# The Fragmented Pantheon: A Full Character Analysis of Desire, Duty, and Destiny in Legend of Mana

## I. The Fragmented Mythology of Fa'Diel: Characterization in a Non-Linear World

The 1999 action role-playing game *Legend of Mana* is distinctive within its genre, not due to a single monolithic plot thread, but through its innovative Land Make system.1 This system allows the player to shape the world's structure by generating regions and quests in a profoundly non-linear manner, resulting in a narrative composed of numerous interrelated, localized vignettes.1 The ultimate goal—restoring the great Mana Tree—is achieved through the collective sum of these varied individual experiences.2 This structural choice radically alters the function of characterization within the game, elevating the internal conflicts and relationships of the non-playable characters (NPCs) to the status of the primary narrative engines.

### I.A. The Structural Context: Non-Linearity and the Land Make System

The inherent lack of a straightforward, overarching plot thread, noted by some critics as potentially disjointed, fundamentally shifts narrative dependence away from traditional world-saving mechanics and onto character dynamics.1 Since the player has control over the sequence of events, the three major quest lines—the Jumi, the Dragon, and the Faerie/Warlords arcs—must rely entirely on the internal consistency, psychological realism, and emotional interdependence of the featured NPCs to drive the plot to its climactic, often tragic, conclusions.4

In this environment, character interdependence, not chronological plot points, becomes the essential governing logic of the story. The game provides biographical and historical depth for these figures through the in-game Encyclopedias, which expand as the protagonist interacts with and observes the NPCs, demonstrating that personal history and perspective are foundational to Fa'Diel’s rebuilding.6 This collection of individual histories underscores that the world's restoration is intrinsically tied to the resolution of personal dramas and conflicting motivations.

### I.B. The Protagonist as Silent Observer and Moral Catalyst

A central feature of *Legend of Mana*'s character design is the reduced agency of the player-controlled hero or heroine. The protagonist is not typically "The Big Hero" but rather functions as an "observer or sidekick" in the stories of others.7 This passive role is cleverly reinforced by Li'l Cactus’s diary, which documents the adventure but often misinterprets events or focuses on unimportant details, emphasizing the protagonist's status as an outsider witnessing profound events.8

The protagonist's quiet presence, however, fulfills a crucial role: facilitating emotional resolution and catharsis. The world, which inherited a post-apocalyptic state, begins to reconnect to Mana only as the core characters allow themselves to "dream and desire" again.8 The hero’s involvement, though passive regarding the NPCs' ultimate choices, creates the necessary space for these figures to confront their intense, defining desires—whether love, duty, or revenge—and reach a conclusion.8 In this context, the hero restores the Mana Tree not by collecting artifacts (though they are used to create lands), but by serving as the vital, quiet witness to the resolution of cosmic and personal emotional conflicts.

### I.C. Thematic Anchors: Love, Duty, and Destruction

The character analysis reveals that beneath the fragmented narrative structure lies a unified thematic core: the pervasive, transformative, and often destructive power of **Love** in its varied forms.10 The primary story arcs can be systematically defined by the type of love driving their central conflicts:

1. **The Faerie Arc (The Warlords):** Driven by **Romantic Love**, specifically the overwhelming bond between Irwin and Matilda.
2. **The Dragon Arc:** Driven by **Familial Love**, the deep fraternal bond between Larc and Sierra.
3. **The Jumi Arc:** Driven by **Communal/Knightly Love**, focusing on the protective and sacrificial dynamic among Elazul, Pearl, Blackpearl, and Florina.10

In each scenario, the characters' strongest emotional attachment is simultaneously the greatest potential source of catastrophic, world-threatening consequences. For instance, Larc's desire for reunion brings Drakonis to the surface, and Irwin’s attachment to Matilda risks manipulating Mana power for selfish ends.10 This narrative pattern argues that intense personal desire, even when rooted in genuine affection, must be rigorously balanced against cosmic duty and consequence, or it will inevitably lead to disaster.

The following analysis details the motivations and thematic functions of the central figures within these three critical narrative pathways, demonstrating how these competing desires constitute the true main narrative of *Legend of Mana*.

