

聖都消滅

剣舞19

ブレイドダンス

精霊使いの

志瑞祐

Illustration

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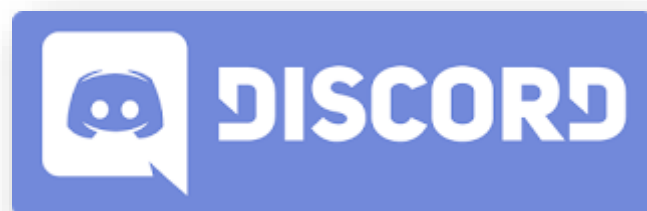
Afterword

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少しかすれた、
耳もとをくすぐるような囁き声。
軍服ごしに、彼女の可愛らしく
小ぶりの胸が当たる。

「私も女だ。
恥じらう気持ちはある。」

Rubbia Elstein
ルビア・エルステイン



Est
エスト

「ふあ、恥ずかしいです、
カミト……」



「覚悟はいいな、クレア。」

「俺の背中、任せろぞ」

「ふん、任されてあげるわ!」

Kazehaya Kamito
カゼハヤ・カミト

Elaine Rouge
クレア・ルージュ



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Prologue

"—Very well, since I promised, I shall tell you."

Greyworth spoke as she looked down at Kamito who was lying on the ground.

"About what I know from the Elemental Lord's shrine twenty-four years ago."

Dawn's rays were streaming through gaps in the gray clouds, illuminating Areishia Spirit Academy's school building.

The merging of the human realm and Astral Zero—Astral Shift—this phenomenon had been interrupted. After that, the great quantity of demon spirits filling up the sky had vanished.

The ruins in the plaza, set up as a gate, had been destroyed by Kamito and Greyworth's Absolute Blade Arts. There was the angel's remains and a sacred sword, very similar to Est, were stabbed in the ground.

This was the elemental waffe form of Millennia Sanctus, the cardinal from the Holy Kingdom.

Right now, she probably lacked even the power to return to her original form. The blade had lost its luster, standing there like a grave marker.

"Twenty-four years ago, you..."

With blood filling up in his mouth, Kamito spat on the ground and muttered.

That was the year when Greyworth the Dusk Witch had won the Blade Dance.

"...What... happened..."

Kamito asked—

Suddenly, he felt an intense wave of dizziness.

(...Wh... at!?)

All strength instantly drained from his body. He felt a searing pain in the depths of his eyeballs. His pulse throbbed violently.

His view, containing Greyworth's figure, was dyed a shade of blood red.

"What's the matter, lad—"

Noticing the anomaly, Greyworth cradled Kamito's head in her arms.

The instant she glimpsed into Kamito's eyes, Greyworth gasped.

"This is...!?"

Chapter 1 - Darkness Awakens

Part 1

It was an hour and a half after the localized Astral Shift had imploded.

At the school building of Areishia Spirit Academy where the Imperial Knights were stationed, the Sacred Maiden flag symbolizing the Academy was flying, a declaration from the students that they had recaptured the school.

Since the majority of their soldiers had lost the will to fight and surrendered, the Imperial Knights offered virtually no resistance.

The supreme commander, Alendora of the Numbers had gone missing. The airspace was occupied by Dracunia's Knights of the Dragon Emperor. Meanwhile, getting the Academy town caught up in the Astral Shift and the large-scale summoning of demon spirits had generated intense distrust of the Holy Kingdom.

Moreover, what changed the knights' minds was the Dusk Witch's speech.

Suddenly making an appearance at the auditorium, Greyworth had revealed the Holy Kingdom's plot hanging over Ordesia's imperial court and the terrifying research they were conducting in the imperial capital, thus persuading them to take up Legitimate Ordesia's cause.

No one questioned why Greyworth seemed to have reverted prime condition. They probably thought that since she was the legendary witch anyway, altering her appearance would be a piece of cake.

Like the students of Areishia Spirit Academy, there was a large proportion among them who had become spirit knights because they

idolized the Greyworth legend. And now, that hero had made her appearance like the legend.

Thus, the princess maidens' school building returned to the students once again.

"...Still, the destruction is quite severe."

"What a tragic sight."

In front of Raven Class' dorm whose outer walls were collapsing, partially incinerated and demolished—

Claire and Rinslet stood there a long time, stunned.

Such brutal devastation did not result from the great quantity of demon spirits summoned from the gate, the angels, or the Imperial Knights.

Rather, they were caused by Demon King's spirits rampaging after Kamito released them using the Ring of Solomon's power.

Out of control, the spirits scattered in the Academy's premises, crashing this way and that, finally using the gate that had appeared during the Astral Shift to return to Astral Zero.

"Our rooms must be a mess too."

"It would have been terrible had Carol not taken our belongings out."

Sighing, Rinslet murmured softly.

Carol had brought out her master's and the others' valuables before the Raven Class dorm was seized by the Imperial Knights.

"Repair costs have risen again."

Ellis pressed her temple and groaned.

"Isn't it great that Ordesia will foot the repair bill?"

"Yes, that is assuming the princess reclaims the throne successfully."

"Fianna and Nee-sama will be fine, I hope..."

"The alliance between the nobles and Dracunia are apparently attacking the imperial capital. After news of the Academy's recapture, the neutral nobles have taken our side apparently."

Ellis was able to listen to the voices of wind spirits. Her intel was probably correct.

"...I'm so glad we made it in time."

Claire exhaled deeply.

"So the Holy Kingdom isn't going to send their army?"

"Apparently. They must have decided that open intervention would be inappropriate, or are biding their time."

Ellis tidied up debris while stepping into the Raven Class dorm.

Though the common kitchen on the ground floor was a mess, its interior seemed intact.

"Despite the destruction of the exterior walls, the damage inside is quite minor—"

She walked around the inside of the dorm, noting down damage in her notebook.

"Wonderful, it looks like the spirit mechanisms sort of work."

Rinslet touched the stove's spirit crystal with her fingertip and a tiny fire was produced.

"Now with this I can cook."

"Look, the canned peaches I hid are still here."

Claire returned from the basement, carrying cans in her arms.

"Claire, hogging them is not the way to go."

"I-Ik know! I'm taking them to Kamito, okay!?"

Part 2

Two moons. A sky so red that it seemed like it was burning.

Over a forest more vast than any that Kamito had seen before, countless spirits were flying, weaving between one another.

(...What is this?)

Kamito's gaze was in the sky.

He could not move his body. All he could do was watch the scene before him.

A gigantic flame spirit was burning the forest. In the shape of a dragon, the spirit was turning its surroundings into scorched earth.

Valkyries clad in red armor were fighting courageously against the dragon spirit.

Among the valkyries, Kamito could recognize one of them.

(...That's Scarlet!?)

Ortlinde the Scarlet Valkyrie—The true form of Claire's contracted spirit.

Enveloped in flames, the valkyries all stabbed their weapons at the gigantic dragon spirit.

The dragon spirit roared, loud enough to shake the earth, then collapsed in flames.

Next, in front of the valkyries who had slaughtered their prey, a darkness spirit with jet-black wings appeared.

(—Restia!?)

This was her appearance without a doubt. Kamito's contracted spirit who resided in his left hand.

Smiling mercilessly, Restia unleashed lightning of darkness that completely covered the sky.

Several of the Scarlet Valkyries were struck by lightning and crashed.

"What the heck...?"

...Kamito decided this was a dream.

(But it's not purely a dream. This scene is—)

'The Spirit War. The great war that took place six thousand years ago to split Astral Zero in two.'

Suddenly, a voice echoed in his mind.

"...!?"

This was a familiar voice to Kamito.

A voice of darkness, enticing Kamito.

The voice of Ren Ashdoll, the Darkness Elemental Lord.

Kamito subconsciously clenched his hands to grip his two swords.

However, no swords manifested in his hands.

This was only natural. Because he was in a dream. A dream she had allowed him to see.

'My nemesis has awakened. Consequently, you have no choice but to awaken.'

A writhing black mist gently enveloped Kamito like an embracing arm.

"Nemesis? Are you talking about the Sacred Maiden?"

'Indeed. The Sacred Maiden is the Demon King's opposing existence.'

"I don't plan on becoming your possession!"

'Now that simply wouldn't do. Because you are mine, beloved child—'

Laughing in mockery, her voice echoed repeatedly in his mind.

Part 3

"Guh, ooh... Ah...!"

Shouting as hard as he could from the depths of his throat, Kamito jumped from the bed.

The bedsprings creaked intensely.

"Huff... Huff... Huff... Huff..."

He looked at the sweat on his hand then surveyed his surroundings.

Walls of pure white. Shelves of spirit crystals and medications, neatly arranged.

...A familiar place.

As part of his job at the the Sylphid Knights, Kamito often transported students who had been knocked out in training. This was the medical facility at the school building.

(...Right. After fighting the angel, I fainted—)

Instantly figuring out his situation, Kamito sighed in relief.

Was the Greyworth the one who brought me here?

Sitting up, Kamito touched his aching ribs.

The bones fractured by the angel's attacks had healed. It was all thanks to this astounding recovery ability—, or rather, regeneration—though it still hurt a bit. It was also thanks to protection from Est, a steel spirit, that his body was fine. Come to think of it, his body's recovery speed was way too fast.

"Guh...!"

Covering his left eye, Kamito groaned.

Wave after wave, the depths of his eyeball was struck by searing pain.

"Don't worry, Kamito—"

A sweet voice vibrated against Kamito's eardrum.

Pale and soft fingertips gently took Kamito's hand.

"Restia..."

He looked back to see her sunset-colored eyes smiling at him.

Clad in a dress the color of night, the beautiful darkness spirit.

The version of her he had seen in the dream just now, with the calm and piercing eyes of a dispassionate and merciless queen, contrasted with the expression of the adorable girl looking at him right now.

"You saw *her* in your dream just now, didn't you?"

"...Yeah."

Kamito nodded mildly to Restia's calmly spoken question.

Due to the contract between them, elementalists and their contracted spirits were capable of sharing some of their memories from dreams.

This was especially true for vivid dreams such as just now.

Ultimately, was that a dream dreamt by Kamito, or Restia?

(...Hell, it's the same thing no matter which side it is.)

He felt really repulsed. No matter what, the fact that Darkness Elemental Lord Ren Ashdoll wanted to control his soul remained unchanged.

"What happened in the dream... Was it real?"

"It was a scene from the Spirit War six thousand years ago."

Restia nodded and answered.

"At the center of Astral Zero, the final battle took place between Ren Ashdoll and the five Elemental Lords. The Elemental Lords' faction suffered heavy casualties whereas the Darkness Elemental Lord was taken down. In the end, she was sealed in the gap between the human realm and Astral Zero—"

"But the seal was imperfect...?"

"Yes. Without the Elemental Lords noticing, she used her own power and succeeded in reincarnating into the weakest race, the humans—"

A glowing fire-red emblem appeared in the depths of Restia's eyes.

An emblem of a sword and a moon. It was identical to Restia Ashdoll's spirit seal.

(...No. What's reflected in her eyes is the light coming from my eye.)

He felt another wave of pain from the depths of his left eyeball.

"...Why is your spirit seal in my eye, Restia?"

"No, that isn't my spirit seal, Kamito."

"...?"

"That is the spirit seal of Darkness Elemental Lord Ren Ashdoll. Having awakened, she wishes to form a spirit contract with you."

"What?"

Restia leaned on the bed and brought her hand gently against Kamito's eyelid.

"In response to the awakening of her nemesis, the Sacred Maiden, I suppose she too has started to awaken."

"H-Hey, Restia!?"

Her body, as light as a feather, was gently pressing down on Kamito, whose eyesight was blocked.

Her gentle arms wrapped around the back of his head, thus hugging him tightly.

Draping down, the tips of her hair brushed against his cheeks. Dark feathers gently enveloped his back.

Back at the Instructional School, she often cuddled Kamito in this manner.

"Don't worry, Kamito. I am your sword. I shan't hand you over to her."

"Restia..."

His left hand heated up faintly. The pain in the depths of his eyeball dissipated gradually.

It probably was through their contract's spirit seal that she had suppressed Ren Ashdoll's power.



The hand blocking his eyesight moved away.

Moist black feathers gave off faint phosphorescence of darkness.

With a mischievous smile surfacing on her face, gazing downwards at Kamito, she was extremely beautiful, Kamito thought.

Next.

"Fufu, I don't mind if you come in, Miss Hell Cat."

"Hyah!?"

Kamito heard a scream from outside the room.

Then there was the sound of something tumbling to the floor.

"Claire? W-What are you doing?"

Still on the bed, sitting up, Kamito asked in surprise.

With twintails flopping, Claire frantically picked up the cans that had fallen.

"...N-Nothing. I heard you collapsed, Kamito, so I came to have a quick look at you!"

Carrying a pile of cans in her arms, Claire stepped into the room.

Her cheeks were tinged with a bit of red.

(Did she see Restia hugging me tightly...?)

Although there was nothing on his conscience, Kamito felt quite embarrassed.

"Umm, are your injuries okay now?"

Claire coughed to clear her throat and asked.

"Yeah, looks like I'm pretty much okay."

"Really? That's great."

Claire breathed a sigh of relief.

She did not say anything despite making eye contact with Kamito.

The emblem appearing on his left eye had presumably vanished.

Kamito looked at Restia to signal "Don't mention about the left eye."

...He did not want Claire to worry.

Restia nodded with a "I know" look.

"You must be hungry. Anyway, I brought many things from the Raven Class dorm."

Saying that, Claire unloaded the cans in her arms onto the bed.

Venison stew with fish added. Fruit with sweet syrup. These cans were luxury items and had spirit language on the labels because they were used as offering to spirits.

"Ah, perfect. I was just about to wonder what to eat."

Kamito picked a couple cans of fruit and stacked them on a shelf by the bed.

"Umm, darkness spirit..."

"What is it?"

Claire looked to the side while handing cans over.

"U-Umm, thanks for your aid. It was all thanks to the talismans you gave me."

"...Huh?"

"So, this is a return gift of sorts. I don't think there are spirits who hate canned food, right?"

"Oh my, a return gift—"

Shaking her head, Restia smiled.

"I should thank you instead. Because of you, I was able to hurry over to Kamito's side."

"H-Hey now, accept it!"

"Fufu, very well. Thank you."

Restia accepted the cans, somewhat pleased.

It looked like these two, who had a complicated past, had slightly improved their relationship without Kamito knowing.

"By the way, what is this can?"

"Canned mackerel. It's quite popular with the spirits in the Academy, you know?"

"Mackerel..."

"What, you don't like fish?"

"No, I will eat it. Though it's not very often that I eat fish..."

Claire looked at Kamito again.

"O-Originally, I was thinking I should be bringing something for you."

"That's okay. It's the thought that counts."

"...! M-Mmm..."

Claire's twintails jumped lightly.

"Fine, give me that spoon. I-I'll feed you."

"N-No, I said I'm fine! I can move my own hand..."

"What, you got a problem with me?"

Just as Claire pouted...

"Hey hey, is Kazehaya Kamito here~?"

"...?"

A voice was heard.

What suddenly appeared was an adorable girl, roughly ten years old, dressed in a black and white dress.

Her silver hair was reminiscent of steel. Her eyes were red like blood.

Her skin was as pale as wax. Her arms and legs were quite slender.

From head to toe, she was quite a beautiful maiden.

"...W-Who are you!?"

Claire cried out warily, summoning Flametongue to her hand.

She was probably making the right call. Although the girl looked quite cute—

(...I totally did not felt her presence.)

Kamito stared unerringly at the girl. This was no ordinary person.

However, the girl was completely unfazed by Kamito's serious gaze.

"The hag told me to come. She told me to summon Kazehaya Kamito once he's awake."

"...H-Hag?"

"Kamito, she's a spirit—"

Restia whispered in Kamito's ear.

"A spirit?"

Spirits capable of taking fully human form were top-tier beings in Astral Zero.

Even for Kamito, he could count the ones he had met on a single hand.

Why would this kind of spirit be here?

"Kiheeheehee, you are right, darkness spirit. We crossed blades at the country of dragons, right?"

"Country of dragons... Don't tell me—"

Kamito finally remembered.

At the Dragon Duchy of Dracunia, what had crossed blades with Restia was—

"You're Greyworth's contracted spirit?"

"Bingo~!"

The girl giggled, showing her fangs.

"I am Vlad Dracul the demon spirit. Nice to meet you!"

Part 4

The imperial capital Ostdakia was a hexagonal fortified city surrounded by three layers of walls.

Ever since the founding of the Ordesia Empire, this impregnable city had never been conquered.

Looking down at this city from the sky over the Caldamon Mountain Range—

The forces of Legitimate Ordesia, led by Second Princess Fianna Ray Ordesia, and its ally the Dragon Duchy of Dracunia were in formation.

The flagship Revenant, military ships gathered here to join the resistance, as well as Dracunia's mainstay, the Knights of the Dragon Emperor, were spread out in the air.

Meanwhile, the imperial capital's defense line consisted of many defense teams with militarized spirits lying in ambush on the plains of Sadelka, as well as Duke Fahrengart's airborne knights.

War between the two sides was about to break out as soon as the rays of dawn rose.

"The students have apparently succeeded in recapturing Areishia Spirit Academy."

Standing on the deck of the Revenant, Fianna spoke.

Perched on her shoulder was a demon wind spirit that had brought the good news.

This was Simorgh sent by Ellis. Although using him as a messenger was a waste of his vast abilities, Ellis had decided to send the fastest wind spirit under her command.

"—I see."

Staring at the Ordesia army's formation, Rubia acknowledged concisely.

"With that, the neutral nobles will take our side."

"Kamito and the others seem to be fine. Of course, so is Claire."

"I see."

There was no change in tone compared to before. However, Fianna did not miss the emotions of relief hidden somewhere in Rubia's voice.

"The Ordesia army seems to be making a move. It is beginning."

"...Yes."

Under a tense atmosphere, Fianna nodded—

And instantly drew the silver sword sheathed at her waist.

Reflecting the sunlight of dawn, the slender blade shone brilliantly.

This was the elemental waffe of the knight spirit Georgios, which had served generations of the Ordesia imperial family.

Raising the silver sword's blade to the sky, Fianna chanted mystic words.

Thou, servant of the king of the child of man, knight and master swordsman—

Thou art my sword, thou art my shield, unleash the light of perpetuity to purify darkness—

"Elemental waffe Zwei Shift—its appellation is Glory of the Queen!"

The instant the words of releasing were unleashed, there was an explosion of silver-white holy light.

The blinding holy light instantly enveloped all the forces on her side. A gigantic holy knight spirit seal, symbolizing the Ordesia imperial family, appeared in the dawn sky.

This was the supreme barrier imbued with spirit blessings and protection, the new power Fianna had gained from her training on Dragon's Peak.

Her spirit seal, shining gloriously in the sky, rendered all arguments inferior.

Fianna Ray Ordesia—The Lost Queen.

She was truly the queen of Legitimate Ordesia—

Holding the shining silver sword up high, Fianna shouted.

"—Lend me your strength, everyone. Let us take back my home country from the Holy Kingdom's puppet!"

The ground shook with thunderous cheering.

Chapter 2 - The Truth Twenty-years Prior

Part 1

After the demon spirit Vlad Dracul showed up, Kamito and his friends went over to the headmistress' office.

With her gray hair was bobbing about, Vlad Dracul was quite cute.

Kamito had crossed blades with her in her elemental waffe form at Dracunia—

"I can't believe there's a demon spirit with human form..."

Kamito spoke quietly, out of earshot of the girl walking in front.

"That's the highest-ranked spirit out of all the demon spirits, crowned with the title of 'Duke.' Truly impressive as ever, the Dusk Witch, to be able to tame such a powerful spirit."

"Don't tell me you're acquainted with her?"

"Only by reputation. After all, she went on a wild rampage during the Spirit War—"

"Yes, Miss Sword Spirit over there, I've fought you before, you know~"

The girl looked back and giggled, baring her sharp teeth.

"Pretty much every Elemental Lord's direct subordinate was strong, but this wild child Est was super dangerous. To be honest, I really don't want to go against her again."

"Est, do you recall any of this?"

"No, Kamito."

Upon hearing Kamito's question, the sacred sword at his waist flashed several times. Separated from her principal body, Est currently retained only fragments of her memories from the Spirit War.

"What~, you don't remember~? Tsk."

The demon spirit girl grumbled quite disappointedly then half-skipped half-ran up the stairs.

"According to the Spirit Research Society's understanding, it is theoretically impossible for humans and demon spirits to communicate with each other. I never expected a spirit like her to exist."

Claire murmured with curiosity.

"You elementalists might think you know everything about spirits, but there are still many more mysteries in Astral Zero."

"Can't deny that."

Claire admitted it honestly with a shrug.

Arriving before the headmistress' office, the demon spirit girl pushed the door open without knocking.

"I brought 'em here~, shitty witch hag~"

"Who do you think you are calling hag? I'll annihilate you, demon spirit."

Sitting at the office desk inside, Greyworth invoked void spirit magic without delay.

"Woah!"

Kamito hastily dodged.

"Ehehe, so scary—Woo♪"

Somersaulting in the air with a flutter of her skirt, the demon spirit Vlad dodged the magic projectile spectacularly.

The floor was dug up with a huge hole in the office wall.

"H-Hey, Greyworth!?"

"You're in the way, lad. I need to teach a disobedient bad spirit a lesson."

Still with her finger pointed at the demon spirit girl, Greyworth spoke with a serious demeanor.

"What's wrong with calling a shitty hag out for being a shitty hag?"

"How dare you—"

Vlad stuck out her tongue.

"Shitty hag so scary, Vlad's gonna play outside now~"

With a turn of her jet-black overcoat, she immediately escaped out of sight.

"...My goodness. My previous contracted spirit was so much better, even though they're both demon spirits."

"Where did you contract this spirit from?"

Kamito asked while walking into the office.

"A sealed spirit kept in secret by the Ordesian military. Unearthed from ancient ruins, but no one was able to tame her. Okay, please take a seat—"

Greyworth stood up and invited Kamito and company to sit down on the sofa for guests.

Leaning Est against the side, Kamito sat down on the sofa.

Occupying his left and right were Claire and Restia respectively. Faced with Greyworth, who looked like she was the same age as them, Claire seemed a bit nervous.

Well, who could blame her? After all, the legendary witch recorded in the Academy's textbooks was appearing before her, looking identical to during the olden days.

"Have you recovered?"

"Yeah, pretty much. At least I can walk."

Nodding, Kamito shrugged a bit.

"I see. Sorry for pushing you too hard, lad."

Greyworth spoke quietly with a solemn look.

"What's going on, this is totally unlike you."

"I became the Holy Kingdom's pawn and hurt you. I must apologize for this first."

Saying that, Greyworth slowly bowed her head.

"...!?"

Seeing that, Claire widened her eyes in surprise. Kamito gasped too.

To think the witch would bow her head. Was history being made?

"What happened to you in the imperial capital? It's not like I don't care about what happened twenty-four years ago, but I want to clear this up first. An elementalist of your level, manipulated by others, that's unthinkable—"

"...You are right."

Lifting her monocle, Greyworth stared intently into Kamito's eyes.

"Did you hear from the princess about the attempted assassination of the emperor?"

"Yeah..."

She was referring to how the Bloodstone in Fianna's possession had run amok and released a powerful demon spirit during the Imperial Council's discussion of how to handle the Theocracy's coup d'etat.

"I was labeled a traitor to the country and imprisoned in the infamous tower of Guas Gibai. Everything was planned by the Holy Kingdom backing Arneus."

Guas Gibai. Commonly known as the "torture tower," it was a military research facility used during the Ranbal War for a series of cruel human experiments involving cursed armament seals and others.

While Kamito and his companions were infiltrating the imperial capital, the Numbers special operative knight Virrey Branford had disappeared there during her mission to rescue Greyworth.

"I heard that the Holy Kingdom's warrior priestesses are implanted with faith towards the Holy Lord using mind magic—"

Resting her chin on her hand, Claire murmured.

"It was not mind magic."

Greyworth shook her head in response.

"I'd have trouble believing that an elementalist like you could get brainwashed by mind magic, even having lost your peak power."

Restia commented while preening her jet-black feathers.

"Oh? I never expected to receive such high praise from you, darkness spirit."

"Oh my, I have no choice but to acknowledge how scary you are. After all, you are the witch who took away my Kamito before."

Faced with Restia's combative gaze, Greyworth smiled wryly in return.

(...Oh well, I can't imagine this witch getting brainwashed either.)

Also, it would not explain why she had regained her youthful appearance either.

Like resurrection of the dead, regaining one's youth was not something any spirit's power could achieve.

If there was an exception, it would only be—

"The Holy Kingdom made me remember my *covenant from the past*."

"Covenant?"

"Indeed. Twenty-four years ago, I entered into a covenant with the Holy Lord."

Greyworth began to narrate in a calm tone of voice.

Part 2

Twenty-four years ago, the month of the white lion...

It was the day when Greyworth Ciel Mais had emerged victorious in the Blade Dance as the Empire's representative.

She had gone to the Elemental Lords' altar to present her longtime *wish*.

Back then, the wish she had made was a young girl's naive fantasy.

"...What did you wish for?"

Hearing Kamito's question, Greyworth smiled wryly in self-mockery.

"—A world without war."

"That foolish little girl wished for such a dream to come true."

"..."

Kamito could not help but stay silent.

A foolish wish—The witch's words were excessively heavy.

The Ranbal War. Before Kamito and his companions were born, two great wars had broken out on the continent.

