

Tsuki ga Michibiku Isekai Douchuu

– Moon-led Journey Across Another World –

**- Volume 18 -
(Chapter 271-295)**

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[Reigokai: Isekai Translations]

Chapter 271

The difference in the sense of value in life

“Now then, there’s a mountain of things I want to hear of you, but first of all, why are you here?” (Makoto)

“Of course, to meet you.” (Root)

The top floor of the Kuzunoha Company’s new head office.

After releasing Root from the restrain at my office, he said this with a straight face.

Ah, of course, I entered through the backdoor.

As expected, it would be bad to have the customers that are in the middle of shopping learn of my return, of course, I can simply explain them that’s not the case, but I decided not to expose it.

“Okay, that might be one of the reasons. Then, the other reason?” (Makoto)

“To inspect the Adventurer Guild of Tsige. Lately, the places around here have been rowdy, so it was to make a confirmation of sorts. And in truth, it seems like the Guild is pretty cooperative to the movements of the town.” (Root)

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

That part is exactly as he says.

We are having the Adventurer Guild cooperate entirely.

Thinking about the public position that Root talks about, and the Adventurer Guild’s significance, just having it as a meeting place is already helping plenty.

With the matter of the independence and the coup d’etat in Aion, there’s plenty reason for him to come here to inspect.

Then, he simply came flying here after hearing about me from Sofia, but it is not like he has any sort of ulterior motive?

Eeh? That Root?

But what he is saying makes sense...

It also sounds convincing.

“Makoto-kun?” (Root)

“Are those really the only reasons? Aren’t you scheming something?” (Makoto)

“None none. I heard from the report of that girl that she had met you, heard a nostalgic name, and that you would be going to Tsige. Meeting with Makoto-kun was a matter of luck, but I thought that it would be nice to come to Tsige at least once, that’s all.” (Root)

Laughing lightly, he flaps his hand in front of his face and laughs.

“...Then that topic is fine already. Next, Sofia who I met not that long ago, what was that about? What are your intentions?” (Makoto)

“Uh, yeah. It is true that I was thinking about making it a small surprise for Makoto-kun, so I kept it a secret. Uhm... how to say it... Makoto-kun, aren’t you especially angry? Now that I think about it, I feel like it was the same a few moments ago too...” (Root)

“I heard and learned about a variety of things you were involved with, and I saw for myself the matter of Sofia after all. Just means that there’s no short amount of questionable things. Root, after what happened, didn’t you finish off Sofia? Why is she still alive, moreover, younger?” (Makoto)

“Things I was involved in, huh. I don’t think I have done that many things that would warrant hate from Makoto-kun though. Also, about that girl, I am simply having her take responsibility for what she did, you know?” (Root)

“Responsibility?” (Makoto)

Root was supposed to have retrieved the power of the Superior Dragons from Sofia

and finished her.

I thought that was the last of the adventurer called Dragon Slayer, and yet, he tampered with her memories and made her younger.

When I asked for the reason, what I got in return from Root was the word 'responsibility'.

"Sofia and Lancer went and did whatever they wanted for the sake of their own goals. Of course, there was no small amount of sacrifices because of it. Because of their intervention, there have been several countries falling to ruin. The amount of people and material damage is still unknown. The chaos they created utilizing the war was also quite the deal. When Lancer grows to a certain extent, I will have him return to his original place, and will have him work as one of the dragons that provides trials, just like Grount. With none of what he has done till now, that is. Then, about Sofia..."
(Root)

"About Sofia, you say. She wouldn't have done something like atoning. She wouldn't regret walking the path she chose. That's how it felt, you know?" (Makoto)

"Yeah, even at the border of death, she still spouted begrudging words towards me."
(Root)

With both of his palms up, he shrugs his shoulders.

That does sound like the last moments of someone like Sofia.

I somewhat could tell that she wouldn't be doing something like plead for her life.

"Then, even with that, she didn't die?" (Makoto)

"Ahahaha! Oh you, Makoto-kun, that's not like you." (Root)

"What is?" (Makoto)

"Die and that's the end. 'Counting death as taking responsibility, don't joke around', isn't that something you said as well? Even if a crime has been committed, there's a limit to how many things one can take responsibility for when the one responsible is dead. Apparently, that's not something that can be forgiven. And so, that's the gist of it." (Root)

“...”

True.

I don't know when it was, but I do remember having a conversation like that in Rotsgard, with Tomoe and Root.

I think it revolved around *seppuku*. <disembowelment>

Stirring society plenty, and when they realize that their objective can't be accomplished, they refuse to live in disgrace and choose suicide.

'All the responsibility is on me, so I want to bring a closure to my own life', just how selfish that is, is what I said. Well, I slightly remember I said that to the two while I was drunk.

"I am also of the same opinion as you. It is wrong to think that with death your responsibilities will stop their hounding. Luckily, she was an adventurer with power. She was also a vessel that had a bit of my power within her after all. That's why I decided to breathe life into her for recycling." (Root)

"Recycling..." (Makoto)

"By having her work as an adventurer in the direct control of the Adventurer Guild, I will have her work in reducing the amount of problems in the world. In other words, I am having her take responsibility." (Root)

"...And why did you tamper with her memories?" (Makoto)

Root didn't seem to show any hesitation as he explains the reason why he revived Sofia, and about her currently working.

"That's a foolish question, Makoto-kun. With how she is, there's no way she would have obediently followed my orders. Just as you saw, she was possessed by hate after all." (Root)

"That's why you imprinted in her that she would happily act for her loved father?" (Makoto)

"Honestly speaking, I didn't care about her relation with me though. I simply sounded

out her dormant desires after the bleaching, and imprinted memories of an environment she would accept more easily. Seriously, I laughed, you know? She hated me that much, and yet, her dreamed upbringing was that of being loved by me, grow her power straightforwardly, and contribute to society. Really, she walked a path that was completely contrary to that.” (Root)

“Root...” (Makoto)

“It is true that I probably surprised you needlessly. If it wasn’t a fun surprise for Makoto-kun, I apologize. But, is it really something to be so angry about?” (Root)

“...”

“Sofia and Lancer really created chaos in the world. If you want to, I can even show you the details of that damage in the future. They have to atone for that. If possible, by their own hands. Isn’t that right?” (Root)

“...”

It is true that, if possible, that’s how it should be.

If it is possible, that is.

I felt that these words had pretty distant meanings for the human me, and the dragon Root.

That’s right, because this is how I think, and in truth, I still think this way. Can it even be called atonement when you have to go all the way and do things like reviving and tampering with their memories?

Can it be recognized as the atonement of the Sofia that perpetrated them?

“The current Sofia is putting her all in her work. She is also tackling the reconstruction of Kaleneon with all she has. Not because of reasons like ‘the reward is good’ or ‘there’s a formidable enemy’, it is simply because she is happy that it is for the sake of the world. She also obtained the past she wished for. No one is unhappy about it, and I think it was a somewhat good decision though.” (Root)

“No one is unhappy, huh.” (Makoto)

As I thought, is this what they call a difference in views?

In the explanation of Root, there was no unpleasant scheme I felt there was.

No, giving me a surprise was a bit unpleasant though.

For him who has lived for a long time, it seems something like bringing back to life a hyuman that has died once is not that big of a deal.

Now that I think about it, even when Lancer changed a brave into a sword for his collection, it didn't seem like he did much to stop him, and even if he acts like a hyuman, it is probably wrong to talk to him with the sense of value of a human being.

He normally acts strangely like a hyuman, so it really confuses me sometimes.

No one is unhappy.

That's true.

"So that means... Sofia was reborn..." (Makoto)

At that time, Sofia was killed by Root.

That Sofia disappeared, and Root gave her the life she dormantly desired, and she was reborn.

Thus, in order to have her atone for the crimes she has committed even if for a bit, Root is having her work.

Haha.

Thinking again about it in that way, I could tell the indescribable disgust towards Root I felt when I saw Sofia had clearly been reduced.

I probably am also becoming pretty weird.

The opinions I have towards death that are inside me, there's times when it just doesn't hold much meaning when I am talking about it to someone on Root class.

In these kind of conversations, Shiki is the same sometimes.

“...Well, that’s about it. It would have been fine to set her a bit younger, but that age was the most convenient for her to apply the techniques and knowledge she obtained, so it just ended up that way. It is not like I was trying to check for the sexual preferences of Makoto-kun.” (Root)

...He doesn’t have any hidden scheme, right?

Yeah, let’s stop pursuing too deeply for now.

In the first place, this was an unexpected development anyways.

The real matter at hand is Rokuya-san and his group.

Regarding their immortality.

And then... I probably won’t be able to hope for a careless blutter of Root regarding the dragon Futsu.

I was asked by Rokuya-san to keep secret about the latter one, so it is irritating that I can’t tackle that subject.

“...Then, is it okay to count Sofia as a working force?” (Makoto)

These weren’t words I muttered towards Root.

They were words that leaked out from my mouth to confirm with myself.

“It would help me if you do that. It seems like the misunderstanding has been dissolved a little. But it looks like you still have more. Fine then. Let’s do a ‘please teach me, Root-sensei.’” (Root)

For some reason, Root made a triumphant expression as he puffs his chest.

Even so, my brain may understand, but somewhere inside my heart still doesn’t accept it completely.

How to say it, it is as if there’s still some fuzziness in a corner of it.

But he is the one offering to tell me, so rather than pursuing that fuzzy feeling of mine, it would be better to just change the topic to something else.

“About the Adventurer Guild and the Adventurers of Origin.” (Makoto)

“!! It is as expected, or more like, you really go for the toughest spots, Makoto-kun. When I heard the name of Azu-kun at the guild, a corner of my head was wondering if that might be the case though.” (Root)

“I heard a pretty different story from the one you gave me before. And so, I began to think that I would like to hear your side of it.” (Makoto)

“...I thought it might be possible, but... I see. You have met them huh, someone among them. By the way, can you tell me from who you heard it from?” (Root)

“...From a person named Rokuya-san.” (Makoto)

It should be fine to tell him that, aside from talking about Futsu.

Seems like they were friends to begin with anyways.

Or more like, it seems there were people that the woman Root had a physical relationship with after all.

With this pervert.

It is unthinkable for me.

It is already not a matter of being carnivorous or herbivorous.

“Him huh. Was he doing fine?” (Root)

As if asking for the present state of an old friend, Root makes nostalgic eyes as he asks me.

...This is the first time... I have seen Root with a face like this.

“Yeah, I think he was doing fine.” (Makoto)

“I see. As always, he was aloof from the world, loves to draw, and when he kills, he still makes those sad eyes?” (Root)

“No well, I have only talked with him, so I don’t know that much. It seems there’s the

atmosphere of an impending battle, but I don't have the intentions of being killed, so I don't think I will be able to confirm." (Makoto)

"Battle? Hmm, if I remember correctly, Makoto-kun's objective was to bring the mercenary group there. Then... yeah, if it's them, it might be possible. They are as always huh. I see, they are at that grand labyrinth. That Doma, he never reported anything to me." (Root)

"You, don't you have any intentions of taking a side?" (Makoto)

"None. If they are involved, I intend to silently watch over it. I also don't intend to do much justification to the things you heard from Roku-kun. If he is the one who said it, it is all true. If I had to correct something, it is probably your words." (Root)

"Mine?" (Makoto)

Then he admits that he made them immortal and tied them down?

If even that isn't a matter to care about like with Sofia, I think I won't be able to comprehend him for life.

"Regarding the part about what I said being different from what he said. Putting it correctly, isn't it just that you heard things you didn't hear from me? For example, the system of the Adventurer Guild. About the core of it." (Root)

"!!"

So he has an idea of what I want to ask huh.

"And what happened to them as a result. Probably also about them disappearing from history's front stage. So, is what you are going to ask something between those lines?" (Root)

"Yeah, if you are willing to tell me, please do. Honestly speaking, I think there's no worse punishment than giving immortality to people. If you really see the Wise, the Japanese people as rare existences that should be welcomed, why did you do something like that to Rokuya-san and his group? If possible, I would want you to tell me in a way that I can accept." (Makoto)

"...Of course, I will tell you. However, I don't know if Makoto-kun will accept it. But

there's one thing I can say for sure, this is all past history that has already concluded, and the concerned party has accepted the result of it. I don't know how much of a meaning it has inside of you that will make it acceptable or not, but I will properly tell you the truth." (Root)

Again.

Past history.

Those words pierce sharply.

If it were about Toa's ancestors and Sofia, it would be another story, but with Rokuya-san and his group, the circumstances are different.

Since we are talking about immortality, can it really be called a matter of the past?

And in reality, Rokuya-san is currently alive.

...Then, has he hated Root? Has he not accepted it?

That's...

Root speaks out.

A story of long past where several familiar names appear.

Not even in the library of Rotsgard Academy it remains, but it is a story that without doubt existed.

My resolution wavers, and with my standing still not clear yet, the story involving the Guild of Root continued on.

Chapter 272

Toa's closure

I scratch my head.

Trace the beautiful wooden marks of the desk with my eyes.

“Past... Past huh.”

My voice leaks out in the room where no one is.

Root told me about Rokuya-san and his group without hiding anything.

What was his female self scheming at that time?

At the very least, from what I heard, he was the one who originally schemed about devouring the Superior Dragons, correctly speaking, absorbing their power and turning it into his own power which was what Sofia was doing. But he met the person who would be his husband, and that was stopped.

