." Jane rose to her feet.

Unlike the miniature size that fairies usually donned, Jane had a regular human size. Of course, she had wings behind her, making it clear she was a fairy. Her pointy ears also gave it away.

"Our Magic Observatory detected some strange phenomenon that occurred some hours ago." She began, no longer smiling.

"What kind of strange phenomenon are we talking about here?"

"It's difficult to explain. It's like space and time folding in on itself, and reality itself warping. I also felt a strong surge of Magical Energy, unlike anything I'd ever experienced before. The readings were simply off the charts."

"But were you able to pinpoint its exact location or range?" Jared's eyes narrowed further as he heard more about this strange occurrence.

Clearly, it wasn't natural. An unprecedented phenomenon, occurring at such a critical moment? No... how could it simply be overlooked.

"That's the problem... not at all." Jane sighed. "The readings were so off the chart that we couldn't pinpoint the exact source."

A Magic Power that was too dense to calculate and trace? How absurd was this surge?

Or more importantly... Who had caused it?!

"Hmm... could this be the work of the Midas Empire again? They're relentless in their efforts and they aren't that weak either. Perhaps they've developed something formidable." Jared rubbed his chin in deep thought.

"Perhaps... or it could also be the work of our other opponents—the Outers?" Jane added, her eyes displaying just as much concern as Jared's.

"The Outgroup, huh? I see..."

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Chapter 822: Strategic Meeting [Pt 3]

The Outgroup.

Despite their small size, they continued to be a major threat to everything Jared had built. Not only were they hidden from his United Nation's detection, but their assaults were also extremely thought-out.

This mysterious and highly competent band of outcasts always found a way to get under his skin, and he could attribute it to mainly one person.

'Neron...' Jared gritted his teeth.

'Could this be the work of Neron? Has he figured something out? Did he make something else this time? Something dangerous?'

A bead of sweat fell from Jared's forehead as he tried to think of any possible explanation for the Outgroup having such a power.

'What could he be up to now...?'

>SHUUUUU<

An incorporeal figure suddenly moved close to Jared, grabbing both of his shoulders with its skinny fingers while leaning down to his ears.

~Don't be too sure it's Neron~ The ghost-like being said.

It had a nearly transparent form, with a glowing pale-like complexion, and a very distinguished robe to cover its thin skeleton-like body.

~Ciel. This could have been the work of that wretch, Ciel.~ The ghost added.

Jared's eyes slowly trailed to the face of the one who spoke.

The flowing white hair, the obsessive eyes and the cold, unfeeling face could only belong to one person.

'I understand the possibility, Merlin. I'll keep that in mind.'

~Do more than that. Ciel is a major threat. The most major of all the Outers, and even the Midas Empire.~

'I won't let her get in our way. Don't worry about it.' Jared sighed and shut his eyes for a few moments.

At that moment, he heard a hissing sound, and the heaviness in his heart and soul slowly lifted. It seemed the ghost had vanished.

Opening his eyes, he watched as his four generals watched him with expectations. None of them could see Merlin's ghost, but this was already old news.

Even though he had been seeing and speaking to the spectre of the legendary Mage ever since he was a mere teenager—bitter about his ineptitude in magic and inept identity.

If it hadn't been for Merlin's intervention and their fated encounter with each other, he wouldn't have risen to become the man he was today.

In a way, Merlin was his mentor. However, their relationship ran deeper than that. Too deep to consider at the current moment.

"Now, then, where was I?"

Finally getting back on track with the topic, Jared decided to resort to the only thing he could at the moment.

"Tighten security in all our major regions. Ensure there are more than enough troops on standby. And also, prepare the big guns. We need to be more vigilant at this point in time."

Without knowing what exactly caused the energy surge, they could only be as prepared as possible.

"Begin to make the preparations immediately. That is all."

His generals instantly rose to their feet and nodded.

This marked the end of their meeting, and while it had been short, the uneasy atmosphere that clung to everyone in the room made it evidently clear that they couldn't afford any errors in their duties.

Something big was happening... and Jared's ever-expanding empire had to be prepared.

Failure was not an option!

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"How do you feel?"

Once everyone left, only two people remained in the room.

"You look a little bothered." Jane Ursula moved close to Jared, a smile plastered on her face. "Is it because of what I said?"

Jared, who was still seated in his chair nodded slowly.

"Yeah. It's a bit worrisome. I don't like the idea of someone possessing a power that even you are unable to pinpoint."

"Haha, you give me too much credit." Jane drew closer until she was right in front of Jared.

"Do I, now? Aren't you the most brilliant mind in the world?" Jared smiled, gazing at her passionately.

"Second only to yours, I'm afraid." She returned his gaze.

For a brief moment, they simply stared at each other in silence. And then—

"Mmmph... mmmh"

It all happened in an instant, but Jared and Jane were now passionately kissing. The Fairy sat on his lap, and he caressed her while they engaged in this act.

No one could see the both of them like this... in this shameful state of emotional weakness and utter indulgence.

"Haa... Jared, I've missed you so much. Hmmm..." Jane moaned, enjoying more of her partner's warmth.

Jared was too occupied to speak, but he definitely felt the same way.

No one had managed to make him feel anything remotely close to how this woman did. They were both made for each other.

Their similar love for Magic had evolved into an inevitable attraction that drew them closer and closer together. Jane Ursula was his best friend and best partner.

They were soulmates, which made this whole venture even more worthwhile.

"You know, what, Jane? I'm excited!"

Still in each other's embrace, Jared finally halted their kissing, smiling widely at his lover.

The glimmer in his golden eyes displayed the level of sincerity he had in his statement. When it came to Jane, there was no need for lies or bravado.

No one understood him as much as she did.

