

あづみ圭
Azumi Kei

月異世界道中 10

Tsukiga Michibiku Isekai Dōchū



Tsuki ga Michibiku Isekai Douchuu

– Moon-led Journey Across Another World –

- Volume 10 -

-Author-
Azumi Kei

-Artist-
Matsumoto Mitsuaki



主な登場人物



Chapter 160

Realizing he is the Devil, late night of autumn

At the center of the spacious room, there's an extravagant bed with canopy attached.

In the interior of this room that is fit for late nights, at times it would turn silent, and at others it was filled with a rattling sounds of hitting something and a high-pitched laugh.

“Fufufufu... Incredible, this is incredible!! So this is an otherworlder. This is a human! It easily does things that I wouldn't be able to imagine!”

If the people who knew the usual him that is never perturbed by anything and always makes a gentle smile, and saw this scene of him flailing his legs and rolling his body left and right, they would be left speechless.

This place is his own room.

A boundary that he ordered no one to get close to.

The bedroom has soundproof applied, so this disgraceful behavior won't be heard on the outside.

He was like a kid.

The adventurer guild's master, Falz, real name Root. He was frolicking.

Before his very eyes, there's a faint glittering quadrilateral frame. It can be clearly seen that Root's excitement was coming from that.

“Makoto-kun should be in essence not human but hyuman though. Do all the people that live in the original world like the humans end up like this?! Ah~, I want to try this out no matter what. His child, his possibilities, I want to bear it with this body of mine!!” (Root)

The square wasn't material, but an image.

An image floating in mid-air.

There, a bewildering scene changed continuously.

It's a terrible image that one can clearly affirm that it is the worst camera work ever.

Up, down, left, right; at a glance, it is something that can even be seen as a disorder.

It isn't something that one can properly watch at all.

Just one thing, no matter how crazily the image moves, a practically bluish hyuman figure can be seen at the center.

With that as the focus, it is the field of vision of something moving at high speed. That's how it felt.

But Root didn't make any complains about the image. He is just following it with his eyes as if having fun.

If he is actually able to understand the situation from this, he has terrifying dynamic vision.

For Makoto, what Root said would be quite unnerving, and the extend of the power is something to watch out for.

"I thought she was a boring irregular, but Sofia is also doing a good job. If she is able to somehow get through this situation, it would be fine to meet her at least once as a reward. Thanks to her I was able to see Makoto's power after all" (Root)

While concluding that it would be impossible for that to happen, Root says this.

The stage of that image is Limia Kingdom, the capital.

Well, even if it is, it has already lost its functionality as a town.

It is a terrible spectacle that would make the majority of people who see this, think in that way.

"This is it for the capital huh. But because of the interference of the Goddess, the life of the hero was saved, and the demon generals quickly left the stage. Because of the

jumbled power, I am unable to tell where Tomoe and Mio are, but being able to see Makoto-kun, and while at it, Shiki as well, is sufficient. At the raise of the curtains, he rampaged with a hilarious armor, and after getting a good laugh out of it, he activated his real power! Not only do I not get bored, looking at you day by day is so fun I can't help it. Just in what way did you reach to such a power?" (Root)

Root asks the hyuman shape cladded Makoto who is at the center of the image.

Bluish hyuman shape.

That is a magic power mass.

But it isn't just magic power.

It is an application method of magic power that's not magic, enabling it to do physical interference.

The demon race gave up and the hyumans gave up as well; a dead research.

When Root was clear about the power of Makoto, for a moment, his face turned expressionless, and then, as if eating it, he looked at that appearance.

Then, taking off his bathrobe and ending up naked, he began making a big uproar without caring about the time.

"One of alchemy's special techniques, the formation of the philosopher's stone. A easy to use catalyst that can even be called almighty. If it's without any impurities, it would truly be the 'Replenishing Drug Elixir'" (Root)

Root remembers something.

The philosopher's stone.

A secret high class catalyst that even among alchemists, only a few who have advanced their research by a considerable amount are able to understand.

If it's in a complete state, it possesses a different effect aside from being a catalyst and a medicine.

But well, there have been no stories of any hyuman creating a perfected philosopher's

stone though.

Then why did Root reach that conclusion?

Because what Makoto did was sublimely disconnected from the normal path, and at the same time, it was showing incredible results.

And Root has connected this result with the term alchemy.

"For an alchemist, reaching the philosopher's stone is the most supreme objective of all. That's why researchers which are not limited only to alchemist, use this word to make comparisons with their own objectives. But well..." (Root)

Makoto revealed this to Root once.

That he wanted to increase the amount of magic power he had.

That he wants an appropriate way to release the magic power he retains.

Of course, Root who holds good will towards Makoto, introduced several methods to him.

But...

Frankly speaking, Makoto didn't have the qualities to do them.

That's why, even if he did the most efficient and harsh training that Root denoted, Root didn't expect more than 1/10 of the result a hyuman would show.

Repetition is power, but with that, one can't expect an immediate effect.

And then, at the summer vacation of the Academy, Makoto secluded himself in a place Root didn't know and continued his training.

It is a pity but, it isn't a task that can be accomplished in just a month, is what Root thought.

Putting effort doesn't turn into waste, and having Makoto reflecting and training was actually something desirable for Root, so he didn't really give any comments regarding this.

In this time, the task of Makoto was to increase the amount of magic power that can be seen in his spell.

"This is crazy. Personifying magic power to the outside and use it depending on the needs. The magic power that that hyuman shape is composed of, it is being maintained one step close to critical point of when a spell is being activated. It is true that at that exact moment, magic power is the closest to being physical, but the consumption is so bad that it isn't even worth the discussion. Even I wouldn't be able to maintain it for that long" (Root)

A really inefficient method of resolution.

Just how much magic power Makoto possesses?

Root once again evaluates that he has no upper limit.

—No way he doesn't have.

But even if he tries to calculate it into numbers, he thought that just by writing the zeros, he would get tired.

If it's only a small dose of materialization, Root thinks that he would be able to maintain it for several minutes, but he doesn't think that he would be able to do it like Makoto in practical use against Sofia, and with that amount nonetheless.

If you are going to use that amount of magic power, it would be easier to just gather it from the surroundings and create a crater with it.

It is without doubt, an ability only Makoto would be able to use.

"Magic power at the verge of critical point and alters diversely. He gave concrete form to it and is actually using it for offense and defense, huh. When aiming to create the philosopher's stone, it is something that creates a genuinely disarrayed chaos. But you were able to do exactly that. I can't say which one is more amazing, but it is certain that it is totally crazy" (Root)

The image dyes in black.

In the second he turned his eyes away, it seems like Sofia had fallen to the ground.

The image that was coming out from her own field of vision, of course would black out the moment hers blacks out as well.

To think that the Myriad Colors dragon who Sofia is looking for, is actually using her as a substitute for a camera, there's no way she would be able to imagine it.

This image is her field of vision.

But it shakes and jolts.

The sensation is close to that of a small sized camera fixed at one's face.

He was unable to tell what was done to Sofia, but Root didn't seem that regretful about it.

No, Root didn't even hold any expectations that Sofia would put up a good fight.

For Sofia who only obtained the power of a few superior dragons, he knew that it wasn't an opponent she could match. The moment Root saw that materialization of magic power, he was sure of it.

At the same time, Root felt pity towards the adventurer that holds the alias Dragon Slayer.

If she were to know her place, if she didn't go scheming with Lancer and hunted the superior dragons, if she didn't try to challenge Root, if she only continued doing her activities as an adventurer, she would have lived her life as a winner and finish her life that way.

Well, now that it has come to this point, it is pointless talk already.

"Magic power edition 'Number One Origin, Materia Prima', is maybe how I should call it? If there's still no name yet, I should try proposing it. You will probably not understand those words and its meaning though. The creation theory you left for later and decided to run away from... right now, this boy was able to put it to practical use and even utilize it for physical labour. Even though you didn't even reach the general principle. Makoto-kun, you are truly the ideal hyuman I have depicted. The person I have imagined, tried to realize, and craved for, is already right in front of me. The core of my body is throbbing, melting... I feel like I will go crazy"

Root places a name to the power of Makoto which can be considered the pseudonym of chaos.

Without saying the true meaning of those words, just the heat of those words remained inside the room.

The image once again turns into the view from the sky.

Several red lights were shot towards the hyuman shape.

Even though they were being shot from different locations, they were all landing at the same spot of the hyuman shape.

Like a high-angle fire, she changes her trajectory and concentrates on one point of the hyuman shape as it is shot.

It is a deed that shows quite the high technique and concentration ability.

Even so, what Root was looking with his feverish eyes, was only Makoto who was enveloped by that hyuman shape.

In the middle of it, he changed his body to that of a woman and her body trembled.

Even though it is already reaching its resolution, it was as if he had completely forgotten about the variant strife that was occurring at Rotsgard.

Root passed a sleepless night.

Chapter 161

Shiki and the hyuman dragon

“...Even if you say dragon, the Nee-sans at Kuzunoha are more daunting. This isn’t a big deal”

At the outsides of the castle where the flames were beginning to settle, several places of the Limia capital had smoke rising.

With the large quantity of light swords that rained down not that long ago, it seems like it had enough effect to control the battle between hyumans and demons.

The sounds of fight have stopped.

The expression of the man that was facing the giant shadow and spilling out abusive language, it was easy to tell that he was just trying to look tough.

He was standing on his two legs, but he was quite wounded.

(I totally agree)

At the words that the man squeezed out, the shadow standing at a mountain of rubble also agreed.

But this one was not a person.

A robe with glossy black and, while few, there were also gold threads added to it.

Just that, the body that was dressed in it, is a skeleton.

The hood that was covering its head was taken off and its cranium was laid bare.

The agreement of his was directed at the words itself, and it didn’t show a single sign of agreeing to the act of toughness of the hyuman male.

It’s the servant of the devil that is currently fighting with Sofia at the audience room,

Shiki.

After following the hero Hibiki, he was staring at the destruction the light swords created.

“It saved me the trouble though”

Shiki confirms from afar the hero party that's trying to stand up and somehow fix their stance.

But his gaze stayed the same.

It was clear where his interest was directed at.

The moment he said it saved him the trouble, what he glanced at was Hibiki and the others.

An adventurer that was heavily exhausted.

Hibiki who can be seen to be in the same state.

Using his sword as a cane to stand up, the knight Bredda.

The Lorel Priestess who is desperately trying to ‘activate’ healing magic, Chiya.

And then...

There was one more remaining that Shiki saw.

With a hole opened at his abdomen and prostrated on the ground, the magician Wudi.

Maybe it was a stray shot, or it might be because his defense was not enough.

Leaving the speculation aside, for Shiki who was thinking about leaving some of her companions half-dead because they are running wild too much, this situation where Hibiki and the others are concentrating in defense and healing is quite ideal for him.

Truly saved him the trouble.

“The Lich huh. It doesn’t seem like you are sided with the demon race, but well, I will

let you go. Leave”

“Superior Dragon Lancer. ‘Mitsurugi’. I didn’t think I would be the one meeting you”
(Shiki)

A dragon that is larger than a watchtower was there.

Shiki knew that superior dragon, and yet, it doesn’t seem like he was scared.

Actually, it can even be seen as joy.

The hero party that screamed the name of their companion royal court magician, resounded in the background.

But it didn’t shake a single emotion from Shiki.

“...What is that stance?” (Lancer)

“My name is Larva. The servant of the Devil. Now that I say this, you should know my intentions right?” (Shiki)

“Devil... that kid, had his own troops?” (Lancer)

“You understand fast” (Shiki)

From the body of Lancer an overpowering aura comparable to a dragon’s roar leaks out.

It was something produced just by being aware of battle.

Without being bound by it, Shiki holds up his black staff.

Within the mist that was enough to cover the lower half of an adult, at the ruins of the capital destroyed by the light swords...

The fight between what is supposed to be only a mere high-ranked undead Lich, and the superior dragon Lancer, began.



<Translator Note: The spells of Shiki were all said in engrish, a language I am heavily weak against. So don't take any name of the spells in face value. I just took anything google told me in that one. Again, engrish can be a complete mess to translate. Especially for spells that can even refer to names>

“You bastard, it seems like you are without doubt the servant of the Devil. Seriously, you are a Lich only in name. Like a ‘servant’ disguising with the shell of a hyuman” (Lancer)

“Kukuku”

“But too bad. Even if you want to put up a fight, I am not just a simple superior dragon anymore. But really, for there to be a servant that has power comparable to that of a superior dragon, as expected of the Devil. Raidou is dangerous” (Lancer)

“...”

“You said your name was Larva, right? You see, I want to hurry and join Sofia, no, I want to kill the Devil with my own hands. That guy, even if it was temporary, he robbed me of one of my legs in the past” (Lancer)

Shiki continued his silence and Lancer continued his words. His form was showing a change.

The dragon body of his shrunk and turned into a hyuman shaped one.

It isn't the childish body that he had before.

He now had the appearance of a slender faced youth of around 20 years old like Sofia.

Different from when he had the appearance of a kid that was exactly the same as a hyuman, at his white skin, there's a tattoo-like pattern floating.

The pattern shines slightly and illuminates his appearance faintly, making his atmosphere feel like an illusion.

“I want to kill him’ That is what I should be saying, Lancer” (Shiki)

“You and that mouth of yours...” (Lancer)

After the words of Lancer, several light swords appear around Shiki as if surrounding him.

Practically at the same time they appear, a rain of swords attacks Shiki.



Shiki destroyed some of the swords with spells and secures an escape path, but unable to escape the explosion that the swords made after. He was blown away in the sky as if riding the wind.

Instead of calling it blown away, it was partly like he himself flew though.

“Larva-dono, release this mist. If you do that, we can fight as well. We can help you defeat that dragon” (Hibiki)

“Fuh, Limia hero, it seems like you are not properly seeing the situation. I am not really facing a hard fight here” (Shiki)

“...Yeah right. No matter how you try, you are just playing way too tough here” (Hibiki)

Shiki’s robe was quite damaged and was tattered already.

And, his opponent Lancer...

Had an even stronger power coming out of him from the shrunken hyuman body and standing as if nothing.

No matter who saw this, one can see that Shiki is the one in a predicament.

“I have received the permission of master. His leeway will be gone now” (Shiki)

“Master... that white guy. Larva-dono, let me tell you my honest feelings. That dragon that has made a mess out of this capital and killed a large amount of residents... let me defeat him alongside you” (Hibiki)

“...Your name was Hibiki, right? That’s impossible. From now on, I will have no leeway to mind you guys. Right now, even the barrier that is protecting you guys, I will most likely be unable to maintain it either” (Shiki)

“No way! If you release this now, the mist will kill Wudi-san!” (Chiya)

“Lorel’s priestess, there’s no need to worry about that. This mist will disappear soon. Not only that. I will give you guys an appealing proposition” (Shiki)

“An appealing... proposition?” (Hibiki)

Hibiki looks at the cranium where emotions can't be seen, at its shining eyes.

Those eyes were looking at Lancer.

Even when he was talking, Shiki wasn't looking at Hibiki and the others.

"Right. If you guys stay obedient, that magician there, I will save him later. Of course, with the condition that the priestess there is able to continue her healing though" (Shiki)

"?!! You will... save him?! An undead like you, save Wudi-san?! A living being?!" (Chiya)

Chiya's surprise was quite a normal reaction.

Normally, an undead can't use healing magic.

Only a very few number of undeads are able to, but they by nature hate living beings.

They hate the light of the living that they themselves have lost.

There's no way they would actively take the role of saving the life of a living.

That's why, for Hibiki and the others, Shiki's proposition seemed odd.

It is for that reason that, not only Chiya, but everyone there had a surprised expression.

"Are you saying that you are surely able to save Wudi in that state?"

"Of course. A mere thing like a fist sized hole at the abdomen, it is an easy job. In the first place, the line where we consider someone dead is different. Don't put us at your same level. Now then, how about it? I have gone all the way and proposed this to you though?" (Shiki)

"...I will believe in those words of yours" (Hibiki)

"Hibiki!" (Bredda)

Bredda's voice of caution.

"No, this is the correct answer. That dragon is not normal, but this guy is not normal either. The atmosphere he gives off is similar to a certain type of people. People that will do it when they say they will, that kind of people" (Hibiki)

"But!" (Bredda)

"Larva-dono, keep your promise" (Hibiki)

Hibiki once again tells Shiki words that meant her acknowledgement.

"The negotiation has been established then. 'Mist Temple, Nivlheim' cancel. Let me warn you. Try to at least protect your own body, okay?" (Shiki)

"...Understood" (Hibiki)

One ring disappears from Shiki's fingers.

As if proving that it originated from a strange power, the mist rapidly dissipates.

"How stubborn. Well, getting you along with the whole hero party is fine as well. Perish with my genuine swords" (Lancer)

Lancer faces Shiki, no, he fires off several number of swords that were floating in the sky at different directions.

"...It seems like, it is time to exhibit my specialty. Hero, and also that knight and adventurer. Protect your body with everything you have. If you don't want to die, that is" (Shiki)

It seems like Shiki has grasped the intention of Lancer's action.

After a slight delay, a scream was heard.

"?!!"

"What!!"

"Just what in the world is going on?"

"Kukuku, if you are going to hate someone, hate these fools that have dared to stand

in my way. You vessel swords, remnant of strong beings that didn't die" (Lancer)

Answering the words of Lancer, the several light swords that were shot, once again float in midair.

No, they were not light swords.

Red, black, silver, white... and also normal swords.

Swords that had substance were floating there.

"...Blade Dragon, Lancer. But that body of yours is a hybrid that holds two lives. A hyuman dragon, or maybe a dragon kin? I see, Root-dono's words were truly correct. Your power has increased when you took that form" (Shiki)

"!! Root! You bastard, why do you know that name?!" (Lancer)

"Surrounded by many famous swords, the supreme dragon called 'Mitsurugi'. The true form of those swords are the outcome of the strong beings you have turned into swords" (Shiki)

Shiki indifferently talks.

"...I can't let you live huh" (Lancer)

"Hmph. People that challenged you themselves, strong beings that you had taken an interest in; you turned the tables on them and increased your own collection. Being able to reside in a place close to people must have truly been 2 birds with 1 stone huh" (Shiki)

"Lich... you said your name was Larva, right? You and that hero as well... turn into a part of my power!" (Lancer)

The swords plunge at Shiki all at once.

"'Clad this body of mine in malice' Groth. Shia, 'the drifting silver cage that wipes out arrows' Madhugiri" (Shiki)

Gently walking forward.

With his specialty of using soul language, he loudly clacks the aria and approaches Lancer at high speed.

In a quite short aria, Shiki's body is clad in something dark red, and on top of that, several ripples were created.

7 of the 10 swords were pursuing Shiki.

An attack that doesn't aim at a place but at an individual.

But Shiki didn't stop.

From the front, the sides, and also the rear; ignoring the swords that were drawing near, he thrusts his staff at Lancer.

"You bastard!" (Lancer)

Just before a number of the swords hit Shiki, the ripples got in their way.

After that, Shiki activates the spell he was chanting his aria for.

The swords distorted heavily and disappear at random directions.

The two remaining swords collide with the dark red coating and slowly corrode.

The shock of the big light that occurred from behind, reached even at the place where Shiki and Lancer were.

It must have been the other three swords that attacked Hibiki and the others

"...I am truly lucky. Because something as convenient as this is actually happening after all. The Dragon Slayer Sofia and the superior dragon Lancer that holds the alias Mitsurugi; your sin of injuring one of our own, Tomoe-dono and Mio-dono would have killed you without remorse. I am truly... lucky" (Shiki)

"Killing me? Just because you have escaped my true swords once, you dare get so ahead of yourself!" (Lancer)

The thrusted staff was Shiki's late declaration of war.

Lowering his staff, Shiki gets happy about his luck as if monologuing.

“And, you are unlucky. I have investigated you well. By having a bit of cooperation from what can be called the dragon’s chief, Root-dono” (Shiki)

“Root! So you bastard really do have a connection with that guy. In that case, the Devil also...” (Lancer)

“I think that the strongest weapon people possess is ‘comprehension’. I am a ‘former’ hyuman, but... I will proof this by slaying a dragon” (Shiki)

“This is a battlefield. There are elites in the demon race, and in the adventurers of Tsige there are some as well. There are still many casks of strong beings. That composure of yours, I will soon erase it!” (Lancer)

“*Number 6 is my fittest...* ”” (Shiki)

“!!”

“*Free yourself from your scabbard and become your true form*’ come... Ascalon” (Shiki)

Shiki holds the staff with both hands as if brandishing a sword.

It is a black staff that has few decorations, but with a light similar to that of a red moon, it changed its appearance and becomes a giant great sword.

Claymore.

And quite the big one too.

“You bastard, weren’t you a magician?” (Lancer)

“I am a magician. That recognition is correct. This is a sword smeared with poison and malediction, Ascalon. With my desires of one day being able to hunt you down, I have given this sword the name of a Dragon Slayer after all” (Shiki)

“Poison huh. It is certainly true that it doesn’t have the radiance of a legendary sword. Not even a ghostly aura” (Lancer)

“That’s fine. I am the one using it, so a beautiful legendary sword doesn’t fit me” (Shiki)

Leaving the point of the sword on the ground, Shiki holds the claymore with both hands.

If it were a strong swordsman, that stance there would be inviting for a swipe to break his stance.

“It is not a sword that a magician can use. If that’s your weapon, your choice was a mistake” (Lancer)

“Six step ‘Fray’ release. ‘Sword Emperor Possession, Sword Spirit Em’” (Shiki)

Lancer jumps instantly.

Firing light swords disorderly to the surroundings, he gathers a number of physical swords around him.

“For a magician to challenge me with a sword, what mockery!” (Lancer)

“Swords created from the life of mobs, are no match for Ascalon and Fray. Taste it plenty, the fear of death” (Shiki)

From the whole body of Shiki, a dark red power swells up.

The moment that power reached the tip of the sharp Ascalon, Shiki roars, and instantly closes the distance that Lancer still had left.

At exactly the range of the giant great sword that one wouldn’t be able to measure with one’s eyes unless they normally utilize it.

The bony arms made a reverse swing with Ascalon and aim at Lancer’s neck.

Several swords made a high-speed automatic defense in between the giant and Lancer, but they were being destroyed one after the other and were unable to accomplish their job.

“Gugh?!”

Lancer himself was only able to make a momentaneous reaction and retreat from that location. He could only take distance.

His voice didn't leak only because of that.

His right hand was dripping with blood.

"If I remember correctly, you bastards cut off the fingers of my master... right? How is it, does it hurt?" (Shiki)

Seeing that he received exactly the same injury as Makoto, Shiki asks him.

"You... bastard... Unforgivable!!" (Lancer)

"I feel exactly the same. What a coincidence" (Shiki)

After joking, he aims at Lancer with Ascalon.

In the moment of contact, a strong light was produced.

"This is quite the different disposition of sword. Ah, it is from your collection huh. As expected of a sword used by past heroes. A wondrous sword you have there" (Shiki)

"That's not all!" (Lancer)

A red light comes out from inside Lancer's mouth.

Immediately after, a light streak was fired at point blank range towards Shiki.

That was something that resembled the laser-like attack of Sofia.

"Wa?!"

Shock.

That voice leaked out from Lancer.

"What's wrong? I am a magician, it is obvious that I will have a barrier spread, right?" (Shiki)

The light bundle that was supposed to go straight ahead, was refracted and disappeared into the sky.

A giant great sword not fit for magicians, a firm and skilfull barrier not fit for swordsmen.

Lancer who was healing the injuries of his fingers, was slowly falling into chaos.

“Well then, let’s continue” (Shiki)

The lights of Shiki’s hollow eye cavities grew stronger.

Upper, center, lower; at times he would even appear at the back and do an attack as if striking by surprise.

Shiki was perfectly utilizing the weight of the claymore, and doing a sword dance that showed no openings.

The light swords imprisonment and the physical swords showed powerlessness akin to leaves.