He revealed to me that there was a time when Doma and Azuma had been devoured by him. And... he also admitted the matter of the Adventurer Guild's establishment, about asking Rokuya-san and his group to become immortals, and on top of that, even the part about him asking them to not appear in the front stage of history in the future.

At the dawn of the Adventurer Guild, there was a time when the five major powers and the countries with a certain extent of influence were facing unbalance, so after discussion, they decided to lay low in order to avoid unnecessary sparks.

There were also a lot of other things. Really, now that I look back at it, I tried going for quite the low spots too, however... the answers that I got back were mostly things that I could understand.

Saying it honestly, I could understand, but I couldn't accept.

But that's only me as well.

Root, Rokuya-san and the others... properly respected that decision.

Even until now.

'If one side were to truly not be okay with it, there would be sure antagonism in a part of it, right?', is what I asked Root, and he didn't say anything about it.

And in reality, Rokuya-san didn't seem to hold any negative feelings towards Root.

What's this. It feels stupid.

In the end, was I simply too stubborn with my shirking towards the word immortality?

The mindset of accepting immortality huh.

Even now, I still can't understand it at all.

Just how much resolve do you need, just how much experience do you need to stack up, to make humans that were living peacefully in Japan accept this torture?

...

As I thought, I can't understand.

In a future, maybe after the fight is over, I will try asking Rokuya-san about it.

But simply voicing it out in words to seek for an answer makes me feel incredibly bad.

What is it... why is it that I feel this way...?

"Waka-sama?"

"?! What?" (Makoto)

When I checked the door, I noticed that it was open. A Highland Orc girl that is working at Tsige was looking at me with worry.

No good.

She probably even knocked before entering, and yet, I wasn't able to notice.

“I called several times, but there was no response, so I got worried. You were making an incredibly complicated expression but, did something happen with the guest just now?”

“I was pondering a bit. It sounds stupid, but it was something that has already concluded, and I’m not even a related party.” (Makoto)

“I see...”

“Looks like I have worried you, sorry. I will be returning to Lorel. The business there will probably end soon after all. One more push.” (Makoto)

“Leave the matters regarding this town to us. Lime is also doing his best, so if there’s anything of interest, we will let you know immediately.”

“Thanks. I will be counting on you.” (Makoto)

She bows once and leaves the room, and once again, silence returns.

But I didn’t sink into my swirl of thoughts again.

That’s right.

Right now, the matter of Tsige and Lorel come first.

Even if Japanese people are involved in it, it would be stupid if I were to forget the important things.

It is a bit vexing to call this a fortune, but regarding Rokuya-san and his group, it is nice that we won’t have to worry about killing them even if we go overboard.

Let’s properly wrap this up at the 20th floor.

And while at it, we will take care of the matter regarding Tomoki’s perfume, and bring the mercenary group back here.

Pang

I hit both of my cheeks lightly.

When the amount of things to think about increases, I just get lost in what to do.

There are indeed people who are able to multitask everything. But I... am the type who can't.

I think I am a bit better in doing that than before. Even so, it would just be about average.

For a person that's acting as the representative of the company, while moving around the whole world, working in the Academy as a teacher, and has the objective of knocking down the Goddess, that's not something that should be lacking.

"...Now, it is finally the time. Let's go to Lorel." (Makoto)

The labyrinth wasn't confined, dark, and musty like I thought it would be, and it wasn't damp and humid, but I don't think that's lucky.

As a wry smile appears in my face, I cross the mist gate I myself created.

"He didn't seem to be convinced. What should I do? Should I return and once again... but he seemed to be busy... It would hurt to be hated..."

After a while of leaving the Kuzunoha Company, Root had stopped his steps.

Placing a hand on his lips, he mutters in a low voice.

Honestly, the anger that Makoto was directing at him was unexpected.

Whether it is the matter with Sofia, or the matter of the Adventurers of Origin; the latter one, he thought that even if it is Makoto, he wouldn't be involved in it, so when he heard that name come out from his mouth, Root was internally pretty shocked.

Even so, it was a story of the past where it was discussed peacefully, both sides accepted it, and had concluded. To think that Makoto would come snapping at it was out of expectations.

Even the matter of Sofia, it was a completely different reaction from what he expected of Makoto.

He will get surprised, but he won't get angry.

For Root who properly gave that buffoon a chance to atone, moreover, trained her so that she will never go against Makoto anymore when he set it up so they meet again, the displeased face of Makoto when he asked regarding Sofia was bewildering for him.

In the past, there were several times with his husband -who he doesn't know where he is- that Root made him angry by stepping on landmine topics just like with Makoto. The feeling of 'what should I do?' was swirling inside of Root.

This will be digressing but, Root getting emotionally anxious is -without exaggeration- a thing that's on the level of only happening once every several centuries.

"Hm... as I thought, let's return. Where did he misunderstand, or what is it he didn't like so much, I have to properly hear it out and solve it. The time I can spend with people is only an instant. I don't want to create discord over insignificant things. Well th—" (Root)

The moment he reached a decision and was about to return, his hung down head sprung up as if by reflex.

At an intersection, Root's gaze was directed at the buildings across the street; more accurately speaking, it was directed at the far distance.

"For so long... really so long, I wasn't even able to feel your presence, and yet..." (Root)

The legs that had been directed at the Kuzunoha Company, began to walk towards a different direction.

Root could have been able to return to his original form to fly there, or used teleportation magic, but as if forgetting he is able to do those things, Root ran.

Slipping through the crowd of people with unbelievable speed, and crossing through the complicated alley he was passing for the first time as if he was familiar with it, his face maintained a smile.

And there was one other change in Root while running.

Root's height stretched, his chest got bigger, and his hair grew longer.

“Azu-kun, you really are here. In this town, you!” (Root)

The nostalgic and unforgettable presence that she feels at the outskirts.

For Root, that person is one of her irreplaceable friends.

Elysion grew, and in time, their religion was poured solely on the Goddess, Root left, Elysion was counted as one of the five major powers, the founding king was envisioned as a legend and sung on, and finally, the country was lost to the demon race.

That’s how much time has passed for the Superior Dragon Root who was searching for the Adventurers of Origin without being able to even catch their presence.

Root was able to certainly feel the presence of one of them.

At the place where the now female Root was chasing after the presence, there was one house.

—Outskirts of Tsige.

These house with a garden is one of the residences build at the area of the successful people.

The access of the town is also decent, and it is the place that’s specially yearned for by adventurers. And it is also where Root is heading to.

For a simple isolated house, it was big.

It is a house where an adventurer party live and it is also the formal place they gather at. It was easy to see that it wasn’t a building constructed and sold, but a building that was ordered to be made.

Currently at the big entrance, there’s one man and one beast.

His frame is big, and his physique is also good.

With a full body armor that didn’t look like it proved any discomfort to him, he rang the bell with natural moves.

“Yees.”

A person soon responded.

An adventurer's house is normally absent of people all day long since they are normally out questing, but luckily for the knight-looking man, it seems there were people at home.

The door opens.

The person that showed up was the woman adventurer that had received a request from an old friend, Raidou, and was excavating for the old documents she had at the storage room, Toa.

“Who is it?!!” (Toa)

Toa looked at the man standing outside and the beast that was at his side, and gulped a breath.

A man whose whole body is covered in full silver colored armor, carrying a unique greatsword on his back, and is about 1.90m tall.

His age is a little before his thirties, his face is showing, and at various parts of his arms and feet, there were wounds of a variety of sizes.

And on the other hand, there's the giant beast docile at his side.

It was a wild boar that was already on the level of being called a demonic beast.

These peculiar traits matched only one person in Toa's memories.

“Could it be... you are...” (Toa)

“Knight... Aznoval. The one by my side is my loved horse—I mean, loved wild boar.” (Aznoval)

“...”

“Loved steed, Greenblue...” (Aznoval)

“Uryii~!”

Aznoval, the name that surfaced in Toa's mind was exactly the name the man introduced himself with, and next, he continued by introducing the boar at his side.

For some reason he hesitated in saying it.

The wild boar that was unnaturally called Greenblue broke its docile attitude as if it didn't even exist in the first place, and turned its head towards the man that's most likely its owner and makes an unexpected cute cry.

As if trying to protest.

"Sorry about that. It is my loved steed, Greenblue. I suppose you are the safeguard of the Blue Oni dagger, Lapis. Am I... correct?" (Aznoval)

"You went through the trouble of visiting me here, but I don't belong to a family like that. I am simply an adventurer that's residing in this town." (Toa)

When asked if she is the safeguard, she responded that she isn't from a family like that.

For a third party, this conversation would feel as if it didn't connect.

But for these two, it properly did.

"Onee-chan, there's a guest? Then, how about letting him i—"

"Rinon! Go back inside. He is someone that will be returning soon, so it's fine!" (Toa)

With a rough tone that was rare from her, Toa sends away her little sister that had come to the entrance.

The shoulders of Rinon jumped, and without responding, she ran to the inside of the house.

"Rinon... as I thought. I will explain so that there's no misunderstanding. I didn't come here to cause any harm to you." (Aznoval)

Hearing the name that Toa shouted, Aznoval nodded as if he had been convinced of something.

And at the same time, he noticed the caution of Toa, so he declared that he didn't

intend to cause any harm to the sisters.

“Yeah, I don’t think you are someone who would do that. But...” (Toa)

There’s no guarantee of anything with only words, however, Toa accepted the words of the knight.

“Hiiragi Towa, Hiiragi Rio. There’s no discrepancy in the sole clue I had. It is settled huh.” (Aznoval)

“!!! I am Toa! That girl is Rinon! Something like a family name, we only use one at suitable times. We are sisters you can find anywhere, and I am an adventurer. I—! Don’t have a name like Hiiragi!!!” (Toa)

“...Sorry.” (Aznoval)

“?!”

The name that Aznoval said was refuted in rage by Toa.

He simply accepted those words and slowly lowered his head deeply.

“I was unable to save your family from that folly, and was unable to protect you from the unreasonable blame, and on top of that, Towa—no, Toa, I ended up making you reject that very blood that flows in you. I am truly... sorry.” (Aznoval)

“...Is that something for you to apologize? I am not wishing for something like tha—” (Toa)

“But!” (Aznoval)

“Eh?”

Toa winced when Aznoval suddenly lifted his head up.

“I want you to understand at least this one thing. The successive generations of the Hiiragi household were always facing their duty in earnest. They appeased Lapis, and also conferred this power with humility. It is the same for that girl who lost Lapis at the wasteland.” (Aznoval)

For a moment, he looked not at Toa, but somewhere far away, and with wrinkles of anguish showing between his eyebrows, he looks straight at Toa and continues speaking.

“Please, I want you to take pride in that blood that flows in your body. It is fine if it’s not right this instant. I will definitely bring back Lapis back from the wasteland. That’s why, at the very least, your ancestors...” (Aznoval)

“Uhm...” (Toa)

“If you want to, I can help you revive the treatment the Hiiragi household received at those days in this Tsige. That’s why—” (Aznoval)

“Listen to what I’m trying to say!” (Toa)

“Ah, oh... okay.” (Aznoval)

“If it’s about that dagger, see, I have already found it myself. I won’t do something as selfish as saying I did it on my own though.” (Toa)

In the hands of Toa, there was something wrapped around a darkish brown cloth.

When she unwrapped the cloth, there was one dagger there.

What was once lost at the wasteland, picked up by the Highland Orcs, went to the hands of Makoto, and finally, after many a search, the dagger returned to Toa’s hands.

“It is... without doubt, Lapis. You became an adventurer on your own volition and came all the way to the wasteland and got back that dagger with your own effort?” (Aznoval)

The knight opened his eyes wide and mutters dumbfounded.

“I told you, it wasn’t on my own. I almost died several times, and it was actually a miraculous reversal. I am still here thanks to that person. After that, I was even blessed with a party...” (Toa)

While Toa was lining up several sentences, Aznoval once again looks at the house.

‘It is a good house’, that’s how he felt.

It is not by the standards of 'it is luxurious' or 'it is big'.

He felt the atmosphere around the house, and his expression changed into a gentler one.

"I see... You... no, both of you sisters weren't in solitude huh." (Aznoval)

'At least that's a saving', is what the tone of the knight felt it was saying as well.

"Yes, fortunately. And we have a place where we belong to, right here. We properly have one in Tsige. Not in Lorel, but in this town." (Toa)

Toa returns a definite refusal to the offer of reviving her household.

After a brief silence, Aznoval makes a gentle smile and nods once.

"Understood. The selfish worry in my heart was released. It seems this is a place that has taken care of you in several ways. Maybe because of the sudden title as a knight I received, I got a tad bit devoted -to the things that I couldn't protect. It is certainly true that it was my own subjective impression that I should protect at least their descendants." (Aznoval)

"No, that stance of yours has most likely saved a great amount of people. It was simply that a different person had already given Rinon and I its hand of salvation. Please, stay the way you are." (Toa)

"Thanks, Toa. But I want to do something for you two. Do you have something you wish for? If it's something I can do, I will do my best." (Aznoval)

"Even if you ask me that... right now, the only thing I want is the safety of Tsige. Detailed things like how to help in that sense, I can't think of anything at this moment." (Toa)

"Hm, it is true that this town is looking for independence from Aion and acting pretty flashily. If it's silencing the royal family... things would get too big. It might go against my promise with that person. What should I do...?" (Aznoval)

The latter half, Aznoval mutters as if asking to himself.