It was said that war had started due to squabbling over mining rights of spirit crystals, but there was no definitive narrative of the true reason.

With the entire continent gripped in war, the ultimate witch had applied herself to the battlefield, earning the title of hero in her homeland.

However, what the girl known as the witch sought was not fame or praise.

On the battlefield where numerous comrade-in-arms and contracted spirits perished constantly—

With a singlehearted wish to put an end to armed conflict, she plunged into the midst of war.

Hence, *that* was the first wish the girl made.

It was precisely for the sake of achieving that wish, the girl had won every fight throughout her Blade Dance tournament.

However, that *wish*—

That pure *wish* was absolutely impossible to achieve exactly because it was too pure.

Kamito knew this already.

(...Fifteen years ago, there was another girl who made the same wish.)

Lurie Lizaldia—That girl's wish did not come true.

"The Elemental Lords said that it was a wish beyond the power of miracles. At that moment, I realized for the first time that the Elemental Lords were not omnipotent."

In front of the Elemental Lords' altar, the girl fell into the abyss of disappointment.

From the beginning, she was uninterested in any other wish.

I might as well leave without making any wish, she thought.

It would serve as a tiny "take that" directed at the powerless Elemental Lords—

But just then...

"—A voice appeared in my mind and spoke to me."

"Was it Holy Lord Alexandros...?"

Greyworth quietly nodded when Kamito spoke that name.

Three years ago, the Holy Lord was absent when Kamito was granted an audience with the Elemental Lords.

What had the Holy Lord said to Greyworth twenty-four years ago?

"The Holy Lord proposed a certain deal to me."

"...A deal?"

"The Holy Lord told me this. I can make your wish come true. I can create a world without war, a world where conflict between people will no longer exist—"

—Become my right arm to achieve that world.

"Was that the *covenant*? Between you and the Holy Lord—"

"...Indeed."

Greyworth's gray eyes darkened.

"Having witnessed too much death, the little lass was dealt a serious blow by despair. She believed those words that were filled with hope. Or rather, she entrusted everything to that sliver of hope—"

Hence, the Holy Lord and the Witch established a covenant.

The Holy Lord granted a portion of the power of miracles to the maiden. Completely unaware that true identity of the miracle was the darkness corrupting the Elemental Lords, the maiden accepted the power.

"It was thanks to the power of miracles shared by the Holy Lord that my appearance remained unchanged over so many years. And also because of that, my divine power did not wane until now—"

"I see, so that's what happened..."

Claire held her breath, unable to hide the surprise on her face.

(...Speaking of which, Lurie Lizaldia also kept her youthful appearance.)

Just then, Kamito recalled that.

However, Lurie apparently had the ability to alter her appearance using spirit magic as well..

"On that day, I became the Holy Lord's right arm. While serving my homeland Ordesia as the first of the Empire's Numbers, I waited for the right time."

"The right time?"

Greyworth's sharp gaze shot straight at Kamito's face.

"Yes. I was waiting for one who had inherited the Demon King's power to show up."

"...What!?"

Kamito widened his eyes in surprise.

THE one who had inherited the Demon King's power. In other words...

"You, Kazehaya Kamito."

Greyworth exhaled gravely.

"All this time, I have been waiting for you to appear, lad."

Part 3

"...Waiting to meet me? You?"

This was the most shocking statement she had made so far.

Feeling intense thirst in his throat, Kamito gulped.

In Kamito and Greyworth's first encounter, they were respectively the assassin and assassination target.

That was actually all part of the plan?

"The Holy Lord predicted that the Darkness Elemental Lord's reincarnation would be born in this era, and therefore looked forward to his awakening."

"The Holy Lord wanted me to awaken? Why...?"

The Darkness Elemental Lord was supposed to be the Holy Lord's enemy.

Then why on earth did he want her to resurrect...?

"In response to the Darkness Elemental Lord's awakening, that which had sealed the Holy Lord's soul would be liberated—That was what the Holy Lord told me. Back then, I did not fully understand, but now I finally do. You must have realized too, lad."

"...! So that's what's going on?"

That which had sealed the Holy Lord's soul.

It was referred to the one who had turned into a spirit crystal due to Est's power, and was thus sealed underground in the Demon King's Tomb for a thousand years—

(—Areishia Idriss.)

...He had suspected this before.

Why had the Holy Lord not released the Sacred Maiden's seal for so long, the past thousand year?

The spirit Iris' barrier was not the sole reason.

Until the Demon King's successor awakened, the Sacred Maiden likewise could not wake up.

"Then in that case, you raised me as Ren Ashbell because—"

"Yes, indeed—"

Confronted with the question asked by Kamito's trembling voice, Greyworth answered.

"My mission was to hasten your awakening as the Demon King."

"...!"

He felt as though his vision turned pitch black.

In that case, those memories back then with her raising him—

Instruction at the witch's mansion, training in the Spirit Forest, inheriting Absolute Blade Arts, etc—

(All that was to complete her mission as the Holy Lord's right arm...?)

Presumably realizing Kamito's thoughts—

Greyworth showed sorrow on her face.

Seeing her expression, Kamito clenched his fist hard.

...The thought of condemning Greyworth did not cross his mind.

No matter what her motive, she had personally raised Kamito.

However, it was a feeling akin to loss and desolation that tightly gripped Kamito's heart.

"In the beginning, I took you in because of the mission. That is the truth."

Greyworth confessed everything.

"..."

"But while I was raising you, confusion appeared in my heart for the first time."

"Confusion..."

"Perhaps I developed feelings over time. If you were to awaken as the Demon King, you would become the enemy of the world, destined to walk a path of no return, bearing the brunt of hatred and resentment from numerous peoples. When I realized that, I—"

Suspicious of the Holy Lord's words for the first time, Greyworth explained.

"It was then that I figured it out. The Holy Lord's true objective."

"True—" "Objective...?"

Kamito and Claire's voices overlapped.

"Soon after adopting the lad, I had a strange dream."

"...A dream?"

"Yes. What you saw at the Elemental Lords' altar, I saw in my dream."

"...The angels of another world?"

Greyworth nodded.

Repeating the same dream every night, she soon realized it was no ordinary dream.

It was a dream shared between a spirit and the princess maiden contracted to the spirit.

Just as how Kamito was able to catch glimpses of the Darkness Elemental Lord's memories—

Perhaps through the Otherworldly Darkness inside her, Greyworth had witnessed the Holy Lord's dream.

Or maybe, it was a sign that the Holy Lord was gradually recovering his original strength just as Kamito was starting to awaken as the Demon King.

"In the dream, an army of an astounding number of angels occupied the entire sky. A gigantic gate was open in the air. Countless angels descended from there."

"What...?"

An army of angels had come to this world through a gate?

It was what Kamito feared most after seeing what lay across the Otherworldly Darkness at the Elemental Lords' altar.

"But that was not the most shocking scene."

"...Huh?"

"Next, a giant of light swallowed the angels."

Saying that, even Greyworth had sweat on her forehead.

"Uh, a giant of light...?"

Claire asked in surprise.

"...The Holy Lord. As a contractor, I instinctively understood."

In front of the shocked Greyworth—

Having swallowed the angels, the giant of light began to employ that power.

Literally, the giant changed the world by hand.

All Greyworth could do inside the dream was watch in shock as the world she knew gradually disappeared.

"I could not tell whether the scene I witnessed in my dream was something that had actually happened in the past or a possible future in the Holy Lord's mind."

However, it was then that Greyworth finally understood the true meaning of the Holy Lord's words.

So-called creating a world without war meant opening a gate to the Otherworld to obtain the power of angels, then using that power to *remake the world from zero*—

"That's..."

Mid-sentence, Kamito stopped.

He recalled what Lurie and Millennia had said.

Rebuild the world—That was what they had said.

Although it had limitations, the summoned angel definitely possessed the power to interfere with physical laws.

If the Holy Lord, leader of the Elemental Lords, obtained that power, then—

"As for the world the Holy Lord will create, I have no idea what it will be like."

Greyworth shook her head calmly.

"Perhaps it is the world without war that I once wished for. However, it is definitely not the world that my comrades-in-arms sacrificed themselves to protect."

"...I see. That's why you—"

For Lurie Lizaldia, the world was already filled with despair.

That was why she was willing to sacrifice herself for the ideal world the Holy Lord described.

However, Greyworth was different.

What she wanted to protect was the current world.

"Resolving to betray the Holy Lord, I ordered Vivian Melosa, who was my disciple back then, to transplant an illegal cursed armament seal onto my heart, sealing the covenant."

However, that was a miscalculation. When the cursed armament seal was transplanted to her heart, simultaneously, all memories about the Holy Lord were erased.

This was a trap laid by the Holy Lord when he granted power.

Forgetting she had entered into a covenant with the Holy Lord—

She unconsciously guided Kamito to awaken as the Demon King.

—Hence, the Strongest Blade Dancer, Ren Ashbell, was born.

"...That was what happened twenty-four years ago."

Greyworth said.

"While I was imprisoned at Guas Gibai, Millennia Sanctus destroyed the cursed armament seal and awakened the darkness lying dormant

inside me. Lad, do you still remember the time when you inherited the ultimate technique during the Blade Dance?"

"Yeah..."

Last Strike.

Passing on the ultimate technique of the Absolute Blade Arts, Greyworth had lost her power as an elementalist.

"That time, it was Lurie Lizaldia who saved me at Ragna Ys. My guess is she analyzed the cursed armament seal on my heart while treating me."

"..."

"I am the stupid witch, leashed by the Holy Lord."

Greyworth laughed in self-mockery.

"...No."

Kamito said slowly.

"Hmm?"

"You put your heart into raising me. That's the unalterable truth."

Although he felt a bit shy saying this in front of the witch, these were Kamito's true feelings.

She was the one who had taught Kamito how to survive in this world.

She was the one who had created the opportunity for him to meet Claire and the rest of Team Scarlet at the Academy.

She had given Kamito back his human side after his assassin upbringing.

It was almost like—

"You're... my—mother."

"..."

Hearing these words of Kamito—

Greyworth showed a shocked expression for an instant, stunned.

Then—

"Fufu, I almost fell for you there, lad—"

Seeing the witch's innocent smile for the first time, Kamito felt his heart race.

Part 4

After listening—

"Excuse me, headmistress, how were you able to recover your memory?"

Claire asked.

"It was the Demon Slayer that severed the covenant together with the Otherworldly Darkness inside me. When I woke up at the bottom of Dragon's Canyon, I had regained all my memories."

"I see, the gamble paid off—"

Kamito looked down at Est at his waist.

The Demon Slayer had destroyed the cursed seal armament transplanted to Velsaria's heart in the past and erased the darkness corrupting Elemental Lords.

Naturally, erasing the Holy Lord's contract was possible too.

"Praise me, Kamito."

"You're amazing, Est."

Kamito chuckled wryly and gently stroked the sacred sword's hilt.

"Speaking of which, how does the Holy Lord intend to open the gate to the Otherworld?"

"...Yeah. And to obtain the angels' power—"

Though the Elemental Lords were powerful, would something like this actually be possible...?

"—Perhaps *this thing* might know."

Greyworth glanced at the sword leaning against the wall.

Securely bound by a chain for restraining spirits, this was the sword of Millennia Sanctus.

Turning herself into a gate, she had summoned an angel.

Surely, she must know the inner details of the Holy Lord's plan.

"Come to think of it, I think she called Est her sister."

...Upon closer examination, the sword's decorations were quite similar to the Demon Slayer's.

Even her iris was colored the same as Est's, a clear violet.

"I have no sisters."

Est denied simply.

"Allow me to investigate that sword."

"Yeah, thanks."

—Just then, there was knocking at the door of the headmistress' office.

"Headmistress, an emergency report—"

The voice belonged to Kamito's homeroom teacher, Ms. Freya.

"What is the matter?"

"—The palace at the imperial capital has fallen."

Part 5

Boom, boom, boom—!

Violent explosions rocked Nefescal Palace.

Militarized spirits for subduing strongholds were deployed in the air over the imperial capital, one after another.

At the back of the throne room inside the vast palace—

"...! W-Why... Why!?"

Pale in the face, Emperor Arneus cried out convulsively in terror.

With every vibration, the luxurious chandelier encrusted with spirit crystals swayed widely.

It was like a countdown to death.

"I-I am the legitimate Emperor of Ordesia! Why did this—"

There was no one else in the throne room. Only a few personal guards protected him.

The battle over the plains of Sadelka soon reached a conclusion.

Encouraged by Fianna's Glory of the Queen, the rebel's knights overwhelmed the Imperial Knights with their burgeoning morale.

Even taking into account Dracunia's reinforcements, the Empire's forces still enjoyed a six to four ratio advantage in numbers, but the Imperial Knights were extremely low in morale.

On top of it being common knowledge that Emperor Arneus was the Holy Kingdom's puppet, news of the rebel forces conquering Areishia Spirit Academy had dealt a decisive blow.

Transmitted by the wind, the news spread all at once, greatly shaking the Imperial Knights.

The Holy Kingdom's large-scale summoning of demon spirits, forbidden by international treaty, combined with the fact that the hero Greyworth supported the students, also contributed to the decrease in morale in the Empire's knights.

As the battle situation deteriorated, nobles in the emperor faction switched sides and surrendered.

The imperial capital's walls were raising white flags. Military ships and Dracunia's dragon riders occupied the whole sky.

"...Damn it, why didn't the Holy Kingdom send reinforcements!?"

Arneus emotionally smashed his fist against the throne's armrest.

The Holy Lord's Knights were garrisoned on the Holy Kingdom's border. Under a secret agreement, they were supposed to send reinforcements to help in defense as soon as the imperial capital was under attack.

However, there were no signs of reinforcements at all.

The cardinals stationed in the palace had also vanished without a trace.

The Holy Kingdom, which had backed his ascension, had abandoned him.

Explosions were heard repeatedly. The palace shook violently.

"Uwaaaah!"

Arneus fell off the throne in an unsightly manner, clutching his head.

"Why, why...!?"

Just then...

"How unseemly, Your Majesty."

Inside this throne room where there was not supposed to be anyone else. Someone's mocking voice was heard.

"I cannot fathom why you would cling so obsessively to a throne you never acquired through your own ability."

"...!"

He looked up, only to see a young girl standing before him.

The Holy Kingdom's cardinal—Millennia Sanctus.

She was not merely a ordinary young beauty.

Arneus knew that she was an exceptionally rare and terrifying being.

"D-Dame Millenia, why didn't the Holy Kingdom send reinforcements!? At this rate, I'll—"

"Your reign will be overthrown."

Finding it funny, Millennia laughed.

Arneus screamed.

Then why on earth did you people allow me to ascend to the throne!?

Arneus knew he was merely a puppet a long time ago.

"I-I still have value! Right?"

"No, your mission is over. Your Majesty."

"...! What did you say?"

"Enough sacrifices have been offered."

"...Sacrifices?"

Arneus frowned in surprise.

"Our goal is to cause war and chaos on the continent. The two Ranbal Wars, the Theocracy's civil conflict, this Ordesia war and the Demon King War a thousand years ago, all of them were sacrifices for disrupting order in the human realm—"

"What on earth are you talking about..."

"The collapse of order in the human realm is enough to destabilize the Elemental Lords. This is key to opening the gate to the Otherworld— ="

With the sound of intense explosions, the palace gates were destroyed.

"—Now then, I must excuse myself. Take care, Your Majesty."

"W-Wait, I said wait!"

Ignoring Arneus' yelling—

With a turn of her pure white vestments, Millennia Sanctus disappeared.

"Ha, haha, hahahaha..."

Sitting on the throne, he laughed drily.

Just then, people entered with the sound of footsteps.

It was Fianna in full imperial attire and bodyguard knights.

...Evidently, even the knights in the king's royal guard had abandoned him.

"—Arneus, you have no right to sit on that throne."

Fianna pointed her elemental waffe rapier straight at him.

"...Is this the end?"

Hanging his head, Arneus raised his arms to surrender.

Chapter 3 - Holy Lord

Part 1

"Alright, one after another please. No butting in line!"

"Please line up~"

In the school courtyard, in front of a simmering soup cauldron set up over a fire spirit crystal, Rinslet and Carol were busy at work.

Inside the cauldron was a Laurenfrost-style hot pot made using leftover vegetables and seasonings.

Chopped yams and spinach. A small amount of salted meat.

In addition, a lot of spices and chili peppers had been added, causing bodies to heat up after consumption.

In front of the two girls, passing out portions, the Academy's spirits had formed a long line.

Coming into contact with the demon realm miasma summoned by astral shift and losing their divine power, the spirits naturally gathered together.

The school courtyard was filled with glowing spirits.

"If I serve them all, there wouldn't be any left for the students and the Imperial Knights."

Rinslet crossed her arms, somewhat in a dilemma.

"We do not mind waiting. After all, the spirits might vanish at this rate."

Responding to her was Ellis who had arrived at the courtyard to pick up aid supplies.

The Sylphid Knights were currently bandaging wounded students.

"Speaking of which—"

Saying that, Ellis looked at her feet and asked a question.

"Why are demon spirits staying here?"

Mixed among the the line of spirits were scattered demon spirits with terrifying appearances.

Presumably, with the gate to the demon realm suddenly gone, they had nowhere to go.

Running over to Carol's feet in front of the soup cauldron, the demon spirits gnashed their teeth noisily.

"Kyah, m-milady!"

"Be good. Do not threaten Carol!"

When Rinslet yelled at them, holding a ladle, the demon spirits settled down.

"Rinslet, you can communicate with demon spirits? I remember textbooks in the Academy said they were impossible to command..."

"I do not discriminate spirits when they are hungry spirits."

With a wave of her hand, Rinslet instantly sent the demon spirits forming a line neatly.

"This is definitely a case to report to the Spirit Research Society—"

"Haha, taming even demon spirits, nothing less expected of milady!"

Carol clapped her hands and laughed heartily.

Just then—

"Hey, still not ready yet? I'm hungry."

The girl with ash-gray hair in twintails ran over.

She was Kamito's adopted sister, Muir Alenstarl.

"It will be ready soon. You must wait your turn even if you are Kamito-san's sister."

"Yes, fine."

Muir nodded obediently and joined the back of the line.

Demon spirits kept drifting over, hanging around her.

For some reason, Muir seemed particularly popular with demon spirits.

"They're pretty cute in spite of their horrifying faces."

"R-Really...?"

Ellis frowned at the comment with a questioning countenance.

...This girl's sense of aesthetics was definitely impossible to understand.

Just then—

"So you're all here—"

"Oh, Onii-sama!"



Kamito and Claire arrived together.

Muir instantly ran over and buried her face in Kamito's chest.

Her twintails swaying, she rubbed her face repeatedly against him.

"Muir, I heard you worked hard."

Kamito stroked Muir's ash-gray hair.

"Yes, I put in a lot of effort for you."

Still hugging Kamito's waist, Muir nodded.

Together with Velsaria, she had defended the students' street barricade.

"Hold on, Kamito, you're spoiling your adopted sister."

Claire was pouting unhappily.

"Hmph, it's only natural for a brother to dote on his sister."

Muir stuck her tongue out and taunted.

"Grrrrr...!"

The two twintailed girls glared at each other, sparks flying.

"Kamito, are your injuries healed?"

Ignoring the two girls, Ellis asked with concern.

"Yeah, the bone fractures are set at least."

"That does not count as healed, my goodness."

"Kamito-san is too reckless."

Rinslet made a look of exasperation and shrugged.

"This is a specially prepared hot pot, everyone. It will warm you up."

Carol served soup in wooden bowls.

There were large chunks of yams. One glimpse was enough to make you hungry.

"Thanks. I shall take a portion to my esteemed sister later."

"Is Velsaria okay? I heard she really strained herself."

When Kamito asked...

"Yes, she consumed too much divine power. She is currently being treated at a facility in the Academy town."

"...I see. Looks like she pushed herself too much."

"But if that lady wasn't there, the barricade would have fallen long ago."

In a rare moment, Muir acknowledged someone other than Kamito.

"By the way, did you come here for a reason?"

"Oh, yeah, that's right..."

Now Kamito remembered.

"The imperial capital, Ostdakia, has fallen—"

Next, Claire spoke.

"What?"

"It capitulated much sooner than expected."

"Yes, we were surprised too—"

Hearing Rinslet murmur with a questioning look, Kamito agreed.

No one would have expected the battle for the imperial capital to have concluded in such short time.

"Duke Fahrengart apparently surrendered. He wanted to avoid turning the capital into a sea of flame, I guess."

"My grandfather..."

Ellis murmured with a complicated expression.

"Right now, Fianna and the nobles of the Emperor faction are having a peace negotiation."

"Who knows what will happen in the imperial capital? If Greyworth has to manage things here, I guess the few of us could head over to protect Fianna—"

The imperial capital was currently in turmoil. The nobles in the Emperor faction might still be targetting Fianna's life. The Holy Kingdom's lackeys might still be lurking in the palace too. Considering the precedents set by Lurie and Leschkir, the Numbers could not be trusted either.

In the middle of the enemy camp, Fianna's only true companion around her was Rubia.

...She must be feeling ill at ease.

"Yeah, that's right. Let's leave this to the Sylphid Knights and we head to the imperial capital."

"Well said. Carol, I leave the food to you."

"Please rest assured, milady. I won't get sugar and salt mixed up anymore!"

"Ah, that worries me..."

Rinslet pressed on her own temple.

"How do we get to the imperial capital? Should we use the Lightning Feather?"

Ellis asked.

The Lightning Feather was the Academy's only research ship, belonging to the Sylphid Knights.

Although its name seemed to imply it was very fast, but in actual fact, the Lightning Feather was just a retired military ship from the Ranbal War, and quite slow.

From what Kamito had heard, the spirit crystals serving as the power source already had cracks.

"...Well, that is the only ship."

"That rundown ship really makes me worry whether it might crash in the middle of the journey..."

"I-It will be okay... I think, probably."

Ellis did not seem too confident either.

After all, that ship had never been used ever since Ellis became captain of the Sylphid Knights.

"How about borrowing my ship, if it is alright for you?"

"...?"

Kamito looked towards where the voice came—

"It has been a while, Kazehaya Kamito."

"You're here, Leonora!?"

Leonora Lancaster, dressed in the dragon country's military uniform, was standing before his eyes.

"Leonora-dono and the Knights of the Dragon Emperor have come to aid us."

Seeing Kamito did not know the whole story, Ellis explained to him.

According to her, the Dracunian army had sent Leonora and the Knights of the Dragon Emperor as a detached force to the Academy while their main force went to reclaim the imperial capital. Thus, Leonora had helped the barricades hold.

Leonora was Dracunia's strongest knight.

Her assistance was tantamount to obtaining the most reliable reinforcements.

"Leonora, are your injuries all healed?"

Kamito asked.

Wounds caused by Greyworth's demon sword should have been critical.

"Yes, a resilient body is an advantage of being a dragon spirit user."

Saying that, Leonora smiled fearlessly.

"Dragon knights become stronger every time they awaken from the abyss of death. As I am now, perhaps I might be able to match you, you know?"

She placed her hand on the great sword at her waist.

In that instant, she exuded astonishing divine power, causing surrounding spirits to clamor.

"H-Hold on, I'm still injured, okay!?"

Kamito hastily waved his hands.

"Fufu, I was just joking. I have yet to recover to peak condition."

Leonora replied but Kamito was unsure if it was a joke or not. She shrugged and put her sword away.

It was hard to imagine her being far from peak condition given that she had fought a large number of demon spirits intensely mere hours earlier.

How much stronger did this dragon girl become...?

"I'll take you on once everything is settled, okay?"

"Fufu, now I have your word. Be it a blade dance of the night, I shall take you on to the very end."

Pressing her chest against him, Leonora smiled mischievously.

"...! W-What is with you!?"

"H-Hold on, Kamito!"

"Kamito-san!?"

"Onii-sama, what is a blade dance of the night?"

Muir asked with an innocent expression on her face.

...Give me a break, explaining this to my adopted sister would make me a bad influence.

Cough cough, Ellis coughed lightly just then and spoke.

"B-By the way, about borrowing Leonora-dono's ship that was brought up just now..."

"Yes, that is right."

Leonora withdrew her chest from tightly pressing against Kamito.

"I traveled here on a dragon carrier. Although it is the small type, its flight speed is extremely fast."

The military ship was reportedly moored in the outskirts of the Academy town. Although Dracunia was not well-known for its military ships, the dragon carriers used for transporting flying dragons to the battlefield were a whole different matter.

The ship that brought Leonora here could apparently carry six flying dragons.

"We are allowed to borrow a Dracunian military ship?"

Ellis asked a very natural question.

"No problem at all. It belongs exclusively to the Lancaster family."

"A-A private military ship?"

"Nothing less expected from a Dragon Duchess..."

Claire and Rinslet stared wide-eyed.

"Thank you very much, Leonora-dono—"

"Yes, you are a great help."

"I shall be traveling to the imperial capital later too. Before that, I have orders from His Majesty the Dragon King for me to guard this Academy—"



Saying that, Leonora reached into her own cleavage and took out a dragon-shaped key.

"This is the admin key for the ship."

"W-Where the heck are you keeping stuff..."

Kamito accepted the key from her that still held residual body warmth.

"By the way, please do not use my personal cabin for indecent acts."

"Like hell anyone's gonna do that!"

"Hey Onii-sama, I wanna come too."

Just then, Muir hugged Kamito's waist.

However, Kamito shook his head.

"No, you have to stay back."

"Eh, why!?"

"You haven't recovered yet. You've got to rest well."