The swords that were floating around Lancer and seemed to have special characteristics, were desperately trying to protect their master.

“*Being true to yourself is the light of life*’ Stavelot” (Shiki)

“You bastard, in between this battle of weapons you are inputting a spell aria?!” (Lancer)

The darkness Shiki created that was deeper than night itself attacks Lancer.

From an outsider’s point of view, there wasn’t much change, but the movements of Lancer had dulled.

But for the related party, it was quite a weakening that can’t be joked of.

“*Sword that seeks its own return*’ Rot Counter” (Shiki)

Purposely not repelling the sword that was about to reach him, Shiki once again forms a new spell in a calm manner.

The sword teared against the dark red aura that covered Shiki, but without being able to injure his body, it made a high-pitched sound and breaks.

As if it cut itself.

"You broke the sword of a hero?!" (Lancer)

"I will be breaking several more until your end, but I don't think you have the leeway to count every single one of them though" (Shiki)

While feeling exaltation, and yet, still able to maintain calm, Shiki's movements were quite the unnatural ones.

Two things that require extreme concentration to perform, and he was able to perform both at the same time.

Sword and spell.

Even the only spectators in that place, the hero party, were clearly able to tell that.

Even when they are looking from a slightly far away location, they could understand that Shiki was overwhelming Lancer, and were looking at a fierce battle from inside their barrier.

While spreading a barrier, they perform healing.

With just that, Chiya seemed like she was already unable to think properly. And seeing Shiki who was able to make more than two spells in the midsts of that dance of blades, she understood that he was abnormal.

It was as if his 'body and spirit were moving as different entities'. Transcendental movements that can even make someone feel bad.

A superior dragon that is called the world's highest ranked.

Hibiki and the others were simply looking at how that notion was crumbling.

Chapter 162

The conclusion outside the castle

(Tch)

Shiki made a heartfelt click of tongue because, even if this was within anticipation, it was still heading at a considerably bad direction.

The true swords that Lancer was creating improvised, were already calculated by Shiki.

It depended on the situation of the surroundings, but he has already inputted the fact that Lancer's fighting potential increases at random.

But that performance was quite high.

The real body itself has skills that Shiki had to revise his own evaluation quite a bit.

The reason was easy to understand.

Because in this capital, there's the elite army that Io led, and the adventurers that came from Tsige.

As if each sword held a will of its own, Shiki was unable to differentiate between which sword was attacking him.

But still, among those, there are times when a sword made from a hero as material was mixed in the group, and its power surpassed that of the rest. Shiki was suffering.

From an outside perspective, it looked like Shiki was at an overwhelming advantage.

Even Lancer who was holding his ground, has fallen in shock at this situation and has already lost his composure.

Just as Shiki planned.

But the truth is different.

Shiki had already controlled the flow of the battle and taken the initiative, not showing a single restraint and charging forward.

To the point that the saying: 'No need to think of later', was quite fitting.

That's why it looked like the fight was overwhelming.

(Even so, I won't let it even smell like a hard fight and kill him. This Mitsurugi alone, as long as I have named myself as the servant of Waka-sama, I can't show an unsightly performance) (Shiki)

The difference in ability between Shiki and Lancer wasn't that much.

If Lancer was a simple superior dragon, that is.

He offsetted the darkness that Shiki emitted, spouted out quite the powerful flames, weakened the effect of the poisons that he was afflicted with, and at times even completely neutralizing them, Lancer was, frankly speaking, too much of an opponent for Shiki.

In terms of instantaneous fighting power, Shiki would be able to rival him.

But even with this, it wasn't an advantage that can win him the fight.

Because he would only be lining up by doing his maximum in an instant after all.

Truly an all out.

Lancer's sword and spells, his special tactics; Shiki was shutting them out with the countermeasures he had thought out in advance.

At times increasing his power to the very limits at the last moment, he dealt with it

without showing any agitation.

Attacks with crazy might that would certainly turn the flow of the battle, were being deflected in the midst of this sword dance with a nonchalant face.

The blaze that came out from Lancer's mouth was a high density flame that Shiki didn't expect as a threat, but even so, he immediately coped with it.

An attack that even if it hit, it would still be possible to continue battle, but he didn't even let those kind of attacks go through.

Shiki did all that and had overwhelmed Lancer in all senses.

This wasn't a feat that could be done unless you habitually fight with opponents stronger than yourself.

Shiki has evaluated his master Makoto as stronger than Lancer.

It is true that Lancer has grown slightly stronger since the time he battled with Makoto.

Because with the varied fighting methods and judgment Shiki has, he would be able to fight in quite the advantage against opponents with the same ability.

However, with the current Lancer that has the power of other superior dragons like Sofia, the story is different.

As a result, the words of Makoto were off, but because of Shiki's fine play, in terms of result, this situation is the most favorable.

In other words...

It would be one thing if it were within expectations, but Shiki has to finish this before something out of expectations happens, or he won't have any chance of winning.

The poison of Ascalon is slowly eating into the body of Lancer.

It must have surpassed his healing and curing powers.

A part of his right hand has turned into stone, and there were spots in his body that were visibly dark red.

He was certainly cornering Lancer.

(Please don't notice. Just like this, die!!) (Shiki)

It is simple luck that Lancer has still not noticed yet. Shiki understood this.

"It would be one thing if it were the Devil itself, but for his mere servant!!" (Lancer)

Lancer was also desperate.

The number of swords was innumerable, and aside from swinging, there were also others who were used simply as piercing projectile weapons.

His ability to control all of those at once is also plenty monstrous.

Shiki's sword clashes with Lancer's.

Shiki's spells clashes with Lancer's spells.

They respectively clashed.

Sword and spell.

In a few, Shiki had an edge.

That's why the equilibrium broke, and the one who ended up wounded was Lancer.

Even in swordsmanship, Lancer was also the one being crushed.

The battle was slowly drawing to a conclusion.

"Ooooh!!"

Gu-gin!

A horizontal slash. What Ascalon caught was not the abdomen, but the leg.

It cut off the leg of Lancer that was jumping.

Shiki was going to decide the battle here, but because of the voice that came from the back, he stopped his charge.

He must have read wrong, is what Shiki thought for a moment.

Slowly turning...

"No well, it seems that wasn't the case. Looks like luck is still on my side" (Shiki)

It was a matter of chance.

'If Lancer were to notice it', that kind of probability.

Shiki won the gamble.

A male stretched his arm and moved his mouth to tell something to Shiki.

The adventurer of Tsige.

He probably was an acquaintance of Tomoe and Mio at some point, but for Shiki, it was the first time meeting him.

However, there was too much distance.

The words that were his testament were unable to reach Shiki.

His body was pierced by the light swords.

The barrier was destroyed.

And maybe she was pushed away, the Lorel Priestess Chiya was on the ground.

(He covered for her huh. I appreciate it, adventurer. If that girl or the hero were to turn into swords, I would have lost) (Shiki)

The new barrier that Chiya created, Shiki disguised it so it looked as if he himself had created that barrier.

He made it look like the barrier that has been repelling all the light swords of Lancer.

In truth, the barrier that Chiya spread didn't have the defensive power to continuously block the light swords.

If the attacks were to concentrate, it wouldn't even last for one minute before being destroyed.

If it is from a physical sword, it might even break in one attack.

But if it's something Shiki has spread, it would be a different story.

And in truth, it has been able to block the attack of 3 physical swords at the same time.

After showing this to Lancer, Shiki dissolved the barrier he made.

Against Lancer, he had no leeway to create a firm barrier that is not for his use.

He cut one of his cards to grab the attention of Lancer and made it seem as if the barrier Chiya created was the same as the ones he has been creating until now.

It was a trivial thing similar to an amulet, but it seems like Hibiki and the others understood its meaning, they didn't make any mention of it and were somehow able to properly convey the plan of Shiki.

After that, Lancer's physical swords were practically all gathered towards Shiki, and a situation where Hibiki and the others were attacked and become the power of Lancer, was avoided.

The hero and the priestess.

For Shiki, these two turning into swords would be the worst scenario.

He doesn't know how much power that would give Lancer.

Moreover, one of them was left in his hands by Makoto, so it is a scenario that must be avoided at any cost.

From what Shiki has seen of Hibiki, she is not a girl that would be so easily defeated, but when he actually heard her scream, he felt insecure of this.

Luck is at my side, is what Shiki confirms as the safety of the hero and the priestess were reflected in his eyes.

At the same time, he once again felt the strong need to decide the battle this moment.

“Tch!! I missed! But with this guy I will!!” (Lancer)

Lancer didn't show even a single shred of remorse at the fact that he tried to assassinate a young girl.

It seems like he lost his ability to regenerate his leg, he was using a sword as substitute for a cane.

The adventurer was wrapped in light and was taken in by the swords. As he himself turned into a new sword, it turned and flies at high speed towards Shiki.

From Lancer's back, several tens of swords float and turn towards Shiki.

Moreover, as if surrounding Shiki, physical swords and light swords appeared.

“...Hoh~ so even you can tell huh? That this is the decisive moment” (Shiki)

“I have never been this cornered since the time with Sofia. Turn into a good sword and serve under me!!” (Lancer)

“Who would serve under someone like you. I have already found someone to serve!!!” (Shiki)

Shiki who had Ascalon thrusted out, fired off several spells as he charged against Lancer.

Lancer and the many swords meet that attack.

Two shadows overlap.

A shockwave and a sword rain blew violently, destroying the surroundings.

“A mutual defeat?”

“No, Larva-dono's lost... eh?”

After the instantaneous-like destruction, Bredda muttered mutual defeat, but Hibiki denied it.

But soon after, words of doubt leaked out.

From the scene she and the others see... there's a man that is missing one leg, and a Lich standing just in front of him.

The Lich has an innumerable amount of swords piercing his body and remained standing with an abnormal appearance.

That's right. Just like Hibiki stated, it looked like Larva lost.

The reason it doesn't look like a mutual defeat is because Ascalon is not piercing Lancer.

But that Ascalon is also the reason Hibiki was in doubt.

There nothing held at the Lich's hands.

"Kukukuku! Did you see that, servant of the Devil?! This is the reason the dragons rule, this is why they rule the world of the stron—" (Lancer)

It seems like Lancer was unable to see Ascalon.

Looking at the Lich that had lost the light in his eyes, he must have felt certain of his victory. He voiced out triumphantly...

And became the last words of Lancer.

"!!!"

From Hibiki's eyes, the giant sword was reflected.

Ascalon.

The falling body of Lancer indicated that the sword had fulfilled its task.

What that girl saw at the back of Lancer, there, the shadow of a person with long red hair was there.

Not even knowing about his existence until now, Hibiki saw a young slender man holding a black great sword.

“Who... are you?”

“...Pathetic. But right now this is my all huh. ‘Sword Emperor Possession’ cancel”
(Shiki)

While looking down at the body of Lancer that was dispersing like dust, Shiki mutters.

It was at a volume that couldn't be heard.

While exposing this body, Shiki walks towards the location of Hibiki and the others.

The black great sword Ascalon had returned to being a black staff with few decoration.

This exterior appearance that was disguised with the form of a Lich.

Using the short distance teleportation that he never showed Lancer not even once, he made a direct hit with Ascalon.

For Shiki, it was a paper-thin victory.

Instantly blaming his own lack of power, Shiki returned to where Hibiki and the others are.

“Are you... Larva-dono?” (Hibiki)

“What!?”

“Eh, are you kidding?”

The doubtful words that Hibiki said, made Bredda and Chiya react.

For this mysterious person to be the same as the Lich, in the common sense of this

world, it was hard to believe.

The line of the living and the undead is not something that can be crossed at will after all.

Even if he is holding the same weapon, for the common sense of hyumans, it would be impossible to imagine.

It is because Hibiki basically still had the way of thinking of her previous world that she was able to notice.

(An otherworlder huh. A hero is troublesome) (Shiki)

While thinking this way at Hibiki who easily connected his identity, Shiki returns to where Hibiki and the others are.

'So you can return to your previous form' is what his master said in the past, so he is the same as her. Shiki was surprised that this people have quite the extraordinary conception.

For Shiki, this is like putting on a substitute for armor, so if he were asked if he is actually back to the living, in essence, it is different.

But this also can't be considered at the level of clothes.

And there's no problem in having his master think that he can return.

Shiki thought that there's no need to unnecessarily explain those details.

"Normally, it isn't something that can be so easily noticed though. Honestly, counting the disgrace from just now and this, my head is even hurting" (Shiki)

Shiki regrets the fact that he had to expose this appearance.

"You were a hyuman huh" (Hibiki)

"Fuh~ in a distant past that is. Priestess, move aside. I will keep my promise" (Shiki)

"Eh? Ah, okay" (Chiya)

"Fifth step 'Keto' release. At worst, if at the very least his soul is still floating around here, something can still be managed. '*Silver Arm, Agat Arm*', Supplement my healing" (Shiki)

A new ring is fit onto Shiki's finger.

A yellow colored light overflowed from the ground and envelops Wudi.

Hibiki and the others reflexively gulp their breath.

With Chiya's healing, the hole had closed, but the color of his skin that showed no signs of recovering, turned from ashen to a normal color.

Shortly after, his chest clearly went up and down and returned into calm breathing.

"It should be fine with this. After this, just make sure he reposes" (Shiki)

Chiya nods at Shiki's words.

"You saved us, Larva-dono. I will give my thanks at a future date" (Bredda)

"I will consider it" (Shiki)

"...Servant of the Devil, those words... should I take those words in literal meaning?" (Hibiki)

"So you heard what Lancer said. Forget those words" (Shiki)

"Don't ask for the impossible" (Hibiki)

"In this terrible scene, even if few in numbers, there are voices asking for help. Residents that evacuated, that are holding uneasiness. Instead of being concerned about me, you should have many other things to do, right?" (Shiki)

(Kugh, as expected, I have used the rings a bit too much huh. That damn Lancer, he really did give me a hard time. With this, even if I return to Waka-sama, I would only serve as an hindrance. I have to rest for a bit) (Shiki)

"This time you won't stop us?" (Hibiki)

“I won’t help you either though” (Shiki)

In this situation, the only thing that could be a threat for Hibiki would be Sofia, is how Shiki thinks.

And his master Misumi Makoto is there.

At this terrible scene of the capital that has made both armies unable to continue battle because of the rain of light swords, and on top of that, Lancer and Shiki fought; no matter if it’s to find any survivors or to escape, there would be no one who would blame Hibiki, is what Shiki has concluded.

“This is something Bredda said as well but, I will definitely give my gratitude in the future” (Hibiki)

“Fumu. Then, I will be keeping that in mind” (Shiki)

“Hibiki, first let’s find a place for Wudi to rest. At the outside of the town, there’s already several camps being set. That place should work” (Bredda)

Bredda shoulders Wudi.

Hibiki glanced at Shiki once, but without turning back a second time, she left running.

(The last words of the man that was turned into a sword. And the previous words of him when he said ‘that person resembles those people’. It feels like it associates with Tsige. Also, the swordsmanship of the devil’s servant named Larva, the sword was different, but his style was similar to my sensei. To a level that I can’t think of it as a coincidence. Also, the devil, that white person wearing a special effect hero suit. There’s a high chance that Larva and the Devil have some sort of connection with an otherworlder. Tsige, otherworlder, and that abnormal strength. Maybe... Kuzunoha Company is related to this? Then is that white guy, Raidou? But Mio-san was not there. The other close aide called Tomoe-san was not there either. A name like Kuzunoha only exists in Lorel so, it slightly bothers me... I don’t think that it is completely unrelated though) (Hibiki)

Chapter 163

Everything without a trace

“Ahahaha!!”

“Did you go crazy?” (Makoto)

“No way. Just that, there were two things that made me laugh, that’s all” (Sofia)

“Hah?” (Makoto)

I spontaneously make a voice of amazement.

Even when I dispelled the charm, it just made her not talk about the Empire hero anymore, but her personality didn’t change that much.

She is still emitting blood thirst, and yet, she suddenly began laughing.

‘Did she go crazy?’ is what I thought.

But right after, I could tell that the power of the laughing Sofia was showing a change.

I see.

At the very least, she has a basis for it huh. It is not like she went crazy.

“The first one is that, my so called companion died in a truly fast and easy way” (Sofia)

“Lancer died huh” (Makoto)

I haven’t extended my [Sakai] to where Shiki is, so I don’t know if what she is saying is true though.

Well, there’s no way Shiki would lose.

But to be able to do the killing blow as well. Shiki has gotten stronger than I thought.

"The other is that, the gamble was as expected, my win. I was amazed by how strong my own luck is" (Sofia)

"Gamble? With Lancer?" (Makoto)

She hasn't done a gamble with me.

There's already nothing I want to test with her.

If she intends to do something, it is fine to watch what she will do, but I should put a finish to it soon.

"Yeah. If I die before him, I would become a part of his collection. If he were to die first, he will give me the remaining life he has. That kind of gamble" (Sofia)

Remaining life.

Lancer has several lives.

"...And, you who has won the gamble and received that life, what is it you can do? That sword and that dragon power, you can already tell that they are completely not up to par, right?" (Makoto)

Having Lancer's power dwell in her at this late in time, just what would she be able to do?

Even if her sword gets slightly stronger, even if the teleportation with the light swords gets slightly better, there's absolutely no point.

"...Ah, it isn't something that makes me laugh, but there's another thing that I have noticed" (Sofia)

"Hm?" (Makoto)

The joy in her expression was gone, but Sofia continues talking.

I will wait for you, so you don't need to buy time in this way.

I sighed.

"I did this quite a lot in the past, but you know, people that fight while looking down on their opponent... are really disgusting. I have reflected on this" (Sofia)

"I see" (Makoto)

So you say.

I don't know if she is trying to provoke me here but, right now I am able to hold the reins of my heart to a certain extent.

The conclusion of this battle as well, and its result, will most likely be reached in a quite plain manner.

This cold emotions that even felt extreme, this battle thoughts of mine, there's no problem with it.

I think that this is simply a mental state I reach when I am fighting.

I can move like a soldier as if flipping a switch, that's all.

This thing that is inside of me is probably a habit of mine.

It isn't something special or anything like that.

I have experienced fights of life and death in practically a daily basis, so I probably just adapted to it.

It is not that there's another person inside of me.

I am slightly able to accept this.

No matter what Sofia says, just like how my magic power body doesn't let attacks reach me, I am able to take everything by surface and ward it off.

"And, those kind of people let down their guards. That's why I was able to make it in time. Let me show it to you then; the trump card that overwhelmed two superior dragons and killed them" (Sofia)

"The strong will control the battlefield and will act as they please. I actually think that this is providence though. Is it negligence?" (Makoto)

"Even now, you are not even trying to stop me. If that's not negligence and conceit, what would it be?" (Sofia)

"...Leeway?" (Makoto)

There was no answer from Sofia.

In exchange, a nauseating richly colored area was spread on the floor and was expanding with her as the center.

Before long, it also reached my feet and it was even stretching up to the sky.

When I thought just how far it would expand, it didn't cover the whole space of what was once the audience room, and its expansion stopped.

A space that is not kind to the eye.

Right after an impression I didn't place much interest in, an ear-piercing sound as if nails were scraping glass resounded heavily in the place.

The richly colored area broke and scattered, and it returns to the scene of the audience room.

But, this is...

As if affirming my guess, from Sofia's feet, no, from every part of the sky, swords began appearing one after the other.

Each one of them were swords with different design.

The similarity they shared was that they were swords and that it was clearly visible that they were quite the quality swords.

It is a line up of swords that seemed as if someone ransacked the smithy of an elder dwarf.

"Welcome to the cage of swords. This is the place where Lancer stores the swords he gathers. And, it is also an execution ground" (Sofia)

Sofia's fearless smile.

“Impressive. You brought me to an isolated space” (Makoto)

“It was just shifting it slightly though. But the entertainment it provides is plenty, so don’t worry” (Sofia)

“No no, just forcefully bringing someone to another space, it is a first for me. No well, putting aside an exception, I have almost never experienced this. Even if it is small, it is quite impressive” (Makoto)

Sofia silently closes her eyes and breathes in largely.

Ignored huh.

But even Tomoe was unable to do it, so this is quite considerable. Seriously.

Was that ear-piercing sound the moment when the space got shifted?

What’s amazing is that from what I see, it is as if we were still in the same place.

This might be the first time today that I have felt admiration towards Sofia.

She didn’t attack me immediately, so I decided to use [Sakai] to understand the characteristics of this space.

“Increases the power of the one that deploys it. But what’s best at is... the cohabitation of swords and life?” (Makoto)

“That’s not on the level of a revelation. Did you do something?” (Sofia)

“Well a bit here. So all the swords here are the life of Sofia. That it produces infinitely depending on one’s worth, quite the unpleasant power there” (Makoto)

From the stocked swords here, I can feel the pulsation of life.

It is as if the swords and her are sharing lives.

Looking at her reaction, it seems I am not wrong.

“...A thousand and eighty. They are not infinite” (Sofia)

“Seems to be slightly fewer than that though. There must have been many used when Lancer was fighting Shiki” (Makoto)

It is a magnificent view as well. A splendid power there.

Thinking about the individual battle prowess of Sofia, fighting infinitely in this place, even superior dragons would not like it.

On top of that, in the first time I fought with her, she already had the Waterfall dragon. In other words, she first obtained the power of the dragon that was specialized in healing.

I feel sympathy towards Darkness Clad and Crimson Light.

“It doesn’t change the fact that we will continue this dance of swords until you die” (Sofia)

“But too bad. At the very end, you brought the worst power you could have brought out, Sofia” (Makoto)

Towards the Dragon Slayer that had taken two swords in hand, I announced this.

I probably did a heartfelt expression of pity there.

Sofia didn’t do any refutation, and in exchange, she stared at my left hand.

“Raidou, what is that?” (Sofia)

“Things like warrior or magician; they are wrong, totally wrong, Sofia. You see, I am...” (Makoto)

I turn my left hand towards her.

While still holding it.

My weapon that I took from a different space a few moments ago.

In this place, in this space that Sofia has created and reigns over, I am able to do this.

It feels as if I am putting Asora into practical use and I do feel bad about it.

“Aaaah!!!” (Sofia)

Must have been her instinct.

With wide opened eyes, Sofia roars.

In a speed that can be compared to that of a bullet, she cuts towards the magic power body.

Heh~, the strength is high.

Then...

I will change [Sakai] to enhancement.

The magic power body that was sharply torn up by Sofia was instantly regenerated to the point that it was practically not injured anymore.

After confirming this and nodding, I take a white arrow in my right hand similar to the bow I have.

And then, I fix the arrow to the string.

Sofia continued her attack from the sky. Her eyes not straying from my left hand in any moment.

“This is... Azusa. My weapon. The craftsmen that made this were adamant in having me place a name to it, you see. And so, I have given it the same name of an ancient bow. It is called Azusa Yumi” (Makoto)

I pour a massive amount of magic power to the bright white arrow in my right hand.

Steadily turning its color to pink, and then, turning into a deeper red.

It is an arrow made from the same material as my ring Draupnir.

This is what I thought when I obtained this magic power body.

If I can't construct a spell by using a massive amount of magic power at once, I just have to accumulate it.

That it is fine to just use what's accumulated.

Even if there's a limit to how much can be accumulated, the power of this arrow that has turned completely red is a lot stronger than any magic I can use.

"Aaaahhh!!"

As if being manipulated by her will, the other swords aside from the ones in both her hands, began to attack me as well.

Slash, stab, swipe, rain incessantly.

Attacks that showed no mercy.

Within all that, Sofia was skilfully evading her own attacks while flying around, changing her position, and continuing her attacks.

She is even bringing out spells. She was literally utilizing everything she had.

Doesn't matter.

A bow that is unusual in this world. I utilize a form of holding the bow that I am accustomed to and draw Azusa to its very limit.

If I have to kill you over a thousand times before this ends, I just need to do this all at once.

These swords and Sofia as well; I will vanish everything in this one attack.

"Raidooooou!!!" (Sofia)

I eliminate Sofia from my field of vision.