"I can't wait till we conquer this world and then expand to the other ones that exist beyond this place."

More kisses interrupted his words.

"I can't wait too, Jared. Hehe... to explore Magic with you and conquer everything that exists. Haa... it's a dream come true."

Their skins grew warmer—too immersed in their depravity to care about anything else.

"We'll let go of this small rock... and explore even far greater ones."

Their passion evolved into something greater and deeper as more time passed. It was almost... Magical.

"The universe is ours!"

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Chapter 823: Attack Of The Outers [Pt 1]

The Outgroup gathered in their hall. They were all wearing resolute expressions on their faces.

Silence pervaded the group, and their eyes looked over each other. They had done many operations like this before, so it wasn't a new thing.

Still, there were times when they lost one or two comrades in an expedition. No one could tell for sure.

"We've made all the preparations possible. Right now, we can only try our best." Neron finally spoke to his team members.

Almost as soon as he said this, the last member they were waiting for arrived solemnly.

"Lady Ciel." They all beamed with a smile.

Since she was now out of her meditation, it meant she had gathered enough energy to utilize her [Teleport] Spell.

"The time has come, dear friends." She returned their smiles with her gentle demeanour. "Let us begin."

All nodding, they moved close to each other—leaving Ciel at the centre. Battles were often unpredictable and dangerous, but they were confident in their abilities and their cause.

Well... almost all of them.

'My intuition tells me something is off...' Neron's thoughts echoed.

However, when he considered just how much time and effort was put into the planning and the stakes that arose as a result of this operation, he knew he had to do more than rely on his intuition.

Everyone here was willing to risk their lives for the cause and he was no exception.

'Maybe I'm overthinking things, but...!' Tightening his fist, he looked at the only family he had.

"Let's all be extra careful out there."

As usual, they would be split into pairs, and they would be scattered across the various regions marked on the map. The survey and investigative analysis that led to this moment played a big role in their current operation.

"Sure. Let's do our best, buddy." Edward grinned, smacking Neron on his back.

Just like the last time, he was paired with Edward.

"Yeah." He returned the gesture, smacking Edward at least twice as hard.

"Ow! That hurt! To think I held back out of consideration..."

They all laughed at Edward's response, enjoying the brief moment of joy before the storm. Deep in their hearts, the Outgroup members knew they might not see each other again.

"You must all survive. Let's meet at the rendezvous point." Ciel spoke, and they all nodded.

"Then... let's go.

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Protected by a double-layered barrier, a certain factory stood tall in its massive compound.

It covered over a dozen acres of land, and the eerie energy that poured out of its several chimneys showed how intense the activities within it were.

One of the barriers protecting this facility handled stealth, while the other served to protect it, like armour. In addition, since it was in such a remote area, the factory was away from civilization and prying eyes.

The most important thing about this factory, however, was its function.

About twenty per cent of the total manufacturing power of the Magic Weapons utilized by Jared's World Power was made here.

That didn't sound like a lot, but when compared to the other areas the Outsiders alone had hit before, it added up to over fifty per cent damage to the United Nations under Jared's banner

A perfect score!

>VWUUUUSSSSHHHH!!!<

A bright beam of light suddenly surged at the northeast section of the massive factory building.

The brilliant radiation pierced the darkness that shrouded the building's outer shell, and one could see other similar flashes of light from other regions—representing the other teams of Outers.

Two men emerged from this beam of light, both shrouded in some sort of transparent aura.

'The security measures should kick in now and our simultaneously divergent appearances will confuse the system for some time.' Neron thought, looking up into the darkened sky.

As expected, there were flying drones monitoring everything and they would now be alerting the denizens of the factory.

'We're currently cloaked, thanks to the Enchanted Devices we have equipped ourselves with. Looks like everything is progressing considerably well...'

The security footage and Magic sensors would only detect surges of light, but none of them would be detected.

Still, by diverting the attention of this facility's security to many areas at once, they would be able to thin out their opponents, as well as cause a distraction long enough to carry out their plans.

It was a plan Neron developed—the act of killing all their birds with the single stone of their appearance.

Neron glanced at Edward, who already had his blade unsheathed, and they both nodded at each other.

Their resonating devices allowed them to see each other—the same applied to every other member of their team. However, considering the fact that the Magic Power of their devices were limited, they had to hurry.

A ring on Neron's hand glowed golden and instantly a blade appeared. It had runic inscriptions, and intricate designs on it—not to mention the aura pouring out of it.

"Alright, Ed..." He smiled, no longer feeling any dread or hesitation. "... Let's do this!"

Edward's eyes turned bright blue, and his long blade glowed with azure light. He had an equally daring expression on his face.

"Yeah!"

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>BOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!<

The massive surge of energy sent metallic debris flying all over the massive factory room.

Two pale silhouettes of males could be seen swiftly sending their blades dancing as they cut through the several golems that stood in their way.

"9 Martial Precepts ... #01: REND!"

Moving like the breeze, Edward skillfully sliced through multiple Golems at once.

The Precepts were his self-made Martial Arts—nine techniques he had mastered to their limits. They were his very best techniques.

As he cut through more Golems, Neron utilized one of his blade's special abilities—creating energy projectiles in the form of similar-looking blades.

As he pointed them in the direction of his enemies, he went on to actualize the true aim of the mission.

'I'll plant the Mana Singularity Bombs (M.S.Bs.) in the strategic areas—same as every other pair—and after scouring the facility for useful resources... we'll blow it all up!'

That was the plan.

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Chapter 824: Attack Of The Outers [Pt 2]

As the assault continued, the tempo slowly rose to the point of extreme difficulty.

The distracted security measures were already being redirected to the inner facilities, where the Outers were attacking.

As a result, the time they had bought was as good as spent.

"#00: Martial Dance!"