Table 1: Central Character Motivations and Thematic Poles

| **Character** | **Primary Arc** | **Core Motivation** | **Thematic Conflict Embodied** | **Source(s)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Larc | Dragon | Fraternal Reunion with Sierra; Freedom from the Underworld Curse | Duty (to Drakonis) vs. Familial Love (for Sierra) | 10 |
| Escad | Faerie/Warlords | Absolute Justice; Eradication of Demon Chaos | Ideology (Rigid Justice) vs. Compassion/Nuance | 12 |
| Elazul | Jumi | Protection of Pearl; Jumi Restoration | Individual Need (Pearl) vs. Communal Survival (Extinction) | 14 |
| Irwin | Faerie/Warlords | Romantic Devotion to Matilda; Freedom from Confinement | Self-Destruction/Love vs. World Stability/Consequence | 10 |
| Pearl/Blackpearl | Jumi | Search for Identity/Duty to the Jumi Race | Memory/Identity vs. Historical Duty/Leadership | 14 |
| Sierra | Dragon | Repayment of Debt to Vadise; Protection of Larc | Personal Duty vs. Familial Bond | 16 |
| Matilda | Faerie/Warlords | Unwavering Romantic Loyalty to Irwin | Emotional Bondage vs. Moral Responsibility | 10 |

## II. Analysis of the Jumi Arc: The Burden of Extinction and Communal Sacrifice

The Jumi Arc focuses on the existential crisis of the Jumi race—crystalline beings hunted for their valuable cores—and the tension between their inherent vulnerability and the demanding requirements of leadership during a time of near-extinction.10

### II.A. Elazul: The Knight of Lapis Lazuli and Obsessive Protection

Elazul is identified as one of the youngest Jumi, acting as the assigned knight to Pearl.12 His characterization is defined by a "rough" manner of speaking and acting, often leading him to instigate confrontations.12 This disposition stems from profound insecurity; he previously had no official guardian until he found the amnesiac Pearl wandering in the desert and "adopted" her.15 The desperation of the Jumi’s situation compels him to overcompensate, adopting the traditional Jumi "Knight" role with a zeal that borders on aggression. This aggressive posture is a defense mechanism against the constant, overwhelming threat of his race being annihilated. His strong desire to protect Pearl, even referenced by the game as akin to Squall Leonhart’s knightly proclamations in *Final Fantasy VIII*, anchors his identity entirely around protection, filling the void left by the Jumi’s near-total collapse.14

Elazul’s journey is focused on rebuilding the Jumi ranks, but his efforts are constantly complicated by Pearl's habit of wandering off while lost in thought, requiring him to be her constant companion.12 This dependency underscores the fragile state of their community, where the strongest member (the Knight) is tethered to the weakest and most vulnerable member (the lost Guardian).

### II.B. Pearl and the Shadow of Blackpearl: Duality of Identity and Duty

Pearl presents a stark contrast to Elazul: she is described as exceedingly shy and sometimes struggles with clarity in her speech.12 Her vulnerability is a direct result of a traumatic past. The narrative reveals that Pearl is actually the amnesiac form of Lady Blackpearl, who was the original Jumi Knight of Florina.14 Blackpearl was the level-headed, pragmatic, and logical individual dedicated to leading the Jumi through their crisis.12

The separation of these identities occurred when Blackpearl’s core was violently damaged by the jewel hunter, Sandra, causing portions of the black core to turn white and resulting in the emergence of the vulnerable Pearl persona.14 This duality suggests that the Jumi’s systemic trauma—the threat of being hunted for their literal hearts—manifests as a fragmentation of self. Pearl represents innocent vulnerability and the desire for peace, a psychological retreat from the burden of leadership. Blackpearl, who sometimes re-emerges in moments of extreme danger, represents the "hard-headed dictatorship" necessary for pragmatic survival.12 The tragic structure of the arc suggests that the Jumi cannot survive as the gentle, naive Pearl; the community’s fate demands the return of the harsh, necessary leadership embodied by Blackpearl, a persona born of desperation and sacrifice.

### II.C. The Failed Guardianship: Florina, Diana, and the Jewel Hunter (Sandra)

The Jumi's decline is attributed not only to external threats but also to a failure of internal leadership and community structure, driven by misplaced communal love.10 Florina, known as the Clarius, held the vital role of healer in the Bejeweled City. The Jumi rely on crying, a healing function 15; however, the immense emotional and magical burden of healing all the wounded Jumi cores ultimately caused Florina's own core to fall apart.12 Her self-sacrifice illustrates that the Jumi’s system of interdependent knights and guardians was already internally consuming itself.