I close my eyes and turn silent.

Even if you get impatient now, it is already too late.

"O bow of Azusa, draw forth and bind the spirits wicked... Just kidding. I only have vague memories of it though" (Makoto)

“You, you are—!!” (Sofia)

She herself secluded us in this small place.

There's already no escape.

There's no need look at Sofia who is trying to confuse me by flying everywhere.

Just by hitting something, the attack will reach this whole space after all.

I slowly open my eyes.

“I am an archer. Name is Misumi Makoto. It would be pitiful to shout out a fake name in your last moments right, Sofia?” (Makoto)

“I still haven’t... that guy... Root... I have not even met the harmony supreme dragon yet!!! Like hell I will die!!” (Sofia)

Even though I went out of my way to tell her my name.

She ignored it.

“You are talking about Root huh. Harmony, you say. I feel like chaotic would fit him more. But, how laughable. You haven’t even noticed that the person himself is using you as a substitute for a camera” (Makoto)

“?!!”

Not only is he not giving her any attention, she is even being used, and she didn’t notice until her last moments.

I feel like, conspiring to fight with Root is also a mistake, but the result of her challenge was quite the unsightly thing.

And that title of Dragon Slayer as well.

“Goodbye, Sofia Blue. Ah, Root, you owe me one, okay?” (Makoto)

“!!!”

A glance.

As if looking deep into the eyes of Sofia, I told that pervert that is definitely watching this live feed.

Pointing towards a random sword stabbed in the ground, I fire my red dyed arrow.

The arrow that went through the magic power body destroyed the sword and made a high-pitched sound.

The bright red light of destruction that was flooding this small space was rapidly filling it up and vanishes the large amount of swords that existed within it.

It obviously touched the surface of my magic power body and slowly scraped it off, but it didn't reach all the way inside.

The part where the arrow passed through has already been closed.

No mistake.

But different from me, the screams of anger and agitation of Sofia were resounding.

But it didn't change anything.

Soon her body was engulfed by that light and her voice abruptly stopped.

It happened soon after. The space she created made a breaking sound similar to glass and was destroyed.

In the silent audience room where no one is present, there's only me with my bow.

Plain, huh.

You were also the same.

The scent of the wind that was different from a few moments ago helped me confirm that I have returned.

...I noticed that Root was looking at me at around the time when Sofia began flying around the sky.

Peeping.

I was surprised but, it is Root.

I don't know what connection Sofia had with Root, or for what reason she showed so much attachment towards him.

I actually don't have much interest in it, but it feels like it might serve to pester Root, so I will talk to him about it at a later time.

As an apology for the habitual perverted utterances he does.

"Next is... the Stella Fortress huh" (Makoto)

Going there is such a pain.

But even so, if I shoot straight from here, it would turn pretty bad.

...It seems like Seiko was also my deed, so I should try to be prudent about grandly changing the topography.

If there's people in between the distance of the fortress, I would be killing them pointlessly as well.

If possible, I want to destroy only the target.

I look up.

It is still night.

While still cladded in my magic power body, I kick the ground.

After a leap of several meters, at the moment the momentum weakened, I used magic power to harden my footing and do another jump.

When the whole capital was in my field of vision from below, I increase the altitude even more.

“If it’s from around here... I think it will work” (Makoto)

I materialize magic power to serve as footing and stand in the sky.

Remembering last time, I look at the approximate direction of Stella Fortress.

But just by doing that, as expected, the darkness of the night still gets in the way.

Let's try this.

I mark a place I can tell with the topography that it is there.

Concentrating at both ends, me and that place, I don't spread my awareness to everything that's around, but at the place that I am looking at. As if tying it to me.

This is a method I used in Japan when my target had quite a lot of distance.

With several trial and errors, my vision finds a giant fortress that is not lighted.

Must be that.

Well then, let's do it.

I take another arrow from a space where nothing is supposed to be.

There's no need to carry a quiver. That's the good part of this method Tomoe thought of.

It is also good that the gist of this method is practically the same as opening a door to Asora.

It is not like I have a grudge towards the building, so the time I used before I drew my bow to the limit wasn't that long.

There's no need to wait for the arrow to turn red after all.

“With this, a business dealt with” (Makoto)



How far is the distance, frankly speaking, I don't know.

Several tens of kilometers, no, maybe even more?

But strangely, I didn't feel like I would miss at all.

The red light makes a trail, and that fired arrow hits the objective location. It created a beautiful pillar of light.

I patiently look at it and confirm the state when it is over.

If it is still safe, I would have to shoot another one after all.

...Looks like it will be okay.

The fortress and, of course, a portion of the terrain around it was dragged as well; the ground turned mortar shaped.

With this, the request of the Goddess has been finished.

I disperse the magic power serving as my footing.

As if being pulled from below, my free fall began.

I confirm the place where Shiki is and, creating several footholds, I alter my trajectory.

Safely dropping to the ground, or more like, I crashed onto it.

If I left my body in the center of the magic power body, there would have been no problems.

If I get dropped in the future, I will be totally fine.

Confirming the figure of Shiki that seemed as if he had trouble saying something in thought transmission, I could tell that he was fine.

He is fine but...

"Why... are you in that form?" (Makoto)

"I am truly sorry. I have exposed my appearance. Lancer was unexpectedly..." (Shiki)

Shiki lowers his head deeply.

Shiki's form was not the Lich but the hyuman one.

"Seems like you are quite exhausted. Let's return quick" (Makoto)

"Is it okay to leave the capital like this? The hero... it seemed like she was no stranger to you though" (Shiki)

While making a face that can't hide his exhaustion, Shiki still asked me about my actions from here on.

I did say senpai after all.

Of course he would remember.

If Shiki and Tomoe looked at my memories, it wouldn't be strange for them to know her as well though.

Now that I think about it, they didn't show much interest in my classmates and friends.

"The people of Limia should be able to do something about the capital right? It seems like the King is also hurrying, so if we are going to involve ourselves, it is fine to do it later. If we do things without understanding the situation, I think like it would turn troublesome later after all. About the hero... well, she is indeed someone I know. I will talk about that when we return. Not only did she see me in that appearance, I also saw her in such an appearance as well. Honestly, I don't know with what face I should be meeting her with" (Makoto)

I showed her a special effect hero cosplay and I saw her sexy cosplay. Just what kind of face should I make? Seriously, whenever I am involved with the Goddess, nothing good happens.

"Long time no see... would obviously be bad huh" (Shiki)

"...Impossible" (Makoto)

"But Hibiki didn't seem like she was that embarrassed with her appearance though."

When I was looking as well, she didn't show any noteworthy reaction and was unreserved" (Shiki)

"Well, isn't that because you are a skeleton?" (Makoto)

"She also saw me in this form though" (Shiki)

"Hm, did senpai have that kind of preference?" (Makoto)

I never heard of this.

...No no, don't be troubled by this.

Even if she has that kind of preference, it is not like it is well-known.

In the first place, I have only seen senpai in regular clothes once, and it was by chance.

It is practically the same as not knowing her at all.

How stupid.

Let's return quickly.

It is me, so at worst, I might even run into her if I stay long.

It seems like there's no survivors around here, but even with that.

"Also, about the adventurer of Tsige. I was unable to save him" (Shiki)

"Can't be helped. An adventurer is that kind of job after all. He himself chose to participate in the war and came all the way to Limia. He must have been prepared" (Makoto)

"It would be good if that's the case" (Shiki)

"If senpai is fine, for the time being, there's no problem. Don't mind it much. Try sleeping for a bit" (Makoto)

"...Now that I think about it, there's no contact from Tomoe-dono and the others" (Shiki)

"They are probably already in Asora. In thought transmission, she told me, while giggling, to look forward to her report" (Makoto)

"As always, so much liberty, those two" (Shiki)

Shiki makes a distant look.

"At that side there was no Dragon Slayer and hero, so wasn't it easy? You shouldn't blame yourself too much, Shiki. You really did well after all" (Makoto)

It seems like he was slightly dispirited so I try cheering him.

"Waka-sama, looks like you easily handled Sofia. I don't see a single wound or dirt" (Shiki)

A heavy gaze. It seems Shiki faced quite the hard battle against Lancer.

But to encourage him by saying that wasn't the case, I think that it would make him even more despondent.

"Well, she was a handy opponent to test my power" (Makoto)

"...I have to become stronger" (Shiki)

"Yeah. If there's anything I can help with, I will also accompany you" (Makoto)

"Please! Oh, and by the way Waka-sama, I saved one of the companions of the hero party. They said they wanted to give their thanks but, what should I ask for?" (Shiki)

Ah, Shiki returned to the Rotsgard Shiki.

That he doesn't drag it forever is also a strong point of Shiki.

...It is a strong point he got by being thoroughly beat up by Tomoe and Mio though.

It is a splendid strong point, no doubt about it. Yeah.

I have to learn from him too.

"A reward. Isn't it fine to just ask them to leave it as if they didn't see your appearance?"

(Makoto)

If he doesn't do that, at worst, Shiki won't be able to appear much in Academy Town or in places with many people. And I would face the full brunt of the business again.

It would turn into a situation several times more scary than this one.

I would sleep with a stomach pain.

I-If it's the cash register where I serve the customers with my Japanese style 'a smile for zero yen' I feel like I might be able to manage somehow though.

"I already tried saying this, but who knows what will happen" (Shiki)

"I see. In that case, ah, if I remember correctly, in the hero party there's a Priestess-san from Lorel, right?" (Makoto)

I have thought of something good.

"Yeah, she said her name was Chiya. For a hyuman, she had quite the amount of magic power. In the future she will most likely become a prominent priestess" (Shiki)

"That's why, in this way..." (Makoto)

I tell Shiki what I thought.

"Understood. Then" (Shiki)

"Yeah. Let's return to Asora" (Makoto)

I don't think there is a banquet at this late night.

But it seems like their side had a big victory. In that case, it should be fine to do a banquet tomorrow.

While worrying about Shiki who has used his power too much and had his footing staggering slightly, we silently left the capital.

Chapter 164

Two Sleepy People

I'm sleepy.

Looking at my face reflected in the mirror, I see my own half-open eyes with shadows under them.

Really sleepy.

Last night – Actually, just a few hours ago – I was in the imperial capital of Limia.

It's still dark, but the sun has been coming up late these days.

When we got back, it was already nearly morning.

“Everyone in Asora is strong, aren’t they...” (Makoto)

As I wash my face, what I’m thinking suddenly comes out of my mouth.

When Shiki and I returned to Asora, we were welcomed by the Orcs and Dwarves, as well as Tomoe and Mio who had come back before us.

The results of their battle were astounding.

Not only did they return before us, they suffered almost zero casualties.

I was told that there were zero fatalities and only two injuries.

The Kaleneon dominion is small, but a country nonetheless, and they had secured it.

I think I’ve overestimated how much power is needed to possess armies and countries in this world. This thought had occurred to me earlier in Limia as well.

I mean, look.

The Green Berets, the Spetsnaz, the Australian commandos, Cobra, the CIA, the KGB, MI6, the FBI...

TLN: The Green Berets are the US army special forces. The Spetsnaz are the Russian special forces. COBRA is the Austrian special forces. Hopefully the rest are self-explanatory.

Err, I think my list is slowly changing as I go.

Anyway.

When you see those really amazing-looking armed forces or special intelligence organizations on television or in movies, you get the feeling they have amazing military power, right?

It's a good thing that there weren't any casualties, so let's just be happy that I was wrong in my expectations.

Even the injuries were mild, like a Lizard's tail being stomped by a Highland Orc.

"I wonder if Shiki is alright." (Makoto)

I received an explanation that I didn't really understand, saying that the enemy's general was a strangely glossy, palm-sized dragon that Mio showed me.

TLN: "Dragon" is more or less equivalent to "serpent" here, referring to the enemy general's body shape – The Japanese term "竜/ryuu" tends to be used for Chinese dragons, which are more serpent-like.

Tomoe also mentioned that there were cliffs instead of national borders.

However.

An interruption prevented them from reporting any further.

As a report on what happened on our side, Shiki explained that we engaged Sofia and Lancer and finished them. He did this with a happy expression that didn't even try to conceal his sense of accomplishment.

Tomoe and Mio's presence suddenly became restless, though their expressions

remained the same.

As Shiki was about to go into an explanation about our contact with the demons and details about the goddess's power, Tomoe put a hand on his shoulder and Mio seized his hand.

They both demanded a detailed explanation.

And then the two of them took him away for a discussion – no, an evaluation meeting – and I haven't seen him since.

In the end, Ema had to take over. I was grateful for her summary of events, then I dismissed the rest of Asora.

So that everyone could rest, we decided to hold the victory celebration that Ema suggested the next day.

In other words, it's tonight.

Right now Ema's tired so she might still be sleeping, but someone has probably taken command and started making preparations for the party.

But I can't do that.

In fact, the battle we fought last night was an irregular one. We're supposed to be finishing off the mutants in Rotsgard today.

"Though I think it's odd to call them mutants after fighting Io and Sofia. I'm still sleepy~" (Makoto)

Even so, I have to go to the academy in the morning.

That means that I can sleep for only another one or two hours.

Rona said something that worried me too, and I'm thinking that the demons might have had something to do with the mutants that gathered in the wealthy district.

It seemed like there might be demi-humans living in Rotsgard that are on the demons' side.

Hyumans or demons.

Now that I think about it, I don't know which side demi-humans would choose.

It's actually strange to think that they would fight against the demons without any conditions.

Since, except for the few that are being treated well, demi-humans aren't seen as people by hyumans.

In that case, even if there was a merit system, there would be those that think that the demons are better, since they give them rights.

Not to mention that up until now, the demons only had cold, frozen lands. So there are probably demi-humans who had no choice but to approach hyumans so that they could live properly.

When I saw that army... This thought occurred to me on the other side, too, but I honestly think that the Demon Lord is an amazing person.

Knock knock.

Hmm?

"Yeah, come in." (Makoto)

"Good morning, Boss."

"Oh it's you, Lime. Good morn–" (Makoto)

"Sorry for bothering you so early in the morning. I was sent from the academy to come and get you immediately. You should go to the academy ahead of time." (Lime)

"Is everyone there already?" (Makoto)

If I recall, Lime was supposed to regroup with Mondo and the dwarves at the academy.

But he came to wake me up.

"Yes. It seems the headmaster wishes to clean up already. Also... It is astounding that

he is saying this so late, but it seems he wishes for us to pretend that we acted at his request." (Lime)

Ahaha...

It *is* quite late to be saying that.

"And... The important lecturers wish for you to say that in this incident, your actions were performed under their orders, which they gave to protect the people." (Lime)

They're all idiots.

In any case, listening to both of these requests is... impossible.

"Is that exactly what they said?" (Makoto)

"Yes." (Lime)

As if Lime knows what I want to say, he nods.

"If I had to pick, I'd say the headmaster's one is better. I'll talk to Shiki and decide later. At any rate, I'd like to spend my first day or two doing as I like before I have to go to the academy." (Makoto)

"As you say. By the way, Boss." (Lime)

"What?" (Makoto)

"There was a woman outside your room. Someone loitering around the shelter?" (Lime)

But there is no woman there now.

As he describes her features to me, I realize that he's talking about the ane-san* who has been coming to talk to me about things on her mind ever since I saved her at the brothel.

If I recall, her name is Ester-san.

"Ah, no, it's a person I brought to the shelter. I guess she's the one I've talked to the

most among the hyumans here. I wonder what she wants." (Makoto)

"She disappeared after I gave her a single glance, so it must not have been anything important. I ended up imagining something indecent, thinking that she had surely spent the night here, hehe." (Lime)

"...Spare me. Don't think that you're the norm, when you're so popular with the Gorgons." (Makoto)

"...Too much of anything is a poison*. But I think you should learn to enjoy yourself more, Boss." (Lime)

TLN: A Japanese phrase equivalent to the English one: "You can have too much of a good thing", or however that phrase goes.*

"Yeah, yeah. Well then, shall we go to the academy?" (Makoto)

"Is Shiki-san not coming?" (Lime)

"I've been trying to reach him with thought transmission since a little earlier, but he's not replying. He seemed pretty tired, too, so I was thinking that you could come with me, Lime." (Makoto)

"With pleasure. Also, please accept my belated congratulations on your safe return." (Lime)

"...Tomoe. She's done it again." (Makoto)

I wondered why Lime already knew, but I realize that Tomoe has probably been going around explaining to everyone.

Or it might have been Mio.

How is it that Lime knows, even though he never shows his face here in Asora?

"The merchants' guild, the Lizards from the arena and the Arke were worried. They thought that we might have failed over here." (Lime)

"It wasn't really a success or a failure... Ah, tonight's the celebration. You can drink as much as you want as well. Since I don't think there'll be any left tomorrow." (Makoto)

Now I'll go to the academy and take care of things there.

Maybe I'll go and make a complaint to Root while I'm at it.



To summarize.

The demon collaborators that Rona mentioned are nowhere to be seen.

But there are three mutants that are all bigger than Io.

With bodies over four meters tall, they're rampaging and destroying a part of the city.

It seems that they have the ability to fuse.

Although, they aren't like "gachiin", they're more like "gucho... gucho."

TLN: These are onomatopoeias, so I can't really translate them in any other way... I believe that the "gachiin" refers to the metallic, mechanical sound of the fusions between mechas (like in Guren Lagann, if you've watched that). "Gucho gucho" is more like a squishy sound. Therefore, this sentence is emphasizing that it's a biological fusion rather than a mechanical one.

And in the end, it was decided that the ones who have to deal with it aren't the academy's army, but the Kuzunoha company.

The academy's army, who were easily cleaning up the remaining mutants, were completely defeated by these mutants that have become resistant to all attributes.

But the damage from no-attribute magic wouldn't be able to keep up with their regeneration, so it just became a wasted effort.

They've retreated, scattering like baby spiders, and now we're left standing here.

Haah...

"Ah, you don't have to do anything, Shiki. You can just sleep." (Makoto)

"I cannot allow that. For waka-sama to be working while I do nothing." (Shiki)

"No, no, I'm not going to do anything either. Let's leave it to the others, since it's such a pain." (Makoto)

Since Lime and Mondo are here, too.

Shiki somehow regrouped with our suppression force, but he looks even more exhausted than I am.

I have no doubt that he hasn't slept.

He might have been in a coma, though.

When I was told to secure the surroundings and left out of the main suppression force, I was actually happy inside.

"Well then, we will go." (Mondo)

Lime and Mondo take a step forward.

"We wish for you to leave this one to us. Since we did come all this way with our weapons ready." (Lime)

Even the Eldwa workers look ready to fight, holding an axe whose height far exceeds their own.

If you were to ask me to describe how big the axe is, its handle is so long that it appears as if the axe is walking on its own.

They can't walk around the city unless they hold the axe straight up.

But it's not causing any problems in a situation like this, so I won't say anything.

"So Lime and Mondo take down two of them, and the Eldwas can take the other. Good luck!" (Makoto)

"Now then... We'll kill it in one blow with our first attack. Let's go!"

There are three dwarves.

The one in the middle holds the axe on his shoulder as he points at the mutant's right

side, and they all charge in.

...Last night's discussion, they heard it too.

The tension's so high.

"Eh? Where's Lime and Mondo?" (Makoto)

"Boss. The Tree Punishment will be fine, correct?" (Lime)

"Ah, I see. You're right, shall we prepare a new symbol for the city's revival? Two trees lined up. It might be a nice addition to our new special products for Rotsgard." (Makoto)

"Yes, sir." (Lime)

"Mhmm, you can do what you want. Lime, the enemy is big, so you know what to do, right?" (Mondo)

"Of course. It won't even take three minutes. Are you ready, Mondo? Wait, you're already going in?!" (Lime)

"Don't be so slow, Lime! They're just slowpokes with large bodies, but somehow, facing such large opponents gets me quite excited!" (Mondo)

Lime and Mondo are lively, too.

Normally, I wouldn't think that it's an opponent that Mondo could use Tree Punishment on by himself.

It's huge, and because the enemies are fused together, their combined resistance is unusually high.

But if Lime's here.

Before long.

Its large body is wrapped in light.

Lime specializes in enhancing the power of others.

Though there are a lot of athletes who play sports doubles and are proficient at drawing out their teammate's ability.

Lime uses that concept as his special ability.

To compare this ability to opposing mirrors* is an exaggeration, but he strengthens and amplifies power.

TLN: If you have two opposing mirrors, you get a seemingly infinite image, and you might consider this as some kind of "amplification", and Lime's power is compared to this effect here. It doesn't make all too much sense to me, but maybe it makes more sense if you're Japanese.*

For example, if he teams up with Mondo.

To a certain extent, when Mondo is trying to defeat an enemy with one use of Tree Punishment, Lime allows it to work on some opponents that would normally resist it.

Known as the Aquarius combo, the two of them have good compatibility.

It's a clever ability that's useful in any situation.

It's a power that suits him, since he's such a helpful person.

While I was thinking about this, two large trees have already been added to the city.

That's pretty amazing.

They're not just four meters tall.

They're definitely tall enough to become a landmark of academy city.

"Karatakewariiiii!"

TLN: The literal translation for "karatakewari" is "bamboo splitter/divider". It's actually the name of a martial art technique where you perform a knife-hand chop that strikes the head.

Oh.

And at the moment the Eldwas drop the axe – no, the *huge* axe that has somehow grown even bigger – on the other mutant's head.

That mutant.

Splits cleanly in two.

The Karatakekewari strikes the head perfectly.

Wait, that axe can grow even larger than its original size?

It seems like a weapon that's really limited in what enemies it can be used against.

I don't think it could be used in one-on-one fights.

During the long time the Eldwas spent living in seclusion, it seems they went and created a weapon I don't really understand.

But there's no regenerating from that.

As I look at the mutant that was split in half, I see its insides bubbling and swelling up.

Ah, they defeated it.

Huh?!

"Wait, it can't be..." (Makoto)

I had a bad feeling, and I was right.

It bursts open, and the contents fall like rain down towards the city...

"Good grief, now the city is going to be covered in a foul smell, isn't it. Never mind the center, but at least the parts of the city where it's landing." (Shiki)

Although Shiki is tired, he's created huge magic circles overhead, slightly above the height of the buildings.

Not just one, but several of them in three dimensions, and the sky is covered with them.

I guess they form a spherical shape.

“Amazing, what a sight.” (Makoto)

“Not at all, I’m just using a weak power to burn up the raining matter; this technique was originally made to incinerate areas of land. I put up several of them and just altered how it looks.” (Shiki)

“Well, thanks to that, the city doesn’t have to take a mutant shower.” (Makoto)

“To swing that axe around without thinking. Those Eldwas must be punished later, as well.” (Shiki)

“As well?” (Makoto)

“...” (Shiki)

“As well, Shiki?” (Makoto)

“Waka-sama, please do not say it twice.” (Shiki)

Shiki is trembling delicately.

Let’s not touch on that any deeper, then.

At any rate, we’re finished now.

Now once the academy finishes surveying the area and declares an end to the state of emergency, the city will be restored to normal and be calm again.

...I really don’t get the sense that there was a battle here.

I stare at the huge trees, whose bright green leaves I can see swaying even from here.

I wonder whether those are evergreen trees.

Chapter 165

Tomoe, the Victory Celebration Party and Mio

The Dragon Knights are the core of the Lorel Union's military power.

As their name suggests, they are soldiers mounted on dragons. The difference in size between a dragon and a person is huge. As a result, the Dragon Knights are treated very differently from regular knights.

The ones who mainly do the fighting are the dragons themselves, so the abilities expected from these knights also differ from those expected of regular knights.

The ones who brought supplies to Rotsgard are units that soar through the sky on flying dragons, though there are apparently also units on the ground riding earth dragons.

They can travel on the ground and in the air but, perhaps because there aren't many oceans, there aren't any units using water dragons.

I heard that the flying dragon units have the advantage in the air for both attack and defense.

As long as the ace that is the Dragon Knights exists, Lorel's defenses can be described as an iron wall.