Edward went into a frenzy as he destroyed a vast amount of Golems in one fell swoop. His precision was extremely sharp—the result of practicing for so long.

Compared to the few Neron had defeated, Edward's pile of destroyed Golems was too great to begin counting.

However, this wasn't a really fair assessment, especially when one compared Neron's focus on the whole operation.

'I need to find building schematics and additional information concerning their operations and other chain facilities.'

Gathering raw materials was important, but it wasn't as if they didn't have a decent stock already. What the Outgroup needed at the moment was information.

As a result, Neron placed a lot of emphasis on that pursuit—only taking certain items he considered rare or useful.

They swept through the Northeast area, making their Southern entrance—the Outgroup's rendezvous point.

Once they all got there, they would resort to the next step of their plan.

'We don't need to destroy all the Golems. As long as we avoid the troublesome ones and we use the tactics we already discussed, we can save them for after the M.S.B's explosion.'

The MSB was one of Neron's most potent inventions. By causing a chain reaction of Mana Explosions consisting of different frequencies, and forcing each fraction to resonate with one another, the force would be magnified, thereby creating an unstable connection.

Eventually, all the energy would clash, further increasing the destructive capacity of each unit—thus forming a massive chain of explosions in the end.

In essence, if they managed to make it out of the facility, and then detonate the blast, it would wipe out everything inside; Golems included.

"Um... Neron, a little help here?!" Edward's sudden yell distracted Neron in his search, causing him to swiftly press the watch on his left wrist.

Instantly, a small ball-like Golem appeared from it—almost like a holographic projection.

"Code: S43. Eliminate hostiles." He muttered, returning to his search.

The spherical Golem swiftly made its way towards the cluster of Golems—almost a hundred—that surrounded Edward at this point.

Whirring as it closed in on its targets, it finally stopped above Edward, sizzling with heat and glowing with brilliant light as soon as it got there.

>BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!<

Sending a brilliant blast from the centre, the floating ball destroyed itself—along with all one hundred Golems that gave Edward trouble.

Thanks to its position above Edward, the blast didn't affect the latter in the slightest, leaving him unscathed among the several defeated Golems.

Edward wasn't surprised, though. This was simply one of the many tricks that Neron could employ.

Even without Magic... he was still more than capable enough to be the leader of the Outers.

"Thanks, Neron!" Edward yelled, catching his breath as he made his way to his friend's location.

As expected, the energy in their cloaking devices was already exhausted, so the onslaught of their enemies would be even more aggressive than they would like.

'I still need to figure out how to increase the Mana Usage capacity of the Cloak Mechanism.' Neron groaned internally as he observed their current predicament.

He had recently hit a wall in that venture thanks to his preoccupation with other matters, as well as the lack of an assistant to help with his research.

If only he had just one person...

'We'll keep running into all kinds of trouble if this keeps up. This is no time to complain, though...'

Utilizing the goggles he now donned, Neron was able to see far ahead—even further than Edward was currently capable of.

"Golems are heading in our direction from three o'clock. We'll need to take a detour!" He declared to Edward, who readily agreed.

"Damn! So many Golems! Where are the operators? Is this place merely an iron fortress?"

"I told you already. They're not simply made of iron, but—"

"Yeah, yeah, I get the point..."

Edward and Neron took their detour, avoiding the collision path they would have jumped into if they had continued their sprint in a straight line.

"The moment we attacked, they would have been forced to flee. Capturing one or two of them would have been nice, but they have Teleportation Stones."

"Oh, yeah... I forgot."

Edward remembered their difficulty in catching a hostage despite launching many attacks on the enemy's many facilities.

Usually, it would take an unbelievable amount of energy to even attempt teleportation. However, in the case of Jared's United Nations, they had found a way to solve the problem.

By linking two points together, causing their positions to resonate, they interconnected the two regions—thereby acquiring the Mana necessary to traverse the distance and making it smaller in comparison.

The reason Ciel spent so much time preparing their teleportation was due to the immense distance they had to cover, plus the two barriers they would need to bypass. In the end, using that kind of Magic was too draining.

'It doesn't help that they use a special process to absorb a majority of the Mana in the atmosphere. They have the advantage.'

Still, that changed nothing!

Once they were done with this building, they would have destroyed a little over fifty per cent of the enemy's supplies.

Their efforts for so many years had not been in vain.

'All that's left is the Dwarven Region. If we attack there, we can eliminate over forty per cent of their artilleries and then their technological advancements.'

It wouldn't be easy, but they had to do their best.

'Let's survive this one first! We're almost done!'

Neron thought of his friends and he did his best to succeed—not only for them but for the world as well.

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Chapter 825: Mission Almost Complete

"Wooohooooo!!!"

Edward's excited voice pierced the air as he and Neron finally saw the Southern Gate in front of them.

It was too early to celebrate, though. There were a bunch of golems charging towards them at breakneck speed. With both parties exhausted, it was only a matter of time before they became overwhelmed—even if they did manage to reach their rendezvous point.

"Um... Neron?" Ed yelled, glancing at his partner.

"I'm on it!"

As they both leapt through the gate—their enemies right behind them—Neron initiated his countermeasure.

"T.M.P." He muttered, tapping an emerald jewel that hung low on his neck like a pendant on a golden chain.

Instantly, the Techno-Mana Pulse he had been saving up all this time spread around him, halting the functionality of the golems for about five minutes.

'Their Magic Cicuits are currently being overwhelmed. The effects should last us long enough to rejoin the others...'

Every team had a T.M.P. Device with them. If they both activated theirs at the right moment, then their plans would flow seamlessly.

'All that'll be left afterwards is the destruction of the whole building.' Neron smiled, running alongside his comrade as he made his way to the rest of his allies.