Kamito placed his hand on Muir's head and stroked her ash-gray hair gently.

Muir's special ability, the Jester's Vise, placed a huge strain on her health. It easily caused her to collapse with fever, and back in the Instructional School, she could not use it continuously either.

"Wait until you recover your stamina, then come to the imperial capital with Leonora."

"...Fine, Onii-sama."

Muir pouted and nodded reluctantly.

Part 2

The Holy Capital of Alexandria.

As the Holy Kingdom's capital, it was also the homeland where Sacred Maiden Areishia was born.

Although its functions as an economic and political center had already shifted to the secondary capital city of Meriazal long ago, numerous princess maidens lived in this city that still stood as the Holy Kingdom's center of scholarship and religious affairs.

On top of a developed hill, pure white spires stood in neat rows like soldiers in formation. And lording over these spires was the massive Holy Lord Palace.

Built four hundred years ago, this magnificent sacred palace towered over all other buildings, overlooking the entire holy capital.

Inside the deepest part of the Holy Lord Palace, inside the Most Sacred Hall—

"The localized Astral Shift in the Areshia Spirit Academy region has been confirmed. The experiment could be described as a success."

A girl dressed in holy vestments spoke calmly.

This young and adorable girl had waist-length blonde hair and an eye patch over her left eye.

This was the spirit carrying Otherworldly Darkness within her—
Millennia Sanctus.

"Although two of *me* have been lost, the plan proceeds without impediment."

"—Well done, Est."

Sitting on the throne, the Sacred Maiden—Areishia Idriss—spoke in a voice filled with tender affection.

"With this, Lurie Lizaldia's sacrifice would not be in vain."

"Yes, she must feel elated for being the rock which the Holy Lord's plan is built upon."

"I would hope so. After all, she risked her life to release this vessel."

Sacred Maiden Areishia stood up and stared at the ceiling of the Holy Lord Palace's great hall.

Carved there were sculptures based on the Five Great Elemental Lords.

"This world is filled with sadness. Because of the original sin committed seven thousand years ago—"

Next, she turned her gaze towards outside the balcony and waved her hand lightly.

A pillar of light rose up from six churches in the holy capital.

These phenomena were very similar to the warning signs before the Astral Shift at the Academy.

Just then.

"—What are your intentions, Holy Lord Alexandros!?"

In this place where entry was supposed to be forbidden, a figure appeared.

A beautiful young girl dressed in a scarlet dress enveloped in crimson flames.

"—Lord of Fire, why are you here!?"

Millennia Sanctus exclaimed in surprise.

However, the newly arrived Fire Elemental Lord ignored her and interrogated the Sacred Maiden.

"I am asking you, what are your intentions?"

Confronted with the Fire Elemental Lord's blazing eyes of wrath—

The Sacred Maiden slowly turned and coaxed.

"—To take this world that has gone down the wrong path, and rebuild it anew."

"What?"

"To this end—I shall open the gate to the Otherworld."

"...! Did you just say gate!?"

Volcanicus spoke in agitation.

"Have you forgotten the beings existing outside the gate? We defeated and repelled them only by making numerous sacrifices and going as far as to borrow the power of spirit weapons—!"

"I certainly have not forgotten."

The Sacred Maiden nodded.

"It is precisely to obtain that power, that I am going to open the gate."

"...You!"

In that instant, Volcanicus spewed intense flames.

The strongest fire of Astral Zero, capable of melting even the Demon King's Tomb.

"Holy Lord!"

Millennia Sanctus cried out.

"—It is useless, Volcanicus."

The Sacred Maiden shrugged and brushed the flames away with one hand.

"...!"

"You are merely an avatar right now, separated from your principal body."

Volcanicus bit her lip and angrily glared at the Sacred Maiden.

"O Holy Lord, you have been devoured by the Otherworldly Darkness."

"No, Volcanicus. I have not been tainted by the Otherworldly Darkness."

"...What are you talking about?"

"Inside me *is something else*."

The Sacred Maiden smiled emptily, pressing her hand against her heart.

"Even I sometimes have trouble distinguishing whether my thoughts belong to myself or what is inside me. However, no matter which of us, we both covet the power of the Primordial Spirit."

"Is this why you wish to open the gate to the Otherworld!?"

"Indeed. That power, capable of interfering in the natural laws governing this world, are essential to my plan."

"...! You shall not succeed, Holy Lord. This world is very much to my liking!"

Scorching flames were exuded from all over Volcanicus.

The Holy Lord Palace shook violently and surrounding stone pillars melted as though they were candy.

"What a surprise. You, a mere avatar—"

"In this world is a friend whose name I cannot recall."

Volcanicus spoke softly.

Surfacing in her mind was the image of the girl with crimson hair whom she had encountered in the Demon King's Capital.

—A girl with a strong resemblance to someone she knew.

That girl's existence was lying dormant deep in her memories.

"I cannot allow you to change the world without permission!"

The crimson flames surged even further, turning the Holy Lord Palace into a sea of fire.

—However, the Sacred Maiden shook her head.

"O proud Lord of Fire. Regrettably, you cannot destroy me."

The flame spirit seal branded on her right hand glowed red.

"...! Damn you, Alexandros!"

Volcanicus released flames.

"Futile."

However, the flames were absorbed by the Sacred Maiden's spirit seal.

Then the Sacred Maiden slowly chanted.

"O Lord of Fire, sleep. Let soul turn into blade—"

"...! Ah, ahhhhh, ahhhhhhhhh!"

Volcanicus turned into particles of light and disappeared into thin air.

Then—

In the next instant, a crimson great sword, surging with scorching flames, was held in the Sacred Maiden's hand.

The most powerful elemental waffe of Astral Zero—the flame sword Ragnarok.

Tossing the sword away with disinterest—

The Sacred Maiden looked at the blindingly bright holy capital.

"—Very well, begin. Astral Shift of the Holy Capital."



Chapter 4 - To the Imperial Capital

Part 1

The flying dragon carrier *Lancaster* was not as spacious as the military ship *Revenant*.

Partly because the ship size itself belonged to a smaller class and partly because much of the interior space was used for keeping flying dragons and the large extended flight deck.

Although large spirit crystals were used as power sources like in conventional military ships, rather than propelling the vessel using the power of wind spirits, this flying dragon carrier used the power of fire spirits to drive a massive cylinder, thus obtaining thrust. In terms of design, more priority was given to horsepower for carrying flying dragons than towards speed.

Due to the fact that helmsmanship requirements were lower than for ships driven by wind spirit crystals, even Ellis could control this ship easily when she was only qualified to fly small ships.

Inside the slightly cramped ship—

Kamito told Ellis and Rinslet about the conversation in the headmistress' office.

This was about Holy Lord Alexandros and the Holy Kingdom, active behind the scenes throughout history.

Then there was the matter of the Holy Lord wishing to obtain the power of Otherworld angels, to rebuild the world—

"...Did you say rebuild the world?"

"T-Then what will happen to the current one?"

"It'll disappear, I guess. Both the human realm and Astral Zero, no exception."

"Impossible..."

Rinslet's hand, holding a cup of tea, was shaking.

"Also, even if the Holy Lord's plan fails, once the gate to the Otherworld opens, thousands of angels behind the gate will be arriving."

"An angel... The thing that possessed Judia, right?"

"Yeah..."

Kamito answered a little ambiguously.

According to Est, what had possessed Rinslet's younger sister Judia Laurenfrost was just a reconnaissance type.

In fact, the combat-type Dunamis he had fought in the Academy had way more powerful abilities than the angel at Laurenfrost. If Est had not awakened her spirit weapon side, perhaps it would have been one-sided slaughter.

No matter what, once the gate to the Otherworld opened, this world would probably get destroyed.

"We have to stop the Holy Lord from opening the gate to the Otherworld."

"...Yeah, that's right."

"But what exactly is the gate to the Otherworld?"

"...Who knows?"

Since the Holy Lord had to spend so much time to make perfect preparations, it meant that the gate was not as easy to open as ones for connecting the human realm to Astral Zero—

The mood had grown somber by the time they realized.

Just then—

"Kamito, I am hungry."

Leaning against the sofa, Est's blade glowed.

"...Anyway, let's eat first."

"You are right. Miss Sword Spirit must be hungry too."

Rinslet smiled wryly and stood up.

"I think Leonora said that there are leftover ingredients in the cold room."

"That is very helpful."

Saying that, Rinslet opened the door to the cold room from the kitchen.

Inside was a spirit that looked like a white lizard, blowing out cold air.

"...Hold on, what is with these ingredients!?"

"Hmm, all I can see is meat."

"This is a bit too heavy for lunch..."

"Bean curd..."

Est murmured in disappointment.

Part 2

After lunch, Kamito walked over to the windy deck.

"...Phew, I'm really stuffed."

He stroked his belly while climbing the gangway. Nevertheless, he was quite impressed by how much this ship lived up to its name as the possession of a noble lady of the dragon duchy. The cold room contained only steaks of the most expensive quality.

"Leonora would probably be able to finish them off by herself."

Kamito recalled the time when the dragon princess maiden had took him on a tour of Dragons Street.

She had ordered three steaks from cows the size of dragons.

Prior to arriving at the capital, Kamito's companions seem to be in their cabins, either reading or studying.

Especially Ellis, who had fallen far behind on the Academy's supplementary lectures, so the homeroom teacher of Weasel Class had assigned a mountain of homework to her.

Doing homework at a time like this was incomprehensible to Kamito, but the disciplined Ellis still worked hard on her studies, seeing her title of captain of the Sylphid Knights as a role model for other students.

(...She's a thoroughly serious noble young lady no matter where she goes.)

Still, that was one of Ellis' strengths, Kamito supposed.

Climbing the gangway, he arrived on the large deck where flying dragons took off and landed.

Across the barrier guarding against the wind was the endless sky.
Down below was a vast plain.

"...!?"

Suddenly, there was pain in his left eye again.

...Did he imagine it?

He was not supposed to be using divine power right now—

(...Darkness Elemental Lord Ren Ashdoll.)

Kamito understood that the Demon King's power inside him was gradually taking over his body.

As though responding to the Sacred Maiden's revival—

(...Tsk, who asked you to devour me!)

He gripped the deck railing tightly.

"Kamito—"

Just then, he heard a voice behind him.

He looked back, only to see Claire and Scarlet ascending the gangway.

"Claire, aren't you tutoring Ellis?"

"It's break time now. Teaching everything all at once would be bad for her."

Claire raised an index finger and shrugged.

Not only were her grades topnotch in the Academy, but Claire's ability to teach was equally high.

Perhaps she might turn out to be a surprisingly good school teacher, Kamito wondered.

Claire came over to Kamito and rested both arms on the railing.

Staring at the vast sky and the mountain range in the distance, she murmured softly to herself.

"...It feels like the days are going by so quickly."

"Yeah."

Rescuing Fianna then going into exile in Dracunia, stopping the rampaging militarized spirit in the Theocracy, crossing the desert to witness the Sacred Maiden's revival in the Demon King's Capital.

...All this happened in a short matter of weeks.

An adventure would be an understatement to describe this densely packed period of time.

"Kamito..."

Mumbling a little, Claire glanced over at Kamito.

"What?"

"Uh, u-umm, nothing!"

Claire waved her hands repeatedly, causing her twintails to shake as well.

However, there was an element of insecurity in her ruby-like eyes.

"...? What's wrong?"

When he stared at her eyes and asked, Claire's face went red immediately.

"K-Kamito!"

"Hmm?"

"I-I am your master!"

"Huh!?"

Hearing that, Kamito could not help but exclaim.

"W-What are you suddenly talking about...?"

"What, did you forget? You're still my contracted spirit!"

Claire extended her finger and pointed at Kamito's nose.

"...!"

...Yeah, I definitely said that.

Facing her in her despair when Scarlet had turned into a berserk spirit—

Since you wish to obtain power—

Then let me be your contracted spirit. Something like that.

"Hmph, looks like you finally remember."

Seeing Kamito's reaction, Claire nodded with satisfaction.

"Don't forget you're my contracted spirit. In other words, I am the contractor, the elementalist and the master!"

"O-Okay?"

"Yes! That's why—"

Still pointing her index finger at him, Claire stared straight at Kamito and said.

"You are not allowed to become someone else's. You belong to me, forever, okay?"

"..."

Ohhh, Kamito finally understood.

Although she was saying this in an overbearing manner just like the first time they met—

This time, after hearing about the Darkness Elemental Lord's power, she was worrying about Kamito.

(...What an awkward girl.)

Kamito smiled wryly and placed his hand on Claire's head.

"...! Hwah! W-What are you doing!?"

"Claire, I will always be your contracted spirit."

When he said that, Claire's face instantly went bright red.

"G-Glad you know it!"

She turned her face away forcefully.

Part 3

Three hours had passed since they set off from Areishia Spirit Academy.

Carrying Kamito's team, the flying dragon carrier arrived at the imperial capital, Ostdakia.

Mooring the ship at the plains of Sadelka, which had turned into a battlefield, the group then walked on foot to the main gate.

News of their arrival had apparently been spread. The spirit guarding the city gate did not block them.

"Anyway, let's head to the knights quarters to meet up with Nee-sama."

"Yeah, good idea."

"Her Highness is probably very busy."

No one objected, so the group walked to the city center.

Banners of the Ordesia imperial family with knight crests were fluttering on the sides of the main road.

"What a peaceful liberation."

Seeing no signs of damage on the buildings, Claire commented.

"Yeah. Looks like the situation has settled with the battle on the plains of Sadelka."

Ellis nodded with an meek expression.

Her grandfather Duke Fahnrengart was the one who had decided to surrender the imperial capital. Between loyalty to the emperor and the lives of the people in the capital, he had chosen the option that avoided bloodshed of commoner lives.

As for how her grandfather was treated, Ellis must be very curious to know.

Although Fianna probably would not hand down a severe punishment, it was unknown whether the nobles in the rebel army would accept such a decision. Surely there would be nobles who wanted to take advantage of this situation to replace the Fahrengart family in taking control of Ordesia's military affairs.

This would depend on Fianna's authority—

"By the way, I don't get it."

"What?"

Hearing Claire's murmurs, Kamito asked.

"The Holy Kingdom. Why did they disappear without sending reinforcements?"

"...I agree. It feels a little weird."

Rinslet expressed the same puzzlement.

The Holy Kingdom's Des Esseintes was aiming to control Ordesia from behind the scenes, using Emperor Arneus as a puppet—One would logically expect this to be the case.

(Those people even conspired to frame Fianna...)

However, even though the rebellion got started, according to reports, the Holy Kingdom withdrew all their cardinals from the palace and did not send any military force at all.

"They did all they can to stoke conflict in the Theocracy too, why?"

"...Who knows?"

Rather than controlling the Empire, it was as though their purpose was to *spread the seeds of war across the land*.

Why exactly did they need to do that kind of thing?

(No, wait a sec...)

Kamito suddenly remembered something.

It was the truth of what happened a thousand years ago, which the spirit Iris had shown him at the Demon King's Capital—

By persuading the young man Solomon who had grown to hate mankind, the Holy Lord had brought about the Demon King's birth.

Then using Sacred Maiden Areisha, who had been granted part of the Holy Lord's soul, the Holy Lord vanquished the Demon King whom he had personally created.

The Demon King War had brought unprecedented destruction and chaos to the continent.

And fanning flames behind the scenes, why was the Holy Lord doing this?

"No matter what, even if the Holy Kingdom's lackeys have vanished, we can't lower our guard."

"Yes, they will definitely be back!"

When Claire declared with a serious look on her face, Rinslet nodded vigorously.

Kamito's group went through the main road and entered the inner city gate.

Last time they infiltrated to rescue Fianna, they had used a Murders merchant channel arranged by Rubia, but were betrayed by the merchant in an underground passage.

If Virrey Branford of the Numbers had not provided assistance, they would have had to wander endlessly in the vast underground passages under the imperial capital.

(...I hope Virrey is fine.)

Just as Kamito worried about the missing knight...

"Ah, Onee-sama~ ...And Kamito-sama too~"

A young girl's adorable voice was coming from beside the gate.

"Mireille!?"

Seeing the figure of the girl running towards them, Rinslet stared wide-eyed.

Dressed in a child's dress, the young girl was precisely Rinslet's youngest sister Mireille.

"Why are you here, Mireille?"

"I came with the others in the Wolf Ritters to join Princess Fianna's army. After all, I am a daughter of Laurenfrost too!"

Mireille puffed out her tiny chest.

Laurenfrost was the first ally to respond to Fianna's call. Due to being responsible for border defense, the knights serving under them were also very strong in combat. Mireille must have joined the army as the flagbearer leading the Wolf Ritters.

"Mireille, you are still a child. The battlefield is too dangerous for you."

"Don't worry, Onee-sama. The Wolf Ritters will protect me, and I have Milla too. Besides, Judia-oneesama cannot leave the castle while her eyes have not healed."

"Milla?"

Kamito asked.

"Yes, milady."

A girl dressed in a maid outfit emerged from the shadows of a neighboring building.

"M-Milla, when did you get here!?"

"It has been a long time, Kamito-sama—"

Faced with the surprised Kamito, the maid girl bowed respectfully.

Milla Bassett.

She was originally a knight belonging to the Rupture Division from the Principality of Rossvale, but after the Blade Dance, the Laurenfrost family had hired her to serve as Mireille's maid.

Her two eyes were of different colors because the left eye used to be a Demon Sealing Eye that held a powerful legion spirit.

"Rooms have been prepared for all of you at the Laurenfrost secondary residence. Please have a short break to alleviate the fatigue from your travels."

"Thank you so much. I am so looking forward to a bath."

Claire was so happy that her twintails jumped.

"Thanks, Milla."

"So I have a room too?"

"Of course, Kamito-sama."

Milla spoke in an emotionless voice. What a calm girl.

"Really? That's such a great help, thanks a lot, Milla."

Unlike his companions who were sheltered daughters of nobility, Kamito had been raised at the Instructional School to be able to sleep anywhere. He originally planned to find a cheap motel somewhere in the imperial capital.

"No, I merely fulfilled my duties as the maid—"

Milla shook her head.

"Milla even spent extra time making your bed, Kamito-sama."

"What are you talking about, milady?"

Upon hearing that, Milla, who had stayed calm until now, blushed and patted Mireille's back repeatedly.

"I am glad to have a bath, but should we not head over to meet up with Rubia-dono first?"

Ellis asked.

"...Yes, you have a point."

"Is Rubia-sama at Nefescal Palace?"

"I don't really know..."

Claire mumbled ambiguously.

The Calamity Queen, who had brought disaster to the imperial capital before, probably would not make a public appearance. Perhaps she was waiting somewhere less conspicuous?

In that case, finding her in this vast capital city would be no easy task.

"In that case, let us proceed like this. Tell the princess that we will be at the Laurenfrost secondary residence. No matter what, we need to get in touch with the princess."

"...That works too. Ellis, please send word to the palace."

"Yes, understood."

Ellis created a transparent flower in her hand.

This was the spirit magic of Wind Ear for sending sounds to a destination.

The flower floated in the wind and flew away just like that.

"Onee-sama, I want to eat your crab omelet rice."

"Very well, I shall make it."

"Wow~, Nee-sama is such a fine woman talented at cooking!"

"W-What are you talking about, Mireille!?"

Taking Rinslet's arm, Mireille turned her head back and glanced a few times at Kamito.

"These sisters are so close."

"Hmm, if I were to do that to my esteemed sister, I would receive the iron fist punishment."

Hearing Kamito's muttering, Ellis nodded several times.

Seeing the sisters walking holding hands tenderly, Claire looked upon them wistfully with a tinge of jealousy.

Chapter 5 - Rubia's Determination

Part 1

With Milla leading the way, they arrived at the Laurenfrost family's secondary residence, located in the outskirts of the aristocracy district.

Although this place was relatively far from Nefescal Palace, it was in a quiet location with lots of greenery.

Leaving Kamito to rest in his room, Claire and the others went to a purification facility outside the mansion.

"I am so glad for a proper purification facility. I must thank Milla."

"Yes, it was hot in the ship and I sweated a lot."

Saying that, Ellis placed her folded uniform into a clothes basket in the changing room.

"This is a shrine usually used for worshiping the Water Elemental Lord."

Rinslet spoke with a raised index finger.

Reportedly, this place was normally open to princess maidens in the imperial capital, but right now, it was exclusively reserved.

Having disrobed, the three naked girls rinsed themselves in front of the shrine and stepped into the bath chamber.

This was a sauna-style purification facility quite rare in Ordesia. The wide bathtub was set up with interacting fire and water spirit crystals to produce a large amount of steam.

"They even have the famous Frozen Hell bath from Laurenfrost."

"...? What is that?"

Rinslet was pointing at a bathtub in which large pieces of ice were floating.

"E-Entering that kind of bathtub will kill me!"

Claire shuddered.

"Oh my, Mireille and I are used to these since we were small."

"Eh... As I always say, in the border lands..."

"What, are you looking down upon Laurenfrost!?"

Rinslet pouted unhappily and poked Claire in the back with a finger enveloped in cold air.

"Hyah!"

Claire's cute screams instantly filled the bath.

Part 2

Three girls were sitting side by side on a bench next to the wall.

The sauna steam filling the entire purification facility was very relaxing.

"This is so nice. It feels like all the fatigue from entire body is gone all at once."

"...Y-Yeah."

Saying that, Claire resentfully glanced at the chest of Ellis, who was sitting further in.

(...Sure enough, Ellis is huge.)

Sitting adjacent, Rinslet's bust was comparable in size too.

With all of them sitting side by side, every difference in figure between them became brutally obvious.

(...S-So unfair, this.)

Claire pouted unhappily.

"Claire, no matter how much you stick out your chest, it is still useless."

"...! W-Who is sticking out her chest!?"

She went red in the face and cried out.

In response, Rinslet smiled with tender affection.

"It is fine, you have no need to be so worried. There is still room to grow. You will eventually catch up to the captain if you follow my instructions every day for the bust enhancing technique I taught you—"

"Rinslet, w-what are you talking about!?"

Ellis frantically covered up her large pale breasts with her arms.

However, there was no way she could cover them up completely.

"R-Right! Besides, that so-called bust enhancing technique you taught—"

Mid-sentence, Claire stopped.

The bust enhancing technique taught by Rinslet required a girl to have her breasts massaged by the target of her affections.

(A-Asking my crush to massage my breasts, how could I possibly do that...)

"Claire, who are you imagining right now?"

"Uwah, I-I'm not imagining anyone!"

Claire frantically denied.

"Fufu, an interesting conversation seems to be going on."

"Fianna!?" "Your Highness!"

Just then, Fianna emerged through the sauna steam, wrapped in a bath towel.

"Fianna, how are things at the imperial council?"

"Adjourned for the time being. I wanted to squeeze out a little bit of time to take a bath."

Fianna sat down next to Claire and poured a ladle of water onto the stove.

She must have found out about the location of this purification facility from Milla or Mireille.

"In any case, thank you for your efforts. Are things going well with unifying opinions in the council?"

Hearing Claire's question, Fianna shook her head.

"Not that well. It is not like I could punish every noble in the emperor faction."

"Well, it is definitely a difficult situation..."

Hearing that, Claire shrugged.

"Are you planning to go on to become queen of the Ordesia Empire?"

"...That is not funny at all."

Fianna sighed and spoke.

"Although I self-proclaimed Legitimate Ordesia as a banner for the rebel forces, I have no wish to play the part of a queen or some such anymore after liberating Ordesia from the Holy Kingdom."

"Really? I think you're doing a splendid job, you know?"

"Ultimately, I am just the acting monarch. Once His Majesty the Emperor recovers from his illness, I shall return all authority."

Fianna shrugged then whispered in Claire's ear.

"Furthermore, if I really became the queen, then I wouldn't be able to marry Kamito-kun, you know?"

"...! Y-You, y-you, what are you talking about!?"

"After all, I love Kamito-kun. Claire, could you be bit more honest too?"

"...~!"

Facing the chuckling Fianna who was wearing a taunting smile, Claire fumed and pursed her lips.

"Y-Your Highness—"

Just then, Ellis interjected.

With a grave expression with apparent worries in her mind, she spoke.

"May I ask what will happen to my grandfather, who stayed loyal to Arneus?"

"Duke Fahrengart ought to receive leniency. After all, it was all thanks to her that the capital was captured peacefully. Also, with the Holy Kingdom's next move unknown, I presume the imperial council would not want to lose an outstanding military commander."

"...I see. That is wonderful news to me."

Ellis exhaled deeply in relief when she heard the answer.

"Oh, right—"

Looking like she remembered something, Fianna said.

"Ellis, I nominated you as my royal guard."

"...Huh?"

"Did you say royal guard?"

Ellis left her mouth gaping in shock. Claire expressed her surprise too.

Serving as the royal guard for members of the imperial family was considered the highest honor for the Imperial Knights. They were the most elite of the elites, basically candidates as future Numbers.

Indeed, it was certainly no problem for Ellis given her status as the noble daughter of the Fahrengart family, but to be nominated as royal guard as a student, that was virtually unheard of.

"I-I am not worthy, royal guard for me would be—"

"At least Ellis is the most reliable. And there is no question about her ability."

Ever since they were in exile from Ordesia, Ellis had served as Fianna's bodyguard and secretary, with many feats of combat to boot.

It came as no surprise that Fianna would want to keep her capable and trusted companion by her side.

"B-But... Is it really okay for me to take this position?"

"Yes, I hope to rely on you."

"...Hmm."