"That's why, please forget about us. It is fine. My little sister and I will live our own

lives. Please go help the people that are troubled somewhere, knight Aznoval.” (Toa)

“...Toa. Umu, really, thank you. Leaving aside how much of your wish I can fulfill, this Aznoval has certainly heard it. I will become your strength in some sort of way. Also, can you lend me Lapis for a bit?” (Aznoval)

“...Yeah, I don’t mind.” (Toa)

Toa gives the dagger to the knight.

Aznoval looks at Lapis in his hand with eyes of nostalgia, as if looking at something important, and then, brings out a dagger that was identical to Lapis from the sack of Greenblue and returns to Toa.

“Is that... Lapis?” (Toa)

“It is similar, but different. Fufu, looks like it was really treasured. Maybe because it was abandoned at the wasteland for a while, it seems to be slightly sulky though.” (Aznoval)

“...”

(Now that he says it, it does seem different from Lapis. But they look alike. The shape as well, but what is it, there’s something in its atmosphere that’s incredibly...) (Toa)

Even when Toa tried thinking about it, there was no answer in her memories and knowledge.

Obviously, she doesn’t have an idea of what the legendary existence in front of her is trying to do either.

“If I hadn’t heard that you had gotten it back yourself, I wouldn’t have thought of going so far as to do this. However, now that I have heard such a story that heats my heart, I also want to answer in kind. With all I have.” (Aznoval)

“What do you mean by t—” (Toa)

Aznoval didn’t answer the words of Toa.

In place of that, he closes his eyes, and begins chanting something with the dagger

similar to Lapis in his hand.

“Guild skill, activate. Recast Overwrite. Lapis, maker Black Smith, type mage to assassin, breakpoint re-register...” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

For Toa, they were continuous unintelligible words. Mysterious words that didn't give off the sensation of magic activation for it to be an aria.

In time, the dagger, that wasn't Lapis and had a transparent blade, disappeared as if melting into the air.

But the remaining Lapis shone several times and trembled, but the appearance didn't change at all as it calmed down in the hands of Aznoval.

“Here, back to you. I have customized it as a dagger for a combatant, you should use it.” (Aznoval)

“Eh?!” (Toa)

“From what I see, you are mainly a physical attacker that prioritizes speed and deftness after all. Using a dagger that's a catalyst for magic would not be useful for your job.” (Aznoval)

“It is true that I haven't used it properly, but...” (Toa)

“Please utilize it. Regarding its new uses, it would be best to have a trustworthy blacksmith appraise it for you. It would be a lot easier to understand than hearing it from me.” (Aznoval)

“Aznoval-san...” (Toa)

“The name of Hiiragi, and the will of the dagger; it would probably be troublesome for the current you, so I will be taking both of them. From today on, this dagger is a dagger for your sake. If you like it, please do tell your children and grandchildren in the future. Well then Toa, we probably won't be meeting again, but I will be praying that you and the important people in your life will ripe numerously. Bye.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

There was no response from Toa. And it seems Aznoval was not wishing for it, he deftly rides the wild boar and leaves without turning back.

Gouging out the earth and creating gusts of wind, and yet, the wild boar left with surprising silence.

Was it because of nostalgia, or maybe the regret from parting, the eyes of Toa narrow.

“Ah, since I had the chance, maybe it would have been good to have him meet Raidousan? But that’s fine, I suppose. If they are a connection that’s destined to meet, they will definitely meet in time.” (Toa)

The moment Toa turned to confirm the back figure of Aznoval for the last time, the already small figure of the knight riding the wild boar had some white thing lunging at him from the side.

The wild boar made a sudden break without agitating and without making a racket, and the white something flies and rides on top of the knight.

Toa rubs both of her eyes.

But what she saw didn’t change one single bit.

It looks like it is real. She confirmed the current situation, and makes one big sigh.

(It must be that. I think that’s probably not something I should get involved with. It looks like that white thing is actually a woman, and the knight Aznoval is a man after all. There must be something. Yeah, let’s just maintain that moving moment we had just now. It looks like he understood a variety of things, and I still haven’t finished gathering the documents I was planning on sending to the Kuzunoha Company. Next is... right, when I am returning, I should not forget to have an Elder Dwarf craftsman look at this Lapis.) (Toa)

The door is silently closed.

“Rinon, your sister’s throat is dry.” (Toa)

Toa requests something to drink from her little sister.

The matters that Aznoval voiced out, it was also bothering her, and so, now, it had

dissolved and disappeared.

A smile that came from the bottom of her heart and light steps.

Toa, who had become an adventurer because of the chains of her past and blood, is finally able to lower that weight.

“Rinon?! It is fine with alcohol too! Bring it to the storage room~!” (Toa)

“What are you saying this early in the morning! I made tea just now, so drink it before going to the storage room, okay?! You will definitely spill it after all!!” (Rinon)

Shouting, getting happy; those kind of changes in her sister amazed Rinon all the time.

Right now Tsige is in a lull state.

Toa and Rinon are passing a somewhat peaceful everyday life there.

Chapter 273

Intermission – At times, the misfortune gathering of Makoto is useful

“Even though I was mounted, I was knocked down by a humanoid living being. So there’s still new experiences to get huh.”

“Azu-kun. Aznoval... It is the real one, it is the real thing!!”

“No well, I don’t think there’s been a fake of me though... Root, from what I have heard, weren’t you living as a man?” (Aznoval)

“That’s right. It is true. But as the memories I passed with you guys revived, my body returned to that one too. It is definitely because of that! I didn’t notice I turned into a woman until you told me after all!” (Root)

The one that is enjoyably conversing while mounted is a tall woman with long straight silver hair.

A woman that would nail anyone on the ground when they catch a sight of her, golden proportions.

The shirt that is not the correct size was producing a strange sense of eroticism.

And the one who was being ridden by such a shocking beauty was a knight that has armor covering his whole body.

It was a heavily unbalanced situation.

“Looks like you are quite the unstable living being, Root.” (Aznoval)

“This has its own fun. Fufufu, hey, that one there, that’s the mysterious abandoned boar that was on top of Azu-kun’s head at the time we separated, right? To think you really raised it. As expected of a being with finite span. With one glance, I can tell that it can even trample on illusory beasts.” (Root)

“I had... infinite time after all. It is until now that I was able to properly ride it and am able to communicate with its heart though... Oops, this talk would end up being long. Let's stop it. As you can see, it is one of my trustworthy companions now.” (Aznoval)

“You really don't change. You are just like how you were in the past.” (Root)

“You too. As beautiful as ever. Also, I go out more frequently compared to the others, so this is something that I can tell...” (Aznoval)

“What?” (Root)

“It seems like you are doing well... with the Adventurer Guild. Even though it was a mere verbal promise... You have my gratitude. That's why Rokuya-san, Haku-san, and Bia-san as well; we all decided on this. If anyone of us were to meet you again, we would represent everyone by telling you our gratitude. Root, thanks.” (Aznoval)

“...Aren't you actually... holding a grudge on me?” (Root)

The words of Aznoval matched something that Root has always thought of in a part of her heart.

That both sides hold much gratitude.

Of course, within the possibilities that Root had hypothesized, the gratitude is classified in the types that are incredibly convenient, and in truth, most of her thoughts were that they may have a grudge on her.

However, the knight was acting as the representative of the Adventurers of Origin and told Root about their gratitude.

Root looks back at her conversation with Makoto.

‘Did you do that knowing how much pain comes with immortality -with eternity?’, and ‘Do you really think they have accepted it?’.

Being told what her heart was feeling, even Root was doubting the certainty of the promise Root had exchanged with Aznoval and his group a long time ago.

That was the reason why words of anxiety came out from her mouth towards the knight that she had a friendly relationship of shouldering each other in the long past.

“Grudge? Are you talking about the matter of living eternally?” (Aznoval)

“Yeah.” (Root)

“It is true that I have a grudge on it, and I hate it as well.” (Aznoval)

“!!”

“...But, it is not towards you.” (Aznoval)

“Eh?”

“It’s the part about not thinking deeply of the meaning in dragging even Rokuya and the others. Regarding that point... I regret to the utmost my naivety at that time, and I also hate it. Of course, even now and for eternity.” (Aznoval)

“What do you mean by that? Guild Verse is a link skill between all of you. That’s why... what are you saying?” (Root)

“It is true that it was a linked skill. But the one that was actually able to utilize the various skills was me, and the others were simply on the standing of obtaining its benefits. In short, it is because I coincidentally had the Master rights –or at least that’s what I thought at that time. Obtaining immortality, obtaining eternity; I thought about using that time to begin researching and make it so that I am able to hold this skill by myself.” (Aznoval)

“No well, even I have been unable to clarify the skill of you guys all this time, and transferring the user rights to an individual is just...” (Root)

Root had completely returned to his female way of talking and speaks of Aznoval’s thoughts.

The knight nods with unhidden self-derision towards the bewildered Root.

“Yeah, just as you say. Even when I researched for several centuries, even when I searched for several centuries, the situation where I was basically trying to grasp straws didn’t change at all. That’s right. I intended to shoulder that myself... for eternity. And yet, this is how it ended up as. Acting so much like a knight, and yet, in the end, I have dragged all of my companions and have been unable to save a single one of them. If I could, I would want to kill myself.” (Aznoval)

“!”

“Well, that’s how it is. And so, we are now here. Just as I said before, I have no grudge towards Root who has raised the guild into a healthy and neutral organization, and has maintained it that way. I am simply grateful for it. It makes me feel that there’s point in me still being alive.” (Aznoval)

“Azu-kun.” (Root)

“Also, just as promised, we haven’t taken the side of a political force, and haven’t raised a country either. Existences that can’t be seen at the front stage of the world, existences that don’t exist. No problem, right?” (Aznoval)

“Yeah. But I didn’t think I wouldn’t even be able to search for you guys, you know?” (Root)

“I was determined to do a thoughtless research. I also didn’t want to bother you in the time when the guild was in the very moment of beginning to move. It is not like I hated you.” (Aznoval)

“You see, actually, I wanted Azu-kun and the others to cooperate by becoming the top brass of the guild and the strongest direct corp, you know? I even prepared the seats for that sake... A lot happened... I wouldn’t have let you be bored. Even if the name of the Adventurers of Origin were to disappear, it would be safe to leave your name as the top brass of the guild.” (Root)

“Sorry. But don’t you have young and reliable ones now? Was it Sofia? She has your blood, right? It looked like she was doing her job with pride. Isn’t that plenty enough?” (Aznoval)

Aznoval brings out the name of the adventurer he just met and praises her.

But Root shook her head to the sides in sadness.

“That would never become a substitute for you guys. Yeah, such a person doesn’t exist to begin with. It is because it is you guys that I wanted to welcome you. The most Sofia can do is... be a proxy.” (Root)

“How strict. I do think pampering parents are questionable, but if you don’t at least recognize her achievements every now and then, she will be sad, you know? And, by

the way... can you please get up already? I have to return to Lorel after all.” (Aznoval)

At some point in time, their bodies were sticking to each other, and Aznoval and Root were conversing as if having a lover’s talk.

Aznoval who was at the bottom, placed both hands on Root’s shoulders and lifted her body up.

“Eh? You intend to return now? After living for 2 thousand years already?” (Root)

“I haven’t lived so long! I haven’t reached the millenniums yet. Well, I did think for a second about having a meal together at least.” (Aznoval)

“In that case—!” (Root)

“No. The moment I saw you trying to take off the buttons of your shirt, I once again remembered what kind of person you were. I am not the type that likes doing it in the outskirts. I will skip all those kind of adventures.” (Aznoval)

“Then I will properly endure until we go to a room somewhere!” (Root)

‘What’s with that ‘then’?', the uneasiness that the knight had was correct in a sense.

“It reminds me of the words of Munemori, good grief. You haven’t changed at all. Your appearance, and the inside as well.” (Aznoval)

“That person’s words?” (Root)

“He said that when you are together with us, you are either a disappointing beauty, or a full score slut. You can call it a true bullseye there.

“...There was no ‘perfect beauty’ or ‘wife’?” (Root)

“There was. When you are together with other people, you are close to that. But there’s no fun in that, so he said that he liked you the w—no, that’s fine. Seriously, what a lovestruck guy.” (Aznoval)

“He said something like that? I see...” (Root)

Skillfully moving Root who was immersed in the memories of the man that she had

raised her love with, Aznoval lightly pats away the earth on his armor.

When he stood up and stretched, he looked at his companion Greenblue.

The wild boar, that was silently resting as it watched over the course of events, received the gaze of his master and lifted its body.

“Whatever the case, I was glad I met you, Root. Until the day destiny brings us together again—?!” (Aznoval)

Aznoval was trying to one-sidedly give his farewells, but both Aznoval and Greenblue suddenly turned their faces to a certain direction.

Root also did the same a second late.

However, different from the perplexed face of Aznoval, the face of Root was showing distinct displeasure.

It could be said that the thing where they are gazing at was outside the boundaries of understanding.