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"Huu... you guys are late." Karlia said, her brows creased in concern as she watched Neron and Edward run towards her. "Kido and I were in the North and we still managed to get here faster."

The two best buddies were already out of breath as they approached the group. Just as Neron had predicted, they were the last to join the party.

Kido and Karlia, Stefan and Reed, Vaizer and Beruel, as well as Ciel. Everyone was already waiting for them.

"W-well... not all of us are as strong as you." Edward stuttered, pretty much worn out after using his techniques too many times in a row.

His muscles ached and he was already feeling the side effects that came with overexerting himself.

"Aren't you meant to automatically recover or something?" Kido muttered, staring at him.

Edward's face turned red, and he gritted his teeth in response. "That's not how it works, okay?"

He had lost count of how many times he'd explained this to everyone—especially Kido. His immortality didn't grant him unlimited stamina.

'I still feel pain and exhaustion, you know?'

If it had been his master, Edward knew she wouldn't have gotten tired this easily, yet he was already worn out after barely an hour of combat.

'Every second I spend as an immortal... I am reminded of my inadequacies.' He smiled sadly.

Glancing in Neron's direction, Edward hoped to find some comfort in his best friend. They always encouraged each other, despite their lack of talent in their respective fields.

That was why...

"... Guh!" Edward scrunched up his face the moment he saw Neron and Karlia kissing.

"G-get a room already!" He cried out, covering his eyes as he turned away.

"Maybe you should get someone you cherish." Beruel snickered in response.

"Aren't you 'old' enough?" Reed grinned.

"You're very handsome, Mister Edward. I'm sure you can find someone as well!" Stefan said, innocent to the intentional mockery they were all making of him.

Everyone was aware of Edward's celibacy, but such matters were perhaps too complicated for the young one to understand.

"S-shut up..." Edward's cheeks turned pink as he closed his eyes and covered his ears. "La la la!"

Everyone often tried to get him to move on, but how could he? As long as his master was still out there... How could he desire another woman?

'I know they mean well, but...' He couldn't see himself moving on anytime soon.

Unlike Neron, who had found Karlia as his lover, he was alone.

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"Alright, Ciel, how much longer will it take for you to gather enough energy?" Neron asked.

"About ten more minutes. We still have about three more minutes before the T.M.P. wears out, right?"

"Indeed.

The T.M.P. was very effective in disrupting the Magic Circuit of anything around it. Unfortunately, that was also its major flaw.

'The bombs I placed close to the exit were affected. I'll have to wait three more minutes before I can detonate them.'

His remote detonator had also been affected by the T.M.P., so that was another factor to consider.

They would be cutting it close, but as soon as the three minutes were up, he would initiate the explosion and destroy the building.

The blast would be sure to attract a lot of attention, and while the escape of the workers would surely attract the appearance of reinforcements, it would take some time before a decent force was mobilized to stop them.

'With the destruction of the Building, the Resonating Effect will be gone, so they'll have to consume a great deal of Mana and time to reach us.'

They were most definitely going to be able to hold out for ten more minutes before Ciel returned them to base.

At least... That was how it was supposed to go.

However...

>WHUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUSSSSSSSSSHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!<

In the blink of an eye, the Outgroup found themselves surrounded by enemies that seemingly appeared out of nowhere.

The entire factory compound was covered in thousands of Golems—some even flying in the air.

"W-wha—?!" The Outers were filled with shock, and fear slowly began to creep into them.

The blue glow that suddenly brought the unexpected group here had to be the work of immensely powerful Magic. And worst of all... they could sense the source coming from the direction opposite their group's circle.

"So, you are the Outgroup, huh?" The warbling tone of the metallic figure echoed in the darkness as he approached the surrounded, flustered group.

This being's platinum body radiated prestige, and his humanoid appearance complimented his armour-like body.

"N-no... why did it have to be this one!" Beruel's eyes bulged as he glanced at Neron.

Everyone in the Outgroup felt the same level of fear and nervousness as Beruel when the Ultimate Automaton approached them.

It was revered as Jared's ultimate creation, after all.

"Gawain, The Platinum Knight Of Carnage!"

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Chapter 826: The Sacrificial Proposal

Most Outers had only heard rumours of Gawain, The Platinum Knight of Carnage.

The only ones who had actually seen him in action were Beruel and Neron—and they were more than lucky to have gotten out alive.

To think the most sophisticated Automaton—the highest form a crafter could make a regular Golem into—was the one who now stood in front of them!

'Damn it...' Neron thought to himself as he gritted his teeth. 'I was wrong.'

His calculations had indicated that there would be more than enough time for them to escape. He had made all his assessments, and his predictions were usually accurate.

Yet... not only did backup arrive sooner than expected, but one of the most powerful entities in this world was the one leading the charge. It was too bizarre to have been expected.

'What's going on? Did Jared and his group change their strategy? There had to have been a shift that I'm unaware of.'

It was too late to figure out the reason their plan had failed, though. At this moment, only the thought of survival was occupying his mind.

'How should I handle this?'

Gawain, the Ultimate Automaton, was walking straight towards them.

His gait was slow, but that was simply on purpose. None of them could escape the encirclement set by the thousands of Golems that Gawain commanded, neither could they even dream of fighting through them to get away.

Not while this immensely powerful thing was present.

In the end, they were at the end of their rope— with nowhere to run or hide, and with limited power to fight.

In the end... there was only one way.

"I'll be using my trump card, everyone. I'll buy us enough time to retreat." Neron turned in the direction of his group, wearing a strained smile.

For a moment, his dazed teammates stared at him in shock. Their eyes widened, and a look of horror spread all over their faces... especially the female demon's.