I can definitely feel their confidence, as if it is overflowing from their bodies.

No, I should say "was".

I can see the Dragon Knights sensing something unusual and looking worried for their dragons, while the dragons themselves are standing at attention (though I'm not sure I should call it that).

"Haah... I was looking forward to seeing how amazing these Dragon Knights are, but... Both the riders and the dragons are second-rate." (Tomoe)

"I get that you're in a bad mood, but show some restraint!" (Makoto)

"Leaving Waka and Shiki aside, all I did was split the earth. Rather than sulk, why not simply accept the credit for it as Waka's own ability?" (Tomoe)

"...You're being unreasonable." (Makoto)

This person is the cause of that.

When we went back to the academy to deliver our report on the incident involving the mutants, Tomoe discussed something with the country leaders who were still in academy city.

I think that the various leaders were among them, like people from the temples and Sairitsu-san from Lorel, but Tomoe was exerting an extraordinarily unsettling presence.

As soon as we entered the academy, as if he'd received some kind of message, Shiki said he'd go to undo the students' barrier and went in another direction. Now that I think about it, that might have been his sixth sense at work.

On the surface, it seemed that Shiki felt regret over the short sword being broken, but in reality, it could be assumed that the outburst of fake anger directed at Shiki was the cause.

While I was delivering my report to the headmaster, I also had to go through the futile mission of trying to calm Tomoe down.

While talking to Sairitsu-san, the topic of the Dragon Knights came up, so I half-forcefully dragged Tomoe out since she had shown some interest in them.

"But they are such opponents that even Mio could toy with them..." (Tomoe)

"Didn't you announce that you were aiming to introduce the four seasons to Asora?" (Makoto)

In reality, that needs a little more work, though.

"This is just a vague feeling that I have, but it seems that the rewards are lacking." (Tomoe)

"Why don't you drink a bunch tonight? And then we'll enjoy the four seasons. We're releasing the Japanese alcohol, too, right? I'm looking forward to it!" (Makoto)

I've hardly drank before, so I barely know the taste of Japanese alcohol or whatever.

But as long as it's alcohol that the people of Asora find delicious, I think it'll be fine to say that it's "Japanese alcohol".

"Now that you mention it, what should we do about the alcohol's name? We should, of course, name it?" (Tomoe)

"Why don't you give it a name? You're the one who's been the most serious about it." (Makoto)

"No, I would definitely like to leave this to you, Waka." (Tomoe)

"Well then, I'll think of a name by tonight." (Makoto)

It's a cheap price to pay to improve her mood even by a little.

"I will be awaiting it in anticipation. Hmph, I do pity Shiki since he is always being treated poorly, so perhaps I will be satisfied with the fact that we have been able to obtain the four seasons. Having him so anxious to please me has probably gone too far." (Tomoe)

Tomoe's expression held no trace of her bad mood as she spoke.

From my experience of having sisters, I know from this expression that her bad mood had not disappeared for good, but only temporarily suppressed.

...I guess putting it off till later is fine.

I'll just let time take care of it.

"That'd be great. Anyway... Even though there's only about twenty of them, the dragons have quite a different presence to them, don't they? They brought quite a lot of supplies with them for everyone, and I'm sure they've made a good impression on the townspeople." (Makoto)

Riding on dragons.

It seems I'm not the only one who thinks that's cool.

Probably just because they're rare to see, there are quite a lot of people watching the Dragon Knights from afar.

They're presumably people who are looking out for the safety of those nearby.

The city's reconstruction might begin as early as tomorrow, or maybe even today.

"My opinion on them will not change. A few of them are worth looking at, but most of them are nothing out of the ordinary." (Tomoe)

"That might be the case by your standards." (Makoto)

"Before you arrived, Waka, I was quite cautious about those men in regards to the future of the company. I would be far more useful than they, who are merely second-rates putting on an act!" (Tomoe)

What did they say with that dangerous atmosphere.

I don't think these guys would do anything bad, but I'll ask about it later.

"...Ah, I see. Well no, I have no intention of comparing you to those guys." (Makoto)

"Hmm?" (Tomoe)

Did she really think I was comparing her to the dragons that the Dragon Knights are riding?

Isn't Tomoe a little emotionally unstable today?

...

Since we're in this crowd, I doubt anyone is listening.

"Even if there were a hundred, or a thousand of them. You're better to me, Tomoe. So don't sulk like that." (Makoto)

I wouldn't normally say something like this, though.

“...Sometimes you are an incredible trickster, Waka.” (Tomoe)

“That’s not my intention. I know that you’re always concerned about me, Tomoe. I’m grateful for that.” (Makoto)

Expressing your gratitude so earnestly is a bit embarrassing, isn’t it.

“R-Root also said this. This is what you call, “people mature in the blink of an eye!”” (Tomoe)

“I’ll keep relying on you from now on. Though I’m sure there will be more troublesome things to come.” (Makoto)

“I will be in your service.”

Root, huh.

That’s likely, too.

But I intend to pay off my relatively large debt.

Using that, I think I can probably get Root to approve the fact that Kaleneon didn’t disappear.

When the other countries discover the existence of Kaleneon later, the Anslad sisters who are its representatives, Eva-san and Ruria, will probably start leading it.

For now, we’ll be supporting them, but they won’t last unless the hyumans and demi-humans cooperate.

They’ve even lost their faith in the goddess, so it will be the first country to be built from such a mess.

I’m actually looking forward to how it’ll turn out.

They’re dependent on us for now, but I don’t intend for that to continue for long.

I don’t intend for the Kuzunoha company to belong to any one country, either.

I’ll think about that more later on.

For now, I'm just glad that Tomoe's mood has improved.

Next is Mio.

I guess I'll just talk to her at the party or something.



"So with that. From tomorrow or the day after, the four seasons will begin in Asora. I think there'll be some inconveniences with this as well, but let's all work together to deal with them." (Makoto)

It's evening.

I'm not used to this kind of thing, but I just gave an opening speech for the party.

I've told everyone about the battles that took place last night - our involvement in the Rotsgard's restoration and the revival of Kaleneon. After that, I just warned them about the possible effects of the four seasons beginning here.

All eyes are on me as I raise the cup in my right hand.

"Cheers!" (Makoto)

『CHEERS!』 (Everyone)

With those words, the seal on the alcohol is quickly broken and everyone gathers towards the plates of food.

I sit down in my own seat, which is slightly elevated above everything else, and start eating.

The drink that's being poured is the Japanese alcohol made in Asora by Tomoe and the others.

Its taste and feel is similar to that of the Japanese alcohol in my distant memories.

I don't know much about Japanese alcohol so I wasn't much use in its reproduction, so from here on it'll probably get milder or stronger depending on Asora's tastes.

I congratulate Tomoe on completing the alcohol, and join her in a toast as she enjoys herself.

...My drink is poured into a large cup that's more like a tankard, and it's somewhat different from how I expected it to be. I can't get away from the smile that is covering her entire face, so I'm stuck drinking this.

I'll be honest.

I'm not sure if I can drink it all.

This Japanese alcohol is actually pretty strong, too.

No, just for today, I'll somehow force myself to drink it all.

There are some tough guys already pouring themselves another.

But as for me...

"This is a wonderful celebration, is it not, waka-sama?"

Before long.

Kakun-san, the winged people's elder has come to my seat.

This is it.

Since an important person from an important group of people has come, not finishing my drink is not an option.

So I think I'll be able to finish this one tankard - no, I'll be forced too.

It's a weekday tomorrow and I'm worried I'll have a hangover...

To think that I'd be having an office worker's problems in my teenage years.

"On this occasion, everyone worked considerably hard. So this is just my way of thanking you all." (Makoto)

"Because we helped in Kaleneon, our efforts were also acknowledged. Thank you very

much." (Kakun)

"I have been making my judgments based on the battles I have been involved in, but I think I will start taking into account the results of practice battles with the other groups. I apologize for having such biased views up until now." (Makoto)

"...Not at all, Waka-sama. Either way, we will have our abilities acknowledged, even in practice battles with you. Also, please speak at ease, as you do with Ema-dono." (Kakun)

"To treat me with such respect, thank you. No, I will do my best. Today, we have the drink made by Tomoe and the food made by Mio, so please enjoy them as you like." (Makoto)

"Yes, the Japanese alcohol is popular with everyone. Of course, including myself. Ah, if I continue being the only one talking to you, that would cause problems for the people behind me. As such, I will now excuse myself." (Kakun)

"Eh, I think I can spare some time while I'm in Asora so please feel free to come to me." (Makoto)

The Highland Orcs, the four Arke, the Misty Lizards, the Gorgons.

The heads and leaders of these groups come one after another to have these flattery-laden conversations with me.

There was the battle last night, so I was quite agitated about the Orcs and Lizards.

I've tried to fit them into the training schedule and that'll start tomorrow, so today I'll show some restraint and let them enjoy themselves.

The Japanese alcohol is quite popular.

But either alcohol percentage is too high or the taste is too strong for me; it's not the kind of drink that I can just chug down.

However, there are definitely quite a few people that are drinking it as if it's water.

Well, because of that, there are quite a few people who have already very drunk, having turned bright red.

Mio's new menu has a lot of things that make good snacks to go with alcohol, so that might be another reason why the alcohol is being consumed at such a rate.

As for its popularity with the hyumans, I have only Lime's judgment for reference, but... At the very least, since it's so popular with the demi-humans, I guess I'll give some thought about whether it can be turned into a product.

"Waka-sama, Waka-sama. Please try this next!"

Mio is bringing dishes of food out one after another.

I'm thinking she should get someone to bring them out for her, but it seems that she wants to do it herself.

She's bringing the food out on small dishes, so the quantity of each dish isn't much, but there is an amazing variety.

It's mostly focused on Japanese food with some Chinese food mixed in, but there's also some food from this world, too.

It's really diverse.

At this rate, she'll be able to produce French food, which I was never able to cook.

I have the feeling that some unknown, new cooking will be coming soon, too.

It seems she's in a good mood for some reason, so I'm just glad that I don't have to go through all the trouble I did with Tomoe.

"Mio, don't just get food, eat some yourself. Here, sit down." (Makoto)

"Ah, yes!" (Mio)

"Good work last night. You fought the enemy general in Kaleneon, didn't you, Mio? I'm glad you're unharmed." (Makoto)

That palm-sized dragon.

I haven't heard the detailed story yet.

"I've released him into the garden now, but that general was quite shrewd, and I admired him for that." (Mio)

"So that was the general, after all... What exactly was he?" (Makoto)

"His name was Reft, and it seemed he was a demon general or something. Following Tomoe-san's advice, I stopped him from eating anything and he became that size." (Mio)

Demon general.

Demon general?!

TLN: The first "demon general" is written in hiragana which conveys only the word's pronunciation, not its meaning. So here he hasn't yet understood the meaning. The second is written in kanji that contain the meaning, so now he understands.

"You're telling me there was a demon general in Kaleneon?!" (Makoto)

He was allies with Io and Rona, right?

He must have been.

"I mentioned earlier that it was a coincidence. In the end, I was unable to mimic his clever reflection..." (Mio)

Mio looks a little disappointed.

No, that's not the important thing.

"W-why is that dragon behaving itself now?" (Makoto)

If it was originally a demon general, it's probably not even really behaving itself right now.

But I saw it several times yesterday, and it seemed well-behaved.

"He lost his sanity partway through the battle, and began to just mumble to himself. After that, he began innocently chasing after a butterfly. He is quite adorable." (Mio)

I see now.

I don't know what kind of person he was before, but it seems Mio toyed around with him and broke him.

He's still alive, and he's apparently a demon general, so we should give him back when we meet the Demon Lord.

Yes.

"I-I see." (Makoto)

"More importantly. Waka-sama, do you remember the promise from the other day?" (Mio)

"Promise?" (Makoto)

I try to think back.

Umm, it's probably from her contest with Shiki.

"Ah, the one where I said I'd listen to one request?" (Makoto)

"Yes! That one, exactly!" (Mio)

Mio quickly brings her face closer.

But right now, the other leaders are having conversations nearby.

"I remember it. Once the party becomes quieter, I'll listen to you, okay?" (Makoto)

"Yes! Then I will go to check if the food is being made well. I will be back soon, though." (Mio)

"Okay, thanks." (Makoto)

Now, I wonder what Mio will ask of me.

I said my words of gratitude to Tomoe, and of course I'm also thankful to Mio.

If it's something I can do, I want to do it for her.

"Eris, and even Akua. I wonder why they're singing and dancing." (Makoto)

For a moment, I thought I was hallucinating.

But I blink and the scene hasn't changed.

The pair of forest onis are doing a flash dance and singing enthusiastically.

When did you guys become artists.

...They're actually pretty good.

I wonder if they've practised it.

Mmm, it's a good thing, I guess.

"They've gotten themselves into quite a state, haven't they? Those guys." (Makoto)

"Waka-sama, it seems you have drunk quite an amount." (Shiki)

"Shiki. I've tried talking to those two subtly, so it might be alright for now." (Makoto)

"That... Thank you for that." (Shiki)

How rude.

I haven't drunk that much yet.

It's only my third cup.

"The first thing I did in the morning was help Ema and Mio-dono to get ready. So I had no hand in the preparation of the food today." (Shiki)

"Yeah, that was a smart choice." (Makoto)

"Mio-dono and I went around the port town looking for and discussing food ingredients, so I believe we should have new products for you to taste in the near future." (Shiki)

“I’m looking forward to it.” (Makoto)

Since there aren’t any seas in Asora, huh.

“If possible, I wished to speak to you regarding the lectures for the students later, but it seems that would be best saved for another day.” (Shiki)

“I don’t really mind. For now, we’re still focused on the city’s restoration so I don’t think we’re in any hurry. More importantly. Shiki, you should drink some Japanese alcohol too, it starts to feel lighter after a while.” (Makoto)

“...I thought it was a considerably strong drink. I had some earlier; but I think it would be best enjoyed in small amounts from a small cup like Tomoe-dono is doing.....” (Shiki)

“...Alright. Well then, for now, I’ll give you this one and get myself a new one.”

I hand Shiki my tankard, which is about seventy percent full.

For some reason, Shiki has a defeated look on his face.

I quickly get a new tankard and raise a toast with him.

“Cheers!”

“...Itadakimasu.”

After that, the party is still going on.

The “this party doesn’t stop until the sun rises” group are still there, while the “I’ll work hard tomorrow” group have left a while ago.

We’ve returned to the mansion.

I think I could work tomorrow even if I kept drinking until morning, but Shiki convinced me that it’d be bad if the lecturer doesn’t show his face tomorrow, so I called it a night “early”.

So in this room, there’s Tomoe, Mio, Shiki and myself.

"I have to say, the Japanese alcohol was well-made. I will improve upon it even further, so please look forward to it, Waka." (Tomoe)

"Yeah. It'll get colder from now, so something like hot sake would be good, too." (Makoto)

"Hot sake! I see, I had forgotten about that."

We discuss our thoughts on the Japanese alcohol - no, on the party itself.

Oh, yeah.

Seeing Mio grinning next to Shiki, who is wearing a complicated, troubled expression, I remember.

"Mio, the request that you had. Have you decided on it already?"

That's right, I have to listen to her request.

Come at me with whatever request you've got.

"Y-yes. I've decided!" (Mio)

"So, tell me. What do you want me to do?" (Makoto)

As I ask her, I'm a little suspicious. For some reason, Mio's previously-smiling face has changed to a stiff expression.

"Well then, I will tell you my request." (Mio)

"Mhmm." (Makoto)

"Please make me your a-attendant!" (Mio)

"Attendant?" [Hiragana] (Makoto)

Attendant? [Hiragana]

Attendant, huh. [Kanji]

So in other words, the oldest trick in the book.

“Yes! Tonight, with me...” (Mio)

“Hooh...” (Tomoe)

“As I thought...” (Shiki)

Maybe Tomoe and Shiki had already expected something like this; they say just a few words in reaction.

Hmm, well, this was outside of my expectations.

Something to do with cooking, or a trip.

I was expecting something like that.

“A-am I asking too much?” (Mio)

I’m staring intently at Mio, and her upturned eyes are returning my gaze.

She’s kind of cute.

...I see.

“Attendant, huh.”

I briefly say the word again.

I’d like my first time to be with her, since I like her.

Or so I thought.

Disregarding the fact that she’s of the opposite sex, I don’t dislike Mio.

If I had to choose between like and dislike, I definitely “like” her.

But being inexperienced, I’m not sure if I could lead her properly.

“Excuse me, Waka-sama?” (Mio)

“ ”

“ ”

“ ”

I'm being stared at by my three followers.

They're really getting me good here.

If she really desires me.

“...” (Mio)

For some reason, Mio is holding her breath.

I might be making you wait here, but I'm not going to reject you, Mio.

Alright, I've got it.

If it's something I can give, I want to answer Mio's request.

“Mmm, alri-” (Makoto)

“I made a mistake!” (Mio)

“Fueh?” (Makoto)

“I did not mean attendant~deshita wa.” (Mio)

“Eh?” (Makoto)

“You're thinking of the wrong “togi”. I wanted you to teach me a method of washing rice to make it delicious.” (Mio)

TLN: “Attendant” is pronounced “伽/togi” in Japanese. The word for “method of washing (rice)” is “研ぎ方/togikata”.

“Eh, but just now, you said “tonight” -” (Makoto)

“Tomorrow! I wanted to taste it in tomorrow's breakfast!” (Mio)

Mio?

What, but I thought she definitely said, “Please make me your attendant”...

What?

“Bufu!”[Snorting sound] (Tomoe)

“...Ku.” (Shiki)

Tomoe and Shiki burst into laughter, as if unable to restrain themselves.

What's so funny?

Hmm, I didn't think I was that drunk, but did I do something strange?

“Tomoe-san, Shiki! Please be quiet for a moment!” (Mio)

“S-sorry. Bufu, ku, ahahaha!” (Tomoe)

“My apolo... Ku, fufu...” (Shiki)



It looks like Tomoe and Shiki are really enjoying themselves.

If it's a funny joke, I wish they'd let me in on it.

"Both of you, make sure you remember this... Waka-sama, well, could you please teach me?" (Mio)

"Ah, sure. But it seems I'm a bit drunk today, so. Would tomorrow be okay?" (Makoto)

"...Yes. Of course." (Mio)

"You might be better at it than me, but let's do it together" (Makoto)

"Ah, Waka. In that case, I wonder if you could also teach me how to sharpen* my sword." (Tomoe)

TLN: The verb "to sharpen" is the same verb (研ぐ/togu) as "to wash (rice)", so "研ぎ方/togikata" is used here again. Tomoe is just trolling Mio here.*

"To-Tomoe-san, you!" (Mio)

"How to sharpen a sword? No, didn't I teach you that a while ago? I don't know that much about it, though." (Makoto)

Yeah, I definitely taught her that already.

But why is Mio being teased by Tomoe?

"Oh, is that so? I suppose I must have confused myself." (Tomoe)

"Both of you, I told you I'll deal with you afterwards. Leave the room, now." (Mio)

Mio is seething with anger.

Both of them? All Shiki did was laugh a little, though.

"Ah, since we'll be busy tomorrow. For today, it's best if we just sleep now." (Makoto)

"Ah, yes. Waka-sama, good night." (Mio)

Mio smiles as she says good night to me.

No, not just to me, but to everyone...

"We can go several days without sleep with no problem. So please, relax and rest. I will definitely come to wake you up tomorrow." (Mio)

I wonder why.

I get the feeling that I'm being ordered to sleep.

Well, it's true that I have to go to the academy tomorrow.

I haven't drunk that much, but it's definitely a good idea for me to go to sleep.

But.

There's something I want to say no matter what, isn't there?

I want to thank everyone.

Though I kind of just want to make one thing clear.

"Yeah, I'll do that. But you three, can I say something?"

As I say "you three," Tomoe, Mio and Shiki stop moving.

I wonder if they can tell from my tone that I'm not messing around now.

I do still have alcohol in me, but I'm not saying this because I just thought of it, so it's not a mistake to say it.

"You three have been fighting for me, working in Asora and watching the shop, so I'm really thankful. If it was me alone, everything would be half-assed and nothing might have taken form." (Makoto)

『...』

"Because I met Tomoe, I came to know about the world of Asora. We created a home for everyone. Because I met Mio, I remembered cooking and could get along well with

the adventurers. Because Shiki was here, the company ran smoothly even when I acted like a spoiled child. It's really all because all three of you were there that I think I can keep being myself." (Makoto)

『...』

If I was by myself, then definitely.

I would have gotten used to fighting and looked at the world with a skewed perspective.

I would have been living a no-good life in this other world.

"I want to give you something to thank you, though it might not be much of a reward. I've only given you your first names, but I want to give you the same surname as me, Misumi. I hope you'll accept it, if you don't mind." (Makoto)

If I listen closely, I should be able to hear the noise of the party from here.

But a small amount of time passes where I can't hear a single sound.

"...With pleasure. I said this during the day, but Waka, you really are an incredible trickster sometimes." (Tomoe)

"I feel like I've been able to get closer to you, Waka-sama. I gratefully accept." (Mio)

"From now on, I swear to do my utmost to meet all your expectations. There is nothing that would make me happier." (Shiki)

That's good.

In that case do I become Raidou Misumi?

I'll eventually meet Hibiki-senpai, the hero of the kingdom, in some form or another.

That might be a chance for me, too.

"I'm glad you didn't refuse. I'm going to go rest now, okay?" (Makoto)

Somehow, it's become embarrassing to make eye contact with these three now.

As if running away, I turn my back on the room and leave.



The outskirts of Asora.

Shiki is lying on the floor, out cold, and the whites of his eyes are visible.

As proof that a fierce battle has taken place here, there are numerous signs of destruction left across the field.

Tomoe and Mio are sitting on the remains of a huge tree that has been felled magnificently.

Shiki twitches occasionally at the side of the tree, and there is a blanket over him, but the two of them show no concern towards him at all.

“Say, Mio. Why did you make that poor excuse? In that state, I think Waka would have accepted you.” (Tomoe)

“Hmph... Have you not had enough? What about you, making fun of me in such a horrible way?” (Mio)

“I am asking why you chose to throw away the opportunity of granting your heart’s desire, to share a bed with Waka. He did consume a considerable amount of alcohol, but I think he was sufficiently conscious, no?” (Tomoe)

The two of them look in the same direction, towards the horizon and the night sky.

“...” (Mio)

“From my point of view, it seems Waka has grown considerably as a person in the past few days. The previous master might have simply offered to assist in the restoration of the imperial capital of Limia. At the very least, we did not end up having to attack Kaleneon by ourselves.” (Tomoe)

“...” (Mio)

“He was even firm in his resolution when dealing with the dragon slayer. I do not think it would be bad for him to learn the warmth of a woman at this point. If that woman

is to be you, I would ignore my usual course of action and encourage you." (Tomoe)

"...But duty and gratitude. Because he says such things, I just thought it would be wrong to join my body with Waka-sama's." (Mio)

Mio opens her mouth, breaking her silence.

"Hoo?" (Tomoe)

"I!... Rather than because of my own feelings. I just realized that I wanted to join our bodies with him being the one to desire me. Things like "well done" or "thank you". It occurred to me that those are the wrong reasons." (Mio)

From his true facial expression, she was able to understand how he felt.

Therefore, before this truth became affirmed, she discarded the opportunity of her own accord.

"You want Waka to tell you that he wants you." (Tomoe)

Tomoe simply nods as she speaks, not even looking at Mio.

A few moments later, Mio also nods.