“I didn’t know at all that the royal family of Aion was connected with them, but I see. The reason they were able to turnaround the situation when in danger was because of this huh.” (Aznoval)

“As expected of Azu-kun. You can already grasp their identity huh. Hah... It is true that it is because I was expecting this turn of events that I am here today in Tsige though. Being ruined this long awaited reunion that can be called a miracle... It really pisses me off.” (Root)

“Such a dangerous bunch have allied with the Aion kingdom which is the lowest within the five ma—no, the four major powers. Just when did they form an amity?” (Aznoval)

“It was pretty recent. Adding to it, there’s one mixed in the Limia hero’s party. It is extremely rare for two swords to have come out in the present day.” (Root)

“The swords of the Goddess huh. Thinking about their *raison d’etre*, that’s a valid point. The people that caused the coup d’etat in this country were an organization that had antecessors of a religion of a half God after all.” (Aznoval)

“Azu-kun, for someone that declares to have the acting principle of using muscles over brain since a long time ago, you really don’t move imprudently. Your information gathering and intelligence; I don’t know how you do it, but it is incredibly precise. Don’t tell me, are you actually only faking being a knight?” (Root)

“Stop it please. It hurts quite a lot being told that. I am putting my life on the line in being a knight.” (Aznoval)

“It is coming from the mouth of a woman that was rejected, so I won’t stop~. At any rate, the half God church, no matter how many times it is crushed, they dive underground and come back. It hurts my head. But this is also within expectation. This is my job huh. It is fine Azu-kun, I will be talking with that. I won’t let it touch one finger of Tsige.” (Root)

Letting out a small sigh, Root encourages Aznoval to leave.

It seemed like she had some sort of idea about what the existence approaching is.

But that’s the same for Aznoval.

It looks like they already had a grasp of the circumstances surrounding Tsige and Aion, and also the one that is at the back of it.

‘Then, I will leave this to Root and head back to Lorel’, is not what the unmoving knight did.

He stepped half a step to the front of Root, and seemed to be prepared to confront the existence that’s the Sword of the Goddess.

“Azu-kun?” (Root)

“In Tsige, there’s the descendants of the Hiiragi household living there, you see. Most of the reason why I came to this town was because of this. It is impossible for me to pass by such a dangerous thing of unknown objective.” (Aznoval)

“Hiiragi... Ah, if I remember correctly, within the group at the Adventurers of Origin, there was one of the humans who was named Hiiragi. I remember now, Adusa Hiiragi.” (Root)

“Yeah. Adding to that, that person died before the agreement with you and the guild.

The place where my hopeless younger brother got engaged with was the Hiiragi household.” (Aznoval)

“Brother... Nagi-kun?! Then could it be... that Toa is...?!” (Root)

“It is already a diluted blood, but well, yeah. Really, I am a useless person who just can’t save the people that I really want to save no matter what. However, I am impressed that you could tell Toa was a Hiiragi. She is an undisputable top quality adventurer that came to the wasteland on her own volition and got back the Blue Oni dagger, Lapis.” (Aznoval)

“Actually, the one that is soon coming here also has business with that girl. And that Lapis is the underlying cause of it.” (Root)

“That’s a dagger that was synthesized with the guild skill and has a power close to the Desire Sword of Munemori, but the evolution of it was only brought out a few moments ago, you know? What’s this about ‘underlying cause’, Root? If she is involved, I definitely won’t back down. Please tell me.” (Aznoval)

“Desire, you say... Was it such a monstrous dagger? No, the problem is not the power of the dagger. It is because of the reason of how Toa got it back.” (Root)

“I heard that she obtained the cooperation of her companions and the town though.” (Aznoval)

Aznoval recalls the conversation he had with Toa.

From what he remembers, that’s what she said.

It definitely wasn’t on her own.

“Yeah. And within those people, the one that lended the most assistance was the Kuzunoha Company. They guided her into the way to get back the dagger, or you could say, they directed it that way. Depending on how it is explained, it might create a crack between the relationship of the representative there and Toa.” (Root)

“If we are talking about guiding, then it would certainly be considered cooperating, but when you talk about directing it, it is not always the case. Hmph, and in truth, didn’t that company do something quite gray there?” (Aznoval)

“I won’t negate that. But the Kuzunoha Company’s representative, Raidou -or Misumi Makoto-, is a Wise that was kidnapped to this world on the whim of the Goddess, and his roots aren’t those of a villain. And at present, he is becoming an irreplaceable existence in this Tsige lined together with the Rembrandt Company. I can’t have the relationship of him and Toa, who is becoming adventurer-like, to crumble.” (Root)

“So it might become a hole in the ant’s nest that could lead to the town’s destruction huh. Wise... a japanese person. This person that’s calling himself Raidou, looks like he is quite the naive type. To think he would become such a spark in this kind of situation by his own volition.” (Aznoval)

Root didn’t say anything about Aznoval who connected the word Wise with a japanese person as if it were natural.

The circumstances of Makoto are different from the others, and while he is hyuman, he is a Wise, and he is also Japanese.

And in turn, it would make the interpretation of Aznoval slightly wrong, but Root didn’t show any signs of explaining at all as she continued the conversation.

“It is not completely his responsibility though. I won’t deny that he is naive either. Because of it, his guard at night is thoroughly tough and it is troublesome.” (Root)

“...For some mysterious reason, my impression of Raidou has improved. Or more like, I pity him. You are already trying to make a pass on him? Keep it moderate.” (Aznoval)

“Anyways... so that means, within the plans to crumble Tsige -which is practically akin to a firm rock- from the inside, the one that has the highest chance by stirring up distrust and anger between Toa and Raidou. The Sword of the Goddess that’s coming here seems to be the strategist type of magician after all. In my personal opinion, when it comes to Tsige and the Kuzunoha Company, I am a bit biased, so I came here in secret.” (Root)

The words of ‘moderate’ from Aznoval were ignored by Root and she continued explaining the current situation.

“On top of that, in this kind of important situation, it is the type that moves itself huh. Is it because it is lacking in trustworthy subordinates, or maybe because it is the type that doesn’t trust anyone aside from itself; whichever it is, if they plan on utilizing Toa in their conspiracy, I won’t forgive it. You are also here, so let’s swing my sword in a

level where it is almost stepping onto the front stage. What do you think about that, the person over there?" (Aznoval)

The words of the knight were sent to a direction different from Root, and in the place that resonated, there's a woman who was dressed in lightweight mage equipment.

A human.

There's no companion with her, and from looks alone, it seemed as if she was a magician wearing a robe as casual wear and holding a staff.

But looking at it carefully, you could tell that that equipment is made of high grade materials.

If she were to fight with a dragon as she is, she would be able to. At the very least, that's the level of preparation she had, and the two of them could tell that in an instant.

"Is that your assessment of me? Or is it regarding you fighting with me?"

"Oh, sorry about that. I would be grateful if you were to forget about my assessment of you. I am a very ordinary knight you can find anywhere, name's Azu. It would be great if I were to know your name, Sword of the Goddess." (Aznoval)

"...I repudiate disclosure of information. About your assessment of me, the former was exactly right, and the latter was practically all correct. I only have one dependable companion, but that one is currently acting separately. Also, regarding you fighting me, do whatever you want. It all amounts to who crushes the other after all."

She doesn't introduce herself.

The woman ignores the question and voices out her displeasure of being called the Sword of the Goddess by the knight.

"Having contact with Toa is not something I can agree to, personally and as an ally of the adventurers, Alte Barrett." (Root)

"...Falz. Turning into a woman, turning into a man; you really are a hectic person. What's this about? I am under the orders of the Goddess-sama and am going to save Aion, and subjugate the rebels. It is true that she didn't say anything about Tsige, but they are trying to go independent from a country, that also falls into the area of a coup

d'etat, and it is not something proper to do. Is it wrong to do what I have to do in order to make it properly return to Aion kingdom?" (Alte)

Being called her name by Root, she clearly made a displeased expression.

Her face, her neck, and her arms and legs that are sticking out from her equipment as well; they were all pure white and beautiful as if saying that suntans are evil.

Her blond hair was shining to the point you would think it is actually made of gold.

The woman that's apparently named Alte Barrett is without doubt a hyuman that possesses beauty the Goddess would like.

And that beautiful voice that came out from her was also filled with faith to the Goddess, and was not holding a single doubt to her own actions.

Aznoval leaked a strained laugh probably as a substitute to his impressions about that part of her.

"About fighting with you, I am neutral to the end. But I am simply saying that I don't like having the adventurer Toa utilized in your plans. That's why, if you are not going to rethink this, I will personally be getting in your way." (Root)

"And for me, Toa is one of the people I have to protect. Just means that, I can't overlook this as a knight passing by." (Aznoval)

Aznoval continues to the words of Root and makes his standing clear.

Unsheathing the japanese sword-like greatsword of wide width on his back, he takes a stance with it, and chants something. When he did that, the width of the sword in his hand increased, and settled into a truly strange shape.

It was too big to be called a katana, a shape that lacked balance.

If we leave aside the point of the size, it would be a sword that's similar to the short sword Masamune.

"Wow, you suddenly bring that out. Azu-kun, as expected, you really do understand." (Root)

“I am counting on you for support. If we rampage to an extent where it would be a disturbance, this person will understand that this is not a fight she should take.” (Aznoval)

“Are you saying this will become a battle of attrition? It is a peculiar sword, but that doesn’t matter for me. Falz –no, Root probably only wants to pester me with words anyways.” (Alte)

“Now, I wonder about that. At the very least, if I were you, I would drop that thought about defeating him quickly, Alte Barrett.” (Root)

“Unless it is the Goddess herself, that’s impossible.” (Aznoval)

“Not only me, but even the Goddess. That contempt of yours, learn it with your own body, low life.” (Alte)

At the outskirts of Tsige, several pillars of light, thunderous sounds, and magic power flew about.

In this pressing situation, the emergency adventurer team of Tsige moved promptly, and they arrived just a few moments after it began.

It was truly a fast response.

However, the place had the remains of a battle, but the concerned party was not there, and not even a corpse either.

The next day, the investigation came out with a truly foolish conclusion that it was a battle where there had to be at least a Superior Dragon and several High Spirits fighting.

The staff that was doing the investigation was truly skilled, but... the reality of things is only known by the three that were at Tsige that day.

The connection of Toa and Makoto had brought a legendary knight and the oldest Superior Dragon to Tsige in this day.

The day the related two will learn that this had secretly saved the town will be in a far future. *<in real time>*

Chapter 274

Outbreak of War

This is probably the last.

19th floor, Grave palace, deep area.

Standing at the front of the teleport formation for the next floor, I nod.

It is a plan that I had Tomoe and Mio hear out, and made some retouches to.

Even when we have already arrived at one step before our goal, I still haven't been able to think of a way to break the heart of Rokuya-san and his group, the Japanese people that have accepted immortality.

We are going to be marching into the enemy's territory, and without killing anyone, we have to gain their cooperation including the person that hates me. Moreover, there's no doubt that there are several forces there that are on a level that can be considered a threat to the Kuzunoha Company.

No matter how you look at it, there's no doubt that this is a big challenge.

That's why I think the idea that came out after cleanly piecing the information at the hotel was a miracle.

...The trigger of it was the casual conversation of Iroha-chan and Akashi-san though.

"Now then, looks like this will be a big job. My blood is boiling."

While touching the blade of her katana, the silver haired mode Tomoe looks at me with a smile.

It is not as if this floor was challenging enough to warrant an enhancement.

It is because we will be needing that level of strength from Tomoe on what's coming ahead, so I gave her the power beforehand.

Tomoe wasn't there when the incident with Root happened, so she probably feels happiness at having a place to utilize her power aside from training.

"It will be difficult not to crush anyone, but if it's the order of Waka-sama, I will carry it out perfectly-desu wa. But if possible, I would like to show people like Rokuya some pain. I wonder if that thing will stand in my way." (Mio)

Mio, who now has glossy straight hair extending till her waist, said some dangerous stuff at the latter half as she laughs and narrows her eyes.

That figure of hers was gloss itself.

Tomoe's smile has seductiveness in it, but Mio's gestures have become more and more sexy lately.

Right now she is leaking out bloodlust from here and there, so if possible, this is the kind of gesture I would prefer to just look at instead of being in the receiving end.

But, in my personal opinion, I would like Mio to confront Haku Mokuren-san, Ginebia-san, or Rokuya-san depending on the situation.

Most of the reason she is like this is because 'he pointed his blade at me', but even if our thoughts are different, our desired pairings were the same.

"Bringing this much here, moreover, we have even received a ring from Tomoe-sama that's only appropriate to call a sacred treasure... this Beren, if it's today, I would be able to crush thousands!" (Beren)

...

Frankly speaking, I will be having Beren, Hokuto, and Shii, take on what's probably the toughest role today.

Because, excluding the Adventurers of Origin, they will be fighting against practically everyone, and until things are settled, they will have to endure.

At first, I told the three that I was thinking about increasing the number of personnel, but their answer was the substantiality of the 'equipment'.

The picnic side probably has less than a hundred, and we have analyzed the

information we have gathered until now.

There's quite the skilled ones that are S-class at the 20th floor, so I was thinking about calling Lime, Akua, Eris, and the elite four Arkes, but to my surprise, all three of them told me to wait.

They told me they wished for perfect equipment and the permission to utilize their full strength.

The three probably had some sort of plan.

There were several floors that were tough enough I would want to use them as training for the Kuzunoha Company, so that might be influencing too.

That's why Beren got the permission of Tomoe and Mio, and also Shiki and Tamaki to bring a big amount of weapons that looked okay to bring.

Since a while ago, he has been looking at the ring Tomoe gave him with a face filled with motivation. It is an item that lets you use Asora like a storage.

For someone like me who is not good at the technical stuff, I simply see it as an item that opens a storage of big capacity.

Tomoe nodded when I said that, so the effect must not be far from my understanding.