Diana, the Diamond Jumi and leader, attempted to prevent extinction through her own efforts but failed because her "hard-headed dictatorship" alienated the support she needed.12 The culmination of this arc sees the death of Diana and numerous other Jumi at the hands of Sandra, the notorious jewel hunter who targets only the most brilliant cores.12 The structural complexity deepens with the revelation that Alex and Sandra combine to form Alexandrite 15, suggesting a possible connection between the Ruby Jumi, Rubens (who is hiding his identity), and the very forces seeking to eradicate them.12 This signifies that the threat to the Jumi is complexly intertwined with the nature of their existence, confirming that their communal love ultimately failed to overcome both external avarice and internal fragmentation.10

## III. Analysis of the Dragon Arc: The Conflict of Fraternal Love and Draconic Will

The Dragon Arc stands as a critical exploration of familial loyalty tested against cosmic-level duty, revolving around the figures of the two Beast Warriors, Larc and Sierra, and their respective Dragon masters, Drakonis and Vadise.

### III.A. Larc: The Fallen Hero Driven by Familial Reunion

Larc was once a famous hero and is the brother of Sierra.11 His death led him to serve as Drakonis's dragoon in the Underworld, tasked with enacting Drakonis's plan to destroy the other Dragons of Knowledge and claim all Mana power.11 Larc willingly entered this dark servitude, enduring a thousand-year blood curse that confined him to the Underworld.11

His motivation was singularly focused: the agreement with Drakonis included Larc's eventual resurrection, allowing him to be reborn and walk the mortal world once more to rejoin his sister, Sierra.10 This overwhelming fraternal love served as the weak point through which the destructive power of Drakonis could be realized. The profound pain of separation drove Larc to risk world destruction and endure servitude. Furthermore, Larc possessed a conflicted motivation, secretly planning to claim the Mana power for himself and defeat Drakonis when the time was right.11 This layered intention—familial love masked by strategic self-interest—reinforces the theme that intense personal desire makes characters vulnerable to cosmic manipulation. The arc concludes with Larc accepting his punishment, suffering delay in his reunion but validating the sincerity of his bond.10

### III.B. Sierra: The Embodiment of Hard-Earned Duty and Loyalty

Sierra is the dedicated beast-warrior serving Vadise, the White Dragon.16 Her loyalty is absolute; she was revived by Vadise after losing her life in a previous battle and swore fealty in repayment of this kindness.16 Sierra is defined by her uncompromising nature, holding both herself and others to exacting standards.16

Her character arc is defined by the excruciating conflict between her cosmic duty to Vadise and her protective, familial love for her brother, Larc.10 Sierra constantly tracks Larc, warning him that Drakonis is exploiting his desires to harness Mana power.16 She displays immense courage, even attempting to confront Larc directly, only to be stopped by the benevolent Vadise, who is forced to surrender her Mana Stone.17 Sierra's zealotry is necessary to execute her duty, but it forces her into a tragic moral position where she must treat her brother as an enemy. In the aftermath of the conflict, Vadise appears as a spirit to instruct Sierra not to touch Larc, as the Underworld curse remains infectious.17 This instruction underscores the immense, enduring cost of their bond, confirming that their fraternal love can only be maintained through ongoing sacrifice or separation.

### III.C. Drakonis and Vadise: Dualism of Mana and Intent

The draconic figures define the cosmic stakes of the conflict. Vadise, the White Dragon, is the Guardian of the White Forest, one of the three Dragons of Knowledge.17 She represents nature, benevolence, and protection, selflessly expending her power to safeguard the hero and Sierra.17 Drakonis, the Crimson Dragon, is associated with the Fire element.18 His aim is purely destructive: to eliminate his fellow Dragons of Knowledge and claim all Mana power for tyrannical self-resurrection.11

This opposition establishes a clear dualism within the game: Vadise embodies Mana's generative and protective potential, while Drakonis embodies Mana’s absolute power used for selfish, destructive ends.17 The underlying philosophical argument is that Mana itself is a neutral force. The catastrophic potential inherent in the Dragon Arc does not stem from Mana’s nature, but from the corrupting will of the user—whether it is Drakonis's greed or Larc's desperate, misplaced love.