"But you are aware that that would be difficult? Waka is beginning to think of us as his family. Rather than being lovers, you could take him as someone who feels close to you, but it would be a love that is quite different from passion." (Tomoe)

"I know that." (Mio)

"Is that fine for you? You are aware that your feelings might be unrequited?" (Tomoe)

"Even so. Even so, I want to truly serve him, to be devoted to him. For now, I want to live with these feelings, this devotion." (Mio)

"I see... It is even more unlikely for Waka to desire my body than for him to desire yours, so I will at least encourage you. Though it may be meaningless." (Tomoe)

"He has not said that there is another woman that he loves. There is no hurry. One day." (Mio)

“...Human lives are short, after all. In another few years, it is possible that he will have one or two lovers that he will be married to for life, you know?” (Tomoe)

“If it is a woman that I deem worthy, then I can endure~desu wa. I absolutely cannot acknowledge a woman who is unable to cook. And I will have him embrace me just as much as her.” (Mio)

“Are you his mother-in-law? No, you are even worse. In that case, it will be a long time before we see Waka’s child.” (Tomoe)

These two old, loyal followers spend the night talking to each other.

Chapter 166

It could be said that it was easier up until now

The mutants left large scars on the city of Rotsgard.

There were a lot of casualties, and the city was damaged considerably.

Of course, the citizens are unable to return to their normal lives and have to live in temporary housing while they work hard on repairing the city.

We made it appear as if the sisters Eva and Ruria had died in this incident and took them to Kaleneon.

People are still saying farewell to the dead over here as well, so I keep hearing about their reputation.

There's not many people now, but surprisingly, it seems that they're working hard every day without any complaints.

From our point of view, they were mutants (lol) but to the people of the city, they were an almost unprecedented event.

The demons' conspiracy theory leaked somewhere, so the demons' reputation had deteriorated considerably.

And so, a year passed.

Or at least, it would have been easy if things concluded like that, but I'm not completely uninvolved with this city.

I'm participating in the merchants' guild meeting (though there are an amazingly small number of people now) and we've been making decisions such as opening

temporary stores and declining people wanting to become lecturers at the academy.

Day after day, I'm doing work that's beyond my ability.

I don't have enough fingers to count the number of tasks I have to complete each day. I've never worked so hard in my life.

"Is it really necessary to meet with the important people from other countries right now?" (Makoto)

I unconsciously let out a complaint.

This is needed, that is needed – In every meeting each night, one after another, additional materials are requested (in other words, my workload increases).

In order to get the lectures at the academy started again as soon as possible so that academy city will appear as if it's returned to normal, I've been getting nothing but unreasonable requests. (We're still in the middle of restoring the city and they're worried about the damn lectures; I wonder if they're idiots.)

I have my hands full with this alone.

Despite that, for some reason, the prince of Limia, the leader of Lorel and the important people from the temple are taking turns calling on us for assistance.

I had to resist the urge to tell them to shut up multiple times.

Today, we're fixing the main street.

It's been about a week since we started on that, and quite a number of places in the street are looking like they're back to how they were before.

However, the prospects for our shop still aren't looking good.

The temporary stores near the temporary housing facilities have become important so even if we hurried to restore our normal store, it would actually be inconvenient for the customers. So we're putting that off until later.

"Sensei, how can you even call this a lecture?!" (Jin)

Jin is shouting.

"Sif and Yuno are working for the merchants' guild in the warmth, this is discrimination!" (Amelia)

Amelia is shouting.

Indeed, today's wind is quite strong so it might be a bit cold.

"I don't think this is the work that we're supposed to be doing..." (Izumo)

Izumo is complaining as well.

It seems that each and every one of the students attending my lecture is unhappy with its contents.

The people here are my students, minus Rembrandt-san's two daughters.

I wonder if those idiots have lost their minds. As soon as I returned to the academy I was told that they've scheduled lectures to be resumed.

Of course, I told them that the lectures can wait until academy city has calmed down a bit, but they went and said that they want lectures to resume as soon as the academy is up and running.

My schedule for meeting people is packed and my business with the merchants is even busier, so it's not the time for... No, a lot of areas in the city are still in ruins, and there are a lot of people who lost their loved ones.

People tend to forget the danger too quickly once it's passed.

TLN: This was some weird expression, literally "once it passes the throat, you forget the heat", so this is quite a liberal translation.

Therefore, under the pretense of solidifying the foundations, we decided to demolish the various partially-destroyed buildings and have some people work on engineering works all day.

Participation is mandatory.

Right after the academy is finished, I'm finishing the negotiations to get the personnel we need to restore the rest of the city. There's a considerable increase in the speed of the city's restoration if magic is used.

Therefore, the participation of the people who can use magic is quite important.

For some reason, Rembrandt-san heard about this beforehand and told us that he had assigned Sif and Yuno other work, so they managed to get out of it.

Well, it might be a good opportunity for those two to watch and learn from their father's work up close, so I didn't force them to work.

"It's because you complain about this kind of stuff that you panic when facing mutants. Your weapons are crying, you guys." (Makoto)

"...Raidou-sensei, now that I'm talking to you directly, I was thinking." (Jin)

"What is it, Jin." (Makoto)

As if he's fallen for my words, Jin is talking back to me.

"You're the same age as us after all, aren't you? Actually, I get the feeling that you're younger than us." (Jin)

"Are you saying that it's a waste for me to be talking?" (Makoto)

"You have more dignity in writing... Wait, that's not what I wanted to say. I was wondering whether the work would be finished sooner if Sensei were to participate. Since you're young and all." (Jin)

"I could consider it as long as I'm not being made to do something bothersome like being in charge of the site. Well, if you guys don't proceed according to the schedule, I'll probably end up having to make it a regular part of the lectures." (Makoto)

"You mean to say we haven't actually been assigned anything?!" (Amelia)

"The other guys are already getting lectures on practical skills at the academy, that's horrible!" (Izumo)

Amelia and Izumo interrupt the conversation between me and Jin.

Even though they're girls around the same age as me, being looked down upon and glared at is enough to make me want to take a step back.

"...There's no way that's true. If I'm working behind you guys at the site, we all have a collective responsibility and we'll all receive the same penalty." (Makoto)

『... P-penalty?』

"A practice battle with Youthrie-kun, no, I'll add Blue-Lizard-kun and Zwei-san to the group." (Makoto)

『Impossible, impossible, impossible!』

All three of their reactions were in harmony.

That's pretty amazing synchronization.

Incidentally, Youthrie-kun is the third Mist Lizard.

Fortunately, or rather, unfortunately for them, they didn't have any opportunities to participate in the recent fighting. Even so, they kept demanding for lectures without understanding the situation, so I set up a mock battle with him for them.

All of the students versus Youthrie-kun.

They will make a formation with the weapons I've given them, while Youthrie-kun will just be wearing elbow-pads and shoulder-pads, light protective equipment that won't slow down his movements.

Yes.

Youthrie-kun is an unarmed fighter.

Apparently he was originally someone who found it easier to fight with his bare hands rather than use weapons, but he's a strange person who took a liking to some of the hand-to-hand fighting techniques in my memories and earnestly practised them.

He ditched the dagger that he had been using for the sake of having a weapon, and now he's the one and only grappler in Asora.

If you say that Blue-Lizard-kun has technique and Zwei-san has power.

Youthrie-kun has both technique and power.

In short, he's strong.

He could have held back against them, but I requested that he kept that to a minimum. For them, his strength must have seemed like that of an emissary from hell.

They were knocked down by Youthrie-kun like bowling pins in a strike.

Their weapons were completely destroyed, and they were treated to a full course of being punched, kicked, thrown around and arm-locked.

Seeing their fear, I'm guessing it caused some trauma on them.

They got their weapons fixed nicely by the Eldwas and they're back to normal, but even I was honestly surprised by Youthrie-kun's Wave Fist.

"So do it seriously. In any case, I think assisting in the city's restoration would only be a good thing, for both the academy and yourselves." (Makoto)

"...There are plenty of people among the townsfolk who are just trying to leech off of us and make profits, though. You're the one that's changed, Raidou-sensei."

"I'll make myself clear. For me, returning the city to normal is more important than giving lectures. That being the case, I'm going to stop giving lectures for a while, you know? Students would have to reapply. Is it alright if I close my lectures for now?" (Makoto)

"The way you're saying that. T-the rumor that you turned down becoming a full-time lecturer, was it actually true...?"

"Yeah, I turned it down. I don't intend to feed myself by being a lecturer forever" (Makoto)

"It's a person that you can't apply common sense to! We'll do it, we'll work hard! Please spare us from having to reapply. The acceptance rate will be crazy! We shouldn't have said anything..."

"You should have said that from the start. Even if you get kouhais, they're going to overtake you guys in no time." (Makoto)

TLN: Kouhai means junior; as opposed to senpai which means senior

For some reason.

After hearing my last words, these three have stopped complaining and are showing a lot more spirit to work.

In reality, I was joking about making them reapply, but I will have to accept new applications once everything's calmed down.

I have to continue with my lectures for these guys, too...

But if the uncomfortable feeling I had in Limia is correct, these guys might already be pretty strong right now.

I have to give a little thought about how hard I want to train them.

It wouldn't be funny if I created students that were stronger than the Knights' Order.

I thought I was looking to raise elite students so I used the adventurers from Tsige as a baseline standard and evaluated the students on their individual specialized abilities. Looking back, that might have been a mistake.

I'd thought that this would be a basic requirement, but I have to set the level of being able to survive trips into the wasteland as a goal, too.

Today, Shiki is portioning rations with Saimitsu-san from Lorel, and Mio is in Asora.

Tomoe is helping with the transportation of goods around the city, so... Haah. We won't be seeing each other until the evening.

I wish I could go back to the night of the party.



The morning's work is finally finished.

The students and workers are on their lunch break, so they're scattered around doing as they please.

As for me?

I have to go and meet some people for a little while.

I've given orders for what needs to happen with the repair work, so it'll be fine even if I don't come back for a few hours.

As long as nothing bad happens, anyway.

I have to meet the first person, so I head away from the main street and pass through the ruins of the Kuzunoha company, which is basically just rubble now.

"Ah, I'm sorry about that, Raidou-sensei. Having you come all the way out here."

"Please stop that. You're older than I am, Ester-san, and I am not your teacher, so you can just call me Raidou." (Makoto)

"It is rather troublesome that you do not feel guilty for mentioning my age, Sensei. But for me to refer to my savior without an honorific is quite impossible. The boss has not arrived yet; would you mind waiting inside for a little while?" (Ester)

"Yes, I understand." (Makoto)

"I have to say, you surprised me since you suddenly became able to talk. You do seem younger than when you were communicating in writing." (Ester)

Ester-san is looking at me like it's unusual for me to be talking normally.

I rescued her from a mutant at the brothel near here, but I never imagined I'd be meeting with her boss. I did think that it would just be lip service, though.

He's a person from the underworld, so it's best if I keep a certain distance from him.

Jin said it as well, but I wonder if sounding younger when I'm actually speaking is a compliment or a bad thing.

I just copied the spoken language, but apparently the impression people get is different.

"This is a major event, after all. There might be an opportunity to take here. It seems the damage is less severe here compared to other areas; when is business scheduled to be up and running again?" (Makoto)

Looking around, it seems that repairing the current buildings without having to demolish them first could work.

That being the case, once the road is fixed, won't these people be able to return to their normal lives sooner than expected?

"...We're in the sex industry, after all. There is no way that people and business will return without the city getting on its feet. We cannot welcome people just because the building and the girls are safe." (Ester)

"Is there no demand from the people who have gathered here to restore the city?" (Makoto)

"Fufufu. Demand, you say? They have to worry about the eyes of the city's people. A brothel does not stand out as something that is necessary. It is a business that is influenced by its popularity and the people's patronage, after all." (Ester)

Is that how it is.

I suppose there are services that can't be offered just because there is a demand for it.

In that case, it's no wonder she's exasperated after hearing my useless talk.

She's looking at me in a gentle way. Or more like, I feel like I'm being viewed as a child, so I'll leave it at that.

"..." (Makoto)

"Hmm, it seems that the boss has arrived. Well then, I will bring him here. In any case, I think he simply wants to thank you. He has a frightening appearance, but he has some

compassion and kindness. And... No, I'll let you look forward to it." (Ester)

Frightening appearance.

It already seems like the type of person I'm not good at dealing with.

Oh yeah, that's right.

Compared to Io's face, no matter how frightening he looks, there's no way a hyuman's appearance can be that scary.

I imagine the face of the powerful giant.

Ah, but.

If it's a hyuman, I guess Zara-san would be a better comparison.

Thinking about the trauma I got from that person, I think this person should be alright.

"My apologies for making you wait. It seems Ester and the other girls from the brothel are greatly indebted to you... Raidou?"

"...Representative Zara?" (Makoto)

The face that I was imagining has appeared in the doorway.

Eh?

The person himself?

"Ester, what's the meaning of this?" (Zara)

"Oh? Did you know each other already? There's no "meaning of this", he is the person who saved my life and his name is Raidou. He is a merchant running a small company." (Ester)

"...You, you had me meet with Raidou knowing that he's a merchant?!" (Zara)

"Well, yes. He is still a novice, but he seems to hold a lot of promise. I thought I'd let him meet with you, to return the favor he did for us." (Ester)

“That’s not the problem here!” (Zara)

“Please calm down, Boss. I can assure you that he has no hidden intentions. Though it seems you not only know of him, but rather, you are acquainted... Have I done something unnecessary?” (Ester)

“Ah, no. I see, he’s Raidou, the one who saved you.” (Zara)

Zara-san lets out a sigh.

To be honest, I want to let out a huge sigh as well.

I want to be spared from having to come here without mentally preparing myself first.

After a brief pause, Zara-san turns to face me and lowers his head.

“Raidou, thank you very much. I’m very grateful.” (Zara)

“Wait, Representative. What I did is not such a big deal!” (Makoto)

“No. You saved many of my employees. Showing this much gratitude is only normal.” (Zara)

Now it’s become awkward.

“Y-you were in ownership of these kinds of businesses too, Representative Zara? I am quite surprised.” (Makoto)

Desperately wanting to change the topic, I say the first thing that comes to mind.

“...Yes. I’m in charge of these street-walkers and gambling. I’ve crushed all of the others who were doing similar operations in other cities. I didn’t plan for things to turn out this way, but I also have my own reasons for this.” (Zara)

The head of the merchants’ guild, and the head of the underworld as well.

It looks like I have my work cut out for me today.

I didn’t plan for this to happen, so it’s amazing that I’m doing this.

"Is that so? Well, I just happened to hear the screams of Ester-san and the others and came running to help. I do not have any intentions of making you feel indebted to me." (Makoto)

I can't really word it right, but I want to get across that I didn't do it to receive their gratitude.

"...Fu, you haven't changed. You still keep coming up with good answers. Even so, the Kuzunoha company has been spreading its name to the point of fiendishness. It's not like I'm accepting Rembrandt's words, but it does seem that you're going in a different direction from regular merchants." (Zara)

For one moment Zara-san has a strict look on his face, but then he lets out an exasperated sigh and begins talking.

"The majority of your fellows who wanted to deceive you have died. Limia's second prince and the empress of Lorel have summoned you so that they can directly measure your usefulness. Don't get too thrilled with the people from the temple, either. I'm not joking when I say that the one who has benefited the most from the mutant rebellion is you, Raidou." (Zara)

"Ha, haah." (Makoto)

Rather, the relations with those people are speeding things up unnecessarily.

Incidentally, the empress of Lorel is Sairitsu-san.

I'd assumed that she was the wife of the emperor, but it's actually an important title given to the person in charge of that country's Priestesses.

Sairitsu-san said herself that her name isn't really well-known, but surely that's a joke; the name of anyone with a high position in one of the four great powers should be quite well-known.

...Not that I knew it.

"Even as a guild. There is a cost to having pushed them so hard for the transportation of goods. There aren't even supposed to be that many medicine stores in the first place. More or less, the guys trying to resume their trading are starting up in different businesses." (Zara)

“Eh, that wasn’t my –” (Makoto)

“Idiot. It’s not just for your sake. As long as you guys keep improving the quality and prices, there won’t be a single store in the city that can compete with the Kuzunoha company when it comes to medicine. I was going to say this tonight. You should consider going in a direction to increase your sales, even if only a little at a time. Opening branch stores is fine as well.” (Zara)

“Branch stores...” (Makoto)

It’s hard, because we won’t have enough people.

“I have already mentioned this to Shiki... san, as well, but it would be helpful if you keep acting as a mediator with the academy to some extent. Right now, the reason the restoration of the city is progressing at a high pace is because we can use magic without holding back. We want to keep this up until it’s all back to normal.” (Zara)

Why does he add -san to Shiki’s name, but drop the honorific for me?

Could he be thinking that I’m his guardian?!

...It’s mostly true, so I can’t deny it.

“For now, I intend to continue making requests to the academy. As well as the transportation of goods around the city through Tomoe.” (Makoto)

“The woman who tamed the dragons even better than the Dragon Knights, huh. To be honest, I have things to say about your inexperience and ability. But I can only take my hat off to the sheer number of unorthodox methods at your disposal. To think that you’d be using a tiger cub from Lorel instead of a carriage.” (Zara)

“I thought that everyone in the Dragon Knights were strong.” (Makoto)

“...How so? I went to see them once, but they’re nothing more than decorations. Under that woman’s directions, they moved like a unit of flying dragons and they were barely fearsome at all.” (Zara)

“Ah,ahaha.” (Makoto)

“At this rate, even if only in appearance, Rotsgard’s cityscape will probably return to

normal in about a month. As the head of a guild and as a manager of prostitutes. I'll say it once more. Thanks, Raidou." (Zara)

Not only Zara-san, but Ester-san imitates him as they both lower their heads in a bow.

I can't really get used to this, being bowed to by a representative.

"I would also like to thank you. From now, if I show any flaws, please guide me, Representative Zara." (Makoto)

"I will, whenever Rembrandt-san gets angry at you... Now that I think about it. As thanks for saving the prostitutes, when this road's shops reopen, I'll let you in for free. What do you say, Raidou?" (Zara)

...As he raises his face, its expression has completely changed.

Ah, he's got an unpleasant look on his face.

"What do I say? I'm only half a man, and I do not partake in such activities."

"One flaw I see in you is these ambiguous answers you give. Well, I'll interpret that in my own way. In that case, from now on, this brothel is free for the Kuzunoha company. Use it as you like. I'll give an order to use your stores for their daily necessities. That's my way to show my thanks, and as my payment to keep your mouth shut about me being the manager here. I'll trust you with that. Well then, sorry for taking so much of your time. Both of us are busy people, but you have to put your best efforts into tonight's meeting. Don't forget, Raidou." (Zara)

After this one-sided monologue, Representative Zara turns around and leaves.

This means that he predicted that I wouldn't turn him down.

...No, I don't think any good would come of exposing him anyway, so I won't do it.

Even though he doesn't have an intimidating air, I somehow find that man somewhat hard to deal with.

Err, next is the prince of Limia.

That's arranged to be in the conference room at the academy.

Chapter 167

Makoto, Overcome This

The prince of Limia, huh.

No, the princess?

If I'm not mistaken, her name is Joshua-sama.

Honestly, I'm surprised she's still in Rotsgard.

That's exactly how I felt when she called for a meeting with me.

Her business is probably to do with her gender, but I know what I need to do first.

Apologize.

That's all.

There's no simpler solution.

And if it looks like the conversation will turn towards the country or the company, it'll be fine if I just tell her that I can't reply quickly and we should discuss it another day.

I'm still learning these convenient phrases that I can use in my work.

As I consider that, I knock on the door to the conference room.

“Come in.”

A quick reply.

It is indeed Joshua-sama's voice.

Well, a person like the prince of a large country wouldn't do something like use the another country's facilities to set up a trap.

Maybe I'm worrying too much.

"It has been a while, Joshua-sama. I'm honored to have been called here today."
(Makoto)

I'll try conducting myself like I'm a lower-class person.

Incidentally, the prince's appearance is as it always has been until now; she is dressed in men's formal clothes.

I'm not taken by surprise by her wearing a dress or anything like that.

"I heard that you are now able to speak; it seems that you have become completely fluent in conversation. I, too, am thankful that you accepted my request to meet, Raidou-dono." (Joshua)

The prince is speaking in her usual polite tone.

I'm a little of tired of having my speech mentioned every time I meet someone.

"So, what did you need of me?" (Makoto)

As according to my plan, I'll give her an apology and have her forgive me for my rudeness the other day.

I'm not entirely sure how to address royalty in a polite manner, so I've accepted that I'll be impertinent many times today as I listen to what she has to say.

...I'm also busy these days, so I kind of want to finish this quickly.

"...Well. Let us get straight to the issue at hand." (Joshua)

"Please." (Makoto)

"Firstly, the thing you found out about me the other day, that..." (Joshua)

Joshua looks like she's having a hard time saying it.

She's talking about that, isn't she.

“The fact that you’re a woman?” (Makoto)

“...Yes. I’m sure you would know this by seeing my appearance, but this fact is known only to a few in Limia Kingdom. It has not been leaked at all to other countries, or at least, that should be the case.” (Joshua)

That should be the case, huh.

Regarding the demons and the empire, does she feel there’s a possibility that it has been leaked?

Ah, I wonder if there’s a chance that the room is bugged.

Seeing that Joshua-sama is talking about quite a serious matter here, it’s probably fine.

We’re not discussing anything that would be bad for me, so there’s no need for me to worry anyway.

“I see.” (Makoto)

“Of course, I understand that it was just an accident while you were trying to save me. However, regarding this subject... I would like to request that you do not mention this to anyone.” (Joshua)

Request.

Zara-san said it sarcastically, but considering our positions, this request is more like an order.

At the very least, it feels that way.

Well, this person might be from the kingdom of Limia, but she did seem to support the Kuzunoha company.

Even I know whether or not it’s wise to disclose the prince’s real gender.

“I understand.” (Makoto)

“...Huh?” (Joshua)

"Eh, err. I understand. I will not tell anyone." (Makoto)

"Umm. But you know my secret." (Joshua)

She looks like she wants to ask me if I'm not going to make a demand in exchange.

Her expression has been slowly stiffening since we began our meeting, but now in a single instant, it's relaxed completely.

"I will not tell anyone." (Makoto)

I'll say it to her clearly.

More like, listen properly.

What else would I do when knowing the secret of a large country's prince?

Threaten her, for example?

That would definitely be troublesome.

Have her be on good terms with me?

Even though our social position isn't equal and I'm the only one who knows the other's secret?

I can't picture her being my friend.

Also... Limia is the country where Hibiki-senpai lives.

I don't want to have a dispute with the prince of such a place.

"...I'm sorry, but I cannot trust you." (Joshua)

"Even if you say that –" (Makoto)

"Is there nothing that you wish for? If it is within my power, I will make an effort to grant it." (Joshua)

She's thinking that nothing is as costly as a free gift, huh.

"Currently, there's nothing in particular. Though I think it might be best for you to return to your country with haste and devote your power to its restoration." (Makoto)

"...I am speechless. Indeed, that is one thing that I should do." (Joshua)

In the first place, it's odd that the prince is still in Rotsgard even though the king has already returned.

"Well then, please do so." (Mokoto)

In fact, I can see her face occasionally looking like she wants to go back.

"At the same time, investigating you and negotiating with you are also things that I should be doing." (Joshua)

Joshua-sama puts on a troubled smile.

Perhaps it's because it's to do with the first topic that we discussed in the meeting.

However, I don't have any intention of making a deal or submitting to any demands. Since Rotsgard is in this state and Asora is in commotion as well.

"I would be relieved if you would report that there are no problems at this moment in time. I'm currently busy with the restoration of Rotsgard. You would know this if you did some investigating, but we don't have any thoughts to offer our cooperation to any single country in particular." (Makoto)

"...It does seem that way. Other countries seem to be thinking of ways to bring you over to their side, although they are not showing any results." (Joshua)

"Yes. And I would think that they should not expect any results from now on, either." (Makoto)

Most likely, because we won't become attached to any particular country.

In fact, it's unlikely that we're going to be allied with only the hyumans.

...Though I can't say that.

"...When I tell you to report to me, exactly as you said, this is what happens. Hmm..."