It is not like you can just freely use it. Every time, you will expend a decent amount of magic power, so Beren will probably be using most of today's magic power utilizing this.

"Ninja costume. As long as I have this, there's already no worthy opponent. Whether it is to act as a wall, support, or damage dealer, I will show that I can fulfill those roles."
(Hokuto)

...The second one.

The big body of Hokuto was dressed in a ninja costume that felt incredibly out of place. A ninja look.

The motivation of the person himself, who recently changed into it, was quite high.

At the last area of this floor, there was one trap that was on a different level from the rest, and one of his arms was blown away, but the treatment has already been done.

Well, it may look weird, but its defense is high, and in the hidden parts of the clothe, there's ornamental equipment that enhances it.

He is a high level Arke that can hunt adventurers like crazy with only his bare hands and skills to begin with. With training on top of that, and coordination as well, if it is the current Hokuto, even if the opponent is the legendary mercenary group, I don't think his fighting power would lack to them.

His body technique and magic working together are without doubt powerful after all.

The only thing is that Hokuto doesn't call it ninjutsu, but ninjutu, His way of speaking is clearly not that of a ninja, which is the only problem point of his.

"Even though you let us accompany you, the ones who will be doing the toughest work today will be Waka-sama's group. On top of that, I even received assistance from Akua-sama and Eris-sama. Personally, I won't be able to recover from that for a while. It is like, 'mercenary group, prepare yourself', kind of thing." (Shii)

I thought Shii would be the one who would be the happiest in having reinforcements, and yet, the moment I brought out the names of Akua and Eris, she said 'there's no need, I can do it', and suddenly changed her attitude.

After telling them the plan, everyone said something weird like: 'we will defeat them all with a homerun'.

At the belt around her waist, there's a number of multicolored experimental *sedges*. At her arm, there's a bracelet that shines a pale green light, and at her ears, there's new earrings.

She said: 'I will be fighting with my all, as a physical type Forest Oni, and as an elf ancestor'.

She doesn't use a bow, and she isn't that good at magic, so those words were pretty rare to hear from Shii.

By the way, I called Lime to the hotel just in case.

I don't think there will be an opponent appearing today that he wouldn't be able to buy time against.

Truly the meaning of insurance.

"...Everyone, ready?" (Makoto)

Thinking that it is about time, I try speaking out, and what was returned were the same gazes.

Okay.

Just as planned, I will be the first one entering the teleport formation.

Enveloped in the light that I have already grown used to, there's a 9 out of 10 chances that there will be a preemptive strike poured at me the moment the scenery changes.

Or maybe there will be a negotiation.

"Like hell that would be possible huh." (Makoto)

Even if I could guess it from the words of Rokuya-san, what welcomed me the moment I appeared alone, was the bloodlust of a battlefield.

Also, the attack with no questions asked.

Not only arrows, there were even javelins, daggers, adzes, a variety of spells like offensive magic, debuffs, barriers being deployed; the types of debuffs were pretty plentiful.

"What a spectacle. But it is still not a threat." (Makoto)

I do a few steps forward.

My head is calm.

Currently, what's the scariest would be the surprise attack of Rokuya-san.

And the unknown power of the other Adventurers of Origin like him.

In other words... my beginning move is...

“?!!!”

I set Sakai to perception and search, and grasp the fighting force of the other side.

At the same time, the Magic Armor that had its concealment effect released had caught the eyes of everyone as it appeared.

Of course, this body constructed of magic power was steadily perceived by the other side, and maybe because of surprise or fear, there was some sort of atmosphere going around the place.

The attacks stopped -for only a small frame of time though.

The attacks raining down, the magic coiling about; in this space of time I was given, I evaporate both of those with the shockwave that the Magic Armor released.

If Sakai can't detect them, there's nothing I can do, but beginning with Rokuya-san, there's no presence that might be of an Adventurer of Origin.

And everything I wanted to grasp, I was able to.

After several seconds, a number of presences appeared at my back.

Everyone has arrived.

Thanks to the network that Mio has connected with all six of us, the information is linked, and we are able to coordinate without any mistakes.

“We still don't know how Rokuya-san and his group will be involved in this, so don't lower your guard—” (Makoto)

!!

The attack resumes.

The wave of magic attacks that were like a downpour.

On top of that...

“Fumu, it is quite the stuffy visage, but it is not on the level of Rokuya-ja no.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe disclosed the skill and exposes the assassin-like corps that were trying to come in contact with us.

There’s seven.

While at it, I burn the people that were most likely doing long ranged attacks to provide support.

Tomoe had her katana directed at the frontline unit, and Beren’s group of three came to her front and take a stance.

“They got us first, but let’s charge as well!!” (Beren)

Beren shouts without looking our way.

“Of course. I will blow them away to an extent that’s not fatal~!” (Shii)

“There was no need to even propose it, we are all on the same mindset huh. I was with the intention of bringing it to a melee fight and cause a disturbance to begin with. We are overwhelmingly at a disadvantage in terms of numbers after all.” (Hokuto)

When bringing it to a melee confrontation in those kind of situations, there’s the need to be prepared for death, but there was no light of desiring death in the eyes of the three.

They rushed like bullets aiming at the assassins, and in a second, two of the seven were rolling on the ground with good momentum, and had went out of combat.

Beren didn’t stop moving.

Swinging the big axe that’s in his hands with all the strength of his body, he throws it at the stronghold. Right after, he activates the power of the ring and brings out a new axe to his hands, and the assassin that was aiming at the supposedly barehanded Beren was repelled by his weapon.

Okay. This is on a level that can be a fight.

In that case...

“As expected, it begins from now on huh. Can’t expect much from the traps either. Leaving aside their numbers, the quality is pretty high.”

“Rokuya-san, you said there was a 7:3 chance that they would be going through the Buggy Palace, even the traps, that side’s where our real setup...”

“Now now, I have already contacted them, so the unit there will probably return in a few minutes. Let’s do our own job.”

“?!”

When I turn around, there’s the shadow of three people.

I couldn’t detect them at all even with the perception Sakai.

Moreover... it wasn’t only Rokuya-san, but the other two as well.

“...You really like surprising from the back...” (Mio)

Mio takes a fighting stance and makes a chilly whisper.

“The reason you didn’t attack us as it is, was it because of leeway, or maybe conceitedness? Which one should I take it as?” (Tomoe)

Tomoe’s words were tinged with slight anger.

If they weren’t putting any airs, they should have attacked just like that, and yet, they didn’t do that and were even talking on purpose to have us notice, which most likely rubbed both Tomoe and Mio in the wrong way.

“No way. We wanted to watch your playing hand a bit more, but since it was such an unexpected situation, we hurriedly came down. This here can hide me together with my companions, but it is an inconvenient item that doesn’t let me attack as it is. The limitations are many.” (Rokuya)

As he said ‘this’, Rokuya-san made a hiding gesture.

Together with his companions. Being able to hide your presence this perfectly is enough to make it a scary skill.

“...”

“What’s with that outrageous magic power? Honestly speaking, it hit my guts. Even in my long life, I haven’t seen anyone with as much magic power in its body as you.” (Rokuya)

“Who knows. People call me things like ‘Devil’ though. I don’t understand the reason well.” (Makoto)

“...So you were quite the racoon <deceiver>. Looks like my reading was wrong. I thought you were more of the honest type though.” (Rokuya)

“And so, I take it the one there is the Muse Danger, Haku Mokuren-san, and the Over Mash, Ginebia-san?” (Makoto)

“...”

Eh?

From their looks and equipment, there’s probably no mistake, but the two who are gazing at me are silent.

Are they not?

If that’s the case, that would be a bit uncool.

“...I am an Arrow Dancer. I am not a religious person, so there’s no way I would take a job that sticks to a God.” (Haku)

“...I am a priest or a bishop. I don’t remember being in a job that doesn’t sound like it has any relation to priesthood..... Why do you know that?” (Ginebia)

They both probably have strong special jobs, unique jobs.

But it seems like they don’t have a good impression of its name.

They mutter this as they turn their faces to the side.

In the case of the Adventurers of Origin, the things called jobs were probably born from the power called Guild Verse, and it is most likely strictly close to the ones

currently at the guild.

They probably can't set the names of their own jobs.

Well, this is convenient.

It seems it is still not the time to do what I asked of Tomoe and Mio after all.

I wanted to buy some time.

If we are able to do that with these three without the need of a fight, that would be most welcomed.

"Ah, Shougetsu-kun huh. If it's him, he might have known things like this." (Rokuya)

Rokuya-san scratched his head, and while making a wry smile, he spoke out the possibility he thought of.

It is exactly that.

"Later, I will go to the Osakabe house and give him a scolding." (Haku)

"It seems there's the need to teach that mongrel just how much of a taboo it is to lightly speak the secrets of a woman." (Ginebia)

Mongrel?

It seems like my utterance has send sparks flying at Shougetsu-san.

It is a rare case where I am not affected much by it, but this is important.

Sorry, Shougetsu-san.

Being at the hotel is good payment, so please forgive me for this.

(Waka, we are done.) (Tomoe)

(Here as well, with no problems.) (Mio)

Okay.

I received the report I wanted to hear from Tomoe and Mio.

From here on, the true battle will begin.

Let's do our best.

"Rokuya-san, here they come." (???)

"?!"

"Good grief, looks like they were able to fix it huh." (Rokuya)

I couldn't feel any magic power, yet, a voice resonated from the whole floor.

...

"Something is... coming." (Makoto)

From our surroundings, several presences appear.

Looks like it is not a direct attack though...

As if telling myself, and the other two, I mutter.

Even if my voice itself didn't reach, it was also relayed to Beren and the others thanks to Mio.

It is true that this is enemy territory.

It is obvious that the opponent is at an advantage.

"Because of Takane-kun, my spirit received damage." (Haku)

Haku-san.

"Me too." (Ginebia)

And Ginebia-san also responded with slight grudge in her voice.

Takane, huh. It isn't an Adventurer of Origin.

It is a magic power I can't detect with Sakai, and the voice that resonates from the whole floor is definitely not that of a natural voice, it sounded artificial.

Is it the labyrinth manager, designer, or whatever it was?

"So you were buying time huh." (Makoto)

So I was way too optimistic in thinking the timing of Rokuya-san appearing was convenient for us.

Hurry.

The thing we need to do the most, we have to do it in the time that we are still able to do follow-ups for Beren and the others.

While asking for the objective of them appearing before us, I form an aria without letting it out from my mouth and construct several spells.

"Sorry about this, but I will be returning the question of Tomoe-dono just now. For someone that's trying to do a reckless fight in the enemy's territory, you guys are way too leisure. Is that conceitedness, or maybe something that surpasses leeway?" (Rokuya)

Words that had no trace of him actually being apologetic.

But for some mysterious reason, it didn't anger me.

"You are a rude man as always. I don't know what you intend to do, but I would like to teach you the etiquette you have to show towards the strong." (Mio)

'Are you able to take it?', is what Mio's face was saying.

It was clearly a taunt, and also a threat.

And at almost the same time, the several presences teleported.

This is...

"What a coincidence. If possible, I would like to do that as well. Leaving aside Raidou-kun, if I had to choose between Tomoe-dono and Mio-dono, I would say Mio-dono is

the easier one to deal with.” (Rokuya)

“! Is that so...” (Mio)

Not only did Rokuya-san evade the taunt of Mio, he returned it straight at her.

In my personal opinion, I feel like it would be most comfortable to fight them evasively in a group fight though.

But Mio seems like she is pretty hyped up now.

I am also bothered by the Marikosans that appeared as if encircling us.

The one that I met at the Alt floor... doesn't seem like she is there.

“Paradise Protector, Guardian; Sharp Blade of Determination, D-Rapier; Conviction, White Card.” (Makoto)

“!”

I activated three spells in succession.

I cut off the left arm of the Magic Armor to place support magic on everyone. I went through the trouble of utilizing the spell that Shiki and Tamaki had recently thought of.

Each one respectively is: specialty enhancement, power enhancement, status ailment nullification. On top of that, thinking about how enemies might obstruct my casting, I expended the Magic Armor's magic power to activate it, and yet, in the end, there was not a single obstruction from them.

Fumu.

Well, no problem with me if they are going to let me do it, but in that case, what's up with this number of Marikosans?

Red, blue, yellow, white, black, gray... well, they are colorful.

There's 12 surrounding us.

They are puffing out their chest and crossing their arms.

Their beards are also incredible.

Kaizer, toothbrush, chin, sides, and round.

It is like a trade fair.

“Then, Marikosans, here I go.” (Takane)

“Oooh!!”

The voice of a man that’s resonating from the whole floor commanded.

The voice also felt like that of a mature woman. There’s several voices interlaced.

However, the more I see, the more I think that the Marikosans would look better without the beard.

“Invite, Duel Area.” (Takane)

“?!!”

As always, I couldn’t feel the flow of magic power at all.

Haku Mokuren-san and Ginebia-san suddenly disappear.

Seriously, I feel like I am fighting against a God that rules this place specifically.

Can’t take it.

But well, from the way they call it, it doesn’t seem to be the ruler here though.

“Tomoe-san?!” (Mio)

Mio’s voice.

When I turn to look at Tomoe, there was no one.

However, she is here.

I can feel the presence of Tomoe in a pretty far away place.

And there, there's the presence of two other people.

"Forced teleportation huh. How dangerous." (Makoto)

Invite, Duel Area.

If it's just as the name implies, it should be like teleporting the players into a battle area like in most MMO's.

The dungeon design itself is game-like.