## IV. Analysis of the Faerie/Warlords Arc: Ideological Purity Versus Destructive Devotion

The Faerie/Warlords Arc explores how personal ideology and passionate devotion can lead to localized chaos that threatens the wider world. It centers on a love triangle structure involving four childhood friends: Daena, Escad, Matilda, and Irwin.

### IV.A. Irwin and Matilda: The Apocalyptic Romance

The core conflict of this arc is driven by romantic love.10 Irwin is identified as a demon.13 Matilda, who adored Irwin since childhood, maintains unwavering loyalty, attempting to stay with him until the end, even after he engages in destructive acts, including stealing her power.10 Irwin’s actions are shown to stem almost entirely from his tumultuous relationship with Matilda.

The arc provides a sophisticated critique of *amour fou*—a mad, reckless love that isolates the couple from all external consequence. Matilda respects Irwin's decisions and refuses to stop him, even when it threatens Fa'Diel.10 Irwin himself summarizes the tragedy at the arc’s conclusion when he declares he must be freed "from a spell named Matilda".10 This framing suggests that their relationship devolved into a form of mutual spiritual imprisonment, prioritizing their singular devotion over cosmic or civic responsibility. Their romantic love, while intense, proves to be the most chaotic and isolating form of attachment in the game.

### IV.B. Escad: The Tragedy of Absolute Justice

Escad is introduced as a Holy Knight, born into the revered Liotte family.12 He is characterized by an "overbearing sense of righteousness" and is consumed by his quest to find Irwin, whom he believes must be stopped because demons inherently bring chaos.12

Escad functions as the tragic figure of the arc. His rigid adherence to justice, stemming from his heritage and fueled by his friendship with Matilda and Daena, blinds him to the emotional nuances of the situation.12 While his dogma—that Irwin is a threat—is ultimately validated by Irwin's actions, his zealous approach prevents him from seeking compassionate intervention or mediation. Escad attempts to impose a linear, black-and-white moral code onto Fa'Diel’s reality, which is fundamentally driven by chaotic, powerful desires. His inability to compromise his ideology leads to his demise, emphasizing that the quest for absolute purity often results in tragedy.

### IV.C. Daena: The Monk-Soldier of Balanced Faith

Daena, a monk-soldier dedicated to protecting Gato's temple, grew up alongside the Warlords trio and holds a deep, sisterly affection for Matilda.12 She serves as the grounded, morally balanced foil to the emotional extremes of Escad and Matilda.

Daena consciously attempts to keep her mind "free from prejudice," continuing to offer help to Matilda despite the grave danger posed by Irwin.13 She represents ethical duty: a protective form of loyalty guided by empathy and a dedication to the established, sacred order (Gato Grottoes).12 Unlike Escad, whose dogmatic justice leads to violence, or Matilda, whose emotional loyalty leads to chaos, Daena seeks mediation. Her role is to stabilize the moral landscape of the arc, demonstrating that faith and duty can accommodate compassion without collapsing into reckless devotion.

## V. The Supporting Cast and Thematic Archetypes

While the three major arcs structure the game's core drama, a vibrant supporting cast drives numerous self-contained micro-quests, reinforcing the game’s core theme: every corner of Fa'Diel has its own unique, localized story.3 These characters fulfill essential world-building functions and thematic archetypes.

### V.A. Niccolo: The Merchant of Chaos and Avarice

Niccolo, an anthropomorphic rabbit, is an NPC who features prominently in recurring, chaotic subplots titled "Niccolo's Business Unusual".19 He views himself as a purveyor of happiness through transactions, yet he is known for his "money-crazy" dealings and habit of playing "dirty tricks" on customers.19 Notably, the in-game encyclopedia mentions his strong dislike for sproutlings and faeries, which he can barely perceive.21

Niccolo functions as the capitalist archetype and the embodiment of persistent, mundane desire. Whereas the main arcs deal with cosmic love and power, Niccolo’s adventures ensure that even in a world centered on Mana restoration, petty human-like motivations, particularly greed and profit, continue to exist as a constant, chaotic element.21 His story arcs anchor the philosophical idea that restoring the Mana Tree will not purge the world of avarice; it simply allows localized commerce and chaos to flourish alongside grand aspirations.