(Joshua)

TLN: This one is really tough to translate, basically Joshua is displeased that Makoto rejected her negotiation in the previous dialogue line

“I have no intention of threatening you. Definitely not with me wanting something as the reason. I just made the suggestion because I thought that in your position, you should be returning to your country as soon as possible rather than concerning yourself with me, your highness.” (Makoto)

If I’m the only concern, then she could probably just return.

“I see, then I shall accept your suggestion. It seems that I gave you a meaningless warning in our discussion.” (Joshua)

“Between the academy, the merchants’ guild, Falz-dono of the adventurers’ guild and the visitors from the temple, we don’t have the time to pursue additional endeavours.” (Makoto)

“...I have some influence within the temple. It is not much, but I will tell them to restrain themselves.” (Joshua)

“That would be of great help.” (Makoto)

It really would be.

The fact that no actual work gets done just by talking causes a lot of stress for me.

“I am sorry for taking your time when you are so busy. I do not have any more... No, Raidou-dono. Could I ask you one more thing?” (Joshua)

“Please.” (Makoto)

“What do you think of me?” (Joshua)

Oi, isn’t that quite an ambiguous question?

What I do I think of her?

About the fact that she’s pretending to be a man?

Or is she asking about my impression of her as a woman?

The fact that she's stayed here to discuss these things with me instead of returning to her country?

It's hard to decide which of these possibilities I should answer.

"What do I think? I am not sure if this will be an answer to your question, but I think that you are having a hard time." (Makoto)

"A hard time?" (Joshua)

"Yes. The fact that you are putting on that appearance, the fact that you are royalty, the fact that you're having to have these conversations with a strange youngster like myself. I feel that you are standing in a difficult position." (Makoto)

"...Fufu, excuse me. Position, you say? It seems that you have quite a strange way of thinking." (Joshua)

I wonder if I gave an unexpected answer.

Those are my honest feelings, though.

"Well then, I will excuse myself, your highness." (Makoto)

Just in case, I address her as "your highness" so as not to continue treading on the fact that she is a woman.

I lower my head to Joshua-sama and bid her farewell.



"Oh my, if it isn't Raidou-dono. It has been a while since we've met like this, hasn't it?"

"...Falz-dono. I have been busy." (Makoto)

I finished my discussion with Joshua-sama and met with several lecturers afterwards.

As I was walking through the corridors to leave the academy, I ran into Root.

As Root said, it's rare to see him in the academy.

I haven't seen him in a while, either.

...Now that I think about it, I let him borrow something, didn't I?

Though I intend to have him return it when the adventurers' guild acknowledges the existence of Kaleneon.

"Can I have just a little of your time?" (Root)

"If it is only a little." (Makoto)

"That's good. Well then, over there is a steeple that nobody visits at this time of day, so let's head there." (Root)

"Alright." (Makoto)

Following Root's lead, I arrive at the empty steeple on the upper floors.

Wow.

There's quite a good view.

I can get an uninterrupted view of the half-destroyed city from here.

"I'm sorry about this incident. I didn't think that the adventurer Sofia would stand in your way there. Even though I could not anticipate the goddess's interference, I feel guilty towards you and the others, Makoto-kun." (Root)

"You watched me through Sofia's eyes and you feel guilty?" (Makoto)

It's amazing that he can say that.

Part of the reason I followed him to this deserted place without thinking is because he feels indebted to me.

Another part of me is also thinking that if he treats this and that as separate matters, I could throw him out.

Virtues are important.

"Ahahaha... Actually, I made it so that I can use high-level adventurers as something of a safety net –" (Root)

"It's unusual that you're lying so obviously today, Root. The reason Sofia could do something like that is because she was a hyuman who had a close connection with dragons – no, with you, isn't that right?" (Makoto)

I noticed it there, which is why I can notice it in his eyes now.

It's a weak lie considering it's coming from Root.

"...It's unusual that you're so sharp today, Makoto-kun. You noticed Sofia's secret?" (Root)

"I don't know exactly what it was. But I know it was related to you. I just thought it was impossible for a hyuman to mutate spontaneously and gain the power of a dragon." (Makoto)

"I see." (Root)

"And her obsession with you was no joke... Both of them. That's why I said I just lent it to you. It seemed pretty rough on our Shiki, too." (Makoto)

"He was a joke of a superior dragon, but it's strange to think that he was defeated by a Lich, even one that has made a contract with you. I did teach Shiki-kun various things, but I didn't think that he would be able to destroy Lancer." (Root)

Shiki himself mentioned that he barely made it through that.

For his sake, let's not tell Root that.

"I'll pass that on to Shiki." (Makoto)

"Please do. In any case, I'm grateful that you took care of both of them." (Root)

Hey hey, are you planning to keep playing dumb after all that, Root?

"...Look here. You're not finished, are you?" (Makoto)

“...Eh?” (Root)

“What I’m saying is, I “handed over” management to you, but I only meant that I would lend it to you.” (Makoto)

“!” (Root)

“Tomorrow, no, maybe as early as tonight, right? Jeez, there’s something wrong with you today, you know? You’ve been having all your tricks seen through easily by someone like me.” (Makoto)

“Makoto... kun. You are...” (Root)

“Once we’re done cleaning up, I’m going over there to ask for my reward for all of this. Get a hold of yourself, chief-dono of the adventurers’ guild.” (Makoto)

“...” (Root)

With no trace of his usual joking attitude, he simply returns my gaze.

How do I put this. Is this guy underestimating me that much?

I’m extremely surprised.

Sofia, and I guess in this case, Lancer and the other superior dragons as well.

I entrusted all of their ends to Root.

That is what I let him borrow.

Tomoe was a little concerned, but I don’t intend to ask for all the details.

After tomorrow, I’ll just go to Root to have him take care of Kaleneon.

I’m fine with that.

“People mature in the blink of an eye... That has really been the case for you, hasn’t it...” (Root)

“Thanks for the compliment. Well then, I’m going back to work. I need to show my face

in the office as well; I've got more work than I can handle right now." (Makoto)

Leaving the astonished Root behind, I leave the steeple.

Chapter 168

Yata is that much

The same night that Raidou and Falz talked for the first time in a long time.

It is raining heavily.

Deep inside a forest that nobody would come to at night unless they had a specific objective.

There is a single silhouette, drawing breaths that are delicate, yet desperate.

In this forest where not even moonlight could reach, her faintly glowing body stands out in the darkness.

It is a female hyuman, basking in the rain as if washing herself with it.

It is Sofia Bulga*.

“Fuuh... fuuh...” (Sofia)

Sofia, who was defeated in the kingdom of Limia after taking an attack from the devil, Raidou.

She is lying in a nameless forest on the outskirts of Asuta, the royal capital.

She survived.

“Raidou, that shitty brat...!” (Sofia)

Her body stirs.

With frail movements that nobody would expect to see from her, she presses her back against a nearby boulder that is taller than her own body.

She possesses nothing but her own naked body. Not even having any clothes to put on,

her body is being struck by the rain.

"Mitsurugi is definitely dead this time and they completely destroyed my weapon... At least they probably haven't noticed that I used Night's Cover as my trump card to escape death. What the hell is that monster...?" (Sofia)

Continuing to curse Raidou under her breath, she begins concentrating to restore her power as fast as possible.

She is definitely an experienced adventurer.

Because Root, the name of her final target was mentioned, she pressed a fight with Raidou that she should not have stepped into. However, it seems that she has regained her composure.

"As annoying as it is, I have to find a way to fight Root while avoiding that. That is an opponent I can't face. For now... I guess hunting the Muteki* dragon in the wastelands is my first priority." (Sofia)

TLN: Muteki = Invincible*

"How unfortunate. That will not happen."

"!?" (Sofia)

There should be nobody here but Sofia, yet the indifferent voice of a man rings out.

Despite the fact that her body has not recovered yet, she forces it to move quickly, shielding herself by putting the boulder between her and the direction the voice is coming from.

In her hand is a sword made of light.

This was originally Mitsurugi's ability.

"Hmm. Your movements are not bad. But compared to when you were fighting Makoto-kun, they're like those of a tortoise." (Mysterious voice)

"Are you one of that guy's allies?! Where are you!" (Sofia)

Getting a rough idea of the situation, Sofia focuses her senses on the darkness of the forest.

Makoto, Raidou's real name.

There is no way Sofia could forget that name.

She also understands that someone else who knows that name is unlikely to be her ally.

She cannot take a prolonged fight, so she concentrates on forming a plan in her head to finish it quickly.

"In the end, Lancer did not teach you the perception and senses of a dragon. That just shows that your relationship consisted of nothing more than using one another." (Mysterious voice)

A young, silver-haired man appears from the darkness.

Wearing a cynical smile, he looks completely out of place in this forest.

"Am I correct to assume you're an ally of that devil?" (Sofia)

Sofia questions the young man, keeping her body hidden in the shadow of the boulder.

"Ally? I guess I could say that I'm a dragon that would like to become one, but won't be accepted." (Young man)

"...Dragon?" (Sofia)

"I continued to watch after giving up on him, and because of that, I'm also a fool who is now indebted to him." (Young man)

"Indebted... You, you can't be..." (Sofia)

"Your intuition is even sharper than Makoto-kun, huh. I'll introduce myself again. I'm Root. I'm the one you have been searching for, the Harmony Supreme Dragon." (Root)

"!" (Sofia)

Sofia opens her eyes wide.

A completely unexpected encounter.

And under the worst circumstances.

“What’s wrong? I’m sure you’re not the kind of girl who would say that she can’t come out because she’s naked. I came out here like this because I wanted to have a final little chat, you know?” (Root)

Final.

From that word, Sofia knows what will happen afterwards.

She slowly comes out from the shadow of the boulder.

“Root, you...?! You’re the real one?” (Sofia)

“You can think what you want. Do you want to be killed by the fake one, or do you want to be killed by the real one? I’ll leave that for you to think about.” (Root)

Immediately following Root’s words -

Sofia instantly produces eight swords of red light, with the intent of melting the ground beneath his feet. But Root snaps his fingers, and all of these lights disperse.

“Is that enough proof for you?” (Root)

“...” (Sofia)

Sofia’s ears are filled with the sound of her grinding her teeth.

Because now she understands that this is the real one.

And after seeing him effortlessly nullify her perfectly timed surprise attack, she realizes just how powerful her opponent is.

“A piece of the ambition that I held in the past. It starts to breathe again, just as I remember. At first, well, it was fun to watch.” (Root)

“...” (Sofia)

“My blood has become thick in the people it is mixed with, as if they were my own children. The two lives I created in a whimsical experiment. Both of whom are related to me. To think that both of them would meet in the same time period and join forces.” (Root)

“You know the truth about me, don’t you.” (Sofia)

“Of course. I’m also the head of the adventurers’ guild. I’ve known since you were registered in the guild. When you found out about your blood’s lineage, when you gained your ambition. When you became a woman, when you experienced heartbreak, I know everything.” (Root)

“...Including the fact that I have been looking for you.” (Sofia)

“Of course, I knew. I had no intention of meeting you at all, though. You should be thankful to Makoto-kun for this. After all, thanks to him, you have accomplished your objective of “meeting” me.” (Root)

(Although, you can also say that thanks to him, everything else has gone horribly wrong.)

In his mind, Root silently adds these words to his statement.

“You! You knew everything about my movements! You’re saying that despite knowing all that, you did nothing about me, about Mitsurugi?!” (Sofia)

Sofia’s voice is shaking in rage.

If he knew, there is no way he could have left them alone.

The reason for that being that Sofia and Lancer were aiming to take Root’s life.

That is why Sofia had thought that Root was unaware.

At the very least, the two of them had thought that Root was unaware of anything beyond the fact that they were making unusual movements.

“I could see your objectives and I could see how it would end, that’s why. I didn’t think

I needed to even face you. And I knew you two couldn't defeat the Sazanami* and the Muteki in the first place." (Root)

TLN: Sazanami = Sand Wave. It made no sense to write the Japanese name for Sazanami and not for Muteki (Invincible), so I'm making it consistent.*

"Don't fuck with me! The Sazanami and the Muteki, I have enough power to defeat them both!" (Sofia)

"Power, maybe. But if you can't even face them, then it makes no difference. You might have a one in ten thousand chance with the Sazanami, but the Muteki is in the furthest depths of the wastelands. And the Muteki is the kind of person who would find it too troublesome to fight properly. Ignoring the fact that you misunderstood the prerequisites, I knew that you couldn't even meet them, so what need did I have to interfere in your meaningless efforts?" (Root)

"What, what misunderstanding...?" (Sofia)

"About the idea that you could defeat me if you absorbed six superior dragons. It wouldn't be difficult to strip that power from you. I don't know what Lancer told you, but the power of absorption that you possess is only a fraction of mine. Even considering the fact that you've deeply inherited my blood, there is no way that you can use the ability better than me." (Root)

"..." (Sofia)

"That's how it is. In the end, it was actually quite troublesome. I regretted leaving you alone. You can have a toast in the other world to celebrate the fact that you caused me just a small amount of regret. Ah, Lancer can't go there so you'll be having that toast alone, though." (Root)

"...Leaving your blood in a world where people live on a whim... Creating dragons that didn't exist before and adding them to the superior dragons on a whim. All of this, you did all of this just on a whim?! Don't, don't fuck with me!" (Sofia)

Sofia once again creates a sword in her hand, covers it in red light and moves to cut him down.

Root is wearing only a simple shirt, but despite the rain, it is completely dry. The moment Sofia realizes this is when gold-colored magic power prevents her attack

from reaching his body.

"An imitation of Makoto-kun. Quite bothersome, isn't it. My limit is about ten minutes, huh. For him to be able to maintain it continuously, just how much magic power does he have?" (Root)

"Ah... Aah..." (Sofia)

"The absorption of all of the superior dragons, the thing that you were aiming for. That was once one of my foolish ambitions. Perhaps it's my fault for carelessly speaking of the past when Lancer was a child." (Root)

Root speaks as he places his hands on his own knees.

"..." (Sofia)

Sofia is unable to speak.

"The Tiamat project." (Root)

"!" (Sofia)

Sofia was trembling ever so slightly.

Even so, it seems that Root sees it clearly.

"...Like I thought. Using my power, I will absorb all the superior dragons. I will understand the land, sky and seas better than the spirits themselves and divide the world in two with the goddess. That is the Tiamat project. You probably don't know this, but Tiamat is the name of the god of good harvest, who has the nature of both a god and a dragon." (Root)

"The god... of good harvest. There are gods other than the goddess?" (Sofia)

"Not in this world; not that I'd expect you to know." (Root)

"This world? Then in a world separate from this one?" (Sofia)

Sofia is wearing an astonished expression.

It is as if she cannot completely comprehend Root's words.

"Though in the end, I stopped thinking that it would be disadvantageous to carry out this plan with the goddess who had already gained a considerable amount of faith from the humans when I met my husband. Who would have thought that this poor-quality product that I made while killing time by combining a half-dead dragon and a weapon filled with hatred would result in a powerful dragon joining forces with it and lead to me being able to dust off this old plan? It's a small world." (Root)

Root continues to speak, not answering Sofia's question.

"Poor-quality...? Just how much do you think my life was fucked up because of this power that I never asked for!?" (Sofia)

"This is an old saying, but there is no good and evil when it comes to power. You became twisted and killed many people, demons and dragons only because you were weak, right? It's the same for Lancer. People, dragons and the strong will to remain in this world. Even if you could call him a miraculous creation and a superior dragon, he could have attained a great social position of power. But he wasn't satisfied with that. In any case, he was just a loser who couldn't control his greed and desire. That's why I lost interest in you." (Root)

Like the conductor of an orchestra.

Root raises his right hand high into the air.

"I wasn't wrong. I wasn't wrong to hate you! Only you!" (Sofia)

As Sofia screams, she falls to her knees like a puppet whose strings have been cut.

In the instant Root bends his whole body forward towards her -

"Ah?" (Sofia)

Sofia falls to her hands and knees. Red, blue, black and red-white spheres emerge from her body and gather in Root's outstretched right hand.



"If your body loses the power of the dragon that you hold after you have already lost the divine protection of the goddess. You know whether or not you can stay alive, don't you?" (Root)

"...This... To meet such an end..." (Sofia)

With her eyes wide open, Sofia whispers as her head bows down to the earth.

"It's quite a normal way of dying for an adventurer, isn't it? An unexpected, sudden death." (Root)

"I... will..." (Sofia)

A small golden sphere appears from Sofia's body, and she falls silent.

As he looks at the various spheres, Root lets out a sigh.

"Superior dragons are reborn in an instant, aren't they? I can't bear to raise children, so I think I'll leave that to someone else entirely. Oh yes, I think I'll bother Makoto-kun with something, too. Since he's basically just staying at home. Anyway, I might need an excuse in order to have him watch the world for me." (Root)

Root lowers his right hand.

The spheres of light have changed, becoming glowing eggs.

They are floating lightly in the air.

"Lancer... Makoto-kun won't like it, so maybe I'll ask "Aunt" Sazanami. Since she's giving her blessings to humans and also probably won't ask to be reborn" (Root)

While deciding on how he will have the eggs taken care of, Root casually looks at Sofia's corpse, which is being beaten by the rain.

Tear-like traces run from her eyes onto the earth; perhaps she had let them out in her dying moments.

Or perhaps it was simply the raindrops that flowed down her face. It is already impossible to distinguish the two, and her expression gives no hints.

Such trivial things do not cross Root's mind.

"Now everything is according to Makoto-kun's expectations, huh. As disadvantageous as it would be to keep her alive, Sofia is also quite pitiful... Hmm, if that's the case, at least. I could just say that she was finished by Makoto-kun, but I can predict what his next request will be, so maybe I'll return the favor." (Root)

Root moves his left hand as he murmurs something.

Sofia's corpse floats into the air.

Root has thought of something. His expression is not that of an absolutely powerful person that he was wearing until now. With the complacent smile that he often shows Makoto, he vanishes from this place.

Along with Sofia's corpse.



At the sound of a loud knock, my eyes open.

I'm always very tired these days, so this is quite the rude awakening.

Still, it's not a bad tiredness.

Surprisingly, it might suit me to be working until it's dark and I have sweat on my brow.

The knocking continues.

"I'm awake, I'm awake. What is it? Come in." (Makoto)

It's so early in the morning.

I'm in Asora.

The four seasons were introduced just the other day.

They were implemented in some odd circumstances, but the uproar from that accident is settling down.

To be more specific: Spring, winter, summer and autumn are rotating in the north, south, east and west with the city area that we're living in as the center.

Of course, there are also irregularities in the seasons everywhere, but we decided to just roughly classify them based on what we see.

That's why we're not being conspicuous by bringing people to academy city from here.

"Waka, I'm here to inform you of something. It's a very serious matter." (Tomoe)

It's Tomoe.

No, Mio and Shiki are both with her.

Wait, what?!

The heads of each race have entered my room?!

I'm glad.

I'm so glad that I at least put my clothes on before inviting them in.

I don't have bed hair either; my appearance is at least somewhat proper.

"I can tell that something's happened due to the fact that you're all gathered in my room, but what do you mean by "serious matter"?" (Makoto)

A serious matter.

Considering that, everyone's expression is confused, or maybe I should say bewildered.

So it might be a serious matter that's not an immediate danger.

"That's... It's an intruder... or should I call it a visitor?" (Tomoe)

Tomoe's words are blunt.

An intruder or a visitor, in other words, someone has come here?

To Asora?!

“Wait, does that mean that Asora’s existence has been leaked to the hyumans?! Isn’t that really bad?!” (Makoto)

“No, it is not a hyuman.” (Tomoe)

“You’ve captured them for now, right? We have to ask how they got here, and what their objective is...” (Makoto)

“Waka, that is to say... We have not captured them.” (Tomoe)

“...Eh?” (Makoto)

“In any case, it seems you are awake, so please speak to them directly.” (Tomoe)

“Directly...?” (Makoto)

As I’m about to wonder how -

[Yo! Misumi Makoto! Morning!]

“!” (Makoto)

A loud voice echoes in my head.

It’s a voice I’ve never heard before.

But considering his impolite way of speaking, it’s a voice with a strange power that subconsciously makes me feel the need to speak politely.

I wonder if it’s telepathic communication.

It’s similar, yet I also get the feeling that it’s somehow different.

Because I don’t feel a connection to the other person.

I’m unsure if I’m supposed to just speak by thinking, but I try responding.

[Good... morning. Nice to meet you? It is the first time we are speaking, correct?] (Makoto)

[Yeah! My aniki* turns out to have caused a lot of trouble for you, sorry about that. I happened to be nearby so I tried boldly coming here, but you were asleep. So I just waited.] (Mysterious voice)

Aniki?

Then that means he's someone's younger brother.

Regarding asking about his name.

If his older brother is someone I know, I'd like to ask his full name.

[I apologize for being rude, but could I ask as to what your name is? If possible, your full name.] (Makoto)

[It's long, so sorry for abbreviating it. The name's Susanoo.] (Susanoo)

[Susanoo-san.] (Makoto)

[That's right.] (Susanoo)

Where does he abbreviate it, I wonder... Susanoo?

His older brother is someone I know?

Susanoo...

?!

Susanoo no Mikoto?!

No way!

[Y-y-y-you're the younger brother of Tsukuyomi-sama, Susanoo no Mikoto?!] (Makoto)

TLN: In the Shinto religion, the three main gods are Tsukuyomi, Susanoo and Amaterasu who are siblings. Susanoo no Mikoto is the full title of Susanoo, who is the god of storms. This explanation hopefully makes it much easier to understand the rest of the chapter.

I'm awake.

I'm wide awake now!

It's a famous god, isn't it?!

Wait, it's a god of destruction, isn't it?!

The kind of big name that might cause a natural disaster if he's in a bad mood!

He's been waiting?

For ME to wake up?!

Oh, ooooooh.

"Tomoe, why didn't you wake me up straight away?!" (Makoto)

"Well, I did think that it was an enormous presence, but I thought I should be suspicious since he was not giving his name..." (Tomoe)

Suspicious or not, it's a god who would be really bad to make angry!

H-he's probably not angry, right?

It's okay, right?

[My aniki made you a few requests, didn't he? For now, I'm relieved that you seem alright. Well, we have come to this space that you're in. I hope it wouldn't be a problem for me to come closer?] (Susanoo)

[Of course! Could it be that Tsukuyomi-sama is with you?!) (Makoto)

?

No, wait.

Tsukuyomi-sama is in a sleeping state, so there's no way they could be together.

But he definitely said "we" just now.

[Aniki is still under medical care on the other side. The goddess here has some pears. I was just on my way back from that. Don't worry, I'm not going to tell that idiot about this place. In fact, I'll help you to keeping it hidden.] (Susanoo)

[I-I see. Well then, I will be waiting for you.] (Makoto)

He met the goddess.

That means that the visitor back at that time was him!

That goddess accepted a really amazing god as her guest, huh.

I can't blame her for being impatient.

[Sorry, but I need to ask someone to guide me. I came here riding something quite big, you see. I want to land in a wide, flat area.] (Susanoo)

[I-I understand. I will prepare someone right away. Where might you be, currently?] (Makoto)

[You'll see me right away if you look up at the sky. Well, I'll see you in a bit.] (Susanoo)

So the conversation ends.

I know my mind is blank right now.

But I can't just space out here.

I turn my head to the right and see my followers and everyone who is now conveniently gathered here.

"Mio. Quickly cook up all the ingredients you have. I think Japanese food is fine as long as you make everything that you think is tasty. You can round up everyone who's rotated onto cooking duty. Hurry!" (Makoto)

"Ah, y-yes!" (Mio)

"Ema, Shiki. Make preparations for a warm welcome. Once I ask them whether we'll be speaking inside or outside, I'll let you know, so start with gathering people and preparing the tools." (Makoto)

“I understand!” (Ema)

“As you wish.” (Shiki)

“Tomoe, come out and greet them with me. For now, just come outside. He said that he wants to land in a wide area, so tell me where we can find a field where a large animal can land, as close to here as possible. Everyone else, divide yourselves into cooking or other things and follow Mio and Shiki’s lead!” (Makoto)

“A field, yes, I understand. Well then, I shall accompany you.” (Tomoe)

I give orders as I walk down the corridor.