The manager of this place probably gets along well with Rokuya-san and his group.

At any rate, two vs one huh.

The numbers don't match.

"Takane, what's the meaning of this?" (Rokuya)

Oh.

So even for Rokuya, this matching was unexpected?

"It may be sudden but, there's a change of plans. Restraining that person would be too bad of a match for Rokuya-san, so I acted on my own accord." (Takane)

'That person', does it mean me?

"I am aware of that, but... I can't just take the easy part." (Rokuya)

And the easy part would be Mio huh.

Even if we are fighting in this place, moreover, with a restriction where killing is not victory, I think he is underestimating Mio too much.

I don't think he has some pinpoint equipment and powers that bring him scary advantage against Mio.

“No no, she is the Calamity Black Spider. She simply obtained intelligence and a master, but that doesn’t make it easy. Well then, I am counting on you.” (Takane)

“H-Hey—!” (Rokuya)

That voice disappeared together with Rokuya-san, and... Mio.

This time, there wasn’t even a signal for the activation of the skill.

The ones left were me and the Marikosans.

C-Could it be... my opponents are these girls?

Or maybe the owner of the voice, this person called Takane?

Or there’s the possibility that they are just going to leave me alone?

I don’t have the intentions of killing anyone here, so if they are allowing me to regroup with Beren and the others to do some follow-up, that would be best.

“...Am I being left alone?” (Makoto)

“No way. Raidou -no, Misumi Makoto-kun. There’s someone for you too. The Adventurers of Origin are not only comprised of those three, you know? Well then, Invite.” (Takane)

Hm?

No, Duel Area?

In an instant, the scenery changes.

The air as well.

Could it be... I alone was thrown out of the labyrinth?!

Is that also allowed?!

“Uwaaa, that’s too much for a joke. What kind of thoughts made you think I am the one most suitable to go against him, Takane-kun... Takane... that damn brat, staying silent

huh.”

For now, I ignore the woman that’s fallen prostrated onto the table without looking at me.

Doesn’t seem like she has any intentions of attacking me anyways.

And so, I look around.

It is a room.

A girl’s room.

And it is close to modern Japan.

It is somewhat fancy and pink.

It is a pretty different type from my sisters.

My sister is a cushion maniac room, and my little sister is the simplistic type, or more like, I don’t understand how she decorates.

This type would be... if I remember correctly, the friend of my sister who does wrestling was similar to this. No, the room of that person was worse. Wait, that’s not it, it is not worse... but how to say it... worse? No no, it was cuter than this.

There were things like plush toys, frills, pink, the bed... it was amazing.

Right, it wasn’t horrible, it was amazing.

This is more between the line of normal, or how to say, like a more normal type of cute.

Yeah.

A soft rug that’s normally not seen in this world, and a low table.

It is probably a composition where you sit on the rug without using chairs.

And in reality, I am standing on it and the girl is sitting there prostrated.

If this person is an Adventurer of Origin, there's no point in her age.

But I can't see the age of her appearance and her face either, so I have no idea.

She does look young though.

After a while of muttering, the girl stays silent for a while and lifts her head up slowly.

Ah, young.

Around 20 years old, an outward appearance on the same generation as me.

"Nice to meet you, Makoto-san. I am Hitsuna. You probably already know but, I am one of the Adventurers of Origin. It is not something that needs to be hidden, and since we have met in this way, you probably already know, but I will be saying it, I am the first generation Priestess, even if it wasn't my original intent. Ah, I will bring you tea quickly, so... please take off your shoes and sit." (Hitsuna)

"Ah, don't mind me." (Makoto)

Hitsuna-san slowly stands up and walks pass by my side without doing anything.

There wasn't a shred of hostility.

Uhm...

For now, I head to the designated place. To the table at the opposite side of where she was sittted, I take off my shoes and sit.

When I try checking the location with Sakai, I learned we are in the same floor.

Great.

The accuracy of the information gain slightly decreasing is a point that bothers me a bit, but this space itself doesn't bring harm to me.

The thought transmission received..... no response from anyone.

Regarding Tomoe and Mio, I can tell that they are alright.

Since we have been separated, that means she is my opponent?

It is quite different from what I expected.

No, it is completely outside my expectations.

“Or more like, she knew my name as if it were natural. And... she is an Adventurer of Origin and the first generation Priestess huh. The other is... she is shorter than me which is rare to see aside from children.” (Makoto)

This is important.

Excluding children and certain demi-human races, there’s few people who are shorter than me with the same age appearance as me.

Just now, Hitsuna-san passed by me and she was only tall enough to reach my chin.

It felt fresh.

“Sorry for the wait. Ara, you are in seiza, what a mannered person. It is okay to relax.” (Hitsuna)

Hitsuna-san returns.

In a space of time that didn’t feel unnatural.

She places a teacup that is steaming quite a bit in front of me, puts the tray down as well, and sits down.

There’s coffee inside.

Ah, now that I think about it, Hitsuna-san’s hair color is indigo blue.

Rokuya-san and his group were things like white or silver.

Hm?

“Thanks.” (Makoto)

“...Sorry. The men in our side all love coffee, so I made some out of habit. Did you like

tea or black tea more?" (Hitsuya)

"No, I also like coffee as well." (Makoto)

While responding to the words of Hitsuna-san, I noticed.

Adventurer of Origin.

Hearing that, I understood.

However...

"First generation... Priestess?" (Makoto)

"Eh?"

"Uhm, Hitsuna-san, you said you were the first generation Priestess just now, right?"
(Makoto)

Now that it has gone through my head, it is quite the statement.

When talking about Priestess, she is referring to that one, right?

The one that is currently in the party of Senpai at the present day and is the symbol of Lorel Union.

"Yeah. We had an agreement with Root, and there were a variety of circumstances, so I left that seat not long after, but... I was a Priestess of Lorel Union, its first generation and the foundation of it." (Hitsuna)

...The Adventurers of Origin really have a lot of talents.

Unexpected developments, meeting people with unexpected titles.

In order to calm down, I take a sip of the coffee.

Hm, it is crazy good.

If this were sold as a specialty product of the labyrinth, it would profit big.

Oops, my merchant part came out.

It is good that I am able to buy time like this, but what should I do from now on.

Seeing that I sipped the coffee, Hitsuna-san smiles as she also drinks of her own teacup.

It has the scent of plum tea.

Chapter 275

The fight progresses with Tomoe's excitement

"Against only three intruders...!!"

"Why are we being restrained to this level?!"

"Or more like, what is the healing party doing?! Isn't their job to do continuous healing?! High Heal, Mana Heal, Cure, and Circle Heal! At any rate, I am counting on you guys until you completely run out of stock!"

"We are already doing our very best here! Or more like, you guys, don't go dull even when we are healing you! Your stamina should be plenty and we should have dealt with all your abnormal status effects!!"

"Our defense skills and enhancements should have been perfect as well, and yet, what unbelievable attack power they have!!"

Picnic Rose Garden is being stirred up.

The defensive battle that they are the most specialized in, and moreover, in their home that's their number one base. On top of that, the opponent's forces have already been split up and they are supposed to be dealing with only three people; those were supposed to be exceptional victory conditions, and yet...

Hmmm, looks like things are going well.

Beren, Hokuto, and Shii are managing things smoothly.

...

It has been a while since I have tasted such nostalgic coffee, and there's the scent of peach tea that I can smell slightly from where I am.

There's coffee in this world as well, but how to say it, this is nostalgic.

That's right, it is like the black canned coffee.

The instant type?

While I was thinking of such pointless things, I was confirming the current state of the battle that I was being shown, and I could tell that a smile surfaced in my face.

"Noma and Ryoma-san, you two are getting way too agitated... Sivaf, you are stepping way too forward; Clemyu, what are you doing?! Your healing is not making it in time! Aniki-kun is as always too... Geez!"

And Hitsuna who was opposite of me was shouting pointlessly while looking, not at me, but at the picture that is being shot from above the battle.

What was being projected in mid-air, where there's nothing, was a big picture the size of a 58 inches tv.

The first thing that girl did when she sipped her tea once and said 'now then', was this projection.

Since she was going to do something, I matched her magic activation with my own [Brid], but for some reason, it didn't work.

I have tried to stealthily activate it a few times already, but it looks like my magic is not activating.

My Magic Armor is active though...

There are many powers of the Wise that I simply don't understand.

Are the names like Noma and Ryoma part of the members of Picnic Rose Garden?

I don't know who she is retorting to and for what, but if I were to understand what she was retorting to, it might be unexpectedly amusing.

I did try to confirm with [Sakai] just in case, and it seems this is without doubt a live feed.

In this current state where I can't attack Hitsuna-san, I am simply spectating the projection together with her.

By the way, this is not projected here but, Tomoe and Mio are also fighting at different places.

Tomoe is fighting Hakumokuren-san and Ginebia-san; Mio is fighting Rokuya-san.

It is a bit different from planned, but our preparations are properly working.

With how things are going, Beren and the others should have no problems for now.

Then, buying time is the number one job for me.

“!! He was able to take a direct hit of the Asura Fist of Ageha-chan?! Is that big Arke man only a ninja in appearance?!” (Hitsuna)

“No, even if he looks like that, he can properly do tricky moves, you know? See there?” (Makoto)

In a remarkably short amount of time, a terrifying amount of power was condensed in one fist; this deadly attack that was fitting to be called a finisher move was aiming at Shii.

Even as a Forest Oni, contrary to her small physique, she is a power-fighter, but I do think it would have been bad if she were to take a direct hit from that attack.

But Shii jumped and avoided the fist, and in substitute, the one who got the brunt of the attack was the Arke, Hokuto, who had slipped in between those two.

The attack was already not going to reach Shii, but Hokuto probably thought of doing this in case there was a follow-up attack from the other party.

Using his elbow that was heavily protected by armor, he took on the attack of the female physical combatant that’s apparently called Ageha.

Thinking about it normally, this should have hurt quite a lot, but she didn’t show any signs of faltering, and was showering Hokuto with a barrage of attacks as she rotates.

What scary strength of mind.

Of course, her physical strength is also unbelievable.

“Eh?”

Hitsuna reacts to my words and looks at me.

Hokuto receives the barrage of Ageha, deflects them, avoids them, and controls the moves of Shii who had ‘escaped’ into the air.

Thread.

With the visage of saving Shii while in the middle of the air, Hokuto had attached a strong string on her.

Shii, who had escaped into the air, was evading the follow-up attacks that were raining down upon her with unbelievable movements, and brandished her metal rod.

It made a sudden acceleration as it was swung down, and this attack filled with brute force was smashed at an area where people were gathered.

Hokuto and Shii; a combination attack that was done with great coordination.

While taking out new equipment one after the other, Beren was parrying the light-armored warriors specialized in speed and crushes them; that figure of his was also splendid.

...No, instead of calling those guys light-armored warriors, they are more like assassins that possess high-dexterity and fire power.

The word raiders really does fit them well.

The support from the backline is also superb.

Right now, Beren is utilizing the treasured weapons of the Eldwas without any frugality and, not only arrows, even throwing weapons are mostly ineffective, and the opponents that are fighting him head on are most likely more inclined into evasion than defense, they are continuously receiving attacks from the blunt weapon of Beren that has a crazy accuracy endowed in it.

It is a development that is incredibly compatible with Beren.

Utilizing his weapons to its maximum capability, he is turning the battle into his favor.

This is a development that was most likely brought by specially because he is a dwarf.

Even so, nullifying the long ranged attacks and his accuracy rate; both of those things are fields that the Elder Dwarfs put their efforts in after seeing me.

In other words, Beren still has more of those kind of equipment in his ring.

I began pitying the enemies in a variety of meanings, but in a sense, this also means I can be at ease.

“Haaah... they are strong. But even so, this is strange. No matter how you see it, the healing is too slow. Could it be that you guys did something? But doing something as dangerous as inhibiting healing magic which would hinder you guys as well would just be too unbelievable...” (Hitsuna)

“...”

Yeah, if they still think in that way, it is still okay.

Instead of asking me directly, she is giving the atmosphere of a spectator that's muttering her own impressions to herself as she watches the battle.

If healing magic is completely unusable, depending on how the fight goes, the chances of deaths appearing would be incredibly high.

If we did that, we would putting the cart before the horse. It goes against our objective.

Or more like, my current situation is weird too.

I have never had my magic sealed before.

Now that I think about it, in my parallel world life, I have never been afflicted with abnormal status effects.

But it is certain that I can't release magic against the woman that's in front of me. My spell is not activating.

I can manipulate my Magic Armor like normal, and I can use my [Sakai] too though.

It kind of feels... unpleasant.

What to do here.

Tomoe and Mio are still in the middle of battle.

I can't tell if they are playing around, or if the enemy is actually strong; even this, I should have been able to tell, and yet, my thought transmission is not working either.

It might even be possible that Tomoe and Mio are in a state where they can't sense me.

We are the ones that want to buy time, and we are currently able to smoothly do exactly that, but... as expected, this is unpleasant.

"Uhm, Hitsuna-san, may I have a word with you?" (Makoto)

Even if it doesn't work, I still try to throw a straight ball.

"What is it, Makoto-kun?" (Hitsuna)

"For a while now, I haven't been able to activate magic. Are you doing something?" (Makoto)

At the very least, something that's not magic.

It is probably something that is the same as my [Sakai], a special skill that only people that came from Japan can utilize.

But at this rate, the only option I have is to bring this into a physical battle.