"It's the only wa—"

"W-what are you saying, Neron? You think I'm going to allow that?" Karlia's voice interrupted him, and a frightened look of disapproval permeated her face.

"Karlia... I know, but..."

The choice wasn't easy for him too, however, after putting everyone's abilities into account—as well as the fact that they were all exhausted—he could only rely on this method.

Mana Overdrive.

With it, he would be able to insert the Artificial Mana he developed into his body. This would grant him temporary access to the power that the world denied him from birth.

However, the consequences of doing this were undoubtedly lethal.

'I'll die after ten minutes... and considering how much I'll have to exert myself to fight Gawain, I'll probably not even last that long.'

With his current knowledge of Magic, as well as his mastery of the Martial Arts that Edward taught him, he was at least confident in holding off his opponent until Ciel was ready.

'Nine minutes. I'll do my best to hold out till then!'

"Neron, no! If you're going to die fighting, I'm going to sacrifice myself too!" Karlia cried out, her eyes filled with tears.

After the death of everyone she had called friends and family, all she had known was hate and despair. Yet, with Neron, she had been able to love again.

He had brought light to her life.

"I... I can't imagine life without you!" Her body was shaking so much that she could barely stand upright. "I won't let you die alone!"

"No, Karlia. We can't afford to lose more than one member of the Outgroup. We're already short-staffed as it is." Neron responded calmly.

This was the most logical approach he could take.

Even though it broke his heart to see the woman he loved in such pain, he would rather see her in tears than see her lying in a pool of her own blood.

'I'll do anything to protect my family!' Neron gritted his teeth and prepared himself for the procedure.

Once it began, there was no going back.

"You don't have to sacrifice yourself, Neron."

"You're our leader. Losing you would be a big blow to the Outgroup."

"Let me do it instead!" After the other members of their team protested, Edward finally got the last word in. "I'm immortal, right? Let me do this."

Placing his hand on Neron's shoulder, the young Martial Artist smiled boldly. Although, a bead of sweat trickled down his face, and it was clear that he wasn't at all in top form.

Still, he did his best to put on a brave front for his friend.

"No." Neron replied, shrugging Edward's hand from his shoulder.

His tone was cold and his gaze was focused on the approaching Gawain. The hundreds of meters of distance between them had now been reduced to a few dozen.

"If you were an option, I would have chosen you. Unfortunately, you're not. This really is the only way."

Neron was hardly wrong about anything. That didn't make him perfect, but he was more insightful than anyone else on the team—of course, Ciel was an exception.

'It's not like I want to die willingly. I want to keep living. I want to see the end of this war, as well as the liberation of our people.'

However, the current circumstances had made things clear for their group.

The only reason he and Beruel had escaped from Gawain back then was because of his T.M.P., which had disabled the Automaton for just a minute so they could make their escape.

Gawain would have been upgraded after that, so that trick wouldn't work anymore, even if he could try it.

'As regrettable as it is... I will have to die here.' He controlled his emotions and tightly held onto the little white pill he would need to swallow.

"It has been a great honour fighting alongside you all. You're my family, and I love you." Neron's gaze went over every member of the team, before finally resting on his lover, Karlia.

"I will always love you."

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

Chapter 827: Power Unlocked

Most of the Outers were in tears.

The few who weren't, either forced themselves to hide their overflowing emotions or were too focused on gathering energy to concentrate on anything else.

'Ciel understands what needs to be done. I just need to do the needful.' Neron smiled, raising the pill to his mouth in order to ingest it.

His hands were trembling, and once again it registered within him that death was awaiting him the moment the substance entered his mouth.

However... Death was already coming for all of them.

In this inevitable situation, wasn't it better for him to sacrifice his life for his friends?

Yes...

"Farewell, everyone."

It would be rough for them without him, but he had faith that they would pull through. They would gather new members and become stronger. Ultimately, they would stop Jared and return the world to its glorious state of peace and tranquillity.

'I... I wanted to see it happen!' He fought back his tears and willed his mouth to open.

'I'll watch over you all in paradise with the rest of our friends.' He dropped the pill into his mouth. 'All of you must...'

The white, round object neared his lips as he closed his eyes and accepted his fate.

'... Survive.'

"WAIT!"

Suddenly, a familiar voice pierced the air, causing Neron's face to move with a jerk. The white pill bounced off his chin instead, forcing him to catch the precious item before it rolled away.

"H-huh...?!"

Both Neron and the rest of the Outgroup— even the enemy forces— looked above them to find the source of the sudden sound.

It came from a young man who floated in the air. He had a darkened cloak and his blue hair unnaturally flowed behind him. He looked like a total stranger.

Yet...

'T-that is—!'

Neron could recognize him. They had met before, and while the lad was now putting on a new face, he could not mistake his presence.

'Jared Leonard!'

Jared, in this new form, was grinning widely, and he confidently stood above everyone—even the floating Golems. As both friends and foes alike stared at him, there was only one thought on their minds.

'What is he doing here?!'

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[Moments Earlier]

'Haaa... this is good.'

Thankfully, the dysfunction my power was experiencing in this world didn't affect its internal nature. When I concentrated enough, I was able to sense all my Cores and Familiars.

'Well, this is going to be a bit tough.'

My goal to transform my current Cores into Aether ones was simple, but also very difficult.

'I'll have to purify and condense my cores. That's really all there is to it.'

Thanks to Ana's groundbreaking discovery of Aether, as well as its formation, I was going to awaken my Aether by using this process.

'It's amazing how she figured this out. With this alone, she has surpassed me.'

Of course, Ana didn't see it that way. For her, her discovery was only a stepping stone. She wanted to make even more discoveries and inventions that would bury me.

I suppose that was the true meaning of surpassing your predecessor.

'Welp, I'm rooting for her.'