### V.B. The Magic Academy Trio: Bud, Lisa, and Esmeralda

The characters associated with the Geo Academy of Magic and related events provide accessible, low-stakes conflicts centered on learning and coming of age. Bud and Lisa are young twin siblings. Lisa is considered the more competent sorcerer, while Bud, who believes himself to be great, was expelled from the academy for his mischievous nature.12 Their dynamic provides a relatable portrayal of sibling rivalry and burgeoning magical talent, focusing on discipline and the chaos of undeveloped power.12

Esmeralda, a student at the academy, adds an element of mystery and local folklore, with rumors suggesting she might be Nunuzac's magical monster or a ghost.12 These characters collectively serve to ground the high fantasy world in everyday experiences, contrasting sharply with the apocalyptic stakes of the Jumi or Dragon arcs.

### V.C. Maritime Figures and Vignetters

A series of recurring characters associated with the sea and the SS Buccaneer further flesh out Fa'Diel's cultural tapestry. Cap'n Tusk, the "dandy captain" and anthropomorphic walrus, leads the Pirate Penguins with an unusual commitment to "gentlemanly seaman philosophy".22 The Pirate Penguins themselves are frequently involved in treasure hunts and comical conflicts, such as the event "The Quiet Sea," which requires the protagonist to help locate a ghost’s bottle.23

Similarly, the Sirens, such as Elle and Monique, anchor local stories in the Lumina region. Elle is a siren who tragically refuses to sing following an accident.12 Monique, proprietor of Lumina’s lamp shop, must sing to spirits to coax them into lighting her lamps for sale.27 These characters drive micro-stories focused on localized emotional or practical problems (a ghost in a bottle, slow business, a refusal to sing).24 This rich layer of minor characters demonstrates the unique success of the non-linear design, proving that every geographic location has a self-contained tragedy or triumph that contributes to the holistic restoration of the world.3

Table 2: Character Archetypes and Functions in the Non-Linear Structure

| **Character Group** | **Archetype** | **Function in Fa'Diel Narrative** | **Contribution to World Restoration** | **Source(s)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Niccolo | The Trickster Merchant | Drives self-contained micro-quests centered on economic chaos and avarice. | Demonstrates the persistence of mundane desire post-Mana apocalypse. | 19 |
| Daena | The Medial Agent/Conscience | Attempts to bridge moral extremes; represents grounded faith and duty. | Provides moral stabilization within the Warlords’ ideological conflict. | 12 |
| Vadise & Drakonis | Cosmic Forces/Dualism | Define the extremes of Mana usage (benevolence vs. tyranny). | Establish the cosmic stakes and elemental context for the conflict. | 17 |
| Bud and Lisa | Nascent Magical Talent | Provides accessible, lighthearted arcs focused on learning and sibling dynamics. | World-building via localized, low-stakes conflict in Geo. | 12 |
| Protagonist | The Silent Observer | Restores the world by facilitating the emotional catharsis and resolution of NPCs' desires. | Acts as the crucial, quiet witness and catalyst required by the Land Make system. | 7 |

## VI. Conclusion: Character Interdependence and Thematic Synthesis

The character analysis of *Legend of Mana* confirms that its non-linear structure mandates a decentralized narrative driven by character motivation. The game compensates for the absence of a conventional main plot by establishing three thematically unified, high-stakes story arcs, all of which explore the destructive and redemptive facets of love and desire.10

The Jumi Arc dissects **Communal Love** and the trauma of extinction, demonstrating how duty can fragment the self (Pearl/Blackpearl) and how self-sacrifice (Florina) can lead to communal collapse.14 The Dragon Arc examines **Familial Love**, showing how a bond as powerful as Larc's desire for Sierra can be exploited by cosmic manipulators (Drakonis), turning fraternal affection into an apocalyptic threat.10 Finally, the Faerie/Warlords Arc critiques **Romantic Love**, framing the intense devotion between Matilda and Irwin as a force that isolates individuals and overrides global responsibility, while contrasting it with the necessary, mediating ethical duty of Daena and the tragic, rigid dogma of Escad.10

The restoration of the Mana Tree is thus presented as a cosmic reconciliation dependent upon the emotional resolution achieved within these character arcs—whether that resolution is tragic (Jumi extinction), sacrificial (Larc’s punishment), or cathartic. The protagonist’s success as a passive observer underscores a profound narrative statement: the world of Fa'Diel is re-created not through heroic conquest, but through the delicate, often painful, process of its inhabitants confronting their deepest desires and choosing how their love will affect the world.

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