That might actually be the right option though.

I have been relying on [Sakai] for a lot until now, but seriously, abilities that can't be detected are really useful.

...That's why, now that I am experiencing it myself, I can tell how tough it is.

"That's right. Takane-kun told me that pinning down your casting is one of the things I should do. You are right now in a safety zone I created. Fighting against you in magic would be way too much for me after all." (Hitsuna)

Takane huh.

The owner of that voice just now.

Must be the administrator of this labyrinth.

“Safety zone huh.” (Makoto)

“That’s right. Whether it is magic or physical, this domain won’t allow any kind of attacks to others. That’s my special ability.” (Hitsuna)

“...I feel like that’s an incredibly unfair ability though.” (Makoto)

An invincible space.

The kind that forcefully turns a fight into a draw?

How fiendish.

“At a glance, yeah. The limitations are quite a lot, so it is hard to utilize. It was by chance that this time I was able to properly set it up. That’s how it is, so let’s spectate together and take it easy. Oh?! Bia and Haku are going for it!” (Hitsuna)

...

Bia and Haku...

Tomoe’s place!

No, wait, that place looks like it is going plenty well.

More importantly... the limitations are many?

It is hard to utilize?

Just hearing that she can create a domain that doesn’t allow any attacks makes me view it as an incredibly good skill.

But it seems there’s holes in it.

Should I try concentrating with [Sakai] to investigate it?

At any rate! Staying like this is out of the question.

While I act as if I am watching the projected image of Tomoe that had appeared in the room, I began investigating the full details of this so called Safety Zone.

Placing the burden on everyone... is not amusing for me.

I will definitely do something about this, so, just for a bit longer, I am counting on you guys.



“Gu... nu?!”

“Dancing Bow, Septentrion! Fo-llo-wing! Mirror image, Basilisk Lance!!”

The moment Tomoe showed slight signs of placing strength in her legs to close the distance... Hakumokuren, who carried a large-sized bow on her back, made a graceful dance at the same time as she flickers the whip at her right hand.

In an instant, seven arrows appear in mid-air right in front of her, came in contact with her whip, and were shot in a straight line towards Tomoe.

With her long sword and activation of a barrier, Tomoe cuts the arrows at a terrifying speed and receives them. The arrows of this dancer that she had received, were fast and heavy, and most of all, sharp.

Tomoe had deemed Hakumokuren's bow skills as the highest level of a true marksman.

Tomoe was honestly underestimating the skills that the adventurers use, but the skills that Hakumokuren utilizes and her ability with the bow she was showing was by no means something to be underestimated. Her power and coordination was visibly high class.

“Tch, the next one you are using your bow huh. Seriously, what a skilfull one you are-ja no!” (Tomoe)

The distance between them stayed as it was, and in the small space of time that was created from Tomoe deflecting those seven continuous attacks, Hakumokuren had

already taken a stance with the bow that was at her back and shot with it.

But an arrow didn't come from her front.

The time it took for Tomoe to open her eyes wide and begin to move probably didn't even take a second, and yet, it couldn't be called a fast reaction.

A heavy arrow approaches from her back.

The barrier that was deployed had been pierced, and while clicking her tongue in her mind, Tomoe unsheathes the short sword with her open left hand and cuts down the approaching arrow.

"What?! Ugh!!" (Tomoe)

Those body movements and reaction time used to intercept the attack were on a terrifying level.

Even so, as if the intercepted arrow was some sort of signal, a second arrow with the same trajectory that was surely not there a second ago was approaching Tomoe.

There was already no way to deal with it.

The right arm of Tomoe that had the longsword in hand had an arrow pierce through it.

At the same time, weakening and petrifying effects were assailing her.

With a single breath, Tomoe blew away those two status effects with plain fighting spirit.

"You have done it now... You... ouch!" (Tomoe)

"No matter how strong you are, lowering your guard can cost you your life, you know! [Ultimate Rotation], [Holy Light Dance]!" (Ginebia)

A terrifying amount of magic power was gathered in those fists of the priest that looked as if just touching that light would turn you into dust.

Ginebia had closed the distance between herself and Tomoe on her own, and laughs

fearlessly at point blank range.

This was already not even in the range of a katana anymore.

Then, in what range is it? Fists.

It was the space for fists.

Tomoe was completely caught by surprise, and this one moment that was provided to Ginebia allowed her to step into her finishing move.

(This is bad. This sensation is just like Waka's—!!) (Tomoe)

The moment the woman that was wearing priest garbs stepped forward, chills ran through the spine of Tomoe and made her body shudder.

Nostalgia and fear; the pain she felt in first meeting she had with her master had resurfaced in her mind.

The light fists approach her.

Where should she guard?

With that dazzling light that even made it hard to see where the attack was coming from, her vision was blocked completely.

Tomoe reflexively guards her head, and then... she felt a dull and heavy attack from her abdomen.

"Guuuuh! Damn it!!!" (Tomoe)

"If it were done with just one attack, it wouldn't be called ultimate rotation!" (Ginebia)

"Nuuu?! Guuuuh!!" (Tomoe)

With the momentum of that attack, a storm of punches that came from left and right coupled with centrifugal force had enveloped Tomoe.

The moment the violent sounds of light explosions and blunt hits had stopped, Tomoe was blown off to the far back, and laid down on the ground face up.

After finishing a deep breath, Ginebia returns to where her partner is.

“Hm, good job, Bia.” (Haku)

“It has been awhile since I have done such a wild dance. Aah, I have shown a sight that shouldn’t be shown as a priest~~.” (Ginebia)

“How about just considering yourself a fist monk? I feel like Bia’s Holy Cross-type skills are different to normal, in a variety of meanings.” (Haku)

“Why?! Increase the power of your holy element with prayers and release an attack that makes the enemy withdraw. Isn’t that exactly what mine is as well?!” (Ginebia)

“The base of it is the only thing that’s barely similar. Well, this must be what’s called ‘the mysteries of words’.” (Haku)

“Just to warn you but, this is totally not over yet, okay?! Don’t lower your guard, got it?” (Ginebia)

With a dissatisfied expression, Ginebia orders Hakumokuren to confirm the situation of the battle.

“I know. If this were a simple Superior Dragon, after that full hit, what would be left to do is gather the corpse, but... the opponent is a Superior Dragon that has made a pact with a japanese person and has changed her original form. As long as it didn’t leave her with no damage, it is good. This is truly tiresome...” (Hakumokuren)

“Yeah.” (Ginebia)

The two of them respectively left a skill and spell in standby, and both continue to warily watch Tomoe who is bend down.

“...Well well, this is a sensation I haven’t felt in a long while-ja yo. Spilling blood I wasn’t planning on spilling. In normal circumstances, that splendid skill and magic combination would warrant a handshake from me. Ah, right-ja. This is... how it felt to fight against an enemy.” (Tomoe)

“.....”

Tomoe spoke, stood on her knee, brushed off the dust on her clothes, and stood back

up.

She picks up the short sword she let go when she fell, slowly sheathes it back, and hits her back with the longsword that she didn't let go of.

Using her left hand to grab the arrow that pierced her upper arm, it soon turned into mist and disappeared.

At the same time, her wound also closes.

Spitting out the accumulated blood inside her mouth, the body that should have received quite the amount of blows was not showing a single scratch.

And then, in place of that, there was one trait that was clearly different from before; what had appeared in the face of Tomoe -those eyes of hers.

They looked like those of a reptile, but it had something completely different from it; eyes that released overwhelming power.

Eyes that only the monarchs of illusory beasts possess –no, it went further above that, eyes that only a few handful possess; those eyes were releasing absolute nobility and despair to its surroundings.

“Uwa, dragon eyes. Finally entering battle mode huh. This surpasses the usual dragon roar.” (Haku)

Hakumokuren analyzed the effects that those eyes were manifesting.

Her expression was not showing as much leisure as her manner of speaking.

“In other words, it is that? Like when Frieza-sama transformed?” (Ginebia)

“...Maybe she has only come down from her pod?” (Haku)

“Then, we should give up on a frontal attack. From now on, it will be the time for deception and gambles. How about that, Haku?” (Ginebia)

“I'm in.” (Haku)

Ginebia and Haku had sweat flowing down their face. Doing frivolous talk that only

both of them as japanese would understand, they gulp down.

“I acknowledge it.” (Tomoe)

“?”

“Hakumokuren and Ginebia; I acknowledge both of your strengths. I acknowledge you as strong. You didn’t stand before me with foolish confidence, and are actually people that have fitting strength and experience to stand before me.” (Tomoe)

“.....”

The tone of Tomoe was low and... cold... it had changed into a freezing one.

Her words were praising her opponents, and yet, that voice that was reaching the ears of those two contained an abnormal amount of pressure.

“I have shed the blood that Waka didn’t wish us to shed.” (Tomoe)

Even when she is in a half-body stance, she doesn’t prepare her katana and artlessly held it in her hand.

It was clearly a different stance from the swordsmen that these girls have fought against.

“This silver hair, which was the proof of being given further power, has rubbed onto blood... and has been tainted.” (Tomoe)

When she touched her hair with her free hand, sand falls down.

Right now, Tomoe is in the boosted state where Makoto provided her power.

Her hair color being silver instead of blue was proof of it.

“Fufu, good grief. If I lower my guard for a little bit, a sense of almightyness fills my body. I have to get used to it a bit more or this will continue being something that would be wasted on me-ja no. Getting haughty so easily and ending up like this right off the bat, seriously pathetic.” (Tomoe)

Slight complaints towards her master were mixed in her wry smile, but blowing away

those emotions in an instant, those eyes of hers were directed at the girls that were standing at her front without lowering their guards.

“But even with that! Even if we have given you everything, even the location advantage! No matter if the chance of the victory we are looking for is sliding on thin ice! This disgrace can’t be forgiven!

This anger is probably in part directed at myself!! You don’t mind if I repay you for that, right?!” (Tomoe)

Along with the words that were spilled out one after the other, magic power was released as if striking onto them.

Several types of spells were instantly casted, and for the two adventurers that have lengthy experience, that activation was unknown for them.

Tomoe had voiced out her own disadvantage, but those were also things that could be said about Ginebia and Haku.

For them as adventurers to fight against an opponent that they are facing for the first time, knowing full well that that person was clearly stronger, and being unable to escape from it; that in itself was an impossible task for them akin to telling them to die.

The original job of adventurers is to survive and bring back information of the opponent, so no matter how many advantages they are given, there are existences that they should avoid fighting against.

For example; an unknown existence that far surpasses a Superior Dragon.

“Fuuh... from here on, we will harden our defenses and aim for a counter...” (Haku)

“And then, bring it to a battle of attrition. I know, Haku. Leave the support to me. I am counting on you for the fire power and distraction.” (Ginebia)

“There’s no yes or no in this. When we overcome this, the sake we will drink today will definitely taste exquisite!” (Haku)

Ginebia and Haku took their battle stances with all their resolve in it.

Even when receiving the pressure that surpassed the roar of a dragon, they still managed to take a stance.

This told how much experience these two had as adventurers and their high ability.

“Well then...” (Tomoe)

Tomoe points the tip of her katana, that was clad in a faint blue light, to the two and mutters.

Hakumokuren prepared her whip, Ginebia her glove; both of them exchanging sharp gazes with Tomoe.

Tomoe laughs daringly, and Haku and Ginebia both nod at the same time.

“Begin!!”

With the spirit of both sides blasting, the signal to resume the battle was shouted, and spells and skills were released in an instant.

The conclusion was close; that’s the kind of feeling that was being keenly transmitted from this spectacle.

The fight between the other follower of Makoto and the assassin was also about to reach its conclusion.

Chapter 276

Mio's Weakness

Mio's attack cuts through the air.

It didn't hit again.

Suppressing his presence is probably the special ability of Rokuya and some sort of job skill in the assassin category.

(He is good to a bothersome level-desu wa. I have never seen a more perfected hit-and-run that utilizes evasion and blind spots this well.) (Mio)

With another sigh she has been doing for who knows how many times already, Mio is impressed by the technique of Rokuya who she is fighting against.

At times, she would catch his presence or she catch his figure with her eyes, but her attacks end up being avoided like just now.

And yet, opposite to this, Rokuya has been dealing powerful attacks to her from every direction.

At core, Mio does not place importance in defense and evasion.

Or more like, she doesn't need to do it.

And so, the strategy of hit-and-run of Rokuya fits perfectly in a bad way for her.

But...

(Well, the damage that I am receiving is slower compared to the speed I am recovering at, so there's no point though. What's strange is that there's no way this rude and outspoken man wouldn't notice.) (Mio)

Mio had shot a serious spell at first, but after that, she has been dealing with Rokuya without being serious anymore.

It is true that he is a problematic opponent to hit attacks at, but once one attack actually connects, the match will be completely decided, is how she thinks.

There's most likely not even a 1% chance of Mio's attacks hitting Rokuya.

But Mio doesn't think of that percentage as small.

She understands that there's no need to be in a hurry.

As long as it is not going against the instructions of Makoto, it is fine to do as she always does.

And then, after dulling the movements of Rokuya, she will give him a lesson.

Since he is immortal, it shouldn't be a problem if she were to release her restraint a little bit.

Mio was thinking in this way.

It looks as if she is calm... and angry.

In other words, the same old Mio. She is operating as normal.