I don’t know how I’m supposed to welcome a god!

I don’t know how, but...

I have to make all the preparations I can.

I step outside.

I’m in a place I can look up at the sky, but which part of the sky am I supposed to look at?

As I think that, I see it immediately.

There is something flying in the sky, about the size of an aeroplane.

It’s a bird.

A pitch-black bird.

“That’s it, huh. Tomoe, is the place you thought of suitable?” (Makoto)

“...Yes. Still, that thing is considerably enormous. A bird that rivals a dragon; no, surpasses it - I have never heard of such a thing.” (Tomoe)

“Common sense doesn’t apply to something that a god would ride. Anyway, mark the place where we want them to land so that they can see it from up there.” (Makoto)

“G-god?!” (Tomoe)

“Ah, well... I’ll tell you about it afterwards. For now, hurry. So that we don’t show any courtesy.” (Makoto)

“...That bird, it has three legs and its claws and beak are sharp. You are aware that it would be a problem if it goes wild?” (Tomoe)

“It’s still probably safer than the one riding it... Three legs?” (Makoto)

What?

For it to appear as large as a plane from here, it has to be pretty huge, right?

Indeed, looking closely, I can see that it has three legs.

A black, three-legged bird.

A raven.

Could it be... Yata-garasu?

TLN: A three-legged raven that inhabits/represents the sun in Asian mythology

Ha... Hahaha.

I’m glad my eyes weren’t crushed.

I remember hearing once that “yata” means “large”, but... This is too huge, isn’t it...?

TLN: “Yata” in “Yata-garasu” means “eight-span”, which I suppose is supposed to be descriptive of its size. I believe this is also where the chapter’s title comes from.

Passenger-plane-sized, huh?

Just what kind of torii would it perch on?

TLN: Torii are those large traditional wooden gate-like things you see in Japan. They kind of look like giant bird perches, and the kanji literally means something like “bird perch”. You can Google it if you’re curious.

“Waka, it seems they have seen the marker. They are descending at quite a speed.”
(Tomoe)

“Ah, I see. Tell everyone not to stare at it too much. Well then, Tomoe. Let’s go.” (Makoto)

“...As you wish.” (Tomoe)

Susanoo.

To think that I would meet two of the three Shinto gods in one lifetime.

I don’t know who he’s brought with him, but he also said that he met with the goddess earlier.

I think that this encounter might be good for me.

Even so, I’m nervous about meeting Susanoo-sama, who is known to be malevolent and is sometimes even called a god of destruction.

Chapter 169

Among a handful of great men, he is not included

The chaos in my head won't settle down.

To put it simply.

I'm freaking scared.

Ravens are supposed to have sharp claws and beaks in the first place, but it's the size of a passenger plane and it suddenly... No wait, that's not it.

It's the three people (three gods?), our guests, that are stepping off it.

On the left, there is a slightly dark-skinned old man wearing a friendly, calm smile.

What's impressive is the pouch and mallet hanging from his waist.

In the middle is a young man wearing custom-made Yayoi-style clothing.

A smile covers his whole face and he seems to be in a good mood; this person is probably Susanoo-sama.

The one on the right is a woman. That is to say, it's probably a goddess.

Like the old man on the left, I can't tell her name just by looking at her.

With the light shining on her from behind, her hair glows a light brown color. Gods probably don't dye their hair, so I guess this is her natural hair color.

For some reason, she's wearing a suit.

She has bright, intelligent-looking eyes and when combined with her clothing, my first impression of her is that she is more like a businesswoman than a goddess.

"Nice to meet you. Susanoo-sama, and his honorable companions. I am Misumi

Makoto." (Makoto)

I was wondering if I should say "If you would be so kind as to disembark"...But I thought I'd sound too tedious, so I stopped.

I decided to speak more straightforwardly.

Incidentally, we have told them to wait until Tomoe gives the signal.

Tomoe wouldn't mess this up.

I know that much.

But they're gods from the world that I lived in and relatives of Tsukuyomi-sama. I thought that if they came to visit me, I should be the one to interact with them.

"Thanks for coming to greet us. Sorry to have the leader of this "world" go out of his way for us." (Susanoo)

"Not at all! I am greatly indebted to Tsukuyomi-sama, so for you to apologize to me is..." (Makoto)

Really.

Tsukuyomi-sama has done nothing but help me.

These people might be aware of Tsukuyomi-sama's current situation.

Considering that, it's only normal for me to be doing this.

The only name I know is Susanoo-sama's, and this person has a strong, wild image, so this must be him, right?

"Don't be so uptight. I don't think you've done anything wrong, you know? And even if you have, we're not in any position to find you at fault for it. Mmm, oh, I know. You can probably tell from our earlier conversation, but I'm Susanoo." (Susanoo)

The person I assume is a goddess nudges him with her elbow, prompting Susanoo-sama to introduce himself.

"I am Daikokuten. You are familiar with the Treasure Ship, yes?" (Daikokuten)

The old man introduces himself as Daikokuten.

Ah, the pouch is a sack and the mallet is the thing you see him holding in his hand.

TLN: Daikokuten is one of the Seven Gods of Fortune in Japanese mythology, the god of wealth. He is often portrayed holding a golden mallet, sitting on sacks of rice. The Treasure Ship is the ship that carries the Seven Gods of Fortune.

I see.

Hmm?

There was something about Daikokuten, what was it, I think I'm forgetting something else that's surprising about him...

It's no use, I can't remember.

He's a little darker than you see in the pictures and his earlobes are smaller than I thought, but he's got a calm air about him that's fitting for one of the Seven Gods of Fortune.

He is a kind-looking god. But I have a slightly uncomfortable feeling towards him, even though he is associated with Susanoo-sama.

"I'm Athena. In some places, I am called Pallas Athena. I am a goddess of Greece, a country far to the west of yours." (Athena)

This onee-san introduces herself as Athena.

She's not violet.

That's a good thing.

TLN: A possible reference to Saint Seiya, where Athena has violet hair.

Unlike Daikokuten-sama, she's completely different from how I imagined.

I mean, she's a businesswoman.

Wearing glasses would suit her.

I don't know why she's with Susanoo-sama.

For now I give a bow, then begin guiding them to my house so I can invite them inside.

Along the way, they seem interested in Asora and look like they're admiring it. Sometimes they ask various things in regards to it.

Tomoe and I both reply to their questions, but even if they ask about Asora's origins, we can't provide an answer.

We can only explain that it seems to have appeared when Tomoe and I made a dragon's contract.

"Please excuse us; your visit was very sudden so our hospitality is not quite ready. However, we are making haste to finish preparations." (Makoto)

After all, it's impossible to put together a proper meal or banquet so quickly.

I can tell that when we arrive by seeing everyone moving around in a hurry.

For now I lead them to the biggest room, which is used for assemblies.

"I keep telling you, don't worry about it. You've created an interesting city, haven't you? It's really interesting." (Susanoo)

"Indeed. And just the thought of preparing a banquet is enough to make us happy." (Daikokuten)

"Really. And everyone is working hard. It makes me feel good to watch them." (Athena)

"Thank you very much. And so, that is... Was there a particular matter you wanted to attend to today? If you wanted to do something, we will prepare it to the best of our abilities." (Makoto)

At first their conversation seemed like they were just happening to stop by, but I don't think that's all.

"Hmm? The biggest reason is just that we came here was because I'm interested in the

Misumi Makoto to whom my aniki made requests, you know?" (Susanoo)

"If you ask us if we had any other business here, well, there are a few small matters."
(Daikokuten)

"I just wanted to try coming here once. Now that I see it with my own eyes, Asora is truly interesting; a place of endless curiosity. Though I think we should keep it hidden from that person." (Athena)

Things that gods consider "small matters" are serious affairs for people.

I know this from what happened when the goddess of this world slept once.

Though I have a feeling that it wasn't the main cause of events, but rather the final straw.

"It seems that we will still require more of your time to complete our preparations, so it would be helpful if I could inquire about these small matters you mentioned. Ah yes, we could offer a tour around Asora, if Athena-sama would care for it?" (Makoto)

"Me and old man Daikoku brought you a gift. Athena has a bit of a harsh lecture and a collar for that stupid girl." (Susanoo)

"Susanoo-dono." (Athena)

C-collar?

Immediately after hearing his frightening words, Athena-sama looks at Susanoo-sama with sharp eyes and speaks in a cold voice.

S-scary.

"Oh, ooh. I know. I won't say any more." (Susanoo)

"Ufufufu. Ah, Makoto-dono. I would like to take you up on your offer of guiding me around Asora." (Athena)

"Well then, I will have Tomoe guide you. Tomoe, would you please escort this lady around Asora? She's a real goddess, unlike that other one, so make sure you are polite." (Makoto)

"I-I understand. Well then, Athena-sama, this way, if you will." (Tomoe)

As I see Tomoe inviting Athena-sama along, I remember to warn her.

I have no choice.

Saying it out loud would be beyond rude, so I'll use thought transmission.

[Also, Tomoe. She's a jealous person in a way, so make sure you don't dare do anything even close to challenging her to a competition. You understand? You must absolutely not do that.] (Makoto)

[A-as you wish.] (Tomoe)

[She is a goddess of war as well, so start by taking her to the Mist Lizards.] (Makoto)

[Understood.] (Tomoe)

That should be fine.

Now then, with Susanoo-sama and Daikokuten-sama, I'll...

As Athena-sama and Tomoe walk out of the room, I turn my head back.

I see Susanoo-sama and Daikokuten-sama with smiles on their faces.

A god of destruction, a god of fortune and a goddess of war, huh.

It's a bit of a weird combination.

Especially Daikokuten-sama.

I mean, he's a god of fortune, right?

He's a multi-cultural god that appears in Buddhism, esoteric Buddhism and even the Shinto religion.

TLN: The Seven Gods of Fortune originate from many cultures and religions – The Hinduism of India and Nepal and Chinese Taoism and Buddhism.

According to one theory, he's in the same category as Ookuninushi-sama, so I think he's probably an important god.

TLN: Ookuninushi is another god of the Shinto religion.

...

...

Mahā... kāla.

I-I-I-I remember now!

Daikokuten is Shiva!

He's a god of destruction!

A god who has countless legends written about him, a god who could literally blow away a whole country in one breath!

TLN: Daikokuten is just the Japanese name for Mahākāla, who appears in many different cultures/beliefs. In Hinduism, Mahākāla is the ultimate form of Shiva, the destroyer of all elements. Makoto sure is knowledgeable about religions; I'm having to surf through a bunch of Wikipedia articles to find all of this.

I've been looking mostly at Susanoo-sama; I slowly turn my face towards Daikokuten-sama.

He is smiling at me.

"Err, Daikokuten-sama. You are Shiva-sama, are you not?" (Makoto)

"Oh, I am called that too. Makoto-dono, you are Japanese, so I thought you would be more familiar with the name Daikokuten. You are quite knowledgeable, aren't you?" (Daikokuten)

"Thank you very much..." (Makoto)

My voice is hoarse at the end of my sentence.

I think most Japanese people wouldn't be able to name all of the Seven Gods of Fortune, but most people would have at least heard of Shiva, Daikokuten-sama.

I personally think Fukurokuju and Juroujin are the hardest to remember.

TLN: Two more of the Seven Gods of Fortune.

"Hey, Makoto. You say some clever things, don't you?" (Susanoo)

"Eh?" (Makoto)

""She's a jealous person, so don't challenge her to a competition", huh? Gahahahaha!" (Susanoo)

No way.

The thought transmission leaked?

!

Even to Athena-sama?!

"Miss Athena's lecturing is harsh, but she has no malice; I am sure she will forgive you." (Daikokuten)

It was even heard by Daikokuten-sama.

I-I've gone and said something amazing.

"By the way. If I wanted to, it would be simple to see into a person's mind. In your case, you'd be fine against someone like Athena, but it would be impossible for you to keep your mind closed against someone like me, aniki or this old man."

Eeeh?

"When someone catches my interest, I cannot help myself. "Telepathy" that uses magic, thought transmission, is it? Even without that, I can see everything. I am also concerned about Fukurokuju and Juroujin's thin shadows." (Daikokuten)

Wow.

Gods are amazing.

They found Asora so easily, too.

The gods of the world I lived in, they're really amazing.

"It seems I have been rude about various things." (Makoto)

"More importantly. Makoto, aren't you coming close to death these days?" (Susanoo)

"N-no?" (Makoto)

What's with this, all of a sudden.

"I see. Nothing like sudden headaches? Nosebleeds that won't stop?" (Susanoo)

"...I have those." (Makoto)

It's from when I received power from that damn insect.

But coming close to death...

Just by thinking that, I guess it's transmitted to them.

"...I see, that's it. I was thinking of giving a power to you as well, but. I was wondering why you're carrying so much power that you're one step away from dying. Old man, can you tell?" (Susanoo)

...

I'm hearing some dangerous words.

Daikokuten-sama stares at me.

"That girl, just how much of a fool is she? We gave her five or six things to manage in this world, but perhaps we should take them all back and give them to our Brahma." (Daikokuten)

TLN: Brahma is the Hindu god of creation

Daikokuten-sama lets out a heavy sigh; I guess he's exasperated with just how foolish the goddess is.

That's good.

As far as gods go, she seems to be a failure.

"So? What's going on with Makoto?" (Susanoo)

"He's close to death. In fact, it is surprising that he is not already dead. The surface tension is such that he is just barely staying alive. She is even a goddess with the power of creation; what a fool. She just pushed the "Mastery of Words' Power" into an ordinary person." (Daikokuten)

"Mastery of the Words' Power?" (Makoto)

Could he be talking about the power that lets me understand language?

"Mastery" sounds pretty cool, but...

Also, it seems I really am just an ordinary person.

No wait, if I'm an ordinary person on Daikokuten-sama's scale, I might actually be quite an amazing person.

"It is commonly known as one of the powers that grants understanding. It is a power that lets you communicate with anyone. It is a "rare" power that only a few great men hold." (Daikokuten)

"I only asked the goddess to make me able to speak with hyumans, it is not an amazing ability like that –" (Makoto)

Ah.

Actually, the power I first got from the goddess let me communicate with everyone other than hyumans.

And then, I asked her to let me communicate with hyumans.

Which means that I can now communicate with everyone.

"I see. That girl is good at finding shortcuts. Indeed, if you remove the ability to communicate with even a single species from the "Mastery of Words' Power", it becomes a normal understanding ability. What an underhanded method." (Daikokuten)

"So, what's the deal. Is Makoto okay?" (Susanoo)

"It is best if you give up on giving him a power yourself. Makoto-dono is filled with the power of gods to his body's limits. If I am correct, Makoto-dono, you have been increasing the capacity of your magic power?" (Daikokuten)

"Yes. I think so." (Makoto)

"In that case, you should do that several times over. And then let us work to somehow contain this power within that soul of yours." (Daikokuten)

"Th-thank you very much. However, it seems to have the effect of expanding Asora, so I have been refraining from doing so lately." (Makoto)

"Susanoo, Athena and I will do work to make sure this world does not catch the eye of the goddess, so there is no need to worry about that. You can expand this world without having to worry about such things. If it becomes too much, we will make a return visit here." (Daikokuten)

Isn't it quite a problem if this world expands?

I actually didn't even consider the possibility of this world being discovered by the goddess.

Though it would be reassuring to have them make sure she won't be able to find it.

"That fool of a goddess. She's making work for people who aren't even here." (Susanoo)

You're absolutely right.

I'm in complete agreement your words, Susanoo-sama.

Chapter 170

Although the gods have come, happiness is still far away?

“Kuhahaha! I see now, so that’s the fate of the demon-general-kun!” (Susanoo)

Susanoo-sama is laughing loudly at this sight.

For now it seems that he is pleased with the feast.

The dragon being held by Susanoo-sama by the scruff of its neck stares at him with wide open eyes, as if startled by his loud voice.

That’s right, this is what’s left of the demon general Reft-san.

With his mind regressing to that of an infant, he has become an incredibly cute baby dragon.

He’s only cute in appearance though; he’ll just be difficult to bring up when I talk to the Demon Lord.

Really, I wonder what I should do.

When I heard that he was the demon general I reflexively ordered Tomoe to return him immediately, but after thinking about it carefully, I realized that it would be quite inconvenient to return him in his current state.

Why was one of only four demon generals in a remote country like Kaleneon, anyway?

Was the timing of me steeling my resolve so poor?

Is that how it is?

“His power has been consumed splendidly and now he feels like some kind of pet, doesn’t he?” (Susanoo)

"I am sure it is no laughing matter for Makoto-dono; you do know that you should not be laughing at this situation, don't you?" (Daikokuten)

Daikokuten-sama puts in a word for me.

He's nice, but he's kind of scary as well, isn't he?

Just earlier I asked him about the Yata-Garasu and he said something outrageous.

I heard that it's an incarnation of the sun and crushes the eyes of the unworthy who look upon it, so I asked him about it.

And then.

"If you were made to hold the sun, it would be hot, no? I suppose it grasps and crushes* them unconsciously."

That's what I was told.

It's on a completely different scale.

What does he mean by "grasps and crushes*".

I was probably making a confused face as Daikokuten-sama elaborated with an analogy.

"It is like grasping and crushing* a lit cigar," he said.

TLN: The Japanese verb, “握り潰す/nigiritsubusu” here is a bit of a problem to translate. It's a combination of two verbs, “握る/nigiru” which means “hold/grasp” and “潰す/tsubusu” which means “crush” so I've given it a very literal translation. In most contexts the verb means “crush in (one's) hand” but I can't translate it like that because the Yata-Garasu obviously doesn't have hands. In the context of this last particular sentence, “extinguishing” would be the correct translation, but the same Japanese verb is used for all of these sentences and I wanted to make that clear.*

I grew increasingly uncertain of how I should respond to this.

Is that all it is?

"How are you intending to cut through?" (Athena)

Athena-sama asks with interest.

She struck me as a very serious goddess, but she looks to be the type who becomes lively with a bit of alcohol in her.

It seems that they have taken a liking to the Japanese alcohol.

Susanoo-sama praised it as well; it seems we managed to reproduce it quite successfully.

They acknowledged it as being delicious.

These three seem to love Japanese alcohol.

Tomoe seemed to be strangely happy about that.

"...I am thinking of recovering as much as possible, waiting for an opportunity and then letting loose on the demons' territory." (Makoto)

"Such a patient plan! Oi, Athena! Since you don't have any present for Makoto, you should work here!" (Susanoo)

Susanoo-sama is making some kind of unreasonable request.

I'm not really expecting anything from Athena-sama, nor anything from Susanoo-sama or Daikokuten-sama, you know?

And they said they'd help me keep this place hidden from that bug goddess, which is more than enough.

Wait, did he say present?

I don't remember receiving anything from Susanoo-sama or Daikokuten-sama though?

They're not planning to leave me that Yata-Garasu, are they?

If they gave me something that huge, I'd be troubled.

“Me?” (Athena)

“Yeah! If you restore his body appropriately and, you know, erase about a month’s worth of memories, there’s no problem, right?” (Susanoo)

You make it sound so simple.

I was prepared for a drawn-out battle anyway, since Shiki won’t be able to recover quickly.

Would it be possible for a god to heal him quickly?

“...Even though I’ve been drinking, that would be a simple matter. Mmm, if I were to give him a present, it might be best if I have him become completely obedient to me and grant him my divine protection.” (Athena)

It’s possible...

“That sounds great, do it, just do it!” (Susanoo)

Don’t fan the flames!

...I mean, please do not fan the flames.

Also, it’s embarrassing to be called “Makoto-kun”, so please just drop the honorific or something, Athena-sama.

“To us, this is a foreign land, you are aware? If we cause too much trouble here, we would not be so different from that girl.” (Daikokuten)

“...You’re right.” (Athena)

“As Susanoo said, if you restore his body and erase his memories, there will be no problem. Some of the fear carved into his mind might still be left, but there is no need to be thorough enough to erase all of it. Susanoo, you are not even drunk, you should not be encouraging jou-chan*.” (Daikokuten)

TLN: Young lady, referring to Athena.*

“...Tch. It was going to turn out to be interesting, too.” (Susanoo)

"Err, Susanoo-sama. About this present, I don't really..." (Makoto)

"I see! You've been hoping for it, Makoto! Don't worry, we'll definitely surprise you!" (Susanoo)

Susanoo-sama isn't drunk, is he?!

Is he trying to make this kind of unfunny joke with that appearance?!

I definitely do not appreciate almost dying without even knowing by having a god's power put into my body, you know?!

However.

Neither Susanoo-sama or Daikokuten-sama have mentioned any details about the nature of this present.

Perhaps it was because the guests of honor, the gods, were slamming the drinks, but the night's feast went down quite well.

I was happy that they enjoyed the festivities and the food.

The most memorable moment of the night was Athena-sama's magic trick using the demon general Reft-kun.

"Be cured!" Athena-sama exclaimed in a high-spirited voice.

Reft-kun grew into a huge, majestic dragon, reminding me of the Naga from Hindu mythology.

That had quite the amazing impact.

The room burst into applause.

Would you call this a... magic trick?

Reft-kun's mind was still in its regressed state, so his antics were popular among the inebriated people.

Athena-sama was delighted.

Susanoo-sama tried to confront her.

Daikokuten-sama stopped him.

For some reason, a karaoke competition started.

Pies flew across the room.

...It was really amazing, wasn't it.

I didn't intend to drink much, but my head was spinning by the end of the night.

I ended up being shamefully escorted back to my room by the gods.

This unusual feast apparently continued on until morning, thanks to the volunteers who worked all night.



I question myself.

I'm in a situation where my body has no strength whatsoever, and I question myself.

The earth is cool, huh. Wait, that's not it.

Is this all I can do?

Was this the right choice?

...

I suppose it's not even worth thinking about.

I'm lying on the ground like this.

I can't even move a finger.

This is how it is.

In that case, was it a mistake to take on the businesswoman-like Athena-sama as an

opponent?

Should I have chosen Susanoo-sama or Daikokuten-sama instead?

That's not even funny.

I'm undoubtedly regretting that I could only do "this much".

I couldn't have chosen anyone but her.

The Yumi Azusa that the Eldwas made for me and the arrows that I haven't given a name are rolling around in front of my eyes.

They're not damaged.

As to be expected of top-level craftsmen; their work is on another level.

I'm pathetic, aren't I.

Just me.

I'm beaten and can't move.



“Makoto, get some training from Athena.” (Susanoo)

Susanoo-sama made this suggestion to me after breakfast; of course I answered, “please spare me.”

The first reason for this is that my opponent would be a goddess, in other words, a female god.

“Well, would you prefer me or old man Daikoku? If we make any mistake in how much strength we use you’ll be getting a hands-on course on how to be annihilated, though.”

Since he said that with a serious look, I ended up facing Athena-sama.

And the results are as you can see here.

Tomoe, Mio and Shiki were watching right from the beginning and at some point Mio looked like she wanted to step in, but the other two stopped her.

Now that I think about it, this is the first time since coming to this world that I’ve been so exhausted that I can’t move a single finger.

I chased this feeling and was even “desperate” for it, but I’d decided not to think about it.

I’m aware that I just didn’t know what it would be like to be pushed to my very limit, so this is a huge benefit to me.

My saving grace is that I narrowly managed to say “thank you very much” before I collapsed.

The goddess Athena, the deity of war, Athena.

Her power lives up to her name.

She’s terrifyingly powerful.

I doubt that’s her original form, and that’s probably not her proper equipment either. I doubt I even managed to get her to fight me seriously.

If she was fighting me seriously, she might have worn a himation? Like the statues of

her do.

TLN: A himation is one of those robe/dress-like things that ancient Greek people wore.

I couldn't put up a fight at all against office-woman Athena-sama.

I was, in truth, careless because of her appearance. The fact that I had started to feel a baseless sense of superiority over the bug goddess is also true.