Ellis hesitated for a while then finally looked up.

"I understand. Your wish is my command, Your Highness."

Saying that, she responded with perfect knightly etiquette.



Part 3

Kamito felt a sharp pain across his left eye, almost like it was bleeding.

"...Guh, ah...!"

The intense pain rendered his consciousness almost comatose. Kamito opened his right eye.

...That dream again.

A world from the ancient past, who knew how many thousands of years ago.

The world from the memories of Darkness Elemental Lord Ren Ashdoll—

In the sky, covered with dark gray clouds, a massive hole suddenly appeared.

Darker than the blackest night, darkness surged out from the edges of that abyss nonstop.

That darkness seemed as though it would shroud the entire world—

"...What, is that... the Otherworldly Darkness...?"

Looking up at the sky-piercing abyss, Kamito muttered to himself in a daze.

(This morning's dream was about the Spirit War—)

Then what time period did the current scene before his eyes belong to?

He saw a few particles of light appear in the center of the abyss from where dark filth was pouring out continuously.

The lights took on the shape of winged humanoids, descending upon the land one after another.

That appearance was not foreign to Kamito.

"...Are they angels?"

Hundreds of Dunamis angels, their wings of light outspread, landed successively in the desolate wilderness.

In that instant, blazing crimson flames swept across the land.

"...!?"

The one who had released the flames was a girl wielding a massive sword.

Hovering in the air, she coldly looked down at the land, burning brightly red.

Her crimson hair, fluttering in the wind, shone with red light against the illumination of the fire.

(Who is she...?)

Next to the girl were other beings, armed with spears and staves.

Wielding a magic spear enveloped in fierce wind was a maiden with jade hair who looked to be in her twenties.

Another girl, wielding a staff surrounded by a vortex of water, Kamito recognized.

It was Iseria Seaward whom he had encountered in Astral Zero.

In that case, were the other two the Fire Elemental Lord and the Wind Elemental Lord?

"...The Elemental Lords are fighting angels?"

Just then. Darkness bled from his aching left eye like blood.

"...!?"

Falling to his feet, the darkness instantly began to devour Kamito's body—

(...This is, bad...!)

Amid the entangling darkness and filth, Kamito struggled and reached out.

Part 4

"...!?"

Upon awakening—

"...Ugh!"

Squeeze.

He felt a pleasant sensation in his right hand.

(...No way!?)

Keeping the posture of his outreached hand unchanged, Kamito was struck by a question in his not yet fully awakened mind.

He seemed to hear a cute scream—

Squeeze. Squeeze.

"...Mm... Y-You knave... W-What are you... doing!?"

"...Huh?"

Finally realizing he had woken up from his dream, Kamito looked up forcefully.

Only to see, in front of his outstretched right hand—

"—Do you want to turn into charcoal right away?"

The beautiful maiden in the military uniform. Her shoulders were shaking while she glared angrily at Kamito.

"Woah, Rubia!?"

Kamito frantically withdrew his hand, almost falling off the bed.

He never expected the hand he had extended during his dream to have touched her chest.

...Speaking of which, so that cute sound earlier came from her?

(...No, wait a sec, why is Rubia here!?)

Was he still in a dream?

Still in a state of confusion, Kamito looked around him.

A furry carpet made from animal pelt. Beige walls. A small lamp by the pillow, shaped like a wolf's head.

This was the room in the Laurenfrost secondary residence where Milla Bassett had brought him.

(...Looks like it isn't a dream.)

Kamito turned his gaze back to Rubia, who was sitting on the bed.

"Sure enough, you are the Demon King of the Night. Perhaps you should be vanquished here and now."

With murderous eyes, she glared coldly at Kamito.

"W-Wait, I didn't do it on purpose...!"

Truly feeling his life was in danger, Kamito frantically spoke.

"...By the way, why are you here!?"

When he threw a question at her, she bit her lip with displeasure.

"I came to confirm whether the Darkness Elemental Lord's power is corrupting you."

"...Huh?"

"During the battle to take back Areishia Spirit Academy, you would have consumed plenty of divine power, right?"

Saying that, Rubia switched to a solemn expression as she inspected Kamito's eyes.

"—What is with this eye of yours?"

"..."

She was probably asking about his left eye, still stinging slightly.

Perhaps the spirit seal of Ren Ashdoll had appeared again.

"You saw through everything? Nothing gets past you, huh?"

Kamito gave up and shrugged.

"Does that spirit seal belong to the Darkness Elemental Lord?"

"...Yeah."

He nodded. Rubia gasped slightly.

"I never expected it to progress to this stage—"

"I was dreaming of the Darkness Elemental Lord's memories just now. Although Restia is currently suppressing it for now, to be honest, I don't think it can last for long."

Looking down at his leather-gloved left hand, Kamito shook his head.

"Is that so?"

Hearing that, Rubia quietly bowed her head and bit her lip.

Sharing dreams with a spirit.

She must know very well what that implied.

"As I thought, coming over to examine the situation was the correct thing to do."

"...?"

Hearing her whisper—

Kamito frowned slightly.

"What do you mean...?"

"Close your eyes for a while, Ren Ashbell."

"...!?"

In the next instant, Kamito felt his shoulder being grabbed. He was pulled closer.

Her face appeared before him.

Clear eyes like rubies. Adorable cherry lips.

Perhaps she had just taken a bath. The scent of soap entered his nostrils.

(...S-So near!?)

Kamito felt his heart racing.

"...! Rubia! W-What are you—"

"Do not make me repeat myself. Close your eyes. Also, do not make a sound."

"...!?"

"I am a woman. I feel embarrassment too."

Her slightly hoarse voice whispered into his ear.

He could feel the sensation of her small but cute breasts behind the military uniform.

"What..."

As though to interrupt Kamito's speech—

Her lips sealed Kamito's mouth.

(...!?)

Badump—

His heart raced even faster.

At the same time, a huge amount of divine power flowed into all the channels in his body.

The divine power circulating within him seemed to have renewed all at once.

"Mm..."

With a sweet moan, she slowly separated her lips from him.

With burning cheeks and water eyes, she stared into Kamito's eyes.

"W-What..."

"—The spirit seal has vanished, yes?"

Saying that, she brought her slender finger lightly to her lips.

"Ah..."

Only then did Kamito notice.

The stinging pain in his left eye had gone away completely now.

"...What did you do?"

Still dizzy, Kamito asked.

His entire felt quite comfortable, like he was floating.

"This is a princess maiden's ritual magic. It causes the dark divine power inside you to circulate into my body."

Rubia spoke, panting.

"This should relieve your burden a bit..."

Saying that, she clutched at her chest in pain, looking like she was about to collapse.

"H-Hey, are you okay!?"

Kamito frantically caught her.

Her shoulder felt burning to the touch, almost like a lit furnace.

"Letting dark divine power circulate? Will that be dangerous?"

"...It just strains the body a little..."

While Rubia was held in Kamito's arms, her face was contorted with pain.

"Strain, you—"

"Sure enough, there are limits to my body that had lost a princess maiden's holiness, I suppose—"

Panting, she murmured in self-deprecation.

"...! You, don't over do it..."

"...It is not serious. Although it was a first attempt, it succeeded—"

Red in the face, she lowered her head shyly.

"...First attempt?"

What did she mean? Kamito did not understand for a moment.

Instantly covering her lips with her hand, Rubia shook her head vigorously.

"N-Nothing, pay no mind to it...!"

"...?"

Her strange attitude was making Kamito more and more puzzled.

—Just then.

<—nal... Cardinal, can you hear me! I have an important report—!>

Static—A hoarse voice was coming from somewhere.

It was Lily Flame from the Instructional School.

Rubia instantly switched to a serious expression and took out a talisman from her military uniform's chest pocket.

Voice Print Talisman—This was a magical tool used by princess maidens to transmit voices over short distances.

"I hear you. What is the matter?"

Hearing Rubia's calm reply—

Lily spoke in a shaken voice.

<—The Holy Capital of Alexandria. It disappeared.>

Part 5

The holy mountain of Londinia. It was both the birthplace of Sacred Maiden Areishia and the heartland of the Holy Lord's faith.

At that mountain—

"What...!?"

Luminaris, captain of the Sacred Spirit Knights, collapsed on her knees in shock.

The place they were returning to—the holy capital Alexandria—had vanished.

Not obliterated by destructive disasters like earthquakes or volcanic eruptions.

But literally vanished, as though the holy capital had been whisked away.

On the surface of the giant holy mountain, all that was left was a large hole filled with empty darkness.

Darker than the black night, a void where no light could shine into.

"W-What on earth happened? Where did Alexandria go...?"

No one answered Luminaris' murmurs.

Only the sound of the howling wind resounded over the mountain range that had lost the holy land.

Chapter 6 - Disappearance of the Holy Capital

Part 1

Disappearance of the Holy Capital of Alexandria instantly spread throughout the palace.

For a massive capital city to vanish all of a sudden, residents and all, that was unprecedented in the entire history of the continent.

Receiving the report, Fianna instantly summoned the nobles to hold an emergency meeting of the imperial council.

"Unbelievable, Alexandria has vanished?"

Inside the circular hall of the imperial council, an aristocrat exclaimed.

"It is certainly hard to believe. Is the report reliable?"

"Confirmation is in progress. However, according to reports from our border, the news is quite likely to be true."

Standing in the center of the hall, Fianna spoke.

"Vanished, rather than destroyed...?"

"That is what our sources say."

"B-But is that even possible...?"

The imperial council was plunged into confusion.

(...Oh well, I can hardly blame them.)

Leaning against the wall at the back of the imperial council hall, Kamito muttered to himself with his arms crossed.

There were no detailed reports at the current stage, only a disorganized mess of rumors. Added to the fact that the Empire had been in turmoil not too long ago, one could forgive the nobles for losing their calm.

"Is it true? News of the Holy Capital disappearing—"

Claire whispered.

"...Unconfirmed for now."

"For a city to vanish in an instant, that is unheard of."

"The Sylphid Knights had a training excursion which included a stay at the Holy Capital. The city was roughly the same size as the Academy town. To think it could vanish—"

Ellis had her head tilted in puzzlement.

"Suppose it met the same kind of calamity that destroyed my homeland?"

Thinking of something, Claire rested her chin on her hand.

"Claire, do you have some kind of idea?"

"Yes, the Fire Elemental Lord's avatar is at that city."

"Oh..."

Hearing Claire's whispers, Kamito groaned.

Victorious in the Blade Dance, Kamito and his team had succeeded in liberating the Fire Elemental Lord.

But according to Rubia, the freed Fire Elemental Lord's soul apparently teleported to the Holy Capital.

The Holy Kingdom must have planned to take possession of the Fire Elemental Lord a long time ago.

In fact, the Fire Elemental Lord was traveling with the Sacred Spirit Knights at the Demon King City.

"Did the Holy Kingdom screw up, causing the Fire Elemental Lord to go on a rampage?"

"That is possible. If the Fire Elemental Lord's power was released, destroying a city would be effortless."

"That's true—"

Even the pyramid of the Demon King's Tomb had melted within the blink of an eye by the Fire Elemental Lord.

Obliterating the Holy Capital in an instant would not be impossible.

"But according to Lily, the city had vanished suddenly without any signs of destruction."

"...Yes, that is quite unbelievable."

Claire looked down again, lost in deep thought.

Just as the council continued to remain in a state of chaos, a princess maiden arrived at the center of the hall.

"Who is that?"

"Oh, it is Lady Rosamia Ashel!"

Rinslet exclaimed quietly.

"Eh, that's the famous Heavenly Eyes—"

With great interest, Kamito looked upon the princess maiden with beautiful black hair.

"Heavenly Eyes" Rosamia Ashel.

Kamito had heard of her name back in his Instructional School days.

She was second of the Numbers, as well as being the top-ranked special operative knight.

At the age of twenty-five, she was the oldest of the Numbers.

Rosamia Ashel bowed to the nobles before chanting ritual magic.

"What is she planning to do?"

"This is the spirit magic of Clairvoyance. The ability to observe situations from afar."

"Like the magic used by Princess Linfa of the Four Gods, huh?"

"Yes, but just on an even higher level—"

After a while, a translucent sphere appeared in the center of the hall.

Projected on the sphere's surface was a clear image. The hall instantly filled with clamor.

The image was projected from a spirit's eyes.

"W-What is that!?"

"What happened?"

Claire and the girls were fixating their gazes upon the image on the sphere too.

The massive Londinia mountain range was gouged out.

Nothing remained to prove that a magnificent city once stood there.

Not even the slightest trace of destruction.

Left behind was a dark and hollow space where even light did not reflect.

"What the heck happened?"

Just as Kamito asked in shock...

"—Signs of Astral Shift."

A calm voice spoke from behind him.

"N-Nee-sama!?"

Kamito and Claire looked back, only to see Rubia standing there wearing a scarlet mask.

"Did you say Astral Shift?"

"Yes, indeed. According to reports, when the human realm and Astral Zero overlap, this sort of void space is left behind at the location of where the Astral Shift occurred. However, previous reports were all concerned with small-scale shifts that happened naturally in places like the Spirit Forest—"

"Don't tell me the entire city went through an Astral Shift..."

"Then the Holy Capital has been transported to Astral Zero?"

"Yes, it appears so."

Rubia nodded slightly.

"Could it be that the Astral Shift at the Academy was a trial run for this?"

"...Possibly. But what is the purpose...?"

The eerie image shown on the sphere had plunged the imperial council into deeper chaos.

The entire hall was full of noise.

"Silence—"

Fianna spoke sternly. Just then...

The image on the sphere shook violently.

"...!?"

The mountain range became covered by blinding light. Soon, nothing could be seen.

"Dame Rosamia, what exactly is this!?"

Fianna looked back to ask Rosamia Ashel.

Only to see—

"...Ah, ah, ahhh, ah... Ooh, ahhhhhhhhh!"

The princess maiden of Heavenly Eyes clutched her head and began to moan in pain.

"Dame Rosamia!? A-Are you alright?"

"...Ah, ooh... Ahhh, has been... issued..."

"...Huh?"

"...An oracle... has been, issued... Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Rosamia's eyes rolled up and she screamed, losing consciousness on the spot, collapsed on the ground.

The hall was instantly in commotion.

"Spirit interference! Deploy a barrier immediately!"

The first to notice this possibility, Fianna issued orders to the Numbers serving as bodyguards.

Someone had hijacked Rosamia's contracted spirit.

(...To think someone interfered with the spirit of one of the Empire's Numbers from outside?)

With his hands on the hilts of his two swords, Kamito secretly jumped in surprise.

How many elementalists capable of such a feat existed on the continent?

Two knights standing by in the corners of the hall immediately deployed an isolation barrier.

This ought to break the interference afflicting Rosamia—

Just then, the sphere hovering in the air changed.

The blinding brightness went away and an image seemed to surface.

"H-Hey, don't tell me that's...!?"

Claire pointed at the sphere and shouted.

"...!?"

Seeing that figure shown in the sphere, Kamito gasped too.

It was a blonde young maiden, clad in pure white holy armor.

Appearing there was—

The legendary Sacred Maiden who had revived in the Demon King City.

"Sacred Maiden Areishia..."

The Sacred Maiden in the sphere looked down at the nobles with her blue eyes.

'—I am Holy Lord Alexandros. I am issuing my final oracle to you.'

Thus she spoke.

Part 2

Holy Lord Alexandros.

That was whom *she*, the one with Sacred Maiden Areishia's appearance, called herself.

The maiden's pure and sacred glow inspired viewers with absolute fear and reverence.

The nobles in the council all held their breath, staring at her in mesmerization.

"Th-That sacred appearance—" "The Holy Lord?" "Unbelievable..."

No one in this world had witnessed the Elemental Lords' appearances first hand.

Even Sacred Maiden Areishia was known to later generations only through surviving portraits.

However, everyone present believed they were looking at the genuine Holy Lord.

That absolute majesty awakened primal fear in humans.

"...!?"

Even Kamito and his friends were rendered speechless, flooded by the imposing presence.

"I never expected, to show up here—"

Claire wiped sweat off her brow.

"...What the heck is going to happen?"

Next—

"Loyal servants of the Elemental Lords, people of the human realm—
"

Inside the otherwise silent hall, the Sacred Maiden's transparent voice echoed.

"—I issue to you the final oracle."

(...Final oracle, come again?)

Kamito's thoughts were puzzled.

Confusion arose among the nobles in the hall, subdued by majestic light.

In all of history, the Elemental Lords had never issued an oracle in such a manner.

Also—

(She said *final*—)

"—Three days later, this world shall disappear."

Thus declared the Holy Lord with a young girl's appearance.

"...! W-What!?" "What was that just now...?" "...Disappear?"

The hall was instantly in chaos.

"W-What is the meaning of this!?" "What?"

The totally one-sided declaration made even Claire and the girls, who already knew the Holy Lord's goal, unable to hide their surprise.

It was neither prophetic verse, a riddle or a parable.

—It was truly an oracle.

Conveyed was clear intent to erase the current world.

"I shall be the one to reconstruct this world that has gone down the wrong path. The human realm and Astral Zero shall be completely erased, to create correct world—"

A peaceful voice filled with tender affection was heard.

All the nobles present could not speak, listening to the oracle in shock.

Humans could not say no to an Elemental Lord's oracle.

All they could respond to a powerful Elemental Lord were offering rituals.

Even when the Fire Elemental Lord destroyed the Elstein lands and took away the power of flames—

The people of Ordesia were powerless, left with no choice but to obediently endure that wrath.

"—Until the gate of termination opens, I grant you the chance to enjoy your final moments. This is a gift to the human race who has served loyally."

"—Nonsense!"

Crack.

Claire struck the floor with Flametongue.

Her clear eyes, like rubies, glared at the Sacred Maiden shown in the sphere.

"What gift? I'm not gonna let you do as you like!

"H-Hey, Claire?"

The Sacred Maiden looked down coldly at Claire.

"—You are not at fault. It is the world itself that has erred."

"...! What did you say!?"

"I hope you will all enjoy your final happiness—"

After making a gesture of rest in peace with her hand in front of her chest, the Sacred Maiden—

She vanished amid blinding light.

Part 3

The imperial council was forced to end amid chaos.

First there was the Holy Capital's disappearance, followed by the Holy Lord's oracle to erase the world.

One could hardly blame them for panicking.

"The Holy Lord's oracle just now has apparently reached all the shrines across the continent."

While traveling through a corridor to her room, Fianna spoke.

"In other words, every nation is in chaos too."

"Yes, apparently..."

Fianna answered gravely to Claire's whispers. Having sent away her bodyguard knights, she only had Claire and the rest of Team Scarlet by her side.

"A one-side declaration to erase the world, who could accept that!?"

"Too unreasonable!"

Ellis and Rinslet protested in anger.

Wearing a mask, Rubia remained silent.

"By the way, I didn't think they'd work this fast."

Opening the gate to the Otherworld, seizing the power of angels, recreating the world.

Was the Holy Lord's plan finally going to be implemented?

(She mentioned some kind of gate of termination. Where the heck is that gate...?)

—Just as Kamito was lost in deep thought...

Fianna suddenly halted in her steps.

"What's the matter, Fianna?"

"—A spirit sent by the Divine Ritual Institute."

Fianna pointed into the air.

Small dots of light were gathering there, forming a spirit in the shape of a three-legged bird.

"—Yatagarasu, huh? Among messenger spirits, it is considered the highest ranked."

Rubia instantly discerned its identity.

The black bird with three legs flapped its wings and landed on Fianna's left arm.

"Uh, who sent this?"

Just as Fianna wondered in puzzlement...

'It has been a while, Senpai.'

(Hmm, where have I heard this voice before...)

Kamito found the voice a bit familiar.

"...Reicha?"

Fianna widened her eyes slightly.

The voice belonged to Fire Queen Reicha Alminas.

She was junior to Fianna and Rubia. Before the Blade Dance tournament, this princess maiden had helped out Kamito.

With a serious expression, Fianna looked at the spirit on the left arm.

"—The Sacred Maiden's oracle, right?"

'Indeed.'

Hearing that, the Yatagarasu with Reicha's voice nodded. Sending a messenger spirit at this point in time could only be because of that incident.

"About the oracle just now, what is the Divine Ritual Institute's interpretation?"

"It is unmistakably the Holy Lord's oracle. However—"

Saying that, Reicha paused.

"The Divine Ritual Institute cannot accept such an oracle."

"I am relieved to hear that."

Fianna exhaled.

She had been worrying whether the Divine Ritual Institute would end up mired in disagreement over the oracle.

'Uh, there is one thing I must tell you, Senpai.'

"What is it?"

Hearing Reicha's nervous voice, everyone present paid extra attention.

Apart from the Holy Lord's oracle, did something else happen at the Divine Ritual Institute...?

'The Holy Capital of Alexandria has appeared on Ragna Ys.'

"What!?"

"What did you say!?"

Even Kamito could not help but shout after hearing the shocking report.

(The Holy Capital is at Ragna Ys...?)

Ragna Ys was the stage where the Blade Dance had been held.

For Team Scarlet, it was a place filled with special memories.

Of all places, who could have thought the Holy Capital would appear there—

"Wait a sec. Ragna Ys is quite large, you know. Where exactly is it?"

Claire asked.

'Well—the location where the Holy Capital appeared is the shrine of the Five Great Elemental Lords.'

"What!?"

Kamito and the others stared at one another.

The shrine of the Five Great Elemental Lords.

It was a place where only victors of the Blade Dance were eligible to enter.

"...Why is it there?"

'No idea. It is hard to believe it is mere coincidence—'

The Yatagarasu conveying Reicha's voice shook its head.

—Naturally, it could not be coincidence.

"Is there anything happening on Ragna Ys?"

Fianna asked.

'No, not at the moment. But—'

After a pause, Reicha continued.

'I have an extremely bad feeling.'

—It was no mere feeling.

This was the instinct of a Queen, a supreme princess maiden of the continent.

"So the plan is to open the gate at the Holy Capital that is superimposed with the Elemental Lords' shrine, huh..."

"I guess—"

Although it was unknown how the Holy Lord was going to open the gate to the Otherworld—

"..."

After a brief silence, Claire spoke.

"Let's go, to Astral Zero—"

"Alright." "Yes." "...I agree."

The trio of Fianna, Ellis and Rinslet nodded at the same time.

Once the Holy Lord opened the gate, whether the human realm or Astral Zero, both would probably disappear as a result.

If not that, the army of angels would surely crush everything.

...No matter which outcome, neither was acceptable.

Even if this was a flawed world that had erred—

(...This is the world where we live in.)

Chapter 7 - The Flame Sisters

Part 1

According to Fianna, teleporting to Astral Zero required some time for preparations. Before the transfer, the historical site in the shrine had to be activated with correct coordinates set for the Divine Ritual Institute's main worship hall.

During this preparation period, Claire returned to her room to check the luggage she was going to bring.

"...I never thought I'd return to Astral Zero again."

She stuffed ritual instruments and spirit crystals with all kinds of effects into her backpack.

As the leader of Team Scarlet, it was her duty to prepare for contingencies.

Finally, she stuffed an utterly worn out notebook in the chest pocket of her uniform.

It contained the notes about formation tactics developed for the Blade Dance.

(...We won again and again throughout that Blade Dance.)

Blade dancing against many strong teams and formidable foes, the memories were still vivid in her mind.

If the Holy Lord obtained the power of angels, then the victory won by Kamito and Team Scarlet would no longer exist.

(...That is something I will absolutely not accept!)

She clenched her fist tightly and stood up.

Just then, Scarlet, who was lying on the bed, looked at the door and miaowed.

"What's up, Scarlet?"

Did Rinslet visit?

Just as Claire wondered...

"—Claire, it is I."

"N-N-Nee-sama!?"

Claire hastily stood up and opened the door.

Rubia was standing in front of the doorway.

This was the first time Claire's sister had come alone to find her.

"N-Nee-sama, uh?"

"I need to speak with you."

"U-Uh, hold on, I-I'll prepare some tea..."

In a fluster, Claire went to get a teapot.

"Let me sit down first."

Saying there, Rubia sat down on the bedside.

"O-Okay, please go ahead..."

Claire nodded stiffly.

She placed the clay teapot on top of the curled up Scarlet.

Whoosh—Steam instantly gushed out. The hot water all evaporated within the blink of an eye.

"Are you still unused to controlling fire?"

"...! N-No, it's because you suddenly came, so I'm nervous..."

Claire seemed lost.

"..."

Rubia suddenly looked at the books piled on the bed.

"You always loved reading since childhood."

"You were the one who taught me to read, Nee-sama."

"...Is that so?"

"Yes, you always read to me before bedtime."

Claire kept a little distance and sat on the bed.

"U-Uh, you wanted to speak to me about?"

"—About Kazehaya Kamito."

"...Kamito?"

Rubia nodded calmly.

"The Darkness Elemental Lord is gradually taking over his soul. At this rate, eventually—"

"...I knew it."

Claire bit the nail of her thumb.

Of course she had noticed something strange about Kamito.

During the ship ride to the imperial capital, he had seemed inexplicably worried.

"With the awakening of Sacred Maiden Areishia, I fear that the Demon King's power has started to awaken again. Although the

darkness spirit is suppressing it the time being, he will soon reach his limit."

"What will happen to Kamito once the Darkness Elemental Lord's power consumes him?"

"An reenactment of Demon King Solomon. No, considering Kazehaya Kamito's latent power, perhaps a calamity far greater than that."

Claire clenched her fist tightly which was resting on her skirt.

(If Kamito turned into that...)

