

= Soma Cruz =

Soma Cruz , known in Japan as Sōma Kurusu ( ソーマ クルス , Kurusu Sōma ) , is a fictional character and the protagonist of Konami 's action @-@ adventure games Castlevania : Aria of Sorrow and Castlevania : Dawn of Sorrow , part of Konami 's Castlevania video game series . He was designed by Ayami Kojima as part of producer Koji Igarashi 's desire to try a " different route " for the Castlevania series . His return in Dawn of Sorrow was due to Igarashi 's satisfaction with Soma and the storyline in Aria of Sorrow , and he was redesigned with a new anime appearance .

In Aria of Sorrow , Soma is an 18 @-@ year @-@ old transfer student studying in Japan ( or simply a Japanese high school student , in the Japanese version ) , where he finds himself in the castle of Dracula , the principal antagonist of the Castlevania series . Soma discovers his " power of dominance , " or his ability to claim the souls and abilities of the monsters he defeats as his own . As the game 's story progresses , Soma learns of Dracula 's demise , and that he is his reincarnation , and destined to become Dracula again ( a position Graham Jones desired for himself before he was killed by Soma ) . The only reason he did not become the next dark lord immediately was due to the efforts of Alucard , using the pseudonym Genya Arikado . Soma eventually defeats the chaos running through the castle , narrowly missing both his own corruption and his possible death at the hands of Julius Belmont . Dawn of Sorrow features Soma fighting the attempts of a cult to slay him and create a new dark lord when one did not surface during the events of Aria of Sorrow .

Several video game publications have praised Soma 's character . Although Soma himself was viewed as a stereotypical echo of previous Castlevania protagonists , the new context that the storyline Aria of Sorrow and Dawn of Sorrow provided for him rectified this . The storyline in particular that Soma was situated in was compared to the storyline of the widely acclaimed Castlevania : Symphony of the Night . The switch to an anime character design in Dawn of Sorrow was notably criticized , as many reviewers preferred the designs made by Ayami Kojima .

= = Conception and design = =

Soma debuted in Castlevania : Aria of Sorrow , the third and final installment of the Castlevania series on the Game Boy Advance . He was created as part of the attempt by Koji Igarashi , the producer of several Castlevania games , including the highly acclaimed Castlevania : Symphony of the Night , to try a " different route " for the series by setting it in a futuristic setting . Soma was designed by Ayami Kojima , who had previously worked on the characters in Castlevania games such as Castlevania : Symphony of the Night and Castlevania : Harmony of Dissonance . Kojima 's drawings are made in a dark , gothic style , and borrow heavily from bishōnen @-@ style art . Nevertheless , keeping with Igarashi 's " different route " motif , Soma 's appearance was made noticeably more contemporary , sporting more modern clothing in comparison to the medieval attire of characters in previous Castlevania games .

Soma 's inclusion in Dawn of Sorrow , a rare sequel in the Castlevania series , was made by Igarashi , who stated that one of his primary motivations behind making Dawn of Sorrow was to feature Soma Cruz in another game . Ayami Kojima was not included in the production team , as Igarashi wanted her to concentrate on her character designs for Castlevania : Curse of Darkness . Soma , along with the remainder of the characters , were redrawn in an anime style . This was a marketing strategy Igarashi wished to employ , as he felt that the Nintendo DS ' target demographic was significantly younger than those of other consoles Castlevania games had appeared on , and he intended to court them with a more simplistic anime design . Furthermore , Igarashi considered it a litmus test for whether the design would be incorporated into future Castlevania installments .

= = Appearances = =

In Aria of Sorrow , Soma is depicted as a high school student in Japan , living peacefully with his childhood friend Mina Hakuba . He is drawn into Dracula 's castle , where he learns of his " power of dominance " , enabling him to absorb the souls of the monsters he defeats and use their abilities .

As he proceeds through Dracula 's castle , he learns that Dracula , the longtime antagonist of the Castlevania series , had been truly defeated , and that a prophecy had been made dictating that Dracula 's powers would be passed down to his reincarnation . After defeating Graham Jones , who had harbored the notion that he was Dracula 's reincarnation , Soma realizes that he himself is Dracula 's reincarnation . As a result , he is confronted by Julius Belmont , the latest member of the Belmont clan , a group of vampire hunters sworn to hunt Dracula until his demise . Soma defeats Julius , and extracts a promise from him to slay him should he fail to subdue Dracula 's spirit . With the aid of the allies he encountered throughout the castle , he is able to escape his fate by defeating the manifestation of the castle 's chaos .

Soma 's second appearance is in Dawn of Sorrow , where he returns into battle to combat Celia Fortner 's cult , which seeks to kill Soma and revive the dark lord . Although Soma believes that his powers have been lost , they awaken , and he proceeds to a replica of Dracula 's castle in order to confront Celia 's cult . In the castle , Soma learns of the " dark lord 's candidates " , who were born on the day of Dracula 's demise and possess supernatural powers as a result . Soma manages to best the first candidate , Dmitrii Blinov , although he inadvertently absorbs Dmitrii 's soul in the process . Soma proceeds to defeat Dario Bossi in two instances , stripping him of his power after the conclusion of their second fight . As a result , Celia slays a doppelgänger of Mina to induce Soma to become the dark lord , but fails due to a talisman Mina gave him earlier in the game . Dmitrii 's soul escapes from Soma 's body into the doppelgänger , and he increases his powers , having copied Soma 's power of dominance . Soma manages to defeat his monstrous form " Menace " , and realizes at the end of the game that his fate is his own to determine . Soma additionally appears in the " Julius Mode " found in Dawn of Sorrow , where the storyline follows the assumption that Soma succumbed to his darker nature and became the new dark lord . He is the final boss of Julius Mode .

= = Reception = =

Soma 's character has received praise and criticism from several video game publications . GameSpy noted that although Soma fell into the stereotypical role of " an effeminate @-@ looking man who does all the slaying " , the original scenario that Aria of Sorrow presented provided a better context for his character . The fact that Soma was not a member of the Belmont clan , the protagonists of most Castlevania games , was lauded by IGN and RPGamer , with the latter commenting on how it contributed to the " depth " of the storyline . The manner in which Soma 's " power of dominance " translated into the Tactical Soul system featured in both games was widely acclaimed ; IGN commented that it contributed " significantly " to the overall feel of Aria of Sorrow , and RPGamer celebrated the " triumphant return " of the Tactical Soul system in Dawn of Sorrow . Reviewers also complimented Soma 's graphical representation . GameSpy noted the " good animation on easily viewable sprites " in Aria of Sorrow , and GameSpot called the graphics in Dawn of Sorrow " intricate and gorgeous " , making note of the character sprites . The change to an anime design in Dawn of Sorrow was criticized . GameSpy deplored the " shallow , lifeless anime images " used for Soma 's in @-@ game representation , and Kojima 's absence from the production . IGN claimed that the images were " down to the level of ' generic Saturday morning Anime ' quality . " Nevertheless , RPGFan felt that the story created around Soma was the best presented in the series since Symphony of the Night .