In any case, I needed to focus on this task. It would be really draining, and I would end up starving afterwards.

The Outgroup never mentioned a kitchen to me, but if I was successful in doing this, I would be able to access my subspace through Original Magic and bring out something to snack on.

'I better get right to it, then!'

[Hours In]

'Ah... yes.'

Finally, after condensing and purifying the cores for over three hours, I was able to do it—my first actual Aether Core.

'Ah... I've missed this feeling.'

My primary Core had now been transformed into an Aether Core, which would make it easier to affect the others. Still, to think I sacrificed over a thousand Mana, Miasma, and Fused Cores just to satisfy the most basic requirements for an Aether Core— It was just crazy.

The demand for energy was really high... but so were the rewards.

'If I turn most of my Cores into Aether Cores, I should be able to apply Spellcraft internally, and directly purify and condense my Mana Particles so they automatically get turned into Aether.'

Once that happened, I would naturally be able to generate Aether, and I could automatically form Cores even during battle or rest.

'For now, though...' I smiled, feeling the surge of energy within me and even externally.

'I can finally feel the energy around me. Not surprised, though.'

Aether was the very energy that represented the essence of this world. It didn't matter the branch—Aether would still function the same way.

In this world, there was no Miasma. It was possible that other realities where there was no Mana, or where everyone was inept existed.

'I can't imagine how people can live without Magic. Perhaps they'll rely on ingenuity to create technology that can assist them, rather than Magic.'

However, one indisputable fact about all of this was the flow of Aether. As long as I had that, I would be able to use Magic.

'I'm not that hungry. Should I form another one? That would be nice. Maybe I can even—'

Suddenly, I received a signal from the Micro-Automatons I placed on all the Outers. I did it so I could help them in case I got my Magic figured out on time.

Unfortunately, I couldn't even access them until now—after developing my Aether.

~It has been a great honour fighting alongside you all. You're my family, and I love you.~ I heard Neron's voice.

It seemed troubled, and I could hear sniffles and voices of unease from the other Outers. I couldn't completely decipher the situation, but one thing was quite clear.

'Something is wrong.'

My Automatons instantly fed me the location of the Outers, and the distance from my current position was considerably large.

However... it wasn't going to be a problem.

"[Original Magic: Great Sage's Memoir]."

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

Chapter 828: Powerful Intervention [Pt 1]

'Okay... wow.' My thoughts trailed as I watched from my height.

The thousands of troops that surrounded the Outgroup were basic Golems, and while their numbers were a bit worrisome, they shouldn't have been too much of a problem for the group.

'They look tired, though. Maybe that's why they look so distraught. It's a good thing I flew here as fast as I could.'

My body was coated in Aether, allowing me to achieve the regular feats of Magic without worrying about any dampening effects. Thanks to Light Magic, I was also able to swiftly get here.

I would have teleported, but my Arcanas couldn't directly interfere with the laws of this world. Their frequency was still tuned to that of my old world. To change that, I'd have to improve the Arcana formula.

'That'll take time and energy...' And while I would eventually have to do that, if I wanted to return home, now wasn't the time.

That meant most of the Arcanas in my possession weren't going to be very useful at the moment.

'Not like I need them, though.' A smile crept up on my face.

>WHOOOOOOOSSSHHHHHH!!!<

I watched the several hundred Golems floating in the air as they whirred and turned all their focus on me. It seemed they would be attacking very soon.

'I should also end things fast.' Returning my gaze to the Outgroup, I noticed Ciel was in the middle of immense concentration.

Perhaps she was gathering enough energy to teleport everyone.

'Fair enough. I'll just help them out until they make their escape.'

"[Grand Safe Haven]"

In a flash, a golden dome surrounded the whole group, encasing them in its glow. With it, none of the Golems would be able to penetrate it.

The only issue would be the Automaton, but... it seemed its focus was on me. Something about its platinum body and pristine design made it look familiar to me, but I dismissed the thought instantly.

The Golems in the sky were already charging towards me.

"[Storm Of Lightning Blades]"

In an instant, I rained down blue-coloured blades that were made with lightning energy. They descended upon the metal Golems, sending them into shock, as well as piercing their most vital points—all in an instant.

>BZZZTTTZZZZ<

I could hear the sounds of their Magic Circuits frying, and watching so many metal puppets dance around me added a certain thrill to it.

'And that's a wrap.' I smiled, looking at the enemies that remained.

There were a few thousand left, and then there was the one who appeared to be the leader, which was the Automaton. It really resembled the Gawain I had designed back in my original world, but...

"What is your identity? Depending on your affiliation, I shall not engage." The Automaton finally spoke to me, its tone warbling exactly as Gawain's usually did.

I felt like my Gawain's tone was clearer, and this one's pitch was a bit off—less natural than I would have preferred—but they were certainly similar.

"And what would you do if I said I was with them?" I grinned menacingly.

It was possible that the Automaton was stalling for time until more backup arrived, so I had to remain vigilant. However, this was my first conversation with someone who could be considered an enemy.

Perhaps I could learn one or two things from it.

"Then, I shall eliminate you. Gawain, The Platinum Knight Of Carnage, declares it."

'E-eh...?'

It really was Gawain!

My eyes nearly popped out of their sockets when I heard him introduce himself. So this world had a Gawain too, and while its design was a bit different from mine, it had the same Aesthetic.

How could I have been mistaken? Well...

"Do you understand now? You realize who you're crossing now, don't you? If you know what's best for you, then introduce your—"

"Sorry, but are there other Gawains like you?" I asked, itching my head a little.

"What?!"

"I mean... you're Gawain, The Platinum Knight Of Carnage, right? Are there like... other Gawains with other different titles?"