He would probably forget his memories with Claire and everyone else—

"What should we do?"

"Although imperfect, there are methods to suppress the Darkness Elemental Lord's awakening."

Rubia reached out and summoned an ancient scroll from out of thin air.

"...What is this?"

"A scroll from a thousand years ago that I discovered in Sjora Kahn's secret library."

"What's written in it?"

"Writings about the ritual magic used by Demon King Solomon to control the power of darkness—"

"...!?"

With a snap of Rubia's fingers, the scroll was laid open.

"I can't read High Ancient."

"I Know. I will now transmit the images directly into your mind."

"Huh?"

Staring into Claire's eyes, Rubia placed a hand on her forehead.



Her slender fingers glowed faintly with the light of divine power.

Instantly, information rushed into Claire's mind all at once.

"N-Nee-sama, what is... this... Hwah!"

"Close your eyes and concentrate."

"B-But this is... almost like a blade dance of the night..."

Seeing what the ritual magic involved, Claire's face turned bright red.

"Do not lose composure over something of this extent. Do you not wish to save Kazehaya Kamito?"

"Y-Yes, Nee-sama... Ehhh, no way, I-I even have to do *that*!?"

"Do not overreact. This, f-for me too..."

Confronted with the images of ancient ritual magic swirling in their heads—

The pure and innocent sisters on the bed began to heat up in body temperature.

Part 2

"Packed lunch boxes can eaten any time. Good idea."

"Yes. After all, sandwiches alone would be too monotonous."

Meanwhile, Ellis and Rinslet were borrowing the palace kitchen to make packed meals.

Although they had no idea what had happened in Astral Zero, regardless, hunger was an eventuality that had to be taken care of.

"...Hmm, this came out pretty good."

Ellis packed omelet rolls into the lunch boxes one after another as she finished frying them.

The Sylphid Knights' lunches originally consisted mainly of sandwiches, but ever since Kamito joined the order, the girls started to make cute lunch boxes on their own.

Seeing that, Ellis changed her former view that lunch was merely a meal to fill the stomach, and started preparing lunch boxes for Kamito under the pretext that making an additional portion was no extra effort.

While making her lunch boxes up to standard, Ellis took full care to consider nutritional balance too.

Hers included mini-salad with roast beef, omelet rolls, pasta, grilled cheese, stewed yams, etc, as well as an abundance of hot vegetables.

"I have done my best work too!"

"Oh, I look forward to it... Wait, what is with that lunch box!?"

Drawing closer to glance at Rinslet's lunch box, Ellis' expression froze.

There was a strange and incomprehensible pattern depicted inside Rinslet's lunch box.

...It was almost like abstract art by an avant-garde artist.

"There are elemental lunch boxes for everyone, created with a motif based on each person's contracted spirit."

Rinslet puffed out her chest in pride and explained.

"Did you say... spirit? So this red one is Scarlet, really?"

Ellis asked in trepidation.

"Of course."

She nodded proudly.

"I-I see..."

Ellis avoided eye contact, pretending she had seen nothing.

"No one can be perfect in everything, yes."

"What was that?"

Hearing that, Rinslet frowned.

"...N-Nothing. By the way, what are those ingredients for?"

Ellis hastily changed the subject, drawing attention to the many sacks of flour in the kitchen.

"Yes, this is flour to make pancakes to be offered to Lady Iseria."

"Oh I see."

Rinslet had made a promise with Water Elemental Lord Iseria Seaward who was in Astral Zero, to dedicate offerings of pancakes to her.

"After that, Lady Iseria has not issued any oracles."

Saying that, Rinslet glanced at the blue rose spirit seal, murmuring with worry. Back when they were recapturing the Academy, she could still hear Iseria's voice, but now there was no response no matter how much she called out.

"Hmm, there might be a situation."

"I hope she is safe and sound..."

Part 3

Meanwhile, Kamito was in his room polishing Est.

He pressed a steel spirit crystal against the sacred sword's blade and poured in divine power, polishing meticulously. Every time the spirit crystal brushed against the blade, tiny particles of light floated into the air.

(Doing work as usual helps with calming the heart and mind...)

Using a dry cloth, he carefully rubbed the blade he had spent his time polishing.

An observer might think he looked confident.

But Kamito was not polishing his sword because he was confident.

It was the opposite.

Starting from the time at the Instructional School, he would polish his weapons like this before missions. For Kamito, weapon maintenance was akin to a ritual for adjusting his mind.

'...Hua, it feels nice, Kamito.'

The silver-white blade flashed. Originally, there was no need to polish or sharpen the Demon Slayer, an elemental waffe, but Est apparently enjoyed the feeling of her blade being polished.

(Maybe it's kinda like cleaning ears for us humans...)

Thinking that, Kamito smiled wryly.

As a side note, Restia apparently disliked getting her blade polished.

According to her, it was a bit embarrassing.

Reminded of Est's refusal to expose her bare feet, Kamito was truly confused as to what triggers spirits' sense of shame and embarrassment.

'Kamito, I entrust the back of the blade to you too.'

"Yeah, I got it."

Responding to Est's request, Kamito started to polish the back of the blade.

Staring at the phosphorescent flash of divine power, he fell into deep thought.

Protecting Claire in the sealed cave and performing the spirit contract ceremony had been just a few months ago.

After that, Est had been Kamito's sword all this time.

There was once when she exhausted her power to save Kamito and was lost as a result.

And also because Kamito lost his memory one time, it interrupted the spirit contract temporarily.

But no matter what, Est was always Kamito's sword.

Even if she had to oppose Sacred Maiden Areishia, her former contractor, she swore she would remain Kamito's sword forever.

'Kamito, what is wrong?'

Perhaps because his hand stopped for a moment, Est asked.

"...Hmm? Oh, uh, I was just thinking you're super awesome, Est."

'...!'

When he revealed his true feelings without thinking, Est's blade instantly sparked.

"That burns!"

'...! Sorry, Kamito.'

"It's okay, I was just startled a bit."

Kamito dipped his hand in a bucket of water to cool his scorched finger.

Just then...

The sacred sword turned into particles of light and vanished. A silver-haired maiden dressed in uniform appeared before his eyes.

Her silver-white hair glowed faintly. Skin as pale as snow. There seemed to be faint blush on her expressionless face, dainty as a doll's.

"—I was startled too, Kamito."

Her clear eyes of violet stared intently at Kamito.

"You are truly the Demon King of the Night, Kamito."

"W-What...!?"

"Kamito, were you speaking your true feelings just now?"

Faced with Est asking expressionlessly...

"—Yeah, of course."

Despite feeling a bit embarrassed, Kamito still nodded vigorously.

"Est, you've been my awesome partner this whole time. As long as I'm with you, I'll never lose, not even to angels from another world, the Holy Lord, or Sacred Maiden Areishia."

"...Kamito."

Est murmured then stood rooted to the spot.

Next&mash;

"Kamito, I have made my decision."

Est sat down on the bed in the room.

"E-Est, th-they're showing, you know!?"

"Yes, please have a look. Kamito—"

"Eh?"

When Est finished speaking expressionlessly—

She hooked her finger against the hem of her kneesock.

"I want you to see, Kamito. My all as the ultimate sword spirit—"

"What!?"

Kamito could not help but fix his gaze on Est's leg.

Thighs as smooth as porcelain. Her slender little feet, wrapped in dark blue kneesocks.

Maintaining her posture with her hands against the hems of her kneesocks, Est stared at Kamito.

And Kamito was stunned, sitting on the bed.

...Est had always been strongly against exposing her bare feet.

Even Kamito had never had a chance to see what was hidden inside those socks.

For Est to be willing to expose her bare feet, in spite of all that—

"...W-Why so suddenly!?"

"This is to prevent my blade from wavering when crossing swords against Areishia."

Est declared firmly.

"I want you to see my all, Kamito, to engrave upon my heart the fact that you are my true master."

"Est..."

Est, as she was right now, was a separate existence from her principal body. But even so, there was always the possibility she might waver when facing off against her former master Areishia.

Even wavering for the slightest instant could end up deciding the outcome of the battle.

"Kamito, please bear witness to my determination now—"

Est began to slide down her fingers that were hooked against her kneesocks.

"...!"

Seeing that, Kamito could not help but hold his breath.

The dark blue kneesocks rustled as it slid below the knees—

There, they suddenly stopped.

"...?"

"...Sure enough, it is still embarrassing."

Est shook her head mildly.

Perhaps due to embarrassment, there was a faint tint of pink on her snow-white complexion of a spirit's.

Kamito was seeing this expression for the first time.

"Est..."

Kamito—

"Hang in there, do your best."

He spoke in a serious tone of voice.

"...!?"

...Indeed, this was Est's determination.

As her contractor, Kamito was obliged to witness to the very end.

"...No good. To go further, even for Kamito..."

Est was speaking so quietly that her voice seemed like it would vanish any moment.

To encourage Est, Kamito spoke in her ear to persuade her.

"Still, I do want to see all of you, Est."

"Kamito... I understand..."

Est nodded mildly.

Rustle. Rustle.

The kneesocks moved downwards.

As the kneesocks formed coils, the snow-white calves came into view.

"Hwa, so embarrassing, Kamito..."

"Est, just a little more... Hang in there, just a little more..."

"...No, sure enough, this is the limit, no more."

"Just hang in there a bit, Est—"

Kamito's voice naturally grew more and more fervent.

"...! K-Kamito, so perverted."

Just as Est whispered that...

"—Fufu, having a lot of fun here, are we?"

Kamito's view turned pitch black.

"...Owah!"

Kamito fell back on the bed.

He looked up—

Only to see the darkness spirit before his eyes, her jet-black wings outspread.

"Kamito, what are you doing to Miss Sword Spirit?"

"R-Restia..."

...Despite the smile on her face, there was no smile in her eyes.

Part 4

At the main shrine of the Elemental Lords, located in the center of Ragna Ys...

This was the place where Greyworth had reached twenty-four years ago, whereas Kamito and Team Scarlet had also arrived after blade dancing against numerous formidable foes.

Those qualified to enter this place were limited to the Queens serving the Elemental Lords and the winners of the Blade Dance tournament. No exceptions.

A girl was slowly walking up the steps leading up to that altar.

The Sacred Queen dressed in vestments of pure white—No, it was a being bearing such an appearance only.

"—Thank you for your patience, my friends and allies."

Holy Lord Alexandros greeted the lords on the thrones with familiarity.

The silhouettes of five thrones behind the curtain were visible.

They were the vacuous lords ruling over this world.

The thrones of the Elemental Lords corrupted by True Darkness.

The souls of the Water Elemental Lord and the Fire Elemental Lord had been liberated, but what could be considered their principal body were still imprisoned on this altar.

The Holy Lord ascended the steps and arrived before the thrones.

Using the insane Elemental Lords as sacrifices, to reopen the gate leading to the Otherworld—

"With this my long-time wish, mine and hers from seven thousand years ago, shall be fulfilled."

The Holy Lord reached into the darkness swirling over the Fire Elemental Lord's throne.

"—Let the gate to paradise open here and now."

Chapter 8 - To Astral Zero

Part 1

After packing their respective luggage, Kamito and the members of Team Scarlet gathered in front of the historical site where the Fianna had designated the portal.

Located at the imperial capital's main shrine, the historical site was shaped like a giant disc. Carved on the stones were writings in High Ancient, left behind by the Elfim race.

In front of the site, Fianna set up spirit crystals and calibrated the teleport destination coordinates.

Some of the nobles were against Fianna leaving the imperial capital even temporarily, seeing as she was the acting monarch, but Fianna was able to get her way thanks to Duke Fahrengart's support.

He announced that this reconnaissance mission was on invitation from the Divine Ritual Institute. Furthermore, it was necessary for the princess to confirm personally whether the rumor of the holy capital teleported to Astral Zero was true or not. Thus, the imperial council was persuaded.

"Kamito, why does it seem like there's a burnt smell?"

"...Yeah, don't worry about it."

When Claire pointed it out, Kamito looked away.

'Kamito is the lecherous Demon King.'

"E-Est!?"

'Indeed, there's nothing wrong with being the Demon King of the Night, but know some restraint.'

"Restia!"

Carried at his waist on his left and right respectively, the sacred sword and the demon sword spoke with tacit coordination.

"Wait a sec, Kamito, what did you do!?"

"Hmm, please confess everything."

"I smell an incident!"

The three young ladies eyed him suspiciously.

"W-Wait, it's not like that...!"

Just as Kamito frantically shook his head...

"The teleportation circle is complete. Are you ready, everyone?"

Fianna stood up and asked them.

"Y-Yeah..."

"Yes, no problem here."

"Lunch boxes all ready!"

Having swallowed everyone's luggage, Fenrir barked.

Next, slightly later—

"—Thank you for waiting."

"Nee-sama..."

Rubia appeared in her military uniform.

On her face was the flame mask she had been wearing during the Blade Dance.

Indeed, if the notorious Calamity Queen were to show up at the Divine Ritual Institute's main shrine in her true appearance, it would most likely cause a great commotion.

"Now then, everyone hold hands and step onto the magic circle—"

"Hwahh, h-hold hands!?"

"N-No way, I am not mentally ready yet...!"

Standing on Kamito's two sides were Claire and Ellis, who instantly blushed.

"So unfair, you two!"

"Seriously, what are you doing? Hurry up."

Fianna forcefully placed the two shy girl's hands into Kamito's, linking them.

"Hyah!"

"Ah, ooh..."

The two noble young ladies reacted adorably.

"—Well then, we are leaping now."

In the center of the magic circle, Fianna chanted words from the lost language of High Ancient.

"Isra El Ruo Arak Nell O Ragna Ys—"

The spirit language carved on the historical site immediately glowed with mysterious blue light—

In the next instant, Kamito and company became shrouded in an incredible floating feeling.

Part 2

Splaaaaaaaaaaaaash!

The instant they were liberated from the floating feeling, there was a massive splash of water.

"...!?"

Falling headlong into water, Kamito was plunged into confusion, unable to get a grasp on his situation.

"Mmgg, mmggggg...!"

About to drown, he frantically tried to stand up. His mind was still in a daze.

Soft.

Just by chance, the tip of his nose collided with something elastic.

"...Mmgg, mmggggggggg...!"

Taking a closer look, he saw an attractive bottom, covered by panties of pure white.

Boing, boing, pinned under a very bouncy bottom, Kamito almost suffocated.

"..Hwahh, K-Kamito-san, what are you doing!?"

Accompanied by a scream, the panties separated from Kamito's face.

...It was apparently Rinslet's bottom.

"Pwah!"

Finally freed, Kamito poked his head out of the water.

"C-Cough, c-cough... W-What happened...?"

While choking, he looked around him.

Next—

The scene before his eyes stunned Kamito.

Wrapped in wet sheer fabric, almost half naked, princess maidens were staring at Kamito with shocked expressions.

"...What!?"

One princess maiden's face looked familiar to him.

Black hair, dripping with water, innocent eyes blinking.

She was Reicha Alminas—the current Queen serving the Fire Elemental Lord.

(Uh, in that case, these girls are...)

A bad feeling made Kamito's back break out in cold sweat.

In the next instant...

"Kyahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

The girls lost composure and shrieked.

"S-Suspicious person!" "Has the lewd beast invaded the Divine Ritual Institute's main shrine!?" "Be gone! Be gone—!"

Yes, this was a forbidden zone, where only selected princess maidens were eligible to step foot into.

A purification site reserved exclusively for the Queens, only five of them across the whole continent.

"...H-Hey, Fianna!?"

Kamito turned his head back, looking for the culprit behind this situation.

Fianna remained sitting in the water, sticking her tongue out innocently.

"Fufu, perhaps I messed up on the coordinates a little?"

"Sheesh, why did you have to teleport here of all places!?"

Her uniform completely drenched, Claire was so angry that her twintails were standing on end.

"K-Kamito-san t-t-touched m-m-my bottom...!"

Holding down her thoroughly wet skirt, Rinslet was shaking, her face bright red.

"W-Wait, you two, uh, your underwear... is showing through."

"...!?" "Hyah!"

When Ellis pointed it out, Claire and Rinslet hastily brought their arms up to cover their chests. [thumb](#)

"S-Sorry!?"

Kamito shifted his gaze away, meanwhile his heart rate rising.

However, when he turned his head to look back—

He found the Queens holding soap and buckets, all glaring at him.

"...!?"

Just as he was thinking "my life is over"...

"...My goodness. You have fared poorly with teleportation ritual magic since long ago."

With her crimson hair dripping water nonstop, Rubia slowly stood up.

"...Huh? R-Rubia-sama!?"

Reicha Alminas instantly covered her own mouth and looked shocked.

"Oh..."

Taking another look—

The demon mask covering her face had evidently fallen off in the impact.

"...Sorry, wrong person."

"No way, this is Rubia-sama, right? Right?"

"..."

In response, Rubia turned her head away somewhat awkwardly.

(...Come on, no way in hell you can deny it now.)

Kamito muttered in his mind in exasperation.

Part 3

"My goodness, are you sure you didn't do it on purpose?"

"That goes without saying. Even someone like me would not play a joke at a time like this."

"...Hmph, who can trust you?"

"K-Kamito-san, p-please forget my bottom."

"Y-Yeah..."

"Be quiet. This is the main shrine of the Divine Ritual Institute, you know?"

Using Scarlet's flames to dry their clothes, Claire and the girls bickered while walking along a corridor in the Divine Ritual Institute's main shrine.

The four Queens, who had finished their ritual purification, were leading the way.

Wind Queen Sylpha Lastia, Earth Queen Nia Roshka, Water Queen Feilei Sin Quina, as well as Fire Queen Reicha Alminas—

The fifth Queen was not present.

Lumiela Leisched, the Queen serving the Holy Lord, had lost consciousness after the oracle was issued, remaining bedridden all this time.

The Holy Lord's oracle had been issued to every church across the continent. As the medium for the oracle, she had collapsed, unable to withstand such massive strain.

(...For the Holy Lord, even a Queen is just a tool, huh?)

Trailing a few steps behind Kamito and company, the masked Rubia remained silent.

It looked like she found it awkward speaking to her juniors, the current Queens.

"Just now, something has happened at the holy capital on Ragna Ys."

Leading the way, Reicha spoke in a nervous voice.

"What happened?"

Her close friend Fianna asked.

"It is faster for you to see with your own eyes. Please do not jump to conclusions based on preconceptions."

"...I understand."

—The Divine Ritual Institute's main shrine was located on a cliff where there was a great waterfall.

Towards the cliff, one overlooked a vast forest. This was the forest of Astral Zero, even bigger than the Spirit Forest that occupied one third of Ordesia's area.

The sky was mildly red. Even during the daytime, twinkling stars were visible.

At night, two moons, one red and one blue would rise.

"How nostalgic, this air."

Claire puffed out her chest and took a deep breath.

"Yes, the air is filled with pure divine power."

"Yes, it feels like my soul is being cleansed."

"The holy capital was transferred to the Elemental Lords' shrine, in that direction—"

Saying that, Reicha pointed across the vast forest.

"...Where?"

Placing her hand over her forehead, Claire narrowed her eyes.

"Wait, I shall create a lens of wind using Far Sight."

Wind Queen Sylpha stepped forward and chanted spirit magic.

Kamito and company watched as the air before them became distorted, turning into a massive lens.

Their view was magnified. Scenery far away instantly looked as though it was right in front of them.

Then—

"W-What is that...!?"

Ellis exclaimed in shock.

Kamito and the others were stunned too.

"Not sure. It suddenly appeared in the sky over the holy capital."

As though superimposed on top, the holy capital had appeared on the Elemental Lords' shrine.

A gigantic black pillar had risen from the central part of the holy capital.

The black pillar pierced a hole in the sky of Astral Zero, producing a swirling void.

(...! That's—!)

Kamito had seen this scene before.

It was the Otherworld hole he had seen in Ren Ashdoll's dream.

"The gate to the Otherworld has opened?"

Kamito groaned in a trembling voice.

Part 4

A gate to the Otherworld had appeared in the sky over the holy capital. Witnessing the shocking scene, Kamito and company returned to the main shrine for the time being.

Next, they explained the current situation to the confused Reicha and Queens.

The Otherworldly Darkness corrupting the Elemental Lords. Sacred Maiden Areishia who had revived in a desert far away. Also, the truth of the Holy Lord's wish to open a gate to the Otherworld and obtain the power of angels—

After listening to them, the four Queens were stunned, unable to speak.

"The Holy Lord wishes to open a gate to the Otherworld..."

"No way...!"

"Although it is hard to believe, I can assure you this is absolutely true."

Fianna told them.

"No, we are not doubting your words. After all, there is that oracle earlier."

Reicha shook her head.

"However, the amount of information is staggering..."

"Yes, that is true. After all, we suddenly have mentions of a gate to the Otherworld and angels—"

Hearing what Fianna said...

"..."

The four Queens looked at each other with a look of doubt.

"...What's wrong?"

"No, uh..."

Wind Queen Sylpha spoke ambiguously.

"Actually, we know about the angels' existence."

"What!?"

"...What is this about?"

Claire and Fianna exclaimed.

"Although the Divine Ritual Institute's dogma does not mention such beings, which means we must not speak about them, we Queens have all seen angels."

"How exactly, where—"

Mid-sentence, Kamito realized it.

"I see, the Elemental Lords' dreams...!"

"Indeed."

Reicha nodded calmly.

True, these Queens were contractors who received the Elemental Lords' oracles directly.

Assuming it was possible to share in the dreams of the Elemental Lords driven mad by the corrupting Otherworldly Darkness, it came as no surprise that they could see the army of angels, restless in the darkness.

"After listening to your story, I finally understand."

"...Understand what?"

"The truth about the gate appearing in the sky over the holy capital."

"...!?"

Reicha looked around her in a circle.

"That black pillar is the principal body of an Elemental Lord."

"What?"

"Using an Elemental Lord as a gate...?"

Kamito and company looked at one another.

"Earlier, my spirit seal showed an intense reaction. I fear that the Fire Elemental Lord is the sacrifice used to create that gate."

"I see."

Rubia, who had been leaning against the wall, listening silently, finally spoke.

"Accursed Holy Lord, using the Elemental Lords who have been corrupted by the darkness, huh?"

"In that case, the reason why the holy capital was transported to the Elemental Lords' shrine—"

"Yes, it was for this."

Hearing Claire's murmurs, Rubia nodded.

(I see, I had seen the army of angels in that darkness...)

It was because the Elemental Lords served as gates to the Otherworld.

(...I should've realized. The significance of the scene I saw.)

Using herself as a sacrifice, Millennia Sanctus had summoned an angel at the Academy.

If an Elemental Lord was used instead, how much bigger of a gate would be opened?

"But if that's the case, why hasn't the Holy Lord opened any gates until now?"

Claire raised a question.

"—Most likely, he was waiting."

Rubia looked down at her spirit seal and said.

"Waiting for the darkness to corrupt further, waiting for the Elemental Lords to descend into instability. No, perhaps stirring up trouble in the continent was for that...?"

"Indeed, unrest in the human realm would greatly affect the condition of the Elemental Lords responsible for the world's stability."

Reicha agreed.

"Holy Lord Alexandros—"

Rubia's crimson eyes burned with tranquil flames of fury.

Suppose the unrest in Ordesia and the Theocracy, the two Ranbal Wars, and that time when the Fire Elemental Lord went crazy, all this was part of the Holy Lord's plan—

Then the Holy Lord would be Rubia Elstein's enemy.

"...But even so, there might be hope."

Reicha looked up and swept her gaze over everyone's face one by one.

"...What do you mean?"

"Only one gate has been opened so far, right?"

"It means that the gate to the Otherworld is not complete yet!"

Earth Queen Nia Roshka stood up.

"That's right!"

Kamito clapped.

The Holy Lord had said the world would end three days later.

In other words, the current gate was not complete, unable to summon the army of angels.

"Then it means there's a chance of stopping the Holy Lord's plan—"

Chin resting on her hand, Claire murmured softly.

"But how do we stop it?"

"Hmm, if only there were a way to close the gate..."

"Yes, that's right..."

Nodding, Kamito placed his hands on the two swords at his waist.

(...So I've got to storm the holy capital and assassinate the Sacred Maiden, huh?)

"—I have got an idea."

Just then, Fianna spoke.

"What do we do?"

"Assuming the gate to the Otherworld is formed from the Elemental Lords, then wouldn't a kagura dance offering be able to pacify their soul?"

"I see."

Claire nodded.

"...That could very well work."

Water Queen Feilei Sin Quina murmured, nodding.

"But Senpai, that would be no easy task."

Reicha shook her head.

"We here have offered kagura to the Elemental Lords many times but that still could not suppress their madness—"

Even Rubia, famed as the most accomplished Queen in history, had not succeeded in placating the Fire Elemental Lord's mad rage.

"True, but Kamito-ku—Ren Ashbell-sama's blade dancing offered at the Blade Dance tournament did succeed in quelling the Elemental Lords' anger, even if only for a short time, right?"

"...!?"

"So you want us to offer a blade dance to the Elemental Lords?"

Hearing Claire, Fianna nodded.

"Yes, a blade dance from Team Scarlet, victors of the Blade Dance tournament, could very well enable the Elemental Lords to recover stability somewhat."

"Indeed, we Queens were very moved by your blade dance."

Reicha said.

"It might be worth trying."

"It does not hurt even if it fails."

Ellis and Rinslet agreed.

"Yes, in that case, we shall assist too."

Water Queen Feirei Sin Quina spoke.

"Someone is needed to preside over the kagura blade dance, right?"