However, my carelessness over the fact that she was a "woman" vanished with her first attack.

The spear didn't pierce through my body, but it broke through my magic power armor* and I had to twist my body awkwardly to avoid it.

TLN: Changed from Rei's temporary name of "magic power body"*

Even though I had it fully formed with maximum density right from the start, since I was facing a goddess.

That was the beginning of the battle.

With her halberd in one hand, she summoned javelins one after another to continue the battle at mid to long-range.

My response was to freely use the magic I've learned in this world, as well as my bow and my magic power armor.

Towards the end of the battle, I became desperate for even the smallest amount of magic power and took off my clothes and rings in exchange for a power that relied on Surehit*.

TLN: In Japanese this is “必中/hicchuu” which translates to “hitting the target”. I’m not sure if this has come up before and has been named something else by Rei so this is what I’m going with for now.*

Athena-sama probably didn't even need to go along with my plan, but she did.

And yet, the result for me is utter defeat.

Not a narrow defeat, but utter defeat.

After all, despite the fact that she was breathing heavily, Athena-sama quickly fixed her suit that had been ripped here and there and is now talking normally to Susanoo-sama and the others.

A big difference from me, who can't move.

Most of my attacks were deflected by her large, round shield.

That shield floated in the air, sometimes changing shape and multiplying.

I screamed countless times that it was ridiculous and unfair.

I've started to realize a little just how the enemies who face me feel.

Even so, I landed some good attacks, but she used her arms to block and brush them off. In short, they were ineffective.

"...Well, using up all your strength at the end was a failure but you did well overall, Makoto. Honestly, you held on far longer than I expected. Until some point partway through the match, I was thinking this whole thing might have been unnecessary for you." (Susanoo)

It's Susanoo-sama.

Moving just my eyes in the direction of his voice, I see that my three followers have all rushed over to me as well.

I'm glad the only ones watching were them and the other gods.

This is a little too pathetic to be showing to everyone in Asora.

Haha, at least that gives me some leeway.

"How surprising. To think that you were this tenacious. You have not fought many hard battles so far, so you were careless at the beginning. I was disappointed for a moment, thinking you should simply be cut down and finished there and then, but now I am relieved." (Daikokuten)

Susanoo-sama and Daikokuten-sama are both demons, aren't they.

I feel a strictness from them that's comparable to my archery sensei.

"Indeed, but you fought bravely, Makoto-kun. Now then, let's fix you up." (Athena)

Maybe I'm still drunk from last night, but Athena-sama who adds -kun to my name is the kindest of them all.

"No, Athena-sama. That is not necessary. I have not felt like this in a long time, so I would like to stay like this." (Makoto)

When I was on Earth I constantly felt this after practice, this deep fatigue that leaves me unable to do anything.

It's a feeling that I haven't felt even once since coming here.

It's a feeling that was necessary for me in order to believe that I would be able to go further tomorrow than I did today.

So I would like to be immersed in this feeling a while longer.

"Makoto, this is a god. There were things you wouldn't have known without facing one in person, right?" (Susanoo)

"...Yes." (Makoto)

"In the unlikely event you ever have to fight that goddess, this experience will be necessary for you." (Susanoo)

"Yes." (Makoto)

I can't ask what they had done to the bug.

However.

At the very least, they haven't exterminated her.

"As punishment, we've put several restrictions on her, including limiting the extent to which she can interfere with the world and suspending the growth of her control. Even

those are simply measures we took when Aniki entered the first stage of recovery.”
(Susanoo)

“So Tsukuyomi-sama might soon make a complete recovery? That is good to hear.”
(Makoto)

If that would come true.

I’d like to meet him again in my lifetime.

“Thanks. Aniki would be happy too. Anyway, we set things up to monitor her to make sure she doesn’t break those restrictions.” (Susanoo)

“If you want discipline, you put on a collar. Understandably, she wasn’t too happy about it, so I decided on a choker instead. When I tried to put this spiked collar on her, I spoke to these two. I told them that men will always be lenient towards women.”
(Athena)

Athena-sama, you’re scaring me.

“We merely decided to leave behind that design in this case. Well, I understand what you are trying to say. You may have noticed this from the fact that we do not call that goddess by her name, but we are in a position where we must always give *that* a certain amount of consideration. If we ignore this fact, we will be no different from *that*.” (Daikokuten)

Like I thought, they are deliberately not saying her name.

I had kind of guessed that was the case, though.

In other words, that bug might be a goddess that I know.

I can think of a few candidates, but who is it?

“She still holds the power of a god. There is nothing you can do about that now, but there is the prior promise. If you were to become openly hostile towards hyumans, that goddess would take direct action against you, Makoto-dono.” (Daikokuten)

“...Yes.” (Makoto)

"If we'd arrived earlier, we could have taken care of things before that promise was made. But we won't let things end like that, either. We have to at least give Makoto some experience in fighting against gods. If I had to choose between you, who has received divine power from Aniki and that underhanded goddess, you're the cuter one." (Susanoo)

"Thank you... very much." (Makoto)

"Yeah. Remember, don't use up all of your strength. Your calm method of fighting in the middle of the match was good. Make sure you're always able to use that. Don't be afraid of increasing your magical power, draw your bow. If you do that, you'll be fine. And if the time ever comes, don't ever break the choker. It won't be damaged easily, but if that monitoring device is gone, that idiot might try to erase you by any means possible." (Susanoo)

"Yes, that was not a fight you should feel ashamed of." (Athena)

"Mmm." (Daikokuten)

So my fighting was worthy of being praised by gods, huh.

Haha, I'm a little relieved.

I don't want a future where I can't raise a hand against that goddess.

Apparently I have the advantage in a battle as long as her choker doesn't come off.

That's information that I'm happy to know.

She probably can't take it off herself.

If she could, it would be meaningless as a monitoring tool.

But with this experience.

I think I can exhaust myself again.

I still have enough of an image left in my mind.

"Well then. We'll be heading back now. Get your followers to heal you up properly."

(Susanoo)

"Makoto-dono, you must draw your bow every day. Please hurry and discover the gift from Susanoo and myself." (Daikokuten)

"It is unlikely that we will meet again in your lifetime. One day, when your life has come to an end, we will welcome you with open arms." (Athena)

Well that was sudden.

Their arrival was also sudden, so I'm not too surprised.

"Well then. Please tell this to Tsukuyomi-sama. That I'm somehow staying alive thanks to the power that I received from him." (Makoto)

"...Yeah, I'll definitely tell Aniki that. It was really fun. Oh yeah, Aneki* likes Yata-Garasu too, so I can't give it to you. She is a rare sun goddess and a very important deity, so it would be a pain to make her angry." (Susanoo)

Aneki.

Ah, Amaterasu-sama.

She completely slipped my mind, but even if I remembered I don't know enough about her to make any assumptions about her anyway.

My fight with Athena-sama was reasonable, but maybe he's trying to say that I fought really well.

Well, I mean.

She'd be happier if he brought Yata-Garasu-san back, so nothing more can be said.

"Waka!"

"Waka-sama!"

"Waka-sama!"

Waving their hands at me, the three gods disappear.

As soon as they're gone, my followers rush to my side, calling my name.

"Don't worry about treating me. Sorry for being selfish. Just let me lie here for today. Give the people in Rotsgard a good excuse." (Makoto)

I try to resist my fatigue pulling me into a deep sleep.

The gods aren't here anymore, either.

Phew.

My consciousness is slipping away rapidly.

Everything about this is nostalgic.

Shit.

If I have to fight the goddess one day.

When that day comes, I will definitely rise up and bring her down.

I don't want it to be a close fight.

Just you... watch... I'll definitely... overwhelm you...



"Well then. Athena-chan, where does it hurt~?" (Susanoo)

"That's sexual harassment, I'll tell Kushinada-sama." (Athena)

TLN: Kushinadahime is a Shinto deity, Susanoo's wife.

"The first thing you do is threaten to tell my wife!" (Susanoo)

"Save the comedy for later. Well, Athena-jou-chan. You actually cannot feel the left arm that you used for defense, can you?" (Daikokuten)

"...I can't feel my right arm, either." (Athena)

“Makoto-kun started pressuring you considerably at some point, didn’t he? We couldn’t stop grinning and wondered if you were going to summon your proper equipment, you know?” (Susanoo)

“...Would a human, no, a hyuman modified by that girl be capable of such things?” (Athena)

Athena folds her arm in an imposing stance.

Daikokuten taps his mallet lightly against her leg.

“Here.” (Daikokuten)

“Hyauh!” (Athena)

Athena collapses onto her back.

As to be expected of Shiva – no; as expected, Athena was faking her condition.

“Getting the idea from Makoto’s magic power armor and using your own magic power to directly move your own body is quite a feat. You’re controlling yourself like a marionette, aren’t you?” (Daikokuten)

“You used that to take the flow of battle out of Makoto’s control, huh? After that, he lost focus and made the bad move of using physically demanding attacks in rapid succession, effectively defeating himself. As expected of you, Athena, you’re showing the wisdom of your many years!” (Susanoo)

“I’m still young! I don’t want to have my age commented on by the likes of you two!” (Athena)

『Wahahaha!』

The gods are riding Yata-Garasu, on their way back to the world where Japan exists, where Makoto once lived.

Their topic of conversation is the battle between Makoto and Athena.

“Well, if he’s that strong, that Makoto. I’m sure he’ll have no problem if he fights the goddess.” (Susanoo)

“In all probability, he will have no problems. He is quite impressive.” (Daikokuten)

“Truthfully, I will admit in spite of my pride that I was overwhelmed. That boy already exceeds the human frame.” (Athena)

“Be that as it may, he is a hyuman. There are already two pure humans in that world. It was probably because it was helpful for shaping a future where the goddess has reached her limits, but the combination of humans and Makoto is extraordinary.” (Susanoo)

“It’s like a hammer and chisel, isn’t it. If the humans stimulate his potential even a little, Makoto will drive it in and open it. Disposing of the countless parallel worlds expanded by the two humans was truly troublesome. Makoto’s acceleration of the process played no small part in it, either.” (Daikokuten)

“The cleanup after that disposal work. You told Makoto that you’re giving him a gift but you’re planning to have Makoto to do it, aren’t you, old man? Payback for being made to do such troublesome work?” (Susanoo)

“Hohoho. It is good to be willing to go through hardships while you are young. Jou-chan told him that we would not meet again, but I wonder. I can see us meeting again.” (Daikokuten)

“...You want to bet on it?” (Susanoo)

“Of course. Jou-chan will not meet him, but I will. What about you, Susanoo?” (Daikokuten)

“I’ll meet him, I guess. He’s a walking box of surprises, I get the feeling he can make the impossible become possible.” (Susanoo)

“Wait, I haven’t said a word about making a bet!” (Athena)

“Hey hey, does the great Athena-sama not have confidence in what she tells others? Saying such vague things, are you the same as that goddess?” (Susanoo)

“Ugu...” (Athena)

“Don’t worry, it’s not an important bet. It’s just for fun, for fun! Don’t worry about it!” (Susanoo)

Susanoo pats Athena on the back.

Athena is groaning with a look of disagreement on her face.

"I would like to ask two other things, would that be alright, jou-chan?" (Daikokuten)

"What is it?" (Athena)

"The first is about Makoto's power. What kind of changes have been caused inside Makoto by Tsukuyomi-dono's power?" (Daikokuten)

"That's..." (Athena)

"Don't hide it, alright? I'm well aware that you had an interest in it yourself and tried to get a feel of them from Makoto, you know? That's why I had you face him in the first place." (Susanoo)

"...He is now very cunning, but you should have guessed that by now." (Athena)

"As I thought, you're talking about that Asora place?" (Susanoo)

"Yes. The trigger was likely a contract with someone who can manipulate space, but it seems he has used a large amount of divine power to expand that tiny space into a whole world. The part of that power that was supposed to grow his abilities has been used up for that. It could be said that in a way, he is connected to that world." (Athena)

"So. You're saying that Aniki's power manifested only as that strange interfering ability? That was quite an incomplete ability. It was called Sakai or something, right? Only its subtlety resembles Aniki's style." (Susanoo)

"No matter how long he's existed, I have never heard of the moon god's power contributing towards creation. This may be an example of new possibilities caused by interaction between people and gods." (Daikokuten)

"I guess it was so Japan-like due to the effects of his homesickness. It would really have been a pain if the goddess found it, but..." (Susanoo)

Susanoo recalls his surprise at how much Makoto's world resembled Japan.

"That is likely a large influence. We made sure that girl can't interfere with it, so there

should be nothing to worry about now." (Athena)

Daikokuten gives a large nod.

Perhaps he is in agreement.

"Well then, the other thing. Surehit, was it troublesome after all?" (Daikokuten)

"...Yes. That was quite a nuisance. Especially because he immerses himself in the battle and forgets his emotions, fighting without any mercy. He fired at me relentlessly and by the time I couldn't hold my arms up anymore, it honestly felt like I was facing a machine. I'm trembling now just remembering it." (Athena)

"Dear me. It is good that the ability that he is developing is his talent with a bow. That is best for Makoto. He is already putting that Surehit to use not only with the bow, but also with his magic." (Daikokuten)

Daikokuten suddenly narrows his eyes and looks at Susanoo.

His expression is reproachful.

"Hey hey, I just suggested a way to prepare Makoto so that if he were to ever fight a god, he could somehow manage, you know?" (Susanoo)

"...It is frustrating that we can do nothing but pray that this will be enough. I hope that the next thing we hear about that world is not a request for its destruction." (Daikokuten)

"I feel the same." (Susanoo)

"Me too. Worlds that were ruined by the involvement of gods are sad existences." (Athena)

The three gods discussed Makoto.

The future in which he would be shouting at the gift that they left him is not so far off.

Chapter 171

If winter comes

“That’s how it is... We’re definitely advancing, but this is doing my head in.”

In a spot a few kilometers from Stella Fortress, there is a single tent.

There are several silhouettes standing around it.

The one speaking is a girl who is looking north with her arms folded.

After she speaks, she closes her eyes in thought. A moment later, she opens them again and unfolds her arms with a sigh.

“We’re going back. We can’t do anything about winter. At the very least, continuing to march north isn’t an option.” (Girl)

“As we thought, “there’s nothing there”?”

“Yes, Wudi. That is likely the case. There will be obstacles if we head north, and we won’t be able to rely on the towns and people. We would have to build camps as we proceed north. Dealing with demons is quite troublesome, isn’t it?” (Girl)

The girl replying to the question from behind her is Otonashi Hibiki.

The hero of the kingdom of Limia.

Hibiki is surrounded by her party members as well as several knights.

They are the only ones on this deserted plain.

“Then, onee-chan...”

“So we’ll end up following the orders that Larva-dono left us. I thought this wouldn’t happen until much later, but it looks like Chiya-chan will be returning home.” (Hibiki)

"I see... It's been a while since I've been to Lorel. I wonder if everyone's doing well. Sairitsu probably hasn't changed at all." (Chiya)

Hibiki turns to face a small girl.

She is Chiya, the priestess of Lorel who is traveling together with Hibiki.

She was making the same, complicated expression that Hibiki was, but it seems that this was just a pretense. At the mention of her Lauren, her hometown, a smile appears on her face.

"Well then, let's go back to the tent before it gets cold, Chiya-chan. We'll return to Asuta then prepare to go south this time." (Hibiki)

While pushing her hands against Chiya's back, Hibiki returns to the tent.

Her tone is cheerful, but her expression is stiff and the smile on her lips is not present in her eyes.

(That day, after the royal capital was invaded. Neither Larva nor that white person were anywhere to be seen. Only a message was left behind. "Take Chiya-chan home", huh. I don't know what the motives are behind this, but these are the words of that Larva, so there is merit to obeying them. We can also visit the academy city of Rotsgard on the way. The Kuzunoha company that is acknowledged by his Majesty and Joshua-sama is there as well. I wonder if Mio-san is there, too. And that Raidou person that I never got to meet. I have a feeling that Larva and that white person are connected to the Kuzunoha company, though it's just a gut feeling.)

Hibiki narrowly escaped death that day at the royal capital of Asuta.

She was saved by the Lich called Larva and the white person who was presumably his master.

Hibiki has confidence in her own power, but she can't forget those two utterly ridiculous people who easily surpassed her strength.

The difference in strength was similar to the Kuzunoha company that she saw in the distant city of Tsige.

(And I still have not heard the details regarding Ilum-kun's death; the truth

surrounding that will also be in Rotsgard. Chiya-chan is still small so I was thinking about returning her to Lauren anyway. It's not a bad idea to do that during the winter. Okay, I've decided. I'll make a request to his Majesty.)

She looks back once more at this wasteland, where not a single proper road is left.

"A scorched earth policy* that's on another level from just burning things to the ground. Even the seasons are against me; am I supposed to be Napoleon facing the Russian Winter? How vicious. This isn't the kind of plan that a hero should be using. If this was a game, the publishing company would be drowning in the critics' comments... Seriously." (Hibiki)

TLN: A scorched earth policy is a military tactic in which you burn down any resources that may be of use to the enemy as you advance/withdraw through an area. The Russian Winter refers to the historical failures of invasions into Russia because of the harsh conditions of the winter there, including Napoleon's own failed invasion. The author is putting my Wikipedia skills to the test once more.

Her murmuring disappears into the wasteland, to be heard by no one.

Winter is coming.



"I see, so Reft himself doesn't know the reason why he was there."

"Yes. It seems he has lost a part of his memory. But at the very least, there are no signs that we can detect of the memories having been removed manually. According to the soldiers who escaped from Kaleneon, we can assume that those monsters advanced forwards."

"Though it is difficult to imagine that there would be someone who wants a place like that so badly that they would repel a demon general. No contact, no messenger sent back and their retreat formation was completely destroyed, huh..."

The demons' stronghold.

A city that is very different to towns that hyumans live in.

It is a city built around a castle.

Snow has already piled up deeply; it is a region that is constantly filled with complete silence.

The conversation between the king and his close aides continues in one of the castle's chambers.

“Rona, do you have some information?” (Demon Lord)

“My deepest apologies. I have attempted to investigate directly myself, but I have not found anything. We have not received any contact from the other party either.” (Rona)

“It does not seem to be a hyuman. This is quite headache-inducing. Continue investigating. But adapt your orders as you receive information on the extent of the damage; it is unacceptable to lose the lives of our soldiers for no reason.” (Demon Lord)

“As you wish.” (Rona)

“It is unlikely that the hyumans who have seen what is further north of Stella Fortress would be so quick to invade. Since there was great damage to the royal capital, after all. Io, Rona. You did well.” (Demon Lord)

“...No. We did not fulfil our mission. We do not deserve such words...” (Io)

“As he said. We were ordered to gather information, yet we have not been able to find out anything about what happened in Kaleneon. I feel that punishment for us would be appropriate.” (Rona)

The demon generals Io and Rona are wearing shame-filled expressions in response to the Demon Lord's kind words.

They might be a giant and a demon, but their faces are full of regret at not being able to carry out the orders from their king.

“Fu, do not worry about it, you two. I do not mind if you reflect on your actions, but do not prolong it and quickly renew yourselves to the task. Io, I will leave the Renhei* in the south to you. Rona, arrange a meeting with that Kuzunoha company.” (Demon Lord)

TLN: This word is “鍊兵/renhei”. “鍊/ren” is a kanji that means “tempering, refine, drill,

train, polish"; it's the first kanji in “錬金術/renkinjutsu” which means “alchemy”. “兵/hei” means “soldier”. My best guess is that this is referring to some kind of special/artificial soldiers.

“Please leave it to me.” (Io)

“At once. Fortunately, it appears that Raidou is looking ahead and intends to meet with us as well.” (Rona)

“Raidou, huh. According to the reports about Rotsgard, he is undoubtedly an irregular person, but I am also looking forward to this.” (Demon Lord)

The Demon Lord laughs.

The relation between the two is that the Demon Lord has had one of his plans crushed by Raidou, but he shows no signs of being concerned about that.

At least, not on the surface.

There is also one more person here.

It is a person who reacts strongly to Raidou’s name.

The Demon Lord, his trusted demon generals and one other person makes four people in this room.

She has been sitting without saying a word during the discussion, but now she responds.

“Your majesty, I wish to meet with Raidou, too.” (Sari)

“Sari. Is he someone you felt something about?” (Demon Lord)

“Yes. I am interested in that person. Rona showed me her report and I think they are a extremely unique company.” (Sari)

“Hmm, what did you think was unique about them?” (Demon Lord)

“The Kuzunoha company is too stable. Their scale is not insignificant, but they are showing no signs of impatience. Even though their existence hangs in the balance year

after year. It is as if they pay for everything themselves, as if they are “self-sufficient”.”
(Sari)

The girl called Sari is a demon whose youth is reflected by her appearance.

However her tone and eyes possess the composure of an adult, causing her to radiate an imbalanced aura.

“Self-sufficient? Those are not words you would normally apply to a company, Sari.”
(Demon Lord)

“I think so too. Are they even a “company” in the first place? I feel some doubt regarding that question as well. That is why I want to see this Raidou person for myself.” (Sari)

“...I will allow it. If there are any others present, make sure to report back to me. Since you are my child, I am sure Raidou will not object to this.” (Demon Lord)

There are four candidates to succeed the Demon Lord.

They are all the Demon Lord’s “children”.

However, they do not all share his blood.

The way the demons choose their king is fundamentally different from the way hyumans do.

Exceptional children, not limited to the king’s bloodline, are chosen to receive the education necessary to become a king.

They undergo countless screenings to remove unsuitable candidates. Today, there are only four of them left.

Sari is the youngest child among them.

She does lack management and diplomacy skills when compared to the other candidates, but she excels at handling information.

As a demon general, she would be on par with Rona.

After the meeting ended, Sari and Rona walked together.

"Sari-sama, it seems you are interested in the Kuzuhona company." (Rona)

"Yes. I said it earlier, but I have some interest in the Raidou I read about in your reports. Otou-sama* seems to want to ascertain his role in this war, but my thoughts are a little different." (Sari)

"You mean that he has nothing to do with the war?" (Rona)

"I want to determine whether Raidou will contribute to the future of the demons or not." (Sari)

"Future, you say?" (Rona)

"Yes. No matter how the war ends, the future of the demons will continue." (Sari)

"But Sari-sama, if we are defeated in this war, our future will also disappear." (Rona)

"I don't believe so. No, thinking that way and wanting to win because of it is correct. Still, having a different way of looking at it is safer, is it not?" (Sari)

"...As a general of the army, I cannot agree, but I can understand that it is another way of thinking." (Rona)

"That is fine. I'm sure you've already noticed, but I have no obsession for the Demon Lord's throne. Please be aware that I have such thoughts as well." (Sari)

Despite the difference in their height, the conversation is not one between an adult and a child.

It is clear to anyone that Sari has received a unique education.

"I would never dare to presume you to be inferior to anyone, but why are you having such thoughts now?" (Rona)

"Because there is Roche-nii-sama for internal management; Shem-nii-sama for diplomacy and Lucia-nee-sama for military affairs. I believe it best for Roche-nii-sama to become the next Demon Lord and everyone to prosper under his rule. It's my role to act so that there will be no conflict, no matter who's chosen as the Demon Lord. As

long as no major event occurs, anyway." (Sari)

"..." (Rona)

"Do not make such a face, Rona. I find your words to be the most enjoyable to listen to. I'm looking forward to your lecture. Though I wouldn't mind a follow-up report on the Kuzunoha company, either." (Sari)

The girl with mature thoughts unfitting of her young appearance continues walking, leaving Rona behind as she comes to a halt.

Rona watches Sari's confident stride for a while, before shaking her head as if clearing her thoughts.

The meeting between the Kuzunoha company and the demons draws near.

Makoto thinks that it is just a formality; however, this will not be the case.

He overcame the demon general Reft using some unforeseen god's power, but he is still unaware that this is merely an omen of what is to come.

Slowly, but surely.

The footsteps of the heroes and the demons approach the Kuzunoha company.



PtF by: traitorATZEN