My major fear was that Jared had managed to mass produce Gawain. If this was only one of the various versions of the Ultimate Automaton, and the others were actually running around causing havoc, then... that would suck.

It would be no wonder this world was like that.

"What in the world are you talking about? I am the Ultimate Automaton, made by Lord Jared himself. How dare you drag a masterpiece like me to such a low estate?"

Ah, it seemed I was mistaken once again. This really was the Ultimate Automaton. The Gawain I built as a masterpiece.

'But... really?' No, maybe this world's Jared simply programmed this Gawain to think that way.

Someone as diabolical as the evil version of myself could simply employ such a strategy to throw his enemies off. Yes, that could indeed be the case.

'Or am I overthinking this?' I glanced at the Outgroup, specifically Neron, for advice.

They knew this world much better than I did. Besides, if anyone could tell me more about this reality's Jared, it would be them.

'It's better than just assuming.'

Neron nodded at me in confirmation, his eyes depicting absolute seriousness. Once I saw it, I instantly knew that the Automaton must have been telling the truth this whole time.

It had just been me who found it difficult to believe.

'Can you blame me, though? I should have already expected this, but... I didn't think it would be to this extent.'

It seemed I had worried for nothing—at least, in terms of this battle.

"Gawain, I am on the side of the Outers. In essence, I am your ene—"

Before I could complete my statement, the Automaton lunged at me with full veracity. It appeared like he wanted to end me himself.

But, well, that would be quite a problem. It wasn't because of anything, other than the simple thing I observed.

The thing that made me doubt this thing's authenticity.

'It's too weak!'

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

Chapter 829: Powerful Intervention [Pt 2]

Light Magic was a very useful type of magic.

Thanks to its properties, everything about me became faster—including my physical and cognitive abilities.

I could engage in my thoughts for a long while, yet only a moment would have passed in real-time. With this ability activated, it made sense that the world around me would slow down when I wanted it to.

Nevertheless...

'This Automaton is too slow.'

Was this the stuff that gave Neron and the Outgroup trouble? No, it was probably because they were exhausted.

I had no right to judge them since I was unaware of just how much they had pushed themselves before reaching this point.

As the only line of defence against Jared's tyrannical rule, I had to give them props. Even if Neron was nerfed and the other members aren't as strong as before... it should still stand to reason that they can handle themselves in a fight.

Something as mundane as this Automaton shouldn't have been a problem for them.

'Should I try it? It's been a while since I used it...'

As a Mage—a candidate for the Grand Mage title—there were many Spells in my arsenal. However, I really liked using one in particular.

'It'll be great for clearing out the other Golems that are standing in my way. Then, I'll take my time to thoroughly examine this Gawain once I'm done.'

As soon as Gawain, The Platinum Knight Of Carnage, got within range, I used the back of my hand to hit it.

>BOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!<

The impact sent him flying straight in the direction of the massive factory beneath me. There was barely any resistance at all.

'It seems to be coated with Defensive Magic, but...!' The defence felt so paper thin that it barely registered as one.

Then again, it was operating on Mana, while I had used Aether. Despite this, I was currently limiting my Aether usage, while giving part of my attention to replenishing my supply.

'It'll take some time to get used to condensing and purifying in the middle of battle. Thankfully, this can't really be called one.

The thousands of Golems beneath me whirred to life and would charge at me at any time. Unfortunately for them, I planned on ending their lives pretty quickly.

'The barrier I'm using to protect the Outers should hold up. Ah, it seems Ciel is already done concentrating. They'll be teleporting soon, eh?'

"Go on without me. I'll meet you guys back at the base!" I yelled at them, yet they proved unresponsive.

It appeared that they were frozen in some kind of trance—one I couldn't quite decipher at the moment.

'Oh, well... let's focus on the targets.'

Golden flashes of lightning burst forth from my fingertips, and a surge of power coursed through me—causing the lightning to swell in size.

This was an original Spell I had developed by merging light properties with lightning. It was quick, precise, and highly destructive. It was...

"[Grand Blitz]"

>BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!!!<

... More than enough to take care of the rest of the small fries.

"Ah, it seems they've teleported already." Once I was done with the Spell and looked in the direction of the dome, the Outers were no longer present.

I really needed them to teach me more about this world—especially for the sake of accessing my Arcanas. Ciel was the answer, so I would have to talk to her after all this.

But first... I suppose I had to deal with Gawain.

'Let's see what else it can do.'

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'W-what is going on here...?!'

Amid the rubble and dark crevices of the partially destroyed factory was Gawain, The Platinum Knight Of Carnage.

Yes, his name was dreaded by all of Lord Jared's enemies, and only a few individuals who were his allies could be called his match—or his superiors.

That was how Lord Jared had designed him.

'Other than Hugo, who is my match, there's also the Four Generals.' Apart from them, Gawain could see no one else whom he wasn't confident about defeating.

Yet... with a mere backhanded hit, he had been sent flying to the ground? How highly improbable was this?

"Unexpected. This is unexpe—"

Before Gawain could utter another word, he heard a loud explosion, like the roar of a very fearsome storm. The intensity of the energy chilled him to his very wires, and he shivered like a frightened child.

'N-no way! T-this is...!!!'

In a flash, all of the fine Golems under his control had been annihilated. A single Spell had wiped them out!

How was any of this possible? Gawain found his circuit getting hot as he tried to process something completely inconceivable. It was too much for his logic to handle.

'I can't sense the Outers as well. Did they get away? I... let them get away?' Throughout his years of dedication, Gawain had never let anyone escape his hands.

The only ones who had managed to do so had been Neron and Beruel—and that was simply because he hadn't been perfected then.

'I'm different now. I'm the ultimate!'

Yet, he had failed. He had shamed his creator, as well as their cause. Gawain couldn't really feel emotions, since he was an Automaton. However, based on how he was programmed, his failure brought him great anguish.