"Much appreciated."

"Rubia, what do you think?"

Just then, Kamito looked back at Rubia standing by the wall and asked.

With a strict gaze, Rubia had her arms crossed.

"...It is worth a try, I suppose. At least it could buy some time."

"Then it's decided."

Claire practically bounced up.

"...By the way, where should we offer the blade dance?"

"Hmm, it is not like they will let us approach and perform right in front of the gate, right?"

Ellis pointed out.

Indeed, it was hard to imagine the enemy would allow them to offer a blade dance right in front of the enemy camp.

"At the center of Ragna Ys, there is still the arena used for the Blade Dance three years ago."

Wind Queen Sylpha spoke.

"That's the stage where Ren Ashbell won three years ago!"

"Yes. Perhaps it might be possible to reach the Elemental Lords with a blade dance from there."

"Got it. Then let's make that place our goal."

Hearing Claire's words, Team Scarlet's young ladies all nodded.

"I shall command the Divine Ritual Institute to prepare a ship. Please be patient."

Part 5

"The gate to paradise has finally been opened, Holy Lord—"

The pillar of darkness in the sky of Astral Zero was piercing the gigantic gate.

Millennia Sanctus was looking up at the scene from a balcony in the Holy Lord Palace.

The grand Holy Lord Palace was now a temple that had lost its master. Des Esseintes and the Sacred Spirit Knights and others, having served the Holy Lord's wishes for centuries, were no longer present.

Then there was Lurie Lizaldia, her former friend and ally—

All were short-lived bubbles in the past, unnecessary in the new world created by the Holy Lord.

(Including me...)

She was not dissatisfied at all.

After all, the spirit Millennia Sanctus had been born for this purpose.

(What I need to do is finish the final mission...)

The spirit with a girl's appearance gripped tightly the crimson longsword granted by the master.

Ragnarok—The elemental waffe of Fire Elemental Lord Volcanicus.

The ultimate elemental waffe of Astral Zero, even surpassing Laevateinn.

But even the strongest flame was not worthy of the master's possession.

The sword that belonged in the Sacred Maiden's hand no longer existed in this world.

It was what the Holy Lord wished to obtain—

Just then, a wavering shadow appeared behind Millennia.

"Ren Ashbell and others have apparently traveled to the Divine Ritual Institute."

"Yes, I know—"

She looked back—

To answer another Millennia Sanctus who had appeared out of thin air.

A hybrid being, created by merging an angel with the fragments of the sacred sword Terminus Est.

Distributed across space and time, all of them were one being.

One of them was destroyed by Dragon King Bahamut. Another became the gate for summoning angels at Areishia Spirit Academy.

Of four fragments, two remained—

"Well then, complete the final mission, Millennia."

"Yes, Millennia—"

Like mirror reflections, the two instances of Millennia Sanctus nodded simultaneously.

Chapter 9 - To the Altar of Dancing Blades

Part 1

The ceremonial ship, *Grand Titania*, took off for the Elemental Lords' shrine.

Although the Divine Ritual Institute's elder council were reluctant to let four Queens go in person, Reicha and the Queens' strong resolve convinced them in the end.

The elder council probably could not come up with any effective response to the Holy Lord's oracle and the gate to the Otherworld that had appeared over the holy capital.

Grand Titania was a white ship with a graceful streamlined shape.

Three years ago, it had been first unveiled during the Blade Dance opening ceremony. It lacked weapons because it was not a military ship, but it was the fastest ship in Astral Zero.

Of course, this was also its first time to carry a man, apparently.

"The destination is not far. With this ship's speed, we ought to arrive in half an hour or so."

Staring intently at the holy capital afar, Reicha spoke.

She was holding a glowing transparent orb in her arms.

It looked like an artifact connected to the spirit crystal energy source and used to control the ship.

Grand Titania flew quickly across an endless plain.

On lookout duty was Simorgh, currently on deck to guard against spirit attacks.

Although the figures of large spirits could be seen in the sky, there were no signs of them coming to attack yet.

Looking at the sky over the holy capital, one could see the gate that resembled a vortex of festering darkness.

It was already as big as the gate that Kamito had seen in the Darkness Elemental Lord's memories.

If the gate were to be completely activated, how many angels would appear?

Just as he was lost in thought—

"Kamito, what are you spacing out for?"

Claire tugged at his sleeve and greeted him.

"W-What's up?"

"Rinslet and Ellis said they made packed lunches. Let's fill our stomachs before we arrive at the holy capital."

"Yeah, I got it."

Indeed, no one could predict what was going to happen in the holy capital. Since it was not far away, he should take this opportunity and eat first.

"...Hmm?"

Just then, noticing something a bit strange about Claire's attitude, Kamito frowned in surprise.

Tugging at his uniform sleeve, Claire was staring directly at his eyes.

As though observing seriously—

Next—

"...Looks like it's fine."

She murmured quietly.

"...What do you mean is fine?"

Concerned, Kamito asked.

"N-Nothing!"

Claire went red in the face and shook her head, returning to Rinslet and the others.

On the deck of *Grand Titania*, the young ladies set out their lunch boxes.

No simple snacks along the likes of sandwiches. Every compartment in the little wooden boxes was filled with a small portion of a cooked dish.

"The Captain and I took great pains to create these."

"Yes, and we even used carefully selected ingredients to help replenish divine power."

Rinslet and Ellis arranged the colorful wooden boxes on the floor.

"Wow, that is amazing!"

"M-May we have a try too!?"

Wind Queen Sylpha and Earth Queen Nia exclaimed.

"Most certainly. As it turns out, in our zeal we made too much."

"Wow, thank you very much!"

The four Queen bowed their heads politely in gratitude.

Even Queens, elite of the elite, had a side to them like ordinary girls... Thought Kamito to himself.

"Where is Rubia?"

"I invited her, but she said she needed to check some literature on rituals."

Fianna shook her head.

"I see..."

Sure enough, spending time with junior Queens would feel awkward.

"I will take my sister's portion to her later."

Saying that, Claire took a pink lunch box.

"That's your portion, Claire."

"...? They're not the same inside?"

"Indeed, open it up and have a look. You will be surprised."

Rinslet looked quite proud as she spoke.

"Oh well, it'll definitely taste good anyway since you cooked it."

Saying that, Claire took off the lid.

"H-Hwahhhhhhhhhhhhh, a d-demon spirit!?"

Instantly, she screamed.

"...What is with you, that is so rude. It is Scarlet, okay!?"

Rinslet protested with a look of dissatisfaction.

"Huh? How does this thing resemble Scarlet in any way!?"

Claire displayed what was in the lunch box.

When they had a look, everyone except Rinslet ended up with frozen expressions.

On top of the rolled omelet was a monstrous design drawn using bright-red ketchup.

"It doesn't even look like a cat!"

"Miaow—!"

Boshboshbosh.

Scarlet protested and gave Rinslet several kitty punches to the knee.

"See, even Scarlet's angry."

"Ehh, didn't I draw the ears and the tail!? Look, here—"

"Uh, I totally cannot make it out—"

Fianna shrugged too.

"Say, don't tell me that Rinslet's sense of aesthetics is this low?"

Kamito whispered in Ellis' ear.

"Hmm, it looks she really believes the drawing is cute."

Ellis scratched her own face while answering quietly.

...How unexpected, a perfectionist young noble lady's surprising weakness.

"Could it be that all the lunch boxes are like this too?"

Fianna opened a white lunch box this time.

"This nightmare... No, very avant-garde pattern, what is it?"

"Tha is Miss Sword Spirit. I made it using bean curd."

Rinslet replied nonchalantly.

"I-Is that so..."

"Don't tell me there's one for me too?"

In human form, Restia asked with curiosity.

"Here it is."

What Rinslet handed over was a black lunch box, the incarnation of chaos.

"This wouldn't be Otherworldly Darkness, would it!?"

"What a wonderful sense of humor, Miss Darkness Spirit. I used powdered truffle."

"Hmm..."

Restia made a very subtle look.

"Oh, b-but it's extremely delicious!"

Having tried the food in trepidation, Reicha attempted to lift the mood.

"...Well, the taste is definitely not bad."

Claire murmured quietly with a complicated look on her face.

"O-Okay now, let's ignore appearances."

"Kamito-san, what do you mean by that!?"

"K-Kamito, if you do not mind, please try my food too."

"Yeah."

He accepted the stewed yam that Ellis had extended to him and ate it.

"Mm, delicious!"

Despite the simple taste, the ingredient's natural flavor was fully brought out.

"Really, I am so glad."

Hearing his comment, Ellis smiled demurely.

In such a manner, the group spent a moment's respite.

"Kamito-kun, look over there—"

Just then, Fianna pointed at the outside scenery.

"Hmm?"

There was a small town down below, in front of where the ceremonial ship was headed.

Speaking of towns on Ragna Ys, this was the only place.

The Town of Fantasy built for people to watch and enjoy the Blade Dance.

"So nostalgic, that place is still here."

Claire leaned out and looked at the town's scenery.

"Yes, it was originally slated for gradual dismantling within a few months."

Reicha replied.

After Team Scarlet's celebration party and sightseeing with Leonora, this place was also filled with memories for Kamito too. However,

the Ren Ashbell Memorial Museum was the one building he wanted demolished as soon as possible.

On a hill, one could still see that castle where Team Scarlet had stayed.

(I remember the forest near there. Muir's militarized spirit even attacked it...)

How odd. Even though not much time had passed, it felt so nostalgic.

(—It shows how too many things have happened recently.)

Just as Kamito and company were reminiscing...

Kyeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

Simorgh on lookout gave a mighty cry resounding across the whole deck.

Part 2

"...!?"

Kamito and company instantly stood up and deployed their elemental waffen. They surrounded the puzzled Queens for greater protection.

A large spirit flew from the holy capital's direction.

It looked like a winged snake, as long as the ceremonial ship.

"...! What is that, a berserk spirit?"

Ellis asked quietly.

"No, spirits of such a high rank should not occur around these parts."

Fianna shook her head.

Indeed, this was the location of the Blade Dance town.

They would not have built a town here if such dangerous spirits roamed the surroundings.

"It is the Holy Kingdom's assault militarized spirit—Kerykeion."

On the deck, Rubia carefully examined the large spirit and spoke.

"I have received reports about it when I previously sent Lily to infiltrate the Holy Kingdom. They are extremely mobile despite their massive size. These spirits are trained for attacking high-speed military ships."

"Did the Holy Kingdom notice us...?"

Just as Rubia said, the militarized spirit Kerykeion was approaching at high speed despite what its size and appearance would suggest. It looked like the *Grand Titania* would have difficulty shaking it off.

"Prepare to intercept. Protect the Queens. I leave the barrier to you, Fianna."

As the team leader, Claire swiftly gave orders.

"I shall not allow you to approach the ship."

Readying her elemental waffe bow, Rinslet nocked a magic ice arrow and drew.

"Wait, there is a rider—"

Just then, Ellis used Far Sight magic and called out.

"That's—"

Kamito focused his vision. Although he did not know how to use Far Sight magic, Instructional School assassins were able to enhance their vision for brief periods.

A petite figure was on top of the giant snake's head.

A blonde maiden dressed in pure white vestments.

"—Millennia Sanctus."

"What did you say!?"

Claire shouted.

...No mistake. This was the cardinal from the Holy Kingdom.

With Otherworldly Darkness residing in her eye, a being neither human nor spirit—

ROOOOAAAAAR!

The gigantic militarized spirit Kerykeion roared.

The atmosphere shook as a result. The intense shockwave struck the *Grand Titania*.

"Kyahhhhh!"

With an explosion sound, the deck shook violently.

Losing balance, Claire fell on her bottom.

Had Fianna not deployed Save the Queen, the ship might have disintegrated in that attack.

Kerykeion's massive body coiled up, wrapping itself around the prow.

Then—

"Fufu, hello, ladies."

"...!?"

A girl's cute voice was heard on the deck.

Standing on the militarized spirit's head, Millennia Sanctus looked down at Kamito's group.

"I am sorry to say to you all, please die here."

With an innocent expression, she grinned and declared.

"You shall not succeed! Freezing fangs of ice, go forth and pierce—Freezing Arrow!"

Rinslet shot the arrow from her elemental waffe.

Bringing cold air, arrows of ice rained down on Millennia and the militarized spirit from above.

However, the released ice arrows were neutralized before they could strike their target.

Kerykeion flapped its gigantic wings, blowing the rain of arrows away.

"...! H-How competent! Then take this instead—"

Rinslet closed her eyes and gathered a huge amount of divine power in her fingers.

It looked like she was about to release a finishing move.

"Fu, fufu, fu... Haha, ahahahahahahahahaha!"

Allowing her vestments to flutter, Millennia laughed conceitedly.

Tearing off the eye patch covering her left eye, she tossed it into the air.

"...!?"

From her clear violet eye, terrifying Otherworldly Darkness flowed out.

"I shall not allow you to interfere in my master's wish. Crash down right here right now!"

In that instant, the deck of the *Grand Titania* shook violently.

"What!?"

The ship's speed instantly dropped while the body became tilted.

"Wait, what's happening!?"

Claire shouted.

"...! I-Impossible to control, the spirit crystal acting as the power source has run amok!?"

Holding the orb used to control the ship, Reicha spoke in almost a wail.

"...! It's the Otherworldly Darkness causing interference!"

The Otherworldly Darkness, capable of driving even the Elemental Lords mad, had been used by Millennia in the attack against the Academy town. Corrupted by darkness, the spirits in the Academy all descended into chaos.

The spirit crystal serving as the ceremonial ship's power source was the first to be affected.

Out of control, the *Grand Titania* spewed the light of divine power while falling.

"Kyahhhhhhhhh!"

"W-We are falling!"

"Grab the railing, everyone! We're gonna crash!"

Amid Millennia Sanctus' laughter, Kamito shouted as hard as he could.

Directly beneath the ship was the town built for Blade Dance visitors.

"—O great wind, relentless guardian, protect thy servants!"

Wind Queen Sylpha deployed a wind barrier around the *Grand Titania*.

The ship's orientation was righted, but the momentum of its descent still could not be stopped.

The militarized spirit Kerykeion squirmed its massive body to strike its slow-moving prey. The gigantic tail smashed into the top of the cabin directly, blowing away panels of armor.

"Eat this—Fireball!"

BOOOOM!

Claire released flame spirit magic against the snake's head.

The fireball caused a great explosion at extremely close range.

Hisssssssssssssssssss!

Kerykeion hissed angrily.

It flew up into the sky in one go, this time intending to flatten this ship from above.

"Incoming!"

Ellis cried out.

"Hmph, they shall not succeed!"

Rinslet readied her magic bow and closed one eye. Then—

"O piercing spear of ice that penetrates sturdy walls—Icicle Driver!"

She unleashed a finishing move with all her might.

A gigantic spinning ice spear flew straight, skewering the large assault spirit in the belly.

Shigyahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

"Success!"

Kerykeion's giant body struggled then turned into particles of light and disappeared.

"...! U-Unbelievable, you defeated a militarized spirit in one strike!"

The Queens, Reicha especially, were astonished.

"Hmph, this is just a piece of cake whenever I bring out my true skills."

"The result of training at Dracunia."

The Raven Class pair of the hell cat and the ice demon hi-fived on the deck in celebration.

"You two, stay alert. That cardinal disappeared."

"Hmm..."

Hearing Ellis' warning, Claire stiffened her expression.

During this time, the *Grand Titania* slowly descended.

The town ruins below them kept drawing nearer.

"This ship is hopeless. Everyone brace for impact."

Rubia calmly said.

Reicha and the Queens gathered together, holding onto the ship's railing in desperation.

Next—

Craaaaaaaaash...!

"...!"

A shocking impact swept through the entire ship.

Squashing buildings in the town, the ship's massive body dug a trench in the stone-paved road surface.

Surface armor flaked off, exposing the frame inside.

While causing destruction in the streets, the *Grand Titania* continued on, finally stopping after knocking down a great clock tower at a plaza in a spectacular manner.

Were it not for Fianna's barrier and the Wind Queen's shield, the ship would have fallen apart early on, dismembered.

A great cloud of dust rose, blocking the entire view.

"...! Are you okay, everyone?"

With the Demon Slayer stabbed into the deck, Kamito looked back.

"Y-Yes, we are fine."

Behind the dust, he heard Reicha's reply.

At the same time, there was a splashing sound. It seemed like Water Queen Feirei Sin Quina had activated water protective magic.

"That was crazy..."

"My uniform is covered in dust!"

"H-Hold on... Kyah!"

"Are you alright, Your Highness—"

Claire and the girls jumped off the tilted deck one after another onto the ground.

Kamito remained alert as he landed in the wrecked town.

(Oh, it's this place...)

Looking at his surroundings with smoke and dust hanging in the air, he muttered to himself.

No wonder this place felt so nostalgic—

This was the plaza where he and Leonora had strolled along the streets before the final round.

'—Kamito, be careful.'

The silver-white sword's blade flashed while Est warned.

"Yeah, I know—"

The gigantic militarized spirit was at most a welcome party.

The cardinal would not be naive enough to think that something of that level could bury Kamito's group.

Suddenly—

"Ahaha, how does it feel to have your wings broken?"

Mocking laughter resounded across the plaza.

"Y-You!"

Claire glared at the sky.

Hovering in the air, vestments fluttering, Millennia Sanctus looked down upon Kamito and his companions.

From her left eye where the eye patch had been removed, Otherworldly Darkness flowed out endlessly.

Small spirits, dancing in the sky, were flashing intensely.

Although high-tier spirits such as Scarlet, Fenrir and Simorgh were unaffected so long as they did not come into direct contact with the darkness, the low-tier spirits living in Astral Zero were evidently unable to withstand the miasma, all of them rendered chaotic.

"What a barbaric greeting, Millennia Sanctus."

Kamito readied the Demon Slayer and the Vorpall Sword.

In response, Millennia Sanctus grinned savagely.

"After all, none of you are needed in my master's world. Just like me."

"...!"

The dripping Otherworldly Darkness—

As though utterly ravenous, it kept devouring the girl's body.

"Ah, ahhh, ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

From Millennia Sanctus' throat exploded a hoarse scream.

"W-What is she intending to do—?"

"She is suddenly killing herself!"

Claire and company were puzzled by her behavior, but...

"—No wait. That's a gate."

Kamito said.

"...Huh?"

"That spirit is creating a gate for summoning angels."

Having absorbed Millennia's body, a black sphere hovered in the air.

...No mistake. This was the same as when the Dunamis angel had been summoned in the Academy.

The Demon Slayer in Kamito's hand gave off a low hum.

As a spirit weapon, Est sensed the presence of a mortal enemy inside.

Whoosh—Suddenly, a crack appeared in the sphere.

...Zu...Zuzuzuzu...Zuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzu...!

Something was about to crawl out of the dense darkness.

"...! Something is coming out...!"

Probably sensing it through a princess maiden's instinct, Fianna held her breath.

"Don't think it'll be that easy! O scorching conflagration—Fireball!"

Seeing that, Claire released flame spirit magic, trying to destroy the entire gate.

However, the crimson flames entered the darkness and immediately disappeared.

"...! Take this—"

"It is futile. Do not waste your divine power."

Seeing Claire about to use spirit magic again, Rubia gripped her shoulder to stop her.

...Zuzuzu... Zuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzu...!

The sphere of darkness ruptured as though ripped apart from inside—

It came out.

"W-What is that!?"

Wielding Ray Hawk, Ellis exclaimed urgently.

"...!?"

Kamito was also speechless, gripping his two swords.

Appearing out from thin air was a gigantic rotating spiral column.

...That was what Kamito could describe using his own knowledge.

The spiral column gave off rainbow-colored light while slowly descending to the ground.

"Is that a so-called angel?"

Claire asked.

"Yeah, but it's different from the one I saw last time..."

'—It is an Ophanim.'

Est's voice sounded in his mind.

"So a different type from the one we fought in the Academy, huh?"

'Indeed, but specific authority unknown. Require memory domain to conduct analysis—'

"Got it."

...Despite the weird appearance, this was an angel no doubt.

With both swords gripped tightly, Kamito spoke to Claire and the others behind him.

"Everyone, take the Queens and go. I'll take care of this."

"W-What are you talking about? We have to fight together too."

"I agree!"

Ellis and Rinslet objected, but...

"No—"

"Why?"

"Kamito, are you treating us as burdens?"

"No, that's not what I mean."

Kamito shook his head.

"The angels possess authorities that interfere in natural laws and nullify spirit attacks. Ordinary spirit attacks don't work on them."

"Why are you talking about?"

"They can only be defeated by spirit weapons, born to fight angels."

Saying that, Kamito poured divine power into the Demon Slayer.

"...! No way, even the power of spirits won't work?"

"...I understand, then let us do as Kamito-kun says for now."

Fianna said.

"Your Highness..."

"Kamito-kun, I shall leave this to you, okay?"

"Yeah—"

Hearing that, Kamito nodded lightly.

"Hold on. In that case, I'll fight with you."

"Claire?"

Kamito frowned and looked back.

"Like Terminus Est, I am also a weapon created for fighting angels. Though my memories from the great war are gone, as the last survivor of the Valkyrie series, I see fighting them as my mission."

Claire's Flametongue spoke.

"Ortlinde, speaking of which, that's true—"

"Sword spirit, please provide analysis data—"

'—Understood, Ortlinde.'

Glowing words hovered around the Demon Slayer and started to rotate at high speed.

Next, as though in resonance, Claire's Flametongue also had glowing words appear around it too.

"Kamito-kun, Claire, I leave this to you."

"Do not overdo it."

"Thank you for taking care of it."

"Yeah, don't worry—"

Kamito made a thumbs up behind him.

"Claire..."

"—Go, Nee-sama. I'll take care of Kamito."

Hearing Rubia's voice, Claire nodded firmly towards her.

In front of Kamito's group, the spiral angel landed on the ground.

"Are you ready, Claire? I'm trusting you with my back."

"Hmph, leave it to me!"

Holding Flametongue, Claire smiled fearlessly.

Standing with their backs together, the two of them glared at the angel before them.

Chapter 10 - The Demon King Is Summoned

Part 1

Around the spiral angel were glowing runes that resembled High Ancient.

This was language for altering physical laws in this world, rewriting them—

According to Est, the enemy was an Ophanim, an astral reconnaissance type.

Unlike the Dunamis angel where he had fought in a deadly battle, this was yet another type of angel.

"Claire, don't lower your guard just because it looks like that. This is a genuine monster."

"Yes. After all, Scarlet is shaking this much."

Flametongue held in Claire's hand was producing low rumbling that resembled ultrasound.

A spirit weapon like Est, Orlinde was reacting to the enemy's power.

"I am trembling in excitement, master."

"I know."

Hearing the proud contracted spirit explain, Claire smiled wryly.

"Est, how long will it take to decipher those runes?"

'—Yes, within sixty-four seconds.'

"Roughly a minute, huh?"

This was quite a tough duration. However, unless those runes capable of manipulating natural laws were deciphered, the attacks from elemental waffen would all end up nullified.

"Got it. A minute. I will buy as much time as possible."

'I will protect you, Kamito. Miss Sword Spirit can focus on analysis.'

As jet-black magic lightning erupted, Est responded to Restia.

'—Thank you, darkness spirit.'

Est brightened the silver-white blade and answered.

'Fufu, with the legendary sacred sword rely on me, I really cannot betray those expectations.'

"Yeah, that's right—"

Saying that, Kamito poured divine power into the Vorpall Sword.

In that instant, he felt a sting in his left eye, but...

(...Shut up, Ren Ashdoll!)

Unfazed, Kamito continued to release divine power.

This was not an opponent that could be defeated by conserving strength.

"Claire, I'll be the vanguard. Cover me."

"Yes, then allow Scarlet and I to make this thing run in circles."

With a swing of Flametongue from Claire, crimson flames instantly crossed the ground.

They were teammates for the longest time, working together ever since they started participating in the Academy's ranking tournament.

There was no need to discuss how to coordinate before a battle.

"Let's go—"

Allowing the divine power gathered in his feet to explode, Kamito kicked the ground hard.

Part 2

Listening to the sounds of combat behind them, Rubia and the rest of the group ran along the streets that had turned into a wasteland.

Unlike Ellis and Rinslet, who had gone through blade dance training at the Academy, and Rubia whose body was enhanced using cursed armament seals, Fianna and the four Queens were lacking in physical stamina.

Added to the fact that the ground had been dug up, they almost tripped and fell many times.

"We have to leave this place as quickly as possible, or else we will get caught up!"

Staying in the rear to protect the Queens, Ellis shouted.

Although she had not witnessed an angel's power first hand—

If what Kamito had said was true, then their surrounding could turn into scorched earth any moment.

Just then...

"...! Kyah!"

A Queen up ahead screamed.

"...What!?"

Ellis widened her eyes.

A blazing wall of fire was blocking their path.

"...! What on earth is going on? Blizzard Breath!"

Rinslet chanted ice spirit magic—

However, the fire grew even stronger, instantly devouring the blizzard.

"Impossible...!?"

Seeing that, Rinslet was shocked.

Next—

"Fufu... Running is futile, little rats on the ground."

"Curse you—!"

Ellis looked up in the sky and shouted.

Only to see in the sky over the fire wall blocking them—

A cute girl dressed in pure white vestments, standing there.

"...! Why is there another Millennia Sanctus!?"

Stopping, Fianna bit her lip.

"How many of them are there?"

"Dear me, do know that I have always been one. All of me are me—"

Millennia Sanctus was holding a crimson greatsword enveloped in flames.

This was presumably the sword that had generated the wall of fire—

Just then—

"...! That sword, could it be—"

Rubia's voice was hoarse.

Her ruby-like eyes seemed to be burning. Her hair was lit with the color of flame.

The spirit seal on her right hand glowed intensely.

A red akin to boiling blood—

"Rubia-sama..."

Noticing something unusual about her demeanor, Fianna murmured in surprise.

As though resonating against the light from her spirit seal—

The deep red magic sword in Millennia's hand spewed crimson flames.

"Yes, this sword is the ultimate flame sword that brings about the world's end—Ragnarok."

Millennia Sanctus smiled and raised the magic sword.

"The elemental waffe of Fire Elemental Lord Volcanicus."

"Damn you—"

Glaring angrily at Millennia Sanctus, Rubia slowly spoke up.

She exuding murderous intent from all over her body.

"How dare you take *that* out in front of me—!"

Fire Elemental Lord Volcanicus.

She was the culprit behind why Rubia had become the Calamity Queen.

The grudge from turning Elstein territory into a sea of fire—

"Aha, what a touching scene, Calamity Queen. Be grateful to me. I shall use this flame, which had destroyed your homeland, to burn all of you lot into nothingness!"

The flame sword Ragnarok in Millennia's hand became bright red as though heated red-hot.

In that instant...

"Fahrengart style of the spear, secret technique—Storm Strike!"

Ellis launched Ray Hawk at the wall of fire towering before them.

BOOM!

Enveloped in a storm, the magic spear created an opening in the wall of fire.

"What!?"

The unexpected situation caused Millennia to frown.

"Rinslet, take the Queens and go!"

"Understood! Fenrir!"

Mutual understanding in Team Scarlet allowed Rinslet to react immediately.

She did not say anything extra. The fire wall's lapse was only temporary. Any hesitation would have wasted the rare opportunity to escape created by Ellis.

Right now, protecting the four Queens was the most important.

Woof!

Enveloped in a blizzard, the white wolf was summoned out of thin air.

Fenrir took the four Queens with his mouth, waited for Rinslet to mount his back, then leaped across the narrowing gap in one go.

"Little rats with petty tricks, do you expect to escape just like that?"

Sneering, Millennia swung Ragnarok lightly.

A scattering of sparks turned into countless fire hounds, chasing after Fenrir.

"...! This is bad!"

Ellis exclaimed—

"Oh dear me, is this the time to be worrying about your companions, little miss?"

Millennia Sanctus jeered and slowly landed on the ground.

Stabbed into the ground, Ragnarok turned the stone tiles into scorching lava.

"Rubia-sama, please step back—"

Wielding her elemental waffe rapier shining with silver-white light, Fianna spoke.

Their formation was to have Ellis as the vanguard and Fianna covering from behind.

Although with only two of them, this was not reassuring, yet this was currently the best tactical formation available to them.

However—

"You two, stand down."

Ignoring Fianna's voice, Rubia walked up to the front.

"...Rubia-sama!?"

"The Fire Elemental Lord shall be mine to handle."

She glared at the sneering Millennia Sanctus.

No, it was the Ragnarok held in her hand.

Scorching flames surged out of the Calamity Queen's hands.

Part 3

Kiiiiiiiiiiiiin—

With an ear-splitting noise—

The glowing spiral angel began to spin at high speed.

The glowing runes deployed around it gave off intense light.

"—It's coming, Claire!"

Issuing a warning, Kamito released divine power and closed in all at once.

The spiral angel stopped spinning.

From instinct, Kamito judged it to be an attacking motion.

Instantly, the deployed glowing runes gathered into a point and released a flash of light.

(...It's coming!?)

Kamito lowered his posture as though lunging at the ground.

This reaction could only have been performed by predicting an attack.

The lightning beam rushed past the top of Kamito's head from the focus point.

The air was torn apart. The heat wave from the beam scorched his skin.

Fired in a straight line, the lightning beam's trail disappeared in the sky far off in the distance behind him.

Had it touched any part of him, his entire body probably would have been turned into ash.

Crushing stone tiles underfoot, Kamito rushed forward resolutely.

"O magic lightning of darkness, crush mine enemies—Vorpall Blast!"

The jet-black lightning erupting from the demon sword's blade rained down on the spiral angel.

But—

K... iiii... iiii—!

The angel deployed glowing runes around it again, producing a weird noise akin to metallic friction.

The magic lightning of darkness, capable of destroying everything, was easily deflected by the angel's barrier.

This was absolute defense for nullifying the power of spirits, interfering with natural laws of the world.

(...! Sure enough, it doesn't work, huh?)

Kamito had expected the angel's defense to relax after a powerful attack.

The spiral angel floated up lightly.

Then six points of light began to contract at the same time.

(...! Carpet bombing next!?)

Discerning the lightning beams' trajectories, Kamito realized dodging was impossible.

In that case—

(—Est, can you hold up!?)

While jumping to the side, Kamito shouted in his heart.

...But all he got was silence.

(Huh, E-Est...?)

'It's useless, Kamito. Miss Sword Spirit is currently focused on analyzing the barrier.'

"...No way!"

Hearing Restia's voice, Kamito groaned in despair.

'Didn't we agree to buy a minute of time? Very well, let's go—'

"W-Wait...!"

Just then—

"Dance, a rondo of flames, O flourishing blossoms of scorching flames—Flare Rose Garden!"

Claire's stern voice was heard.

The spirit magic poured into Flametongue was released—

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Detonation. Centered on the angel, the entire area exploded.

By striking the focus points of the lightning beams, Flametongue had detonated them.

"Claire, you saved me!"

"Scarlet and I will take out the attack's origin points."

Jumping onto a collapsed building, Claire brought back Flametongue with a swish.

"Kamito, keep moving to act as a diversion."

"...Got it. I'll try to draw its attention as much as possible."

"B-But, don't overdo it!"

Saying that, Claire hastily added.

"Yeah, I'll be fine."

Chuckling wryly, Kamito readied the Vorpall Sword.

(Time until Est completes analysis, thirty-four seconds to go. Thirty-three, thirty-two...)

While focusing on the battle at hand, Kamito also kept an accurate countdown in his mind.

...As long as he persisted, a chance would come.

...i, iii, iiiiiiiiiiiiii—!

The strange noise was heard again. Burning flames were instantly erased.

This time, runes with a red glow were deployed around the spiral angel.

(—The pattern is different from just now!?)

Of course, Kamito could not understand what the runes meant.

But at least he knew that the incoming attack would be different from before.

The glowing runes reached the ground and deployed in a circle.

"It's coming, Claire. Be careful—"

"What's coming?"

"Who knows—"

"W-What... Eh, kyah!"

"Claire, hold on to me!"

Kamito hurried to Claire's side and pulled her by the arm.

Picking up her kitten-like body in his arms, he jumped on top of rubble.

"Hwa... K-Kamito!?"

Claire instantly blushed to her ears. Her eyes became moist.

Just then, the ground under Kamito's feet turned into mud. His body instantly sank down.

"...!?"

Kamito released concentrated divine power in one go, jumped again, leaping on top of a building.

Centered around the spiral angel, the surrounding buildings slowly sank into the ground.

"W-What is going on...!?"

"This area's properties has been rewritten—"

Putting Claire down on a roof, Kamito looked down.

The road paved with stone tiles had turned into pitch-black mud, devouring everything.

"T-This is so crazy..."

Stunned, Claire grumbled softly.

"This is nothing..."

Still gripping his swords tight, Kamito wiped sweat off his brow.

Soon, the glowing runes vanished and the bottomless swamp turned back into the original ground.

Glowing with rainbow colors, the spiral angel began to slowly spin in one place.

(But it seems a bit odd...)

Suddenly it occurred to Kamito.

Compared to the Dunamis angel he had fought at the Academy, this angel seemed more defensive in action.

Of course, its power was still nothing to laugh at, but—

(It's almost like it's *waiting for something to arrive*...)

Thinking that, Kamito then noticed.

Apart from the barrier deployed around the angel—

Runes had been spinning inside the spiral this whole time.

(...What's going on? What is it doing?)

'—Kamito, angel analysis complete.'

Just then, Est's voice interjected into Kamito's mind.

Words of High Ancient flowed rapidly around the Demon Slayer's blade.

"Good job, Est!"

'Yes, Kamito. I shaved off approximately seven seconds.'

With an unemotional voice, Est declared a little proudly.

"Now we can finally counterattack."

"Yes, it's not my style to keep taking attacks."

'Sharing data with hell cat spirit.'

Resonating, the Demon Slayer and Claire's Flametongue began to glow.

"I don't know why, but this angel doesn't seem that strong in offense. It's much easier to handle than the Dunamis angel I met in the Academy."

Just as Kamito was about to counterattack...

'—Wait a moment, Kamito.'

"Whati is it?"

'The existence density inside the angel is rapidly rising.'

The silver-white blade flashed intensely.

"...Sorry, can you explain more clearly?"

'The angel seems to be summoning something inside it.'

"...What did you say!?"

The spiral angel that continued to spin gave off blinding light.

The spiral unraveled then vanished into thin air—

Something enveloped in light appeared at the same spot.

"...What!?"

Kamito could not help but gasp.

It was a human figure.

A tall human figure, dressed in a jet-black cape whose shape kept shifting like a shadow.

His entire body was shrouded in dark miasma. Behind that mask, shaped like a skull, was a pair of blood-colored eyes glowing ominously.

That image was almost like—

"...What the hell!?"

The strongest and most vicious being in the history of the continent—Demon King Solomon had appeared.

Part 4

"Aha, what a sense of humor, Calamity Queen!"

With her back to the blazing wall of flames, Millennia Sanctus laughed, the corners of her lips curling.

"Having lost your power, what could you do now?"

"Lost my power, is that what you think?"

Rubia extended her right arm, enveloped in flames.

"What?"

"—O ancient and unruly flames, take residence in my hand and turn into a sharp blade!"

Instantly, a scorching weapon with graceful curves appeared in her hand.

Its shape was very similar to the weapon known as the katana that had existed throughout the ages in a far eastern country.

"Is that an elemental waffe!?"

Fianna widened her eyes, exclaiming in surprise.

The elemental waffe Laevateinn should have been destroyed during the final round of the Blade Dance.

Also, Rubia was supposed to have lost the power of the spirit contract.

"Eh, how interesting. Why do you have an elemental waffe?"

"It is not an elemental waffe."

"What did you say?"

Rubia readied the blade she had summoned out of thin air.

The blade left an after-image of blue flames wherever it swept past.

"Militarized spirit Kagutsuchi, an experimental model I had Vivian Melosa create."

"M-Militarized spirit...?"

Hearing that, Fianna was stunned.

Militarized spirits were meant to be spirit that could be employed without establishing a spirit contract. Normally speaking, they were impossible to turn into elemental waffen.

Even for the Ordesia military, relevant technologies should still be at the research stage.

To think that Rubia had actually implemented it?

"Similiar to my esteemed sister's Elemental Panzer, huh...?"

"Yes, the theory is quite similar."

Rubia replied.

"Although swordplay is not my specialty, at least I am better than you, cardinal."

She glared sharply at Millenia Sanctus before her.

The cursed armament seals branded all over Rubia's body gave off ominous light from under her military uniform.

The blue flames on the blade began to burn intensely.

"Rubia-sama, no—!"

Fianna could not help but cry out in alarm.

Using so many cursed armament seals at the same time was tantamount to suicide.

"I care not. I am but a moving corpse."

"Ho... Aha, ahahaha, to think I thought it would be something else, unbelievable, a militarized spirit!?"

Millennia Sanctus mocked coldly.

"You intend to cross blades with this Ragnarok with something like that?"

The ultimate elemental waffe in Millennia's hand spewed crimson flames.

The sword was swung.

A giant mansion was sliced diagonally. The top portion slowly slid down.

CRAAAAAAASH!

With noises of destruction one after another, a massive dust cloud floated into the air.

"Thank me for my mercy. I shall grant you swiftness, burning you three nice and clean. So clean, not even ash will be left!"

The remains of the collapsed building turned into a rain of fire, falling upon Rubia.

" "Rubia-sama!" "

Fianna and Ellis hastily tried to rush over, but were blocked by the burning debris.

However, Rubia stood calmly amid the pouring rain of fire.

Her crimson hair, aflame in appearance, fluttered wildly in the wind.

"Cardinal, you are not worthy to hold that weapon."

Rubia slowly spoke.

"—Someone like you *cannot use those flames*."

The spirit seal of fire branded on her right hand gave off blinding light.

"...!"

For an instant, Millennia's body froze as though shocked.

"No need for you two to intervene. I shall handle this."

Turning her head to look back, Rubia said.

"Oh my, your words are killing me with laughter. Calamity Queen."

Head lowered, Millennia spoke.

"Very well. As you wish, I will burn you into charcoal!"

With her face filled with anger, Millennia swung Ragnarok.

A snaking dragon of fire swept over the ground, melting stone tiles as it charged forward.

In response, Rubia—

She stabbed her Kagutsuchi into the ground.

"—Not even time can escape a frozen fate, conflagrating flames of absolute zero—Frost Blaze!""

The secret passed down the Elstein bloodline.

The otherworldly flame capable of freezing even the strongest flame in Astral Zero.

"Have you forgotten this flame, Volcanicus?"

Amid the freezing blue flames, she said.

"—In that case, I shall make you remember!"

Part 5

—Demon King Solomon.

The most powerful elemental in history, who had brought terror and chaos to the continent a thousand years ago.

Seeing him appear before their eyes—

"...Say, what the hell happened?"

Kamito asked Claire behind him.

"What makes you think I can explain clearly..."

Claire's eyes were equally filled with doubt and confusion.

The appearance displayed before them was just like the Demon King of legend.

(...Say, I've seen both that mask and the cape before.)

...Unmistakably, this was the real Demon King.

The being before them was exuding an oppressive aura, enough to convince Kamito beyond doubt.

The Demon King landed lightly on the ground. Dense miasma of darkness instantly spewed forth from his entire body.

"Est, what happened? What did the angel do?"

'—A summoning of past temporal coordinates, Kamito.'

"...Huh?"

Kamito's reply was a question mark.

'A rewriting of the world's laws, invoked by the angel's authority. Extracting coordinates from the time axis of this world, then materializing it—'

"Uh, in other words, what do you mean?"

"In other words, the Demon King existing from a thousand years ago was summoned here in his entirety?"

Through Ortlinde, Claire had heard Est's voice and responded.

'Affirmative.'

"...So absurd—"

Kamito grumbled.

(...Summoning the Demon King? That's ridiculous.)

Demon King Solomon was the reincarnation of the Darkness Elemental Lord's power. If the Demon King before his eyes was the real thing, it meant that the angel had summoned that power along with him.

This ability was practically the same as a miracle. No wonder the Holy Lord wanted it so badly.

The angel's behavior focused on defense in order to buy time, huh?

—Suddenly, his left eye began to sting.

Perhaps the appearance of a being possessing the same power was causing *her* to react.

"Summoning the most powerful being recorded in the history of this world."

Holding Flametongue, Claire jumped down to the ground.

Kamito followed, facing off against the Demon King in front of him.

His gaze met with that of the two eyes behind the skull mask, glowing red.

Suddenly, Kamito recalled the young man he had met in the Demon King City.

"...Oh, ohhhh... Oh, ohhhhhhhhhhhh...!"

With a weird growling sound, even denser miasma of darkness filled the surroundings.

That voice of hatred seemed to be cursing all of creation.

The Demon King slowly extended his right hand.

"...! Incoming!"

"Burn all... souls, black thunder—Hell Blast."

—The magic lightning of darkness released from the Demon King came as a raging torrent.

Chapter 11 - Terminus Est

Part 1

The top-tier wide-area destructive magic of the darkness element.

The jet-black magic lightning released by the Demon King kept destroying buildings in the town.

The ground was punctured and left with countless craters.

"...Damn it... Are you okay, Claire!?"

"Y-Yes... Why is this so crazy...?"

Kamito and Claire crawled out from the collapsed debris.

Were it not for the Vorpai Sword, whose darkness element allowed it to act as a lightning rod to absorb the magic lightning, the two of them would likely have been scorched to ash in an instant.

Although Hell Blast was also a type of spirit magic that Restia used—

The firepower demonstrated here far surpassed what the top-tier spirit could use.

"...Living up to his name as the most powerful elementalist in history, the real Demon King himself."

Muttering, Kamito wiped fresh blood off a corner of his lip. The amount of divine power was extraordinary.

"How do we handle that monster...?"

"Just go all out and take a gamble. The enemy looks all fired up."

Kamito poured divine power into his two swords and stood up.

(...Est has finished analyzing. At least, there won't be any nullification again.)

The Demon King extended both hands this time. The skull mask glowed with eerie light.

"...!"

Hastily, Kamito and Claire jumped to the sides.

"Eternal... sleep—Cocytus."

One could hear air freezing.

Shrouded in white mist, everything within a radius centered on the Demon King was frozen—

From the ground, countless arms of ice reached out for Kamito and Claire.

"Incinerate until nothing remains, O scorching conflagration—
Fireball!"

With the sound of an explosion, Claire chanted flame spirit magic, shattering the generated ice.

However, the endlessly appearing ice covered the flames, surging towards them like a giant wave.

"Absolute Blade Arts, Third Form—Shadowmoon Waltz, Double Moon Turn!"

With a mighty shout, Kamito released divine power all at once.

Countless black and white flashes of the sword.

Leaving sword afterimages one after another, Kamito rushed in as a whirlwind.

Confronted with ice arms attacking from all directions, he shattered, severed or broke them with his every motion.

Stepping on a giant piece of ice fallen on the ground, he leaped into the air and—

"Absolute Blade Dance, Second Form, My Style—Double-Hit Comet!"

A dual-sword move of the Absolute Blade Arts, modified from Comet, was unleashed against the Demon King.

BOOOOOOOM!

The impact of the comet crash shook the air.

Together with the black garment, the Demon King's body was sliced into two. A gigantic crack appeared on the ground.

"...!"

Kamito did not feel the move connect.

He immediately jumped to the side. At the same time, a black blade swept by, just above his head.

(...Shadow spirit magic, huh?)

That magic was Ms. Freya's specialty.

The Demon King lifted a skinny black hand.

The golden ring on his finger instantly glowed ominously blue.

(...That ring is!?)

'—Kamito, beware. He is about to summon a spirit!'

Restia issued a warning.

That ring was the Ring of Solomon.

A legendary artifact capable of controlling seventy-two archdemon-class spirits.

(The spirit magic earlier was just a welcome greeting, huh?)

A terrifying voice sounded under the Demon King's mask.

"From underground, come... My minion—Midgardsormr."

Rumble rumble rumble rumble rumble...!

"W-What's going on!?"

Accompanied by a violent earthquake, the land on Ragna Ys split open.

Appearing out from the crevasse in the shattered and frozen ground—

A gigantic serpent all covered in countless steel-like scales. Compared to the Holy Kingdom's militarized spirit, Kerykeion, which was also a snake, it was several times larger.

'Earth dragon spirit Midgardsormr. It is the prototype for the strategic-class militarized spirit Jormangand that was sleeping in the mining town of Gado, you know—'

"...What did you say!?"

The gigantic earth dragon spirit opened its jaws and crushed buildings in the street.

"...Even the Demon King's contracted spirits can materialized?"

'Yes, what the angel summoned are the Demon King's complete powers—'

To this, Est replied.

"Kamito, I will come up with a way to handle this spirit!"

Claire shouted.

Kamito took a closer look and saw that Flametongue had entangled Midgardsormr's horn.

"Don't overdo it, Claire!"

"Don't worry and focus on the Demon King, kyahhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

The enraged giant serpent rampaged, causing Claire's petite figure to get thrown around in circles.

The gigantic writhing body swept across the land of Ragna Ys.

(...At this rate, the whole underground will be all dug up!)

Kamito jumped aside, dodging a strike from the tail.

He rushed up the earth dragon's back in one go, pouring all of his divine power into the swords in his hands.

His left eye began to hurt again.

He remembered Rubia's warning to him, but—

"Absolute Blade Arts, Destructive Form—Bursting Blossom Spiral Blade Dance, Eighteen Consecutive Strikes!"

Unleashing numerous slashes simultaneously, he destroyed Midgardsormor's scales of steel.

'It's not over, Kamito—!'

Restia called out.

Midgardsormr raised its head and widened its jaw.

(...! I can't believe it can still move after taking an Absolute Blade Arts move for countering archdemon-class spirits!)

Kamito kicked the ground and jumped, evading the attack, then plunged the jet-black demon sword into the monster's eyeball.

"O darkness, pierce—Vorpall Blast!"

The magic lightning of darkness erupting from the demon sword's blade shattered Midgardsormr.

However...

"From the ends of the sky, respond to my call... Minion—Fafnir."

The Demon King's ring glowed and summoned a spirit from thin air.

It was a dragon spirit with jet-black wings.

The dragon's claws attacked from overhead. Kamito blocked the attack with the Demon Slayer.

The heavy attack almost dislocated his shoulder—

"Absolute Blade Arts, Seventh Form—Biting Dragon, Double Strike!"

With a back handed strike of his sword, Kamito decapitated the dragon spirit.

"Huff, huff, huff...!"

He panted and pressed his hand against his aching left eye.

(If he keeps summoning archdemon-class spirits...)

"From the dimensional gate, respond to my call... Minion—Ymir."

"...!"

"You wish—Flame Chain!"

Claire swung Flametongue.

Enveloped in a conflagration, the long whip immobilized the Demon King's right arm.

Instantly, the Demon King's right arm carbonized and turned into ash.

"Kamito, do it now!"

Accompanied by Claire's shout—

Kamito dashed in one breath, executing a violent slash.

However—

It was easily deflected.

A jet-black demon sword appeared in the Demon King's hand and blocked the attack.

"What!?"

Kamito was speechless.

The demon sword held in the Demon King's hand was almost like—

"...I see. Indeed, *that* is the strongest spirit employed by the Demon King."

With anger in his voice, Kamito spoke.

Feeling the pain in his left eye, Kamito gripped the Vorpall Sword tightly.

"But, *that's my sword*, Demon King Solomon!"

Kamito stepped forward and slashed.

The demon sword of darkness clashed violently with the Vorpal Sword.

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

The Demon King roared.

It was a howl of joy for encountering a formidable foe.

Part 2

"Pierce, freezing fang of ice—Freezing Arrow!"

The magic ice projectile fired by Rinslet pierced three hounds simultaneously.

However, the fire hounds created by the flame sword Ragnarok immediately resurrected and kept narrowing the encirclement.

"...! Why will their numbers not decrease!?"

Rinslet shouted anxiously.

"The Fire Elemental Lord's fire is fire that burns eternally."

Reicha said.

"That is too unreasonable!"

Standing in the front to protect the Queens, Rinslet glared at her surroundings.

The fire hounds appeared one after another from the shadows of the collapsed building.

Even for Fenrir, running at full speed while carrying four people was a stretch.

Rinslet expected the hounds to catch up to them soon.

...Still, even with her defending as best as she could, the situation will only worsen eventually.

She could not expect the Queens to help out on the combat front. After all, they were princess maidens cultivated to serve the Elemental Lords.

(...All is lost, it seems.)

Rinslet poured power into her hand, drawing her bow.

(At least, I must create an opening for Reicha-sama and the others to escape—)

The fire hounds all pounced at them together.

In that instant...

An intense blizzard blew, turning the hounds into ice sculptures—

"...! W-What is going on!?"

Still with her bow drawn, Rinslet was instantly speechless.

Part 3

"—I will make you recall my name, Volcanicus!"

With her militarized spirit armament—Kagutsuchi—held at a mid-level stance, Rubia kicked the ground.

The cursed armament seals branded all over her body gave off intense sparks. Her figure instantly vanished.

"...What!?"

Millennia Sanctus' violet eyes widened in shock.

Leaving far behind the sound of her boots kicking the ground—

Rubia instantly closed in and executed a slash with lightning speed.

Imbued with flames, the tip of the blade brushed across Millennia's throat, leaving faint burns on her pure white vestments.

"—Tsk!"

Millennia leaned back, turning into particles of light and vanished, performing a spatial leap towards the back.

However, Rubia predicted that move.

She forcefully turned her arm that was wielding the blade and charged in one go.

Clang!

With the ear-splitting sound of metallic friction, sparks flew all around.

Kagutsuchi's blade had sliced into Ragnarok's body.

"What is with your movements...!?"

"Do not look down on me, cardinal. Although this power is borrowed, do know that I do not wear the name of Ren Ashbell, the Strongest Blade Dancer, in vain."

Saying that, Rubia attacked with even greater speed.

The flaming slash sliced across air.

Branded upon her body were simply cursed armament seals for physical enhancement.

However, Rubia Elstein was a princess maiden famed as the greatest Queen in history. When her astounding divine power was completely converted into physical ability, her movements were just like a master swordsman's.

Using the power of a militarized spirit, she overwhelmed the Ragnarok-wielding Millennia.

Even though Ragnarok's flames threatened to devour Rubia, she skillfully evaded every time.

"Rubia-sama's swordsmanship is so exquisite—!"

Ellis could not help but exclaim.

"Yes, but if she keeps using cursed armament seals like that—"

Nevertheless, Fianna murmured with worry.

Although Rubia's blade dance was aggressive—

At this rate, even for Rubia, her body would probably collapse from the strain in another minute or two.

Of course, she understood this all too well.

She must have planned from the start to conclude the match in a few dozen seconds.