"Glad to see you're still alright." A voice suddenly greeted the confused Automaton, causing him to freeze in his position.

The stranger that just attacked him suddenly appeared in front of him, looking as casual as one could be in their current situation. It didn't even seem like he was taking any of this seriously at all.

"Ah, wait! Your jaw is a little... you know, crooked." The blue-haired young man said.

Logically speaking, Gawain already knew he couldn't fight against this person. The only and best option would be to escape. He had to escape and inform his master of his wrongdoing... as well as the danger this man posed to their plans.

"Tch!" As much as it hurt him to say... this was his final farewell.

'Self Destruct Sequence... Activate!'

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

Chapter 830: Odd Encounter

I watched as Gawain activated its Self-Destruct Protocol. I also realized that it really was quite similar to my own version—at least, in that respect.

'Once it detonates, all the information it has will be uploaded to whatever server the Jared of this world has prepared for it. In any case, everything that happened here will be exposed to him.'

Did I really want that to happen?

'Well... perhaps...' I stared at the Automaton in front of me, watching as its Magic Circuits began to overheat and fry.

In a second or two, it would explode, swallowing me and the entire building we were within in its powerful eruption.

'I'm disguised anyway. It's not like my identity will be deciphered. Besides...' A smile formed on my face as I looked at the battered thing. '... I'm curious to see how this world's version of me would respond to this.'

>BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO—<

I contained the blast within a Magic Barrier, preventing the explosion from spreading much further from the Automaton itself. I could see the sizzling blast struggling to get out, but my Magic Barrier was far stronger than the struggling eruption.

In the end, it died down without too much trouble.

'Guess we're done here.' From the fight I just had, there were a couple of things I had deciphered.

Firstly, this world's Gawain was far weaker than mine. The Defensive Magic it had on, plus the material it was comprised of... they were all subpar.

'Plus, it Self-Destructed. That means it was also aware that it stood no chance.'

I was tempted to project Gawain's weakness to its creator. Perhaps this world's Jared was not as strong as I had imagined? Perhaps I could handle him.

'No... let's not get too conceited. I have to be careful here.' Just because this world's Jared was less skilled in making the Perfect Automaton didn't mean he was lacking in other areas.

Besides, he had hidden knowledge from this world's Merlin. He most probably had trump cards as well, making the situation more difficult than I could imagine.

'Then there's also Spellcraft. I can't use it currently. But if he can, then I'll be at a disadvantage.'

In the end, I still needed more time.

"Alright, then. Why don't I take care of the other issue I noticed since I entered this building?" A smile formed on my face as I looked at the far end of the factory.

There was a hidden door that was made to look like part of the wall. Beyond the wall-like door was a special room, and someone was dwelling inside it.

'I wouldn't have known if I didn't move this close.' My senses were also enhanced to their limits due to my being extra cautious.

The person on the other side had to be skilled at using Magic Distortion. Perhaps there was a Magic Device that allowed for something like that there.

'Let's find out.'

In no time, I closed the distance between me and the mysterious hidden door. Concentrating my energy on my fist, I readied myself and bolstered my defences—just in case there was a trap.

'Here goes...'

>BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMMM!!!<

In one burst of power, I obliterated the wall before me, revealing the moderately sized room within.

It had a certain metallic smell, and I could see dim lights flashing around the room. There were shelves in every corner, and the centre had a large, sturdy table placed there.

Just one glance told me that this was a workshop—one belonging to a crafter, no doubt.

"E-eeek..." I heard a slight shriek come from the other side of the room.

A small figure was crouching down, trembling as she squeaked even more. She seemed to be the only person here.

Her yellow-blond hair and the oversized lab coat she donned, brought back memories. She had a small stature, and even the high pitch of her voice sounded familiar. Almost like—

>WHOOOOOSSSSSSHHHHHH!!!<

Three small flying Golems lunged at me from behind. They were strengthened with Magic, and each one would pack a heavy punch if they came into contact with me.

Unfortunately for them... I was much faster and stronger.

'[Electro-Disruption Field]'

The moment they drew closer, my barrier paralyzed them, frying all their Magic Circuits in an instant. My gaze returned to the little one who remained crouched.

As soon as I stared at her, her skin jumped. She must have realized that her plan failed and she was now royally screwed.

"E-eeeeppp!!!"

"What now? It's your call." I grinned, drawing closer to her.

The closer I got, the more she appeared smaller. This person... looked very much like a child. An image flashed in my mind, but because she was wrapping her hands over her head, I couldn't see this person's face.

"P-p-p-please..." She suddenly slid to her knees and prostrated in front of me.

'E-eh?'

"... Have mercyyyyy!!!"

Her loud tone, and incredibly high pitch, made me almost laugh. It was so instinctive and natural that I did it without much thought.

At this point, I already realized that my suspicions were correct.

"You may raise your head..." I smiled at the little girl, or rather, the Loli. "... Anabelle."

Stiffening slightly, she slowly lifted her head, revealing the baby-like face of the girl I remembered. Her bright blue eyes were filled with tears, her nose was running and her soft cheeks were red.

It seemed she really didn't want to die.

"What are you doing here?" I asked her, narrowing my eyes to imply that any false statements would mean her death.

Of course, I couldn't possibly kill Ana—at least, not until I was sure she would be a threat to me.

"I... I work here... in this factory." She muttered, more tears falling down her cheeks.

'I see. I suppose I should have expected this.' A smile formed on my face.

No matter the world, it seemed Ana didn't really change. Her love of being a Magical scholar, especially Engineering, hadn't changed.

The fact that she had this workshop proved it. She had to have been a key technological developer in this factory.

'Looks like I hit the jackpot!'