Perhaps, even end the enemy in the first few seconds—

Rubia's Kagutsuchi sliced through Millennia's shoulder.

However, it was not fatal. A sword spirit with the attribute of steel had resistance to both cuts and fire.

Meanwhile, Ragnarok's flames could turn an enemy into ash with just a minor brush of the sword against the skin.

"Fufu, looks like it is checkmate, Calamity Queen!"

Millennia Sanctus grinned and swung Ragnarok.

Intense flames spewed out, turning into a gigantic fire dragon that lunged at Rubia.

"—Hah!"

With a mighty shout, Rubia swung Kagutsuchi.

Blue flames surged from the blade, instantly freezing the fire dragon into ice.

"Impossible, how could the strongest flame in Astral Zero end up like this, by the fire of a mere human's!?"

"You do not know?"

Seeing Millennia's fluster, Rubia spoke coldly.

"What!?"

"Unlike the fire of Astral Zero, the Elstein flames are not governed by natural law. Their true nature is similar to the Otherworldly Darkness you possess. Hence—"

Holding Kagutsuchi with blue flames over its blade, Rubia approached, step after step—

"Even the strongest flame can be frozen!"

Releasing power from the cursed armament seals, Rubia charged all at once.

"...! Then how about this?"

Rumble rumble rumble rumble—!

Millennia raised Ragnarok high above her head.

A vortex of crimson flames surged from the blade, piercing the high heavens.

This was a scorching conflagration, enough to burn the entire sky.

Next—

"Day of wrath, bring salvation to the foolish and punishment to the saints—Calamity Disaster!"

Generated from the vortex of flame, countless fireballs rained down from the sky!

"Ahaha, turn into ash from the flames that destroyed your homeland!"

"Rubia-sama!"

Fianna screamed.

However, Rubia remained where she stood without moving.

Holding Kagutsuchi, which was enveloped in blue flames, she stared straight at Ragnarok.

"—Do you see my blade dance, Fire Elemental Lord!?"

The pouring rain of fire vanished as soon as it touched the blue flames.

The fire spirit seal branded on her right hand glowed crimson.

"...Wh...at...?"

"...! Could it be that Ragnarok has gone out of control?"

"...! What have you done, Calamity Queen!?"

The flames of Ragnarok in Millennia's hand began to rampage.

Millennia's screams were heard from the flames.

With nowhere to go, the blaze of punishment devoured the surrounding rubble, expanding endlessly.

Ellis shouted, hastily planning to hurry over.

However, Rubia slowly shook her head as she stared intently at the fire.

"—Now I shall liberate you, Volcanicus!"

With her body shrouded in blue flames of absolute zero, Rubia plunged herself into the flames of crimson conflagration.

Part 4

"Absolute Blade Arts, Sixth Form—Crushing Fang!"

Confronted with Demon King Solomon, who was wielding a demon sword of darkness—

Kamito mercilessly executed an Absolute Blade Art specialized for destroying weapons.

However, it failed.

With the persisting sound of metallic impact, violent sparks flew out from the clashing blades of demon swords of darkness.

(—How dare you use *that* in front of me!?)

Glaring angrily at those crimson glowing eyes behind the mask, Kamito roared in his heart.

(...Sorry, you have really pissed me off with this, Demon King Solomon!)

The Demon King had summoned another Vorpall Sword.

The moment he saw it, Kamito felt his blood boil.

What a childish feeling, wanting to monopolize. With self-awareness, he could not help but smile wryly.

However, despite knowing he was being too emotional, Kamito still could not stop this impulse.

Perhaps the divine power of darkness also played a role in causing his emotions to turn violent—

"Ohhhhhhhh!"

With a great shout, Kamito swung his two swords.

With the flashes of light, he struck the body of the demon sword of darkness.

His left eye kept hurting.

Ren Ashdoll's spirit seal was projected onto his retina.

'—Kamito, I'm sure you are aware, right?'

Restia's solemn voice warned him.

(Yeah—)

He answered in his thoughts.

As soon as he ran out of divine power, Kamito would be devoured by Darkness Elemental Lord's power.

Using the Absolute Blade Arts, intensely draining in divine power, was suicidal given his situation—

But the enemy was the legendary Demon King after all. The most powerful elementalist in history.

Naturally, this was not an opponent he could defeat with his hands tied.

(In that case, I have to go for a quick kill!)

Kamito stepped forward in one breath, penetrating the enemy's attack range.

Since Demon King Solomon was both the most powerful elementalist and an outstanding warrior. But purely in the realm of swordsmanship, he was beneath Kamito who had mastered the Absolute Blade Arts.

Using unlimited divine power to invoke powerful spirit magic and to summon spirits.

This was the source of the Demon King's power.

Kamito would be uncertain of victory if he allowed the Demon King to launch attacks of that sort one after another, but—

(That's why I can't let him have things his way!)

The two swords swinging through the air glowed with blinding brilliance.

"Absolute Blade Arts, Introductory Form—Bursting Cherry Blossom Flurry!"

This was an anti-personnel Absolute Blade Art exclusive to dual wielding.

Kamito's arms turned into a mirage, executing consecutive thrusts like falling petals.

However—

"...What!?"

The godlike speed of Absolute Blade Arts failed to reach the Demon King's heart. All strikes were deflected by the black garment.

Glowing with dark luster, the cape's shifting form was like a shadow.

(...! Oh right, this black garment—)

The Garb of the Lord.

He had accepted it from the spirit Iris, a legendary artifact that allowed the wearer to convert divine power into defensive ability.

Although when Kamito wore it himself, it turned out to hinder the flow of divine power—

But right now, supported by Demon King Solomon's massive divine power, it was showing its true worth.

Seizing the momentary opening right after Kamito had executed the Absolute Blade Arts...

The Demon King laughed in mockery from behind his mask.

The demon sword of darkness swept horizontally with lightning.

Although Kamito hastily used the Demon Slayer to block the incoming sword, the dark lightning still pierced his right arm.

"...!?"

He barely managed to hold on to his sword.

Thanks to Est's powerful magic resistance, his arm avoided a fate of carbonization.

However, even a brief moment's delay in attacking could prove fatal in battle.

Glowing runes appeared over the stump of the left arm severed by Claire.

Within the blink of an eye, the left arm was restored together with the Ring of Solomon.

(...! The angel's authority!?)

That being said, Kamito had considered the possibility of him using that move.

The Demon King extended his right hand at Kamito, who did not get a chance to follow up his attack.

"Dance, crimson flames summoning destruction—Hell Blaze!"

The Demon King chanted the ultimate fire spell.

Taking this move at close range would turn a person into ash completely.

"—Scarlet!"

Kamito heard Claire shout.

At the same time, the hell cat wrapped in flames raised sharp claws and pounced on the Demon King.

The Demon King easily swatted Scarlet away with a single hand—
While unleashing the flames of spirit magic with the other hand.

In response, Kamito—

"Absolute Blade Arts, First Form—Purple Lightning!"

With a mighty kick against the ground, he dashed straight towards the Demon King's chest.

Thanks to the brief opening created by Scarlet, the activation of spirit magic was delayed slightly.

With godlike speed, the Absolute Blade Art connected in the nick of time just before the Demon King's magic activated.

This was a dangerous gamble that Kamito had made the call to take.

If his judgment was off, Kamito would be the one with his body turned to ash.

Like lightning, his attack pierced the Garb of the Lord.

With the Vorpall Sword still deeply embedded, Kamito unleashed his divine power.

"—Vorpall Blast, Vorpall Blast, Vorpall Blast!"

He mercilessly blasted three consecutive attacks with the darkness element.

Every magic attack caused the Demon King's massive body to convulse violently.

Almost in a pleading manner, Kamito released the magic lightning of darkness for the fourth time.

His left eye burned as though it was on fire. His view had almost turned completely red.

'Kamito, this is no good... At this rate, even I cannot suppress the power of darkness any longer...!'

(...I know, but—!)

He had to take care of this monster right here.

The fifth Vorpall Blast was released.

But Demon King Solomon still remained active.

With his heart still pierced, he grabbed Kamito's neck with a bony right arm.

"...! Cough... Gah...!"

Next—

As retaliation, he plunged his demon sword of darkness into Kamito's belly.

"Guh... Ah... Ahhh, ahhhhhhhh!"

Just like that, Kamito was thrown to the ground.

"...Guh, ooh... Ooooh...!"

Crimson blood dripped on to the rubble.

Holding the demon sword of darkness that had drank this blood, Demon King Solomon began to step forward.

(...! Damn... monster...!)

Kamito cursed in his thoughts and smiled wryly.

It was self-mockery.

—Directed at himself, who had likewise become a monster.

Thump, his heart throbbed.

Black miasma surged out. The hole in his belly punctured by the demon sword instantly healed.

He could no longer hear the voices of his two contracted spirits.

Only her soft laughter echoed in his mind.

(I... am—)

His consciousness was gradually turning all black.

He—

Slowly stood up.

Demon King Solomon halted.

It was unclear whether the emotion of fear still existed within him, but presumably he instinctively sensed danger.

Boundless divine power of darkness filled *his* body.

With every footfall, the ground was shattered. Dark miasma was generated.

Oh, ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...!

The Demon King roared and swung his demon sword of darkness.

"..."

But the jet-black lightning erupting from his demon sword's blade was effortlessly crushed in *his* hand.

Of course. After all, *he* was synonymous to darkness itself now—

That being said, magical attacks of any other element would have ended up the same way.

It was as though time had frozen.

Step by step, *he* approached the Demon King.

Demon King Solomon activated the Ring, intending to summon spirits.

So slow. Those movements were truly too slow.

No, it was only in *his* eyes that things seemed this slow.

He raised the Demon Slayer simply—

Whoosh—The Demon King's heart was pierced.

That was all.

That was all, and the Demon King's body turned into glowing runes and vanished into the air.

With that, *he* stood there.

Part 5

Amid all-incinerating fire, *she* saw fragments of lost memories.

How long ago was it when that young little girl had arrived at the shrine for the first time to seek an audience—?

In front of her, whose sanity was corroded by Otherworldly Darkness, about to succumb to impulses of hatred and destruction—

The girl had arrived as Queen.

"—Today onwards, I shall serve at your side."

So nervous that she was trembling, the princess maiden knelt before the altar, introducing herself with the name of Rubia.

The girl's face was more beautiful than any princess maiden *she* had seen before.

...But that was all.

As Queen, she would serve for a mere few years then leave.

This girl was nothing more than one of those princess maidens.

—That was what *she* thought at the time.

"T-Today, I have learned a new dance to offer to you, Elemental Lord!"

"I saw some beautiful flowers blooming in the Divine Ritual Institute's courtyard and picked some to bring along."

"I wrote a story for you, Elemental Lord. Would you like to listen?"

"I received a letter from my younger sister, Elemental Lord. May I read it out?"

Perhaps being young and naive, she was fearless.

Unlike the Queens before, the girl did not focus single-mindedly on pleasing her.

That girl's attitude made her feel confused, agitated, and a little intrigued.

—What was up with this human?

—Why does she not fear the revered Elemental Lords?

One day, the girl came before the shrine and said.

"U-Uh, today I have a favor to ask of you, Elemental Lord."

—Permission granted to ask.

She replied solemnly,

The petitions of Queens were mostly concerned with bringing prosperity to the human realm.

She thought the girl's request would fall along those lines too.

However—

"—Uh, Elemental Lord, umm..."

—What is it? Be quick. My patience has limits.

She had a flame surge from the altar in a threatening manner.

"I-I am sorry! U-Umm, *I would like us to become friends!*"

That was what the girl had said.

Had the elders of the Divine Ritual Institute heard this, they probably would have fainted on the spot.

—What?

Her angry voice echoed throughout the entire shrine.

The girl jumped in fright, her shoulder trembling in fear.

Nevertheless, she looked up with great fortitude—

"I-I have been very lonely ever since I separated with my sister. Lately, it has been hard for me to see my juniors in the Divine Ritual Institute such as Fianna and Reicha. Uh, and so—"

The girl explained awkwardly.

Of course, *her* wrath was implacable.

—A mere human princess maiden dares to call herself my friend, such insolence against an Elemental Lord such as I!

"Uwah, p-please forgive me!"

When *she* vented her angry flames on the altar, the girl fled in panic.

...Perhaps she was scolded severely by the elders of the Divine Ritual Institute after that.

The girl never brought up anything similar again.

This was *her* final memory as an Elemental Lord with sanity.

A small flame lit up in the darkness.

Part 6

In the flames of purgatory, Rubia gripped the Fire Elemental Lord's sword.

Using the Absolute Flame, she suppressed the rampaging ultimate flame of Astral Zero.

Freezing flames were exuded from all over her body.

Were they to interrupt for but an instant, her physical body would have been annihilated within an eye's blink

"—Remember, Elemental Lord Volcanicus!"

While shouting, Rubia hugged the blade of Ragnarok to her chest.

"Remember the name of Rubia Elstein, the Queen who serves you!"

In that instant, the spirit seal branded on her right hand shone with blinding brightness in the flames.

Ragnarok's blade glowed as though in resonance, then turned into particles of light and vanished.

The howling flames of purgatory—

Instantly vanished without a trace.

"...Ugh...!"

Rubia collapsed on the spot like a marionette whose strings had been severed.

"Rubia-sama!"

Fianna and Ellis hastily rushed over to her side.

Just then, a fire lit over Rubia's head.

That flame, appearing out of thin air, flickered and gradually took on human form.

Landing softly on the rubble was—

A beautiful girl with curving horns, a head of crimson hair and ruby-like eyes.

Fire Elemental Lord Volcanicus.

With her ruby-like eyes widened, she looked down at Rubia who was on her knees.

"...Ru... bia?"

She murmured in a daze.

"..."

With her head down, Rubia did not respond at all.

It was as though this girl's voice had not reached her ears.

"...I remember you."

With a trembling finger, Volcanicus touched Rubia's shoulder.

"You are my—"

Rubia's body instantly shook.

Surprised, Volcanicus hastily tried to help her up.

The color of blood swiftly left Rubia's face.

"R-Rubia! Someone, someone come cast healing magic—"



"Elemental Lord, allow us to—"

Fianna and Ellis replied while hurrying over.

Just then...

The sky glowed from over at the distant holy capital.

Part 7

Having destroyed Demon King Solomon, Kamito was surrounded by dense miasma of darkness.

It looked like it was about to transport Kamito to somewhere unknown—

"—Kamito!"

While calling out, Claire ran over.

(...! I must save him!)

Est and Restia were probably dominated by that power of darkness.

Right now, Claire was the only one who could save Kamito.

Suppose she used that method that her sister had taught, she might still make it in time—

Just as she stepped over rubble, about to reach Kamito's side...

The distant sky glowed with blinding light.

(...What!?)

She had a bad feeling about what was coming. Based on her instincts as a princess maiden, she understood this much.

"...! Kamito!"

Claire jumped without hesitation.

She plunged headlong into the dark miasma shrouding Kamito.

"...Guh, ah, ughhh...!"

In that instant, Claire felt searing pain as though being burned.

Submerged in the divine power of darkness, her skin was tormented mercilessly.

For a princess maiden with pure divine power, this was excruciating pain.

"...! Damn... it... Give Kamito back...!"

Even so, Claire still did not let go of Kamito's hand.

This guy has saved me so many times.

He always came for me, no exceptions.

"This time, I will be the one to save Kamito—"

The massive light produced in the sky over the holy capital was released.

"Kamito!"

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

With the frightening sound of an earthquake, Ragna Ys' ground split open.

"W-What, kyahhhhhhhhh!"

Hugging tightly Kamito's body that was devoured by the divine power of darkness...

The two of them fell into the vast forest of Astral Zero.

Part 8

The fractured ground of Ragna Ys turned into gigantic rock fragments, crashing down into the great forest below.

The town created by humans for the Blade Dance was wiped out without a trace by that strike.

"—Hmm, impressive as ever, Est."

In the sky over the holy capital of Alexandria.

Under the rotating gate in the air, Sacred Maiden Areishia exclaimed in admiration.

Howling wind blowed that beautiful blonde hair.

Slowly, she returned the sacred sword in her hand, Terminus Est, to her scabbard.

The ultimate spirit weapon that had annihilated numerous spirits.

"—After a thousand years, you have finally returned to my side."

Giving a light kiss to the sacred sword's hilt, the Sacred Maiden looked up at the rotating gate to the Otherworld.

In a little while, the road leading to paradise would open completely.

—By then, the existence guarded by angels would come within reach.

"Yes, very soon, the world we dreamed of shall come true—"

Looking at the sacred sword in her hand, Sacred Maiden Areishia smiled.

Epilogue

Part 1

In a space illuminated by faint light, Fianna opened her eyes.

"...Ooh, ooooh, mm... Where is this place?"

Gasping in pain, she slowly sat up.

The ground which she used her hands to push against for support felt soft, like a feathered velvet carpet.

Next to her, an unconscious Ellis was lying on the ground.

"...Ellis? Hey, what happened?"

Fianna woke up Ellis forcefully.

"Y-Your Highness, where is this place...?"

Waking up, Ellis blinked her brown eyes.

"I have no idea either."

Fianna shook her head.

"After that white light swallowed us, I woke up and here we are."

In that instant—

Just as the two of them rushed over to Rubia and the Fire Elemental Lord, the silver-white flash of light had swept them up.

The ground had shattered. They fell straight down.

They could not remember anything after that.

(...But I seem to recall seeing some kind of gigantic white monster.)

Fianna touched what felt like a feathered velvet carpet.

The ground was warm and trembled lightly as though it were breathing.

"Anyway, we should be thankful we did not fall all the way down."

"I wonder what happened to Rubia-sama, and Kamito and Claire—"

Ellis worried.

Fianna looked around in a circle. The only people present were Ellis and herself, the two of them.

Just then...

"The others are currently being located."

"...! Rinslet?"

Riding the back of a white wolf, Rinslet appeared from the darkness.

"Rinslet, what on earth is going on? Where is this?"

Fianna asked a series of questions.

"In the belly of a spirit."

"W-What did you say?"

"Seeing you two fall from the sky, I hurried over to rescue you."

"Rinslet, this isn't your spirit, right...?"

"You are right, of course not—"

Rinslet nodded.

Then whose was it?

"—It is mine, princess of Ordesia."

Suddenly, particles of light gathered in the air before them, forming the appearance of a girl.

"Y-You are—!?"

An adorable maiden with hair the color of water appeared.

Iseria Seaward—The Water Elemental Lord.

Part 2

Rain began to fall.

Inside a dense and creepy forest—

"—Kamito, open your eyes, Kamito!"

Claire hugged Kamito's motionless body tightly.

He was still breathing. However, it was still unknown whether he could regain consciousness.

Starting from the instant when the holy capital had shot out light, shattering the ground of Ragna Ys...

Claire had grabbed Kamito's hand and together they fell.

Although she had succeeded in slowing their descent by taking a spirit crystal out from her uniform pocket and activating levitation in haste, since it was not enough to support the weight of two people, the two of them had crashed into the forest in Astral Zero.

"...Kamito, I'm begging you, come back... Kamito!"

Not caring that the rain was drenching her, Claire called out with all her strength.

(...I must save Kamito!)

Est and Restia showed no signs of responding.

Right now, she was the only one who could save Kamito.

But as though in mockery of her—

Divine power of the darkness element gradually shrouded Kamito's body like a mist.

(Nee-sama had taught me the ritual for dispelling divine power of the darkness element...)

The ritual meant taking on the risk of getting devoured by darkness herself.

Even so, Claire did not hesitate.

(...Kamito has saved me who knows how many times.)



That's why, I have to be the one to protect Kamito this time—

Pulling off the ribbon at her chest with one hand, she unbuttoned her shirt.

Taking off the uniform, heavy from moisture, and removing her skirt, she was now wearing nothing except for a set of underwear.

In front of Kamito, she was displaying herself in an embarrassing state of undress on her own initiative.

The thought of this caused her skin to heat up in embarrassment.

However, now was not the time to be concerned about that kind of thing.

(...A-Also, I should be happy to let Kamito s-see this.)

Claire bit her lip and steeled her resolve.

She slowly picked up Kamito's body, shrouded in dark miasma, in her arms.

Wrapped in silk underwear, her two adorable little mounds pressed tightly against him.

"...Ah, mmm...♪"

Blushing to her ears, Claire whispered softly in his ear.

"—I love you, Kamito."

Her lips, like cherry buds, touched Kamito gently on the lips.

Part 3

First to be born were the spirits of Light and Darkness.

The spirit of Light illuminated the world while the spirit of Darkness covered the world with a canopy of night.

Next, spirits of Fire and Wind, as well as Water and Earth were born into that world.

The spirits created their own subordinate spirits and set about constructing the world.

Astral World was a perfect paradise of harmony and balance.

When was it that this state of affairs was broken—?

(...Where am I?)

In a strange dream, Kamito opened his eyes.

His consciousness remained awake. The last thing he could remember was destroying the Demon King Solomon that the angel had summoned.

(...I was swallowed by Ren Ashdoll's power, which took control of my soul.)

In that case, what he was seeing now would not be a dream—

(...So I've arrived directly in *her* mind, huh?)

Inside a space of endless darkness, Kamito slowly stood up.

Held in his hand were two swords, the Vorpall Sword and the Demon Slayer.

The two swords that had been missing in previous dreams.

—Right now, they were in his hands.

(...I knew it, not a dream. It's my soul that has been trapped in *her* consciousness.)

Reaching this conclusion, Kamito gripped his swords tightly.

Just then—

"—Fufu, you have finally become mine, my dear adorable child."

"...!?"

The echoing voice made Kamito look around him in surprise.

—Behind him, dense darkness coalesced.

"Hi, this is actually our first time to meet face to face, you and me."

Facing a presence that seemed to nurture death, feeling a chill down his back, Kamito greeted humorously.

Without his two contracted spirits by his side, he probably would have spoken with trembling words.

"I commend your courage. You have more potential than the brat a thousand years ago who was known as the Demon King."

The mass of darkness flickered and gradually took on human form.

Skin so pale it was like bright snow came into view in the darkness.

Arms and legs as delicate as works of art made of glass. A petite body like a child's.

Furthermore, beautiful hair in the color of night, like that belonging to Kamito's darkness spirit partner.



Her golden eyes, glowing mysteriously, were staring at Kamito with curiosity.

From the girl's back, jet-black wings spread out.

They looked like a canopy of night covering the world—

Ren Ashdoll, the Darkness Elemental Lord, had appeared

Afterword

—Have you forgotten this flame, Volcanicus?

Hello again, I am Shimizu.

I hereby present Seirei Tsukai no Blade Dance Volume 19,
"Disappearance of the Holy Capital"!

Kamito and his companions had returned from the Demon King City and succeeded in recapturing the Academy. After getting wounded all over in his battle against the angel, Kamito then heard Greyworth reveal the truth from twenty-four years ago. With the power of the Darkness Elemental Lord eating away at Kamito, the mystery of the holy capital's disappearance, the unexpected weakness of Rinslet-san the perfect noble young lady, and Holy Lord Alexandros' true goal is—?

Volume 19, which approaches the secret of Est's kneesocks, I hope it will meet everyone's expectations.

Recently, perhaps due to the summer heat, I've been in bad health, and caused a great deal of trouble for staff. Novelists must prioritize their health and take good care of their bodies...!

Next come acknowledgements. Once again, I am very grateful to Shimesaba Kohada-sensei who has drawn adorable illustrations. Every illustration was awesome, especially the one with Kamito and Claire standing next to each other, super amazing. Mr. Editor, I've caused a lot of trouble for you again, I thank you for taking care of me all this time. Finally, I have to thank all of you, dear readers, who have stayed with me the whole way to Volume 19. It's thanks to you all that the series was able to make it to this point...!

Almost eight years have passed since the series began. Manga and anime adaptations, autograph sessions, the Taiwan event, the performances of the Kneesocks voice actress unit, etc, so much has happened over these eight years. I had so many experiences. Volume 20 will be the final volume. I hope everyone can support the *Blade Dance* series to the very end!

I have also finished the script for the audio drama to be performed by the anime cast. The main theme is a reunion of Team Scarlet. I hope everyone will listen to it too!

Finally, let me advertise a little. Currently serializing in *Gekkan Comic Alive* to critical acclaim is the after school magecraft story "After School Witch Craft" written and drawn by Ichihara Kazuma-sensei. A fun and ecchi manga, I hope everyone could support it!

—And so, the final volume arrives next time at last.

I will work hard to bring you the best ending!

Shimizu Yuu, August 2018

イラストレーター あとがき!!

ごきげんよう、イラスト担当のメ鯖コハダです。

今回はイラスト的に出番の少なかったこちらの3名を描いてみました!

カミトやクレア、エストが大変な中、この3人を見てると安心しますね

特にエリスとフィアナを絡ませたくなってくるのです。

引き継がせて頂いて、もう三巻目、次が最終巻ですが

まだまだ描き足りない!という気持ちもありますが

最後まで"剣舞"らしいイラストになるように、イラスト担当として

頑張らせて頂きます!

メ鯖コハダ



Hello, I am the illustrator Shimesaba Kohada.

This time, I drew the three girls who appear relatively less often in the illustrations!

With Kamito, Claire and Est in trouble, seeing these three always makes me feel reassured. Especially Ellis and Fianna, I really wanna hug them.

It's been three volumes since I took over as illustrator. Although next time will be the final volume, I still have this feeling of "I still haven't drawn enough" in my heart.

As the illustrator, I will work hard to the very end to draw illustrations in Blade Dance style!

Shimesaba Kohada

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