"Shadow stroll, [Skywalk]; domain of Gods [Chronos Filing]." (Rokuya)

(That's most likely the skill that makes it almost impossible to grasp his presence. The other is probably something that increases the reaction speed of his body.) (Mio)

Rokuya showed up in a slightly faraway location, and then, when he utilized his skill again, his figure disappears again and Mio is unable to catch his presence anymore.

From there, he uses enhanced skills and attacks in conjunction. This is a pattern that has been repeated countless times already.

Shortly thereafter, the presence of Rokuya is caught in the perception of Mio. A bit fast.

Mio continues sighing as she shoots a darkness bullet.

"[Counter Death Scythe]!" (Rokuya)

(As I thought. Eh?) (Mio)

“Fang that destroys the soul, [Soul Slaughter]!” (Rokuya)

It didn't end with only the pattern that has been repeated countless times. When Mio showed an opening from her weariness, Rokuya closed the distance and hit her with the katar that had a dark purple blade.

The strongest attack until now had hit the side of Mio.

At the same time, a miasma that invites death spreads into her body and was eating away the magic power that was clad on Mio as well.

Mio has defeated several assassins already, but this attack is a first for her.

“Without taking your time in the attack that connected, you once again disappear. And it was quite the brutal technique.” (Mio)

Mio perceived something with her instinct and reflexively clampers up.

Right after, from her right shoulder she placed to cover up her right side, the same attack was dealt.

When she looks at that place, she could see Rokuya there.

She could see him, but there was not a single trace of his presence.

Even though she could see him, he wasn't there.

A strange sensation was transmitted to Mio.

“[Enchant Poison, Ghoul Witch], [Enhance, Ogre]” (Rokuya)

“!!”

In that instant that felt as if it was a ‘oh crap’ moment, and the instant that felt as if she had been perplexed by a strange sensation, Mio, who had noticed the pattern of her opponent and saw Rokuya preparing his katars by crossing them together... smiled.

“Then... the equality of 4,000 lives turned to dust, [Wind of Destruction]” (Rokuya)

The figure of the assassin disappeared, and in place of that, a black mist passed by Mio.

“Finally brought it out. A combo attack and your trump card huh.” (Mio)

Several thousands of deadly attacks were assaulting the body of Mio.

And yet, Mio had received that attack without breaking that smile from her face and didn't show any care about her kimono that was being steadily torn off.

“...After receiving that, this is your impression of it? Well well, you are far stronger than I expected.” (Rokuya)

Rokuya had returned to his usual atmosphere he had when he first met Makoto's group and spoke.

Mio's knees fell to the ground, but the blade storm didn't allow her to fall down, and yet, he spoke in such a calm manner. In a sense, this manner of act was scary in itself.

“ ... ”

As expected, there was no response from Mio.

“This attack is the one with the strongest power I currently have at hand. If you were to come to our territory and had twice the power I had assumed you had, this should have been plenty enough to deal with you guys, but as expected, it just won't go as planned huh.” (Rokuya)

‘Good grief’ is what Rokuya says as he holds his head with his hand and shrugs his shoulders.

Utilizing skills continuously, moving continuously, and attacking continuously; there's no way he wouldn't get tired.

That's also one of the reasons why Mio is not growing impatient.

Because she understood that the one who will be running out of stamina first will be the opponent.

And then... the storm stops.

He thought that she would fall, but Mio simply stood up like nothing and patted her body from up to down.

“!!!”

A black kimono instantly covered the body of Mio.

There was not a single trace of a cut, and there were no signs of the skin color change caused by poison.

It was all like when she first got teleported to this place.

The shock of Rokuya couldn't be helped.

“...Even if you catch me by surprise, even if you shower me with attacks, even if you hit me with a finishing move; your attacks won't reach me.” (Mio)

“They were reaching... is what I thought though...” (Rokuya)

“Those splendid katars of yours, or more like, your blades in general and the several types of poisons you used won't leave a single wound in my body.” (Mio)

“...It is just as you say.” (Rokuya)

“The compatibility is good, don't you think? Is the confidence of that big mouth of yours still remaining?” (Mio)

The words of Mio continue on.

That's right.

From the very beginning, Mio had the intentions of watching all that Rokuya had to bring out.

She had decided that she would receive them all and laugh at him.

And after that, she would punish him.

With the carefully selected lineup of punishments she has repeated against Shiki and the small number of rude ones at Asora.

Going into details, it would be: scouring, mopping, rotary cutting, and pocky; those ones are settled, and any others are added on her whim.

That's how Mio's plan goes.

"...Yeah, that hasn't changed. From within that group, you were the one I was the most compatible against. Today, with these conditions, I have confidence that I will definitely not lose." (Rokuya)

"What did you say?" (Mio)

Mio reflexively asked back.

The eyes of Rokuya did show fatigue, but there was no despair.

Even though he had shown his trump card, he didn't show any signs of giving up.

"After fighting you, my instincts whispered to me that maybe your objective was buying time, you see. And so, I thought that instead of the objective planned at first, it would be better to defeat the Calamity Spider." (Rokuya)

"..."

How displeasing, is what Mio straightly felt from this.

Just like Rokuya said, this battle has way too many advantages on one side. Even so, there's no doubt the strong ones here are Mio, Tomoe, and Makoto.

And yet, this old adventurer standing in front of her was not trying to oppose her, but defeat her.

This isn't something that Mio could forgive.

"But, even when I tried to analyze the many battles going around while attacking you, I was unable to grasp any decisive conclusion. The former Superior Dragon, Tomoe-dono, having a tough fight, and on the contrary, the group of that dwarf is proceeding with the battle predominantly; both of those things were out of my expectations, and those are indeed key factors, but it definitely doesn't show what's on the other side of the door." (Rokuya)

“...That’s why, even if you had to take the method that required time, you were thinking of defeating me first and then join in the information gathering yourself.” (Mio)

“Yeah, that’s how it would be. Or more like, it has already been done.” (Rokuya)

“Are you... referring to the poisons that are combining inside of me? If that’s what you mean, that’s quite the overly optimistic preparation you had.” (Mio)

“By no means. The poison was just a decoy. The weakness I am sure you have is not related to poison. Or rather, poison wouldn’t work on you at all. In the first place, for a long time... the Calamity Spider has had no weaknesses.” (Rokuya)

Rokuya lifted both of his hands as if stating his surrender.

If someone is able to obtain a piece of the hard carapace, thread, fangs, claws, or poison of the Calamity Spider, they would be able to buy a house with it.

All of them are high grade ingredients, and at the same time, they are the proof that the Calamity Spider has conquered all the weaknesses a spider mamono has.

The Calamity Spider has no weaknesses.

Until now, there hasn’t been a single one who has been able to defeat it.

It is exactly because Rokuya has been in the know of the bad news that the Calamity Spider has brought about for longer than the normal adventurers that he is able to understand this fact to his very core.

“...”

“But, right now, you are Mio. Not a spider.” (Rokuya)

“What are you trying to say? Yo—Eh?!” (Mio)

“Your footing was neglected. Was it because you didn’t think of my attacks as a threat? Or maybe because you thought that combo attack was my trump card? Or it might be because you lowered your guard with the combining poisons? Whatever the case, you noticed way too late.” (Rokuya)

The state of affairs were affirming the words of Rokuya.

The footing of Mio was producing a faint light and several gears restrained the body of Mio.

Unknown if this was real or an illusion, it looked like some of those gears had melded with the body of Mio, and at times, they would make some sort of rough noise.

The gears that didn't even reach ten, began to slowly rotate, and it seems that that movement was proving painful for her, her expression distorts into anguish.

Legs, arms, waist, shoulders, neck, chest...

Gears were enfolded around every part of Mio's body.

This is the true trump card Rokuya aimed at Mio.

"This is... a type of restraining barrier huh. Moreover, it even generously adds pain! I don't think this is the kind of skill an assassin would use, but no matter how powerful it is, to think you would use something like a barrier as a trump card against me." (Mio)

"Just as you have guessed, this is not a skill from my guild or my job; it is an ability that only I can use in this world. Gears of fantasy, [Grim Tale Gear]." (Rokuya)

"Grim Tale?! I don't care about the name. If this is your trump card, I will tear it down into pieces-!!" (Mio)

"No, you should listen. This ability can only be used on certain people of power, and as an assassin, it possesses an incredibly powerful effect." (Rokuya)

"...It is true that this is something that even super specialized magicians wouldn't be able to reach in their lifetime! Leaving aside if this would be effective against me though!" (Mio)

Mio responded to the words of Rokuya, but wasn't complying to them.

The rotation of the gears was slowly but surely becoming slower.

It is also beginning to create creaking ear-piercing sounds.

This is proof that the barrier was clearly about to be destroyed.

“Therefore, there’s a particular restriction to those restrains.” (Rokuya)

“Res... triction?” (Mio)

“”If there’s someone who destroys this restrains with their own strength, the fantasy gears will provide a blessing.” (Rokuya)

“Fufufufu! What’s with that?! There’s nothing good for you! Using a power that’s too much for you; rather than calling it a restriction, it is more of a price!” (Mio)

“That’s right. It restrains the target physically and magically, and will slowly lead them to their death. The only way to get out of it would be to destroy all the gears while in a state of having your power restrained in all senses. It is a power that’s wasted on me.” (Rokuya)

“No matter how great it is, it is just a matter of time before it is destroyed! If this is all you have, it is time for your punishment, Rokuya. I won’t let you escape.” (Mio)

“You are truly scary. If you are able to destroy this, you will be released from all your *bindings* and be free.” (Rokuya)

“I see, that’s great to hear! After all, I will be able to teach you your own posi— All the... bindings?” (Mio)

The words of Mio suddenly lose their heat.

It seems she noticed something.

Rokuya has already noticed.

No, his aim was that from the very beginning.

The weak point of, not the spider, but Mio... that is...

“All your bindings. Any kind of pact, restrain, restriction; all your bindings will be destroyed along with the fantasy gears.” (Rokuya)

“...Rokuya... you!!!” (Mio)

“Of course, it would be the same if you just have them bound again later. But, can you

really throw that away with your own hands? The pact that is your bond between you and Makoto. The pact that led to being given the name Mio. The pact that was most likely the first one you have formed in your life.” (Rokuya)

“Fuh....!! Fuuuh....!!” (Mio)

“...It is true that Makoto-kun, who you treasure more than anything, is stronger than you. We wouldn’t be able to take him as hostage, and depending on the situation, he might even be more of a problem than you. We wouldn’t be able to use this kind of method as a weakness. But you... your love for Makoto-kun is excessive. To the point that you wouldn’t throw away a single thing he has given to you even if it cost you your life. That’s how much you love him. That’s a weak point. You can’t do something like throwing away the pact you have with him with your own hands. At the very least, at present, you can’t.” (Rokuya)

“!!!! !!!”

She increased the strength, but, showing an expression as if fearing the creaking sounds of the gears, she decreased her strength, and accepts the pain.

“Well then, stay like that for a while please. I will be going.” (Rokuya)

“...Quite... impressive. To think you had set up such a threat, I wouldn’t have expected it at all. But, even if I have given up on fighting back... these gears can’t kill me, you know? It only hurts a little.” (Mio)

“Having you stay there obediently is plenty enough.” (Rokuya)

“And also, Rokuya, I won’t let you go anywhere. The first spell I shot, do you know what it was?” (Mio)

“The first spell you shot? Ah, the one you used to catch me?” (Rokuya)

“No-desu wa. In a radius of around 300 meters, I made it so noooo one can leave. If it’s Waka-sama and Tomoe-san, they would be able to leave in given time but, I wonder if you would be able to accomplish that?” (Mio)

“?!”

Rokuya opens his eyes wide.

“At any rate, it would be troublesome if you were to escape, so only that one spell, I placed serious power when activating it. The effective time of this ability is not eternal, right? It is a powerful ability after all. If the gears disappear naturally... let's go for a round 2. I won't lose next time. The punishment is still on hold, okay? Ufufufufufufu~~~.” (Mio)

“Tch! A draw was one of the worst developments within the possible scenarios! At the very least, I have to silence the group of that dwarf!” (Rokuya)

Glancing at the unmoving Mio for a second, Rokuya's figure disappears.

Only the small laugh filled with anger of Mio remained in that place, and Rokuya was unable to get out from the space that Mio had setup there.

Mio was unable to move because of the gears' restrain; Rokuya was sprinting at full speed in search for a seam in Mio's spell.

In this space where the battle had finished, there's currently no deaths.



“Ah, so that's how it is.”

“...You are interested in the battle between Rokuya-san and Mio-san? Sorry, I can't show you due to Rokuya-san's request.” (Hitsuna)

“Eh?”

“Ara, did I misinterpret that?” (Hitsuna)

“This is your territory anyways. Well, I understand that there's a lot going on on your side. What I got just now..... was your power, Hitsuna-san.” (Makoto)

“?!”

“You called it ‘Safety Zone’, right? You said so before but, it is certainly not an invincible space.” (Makoto)

...It is just slight but, I felt the emotions of rage from Mio.

It is a situation I didn't expect.

Even so, in order to change the situation, I have to do something about this space first.

The analysis of it... is probably finished.

"Cutting off the attacks from the outside, and also deploying a space that prohibits fights inside. I see, it does sound like a power in an MMO. The condition for its activation is not a catalyst, but time." (Makoto)

"..."

"It seems like this is the type that is tough on its effective time and cooldown time." (Makoto)

"And Makoto-kun has an ability that can analyze our abilities? This might be out of expectations." (Hitsuna)

"So, it looks like you can't shorten the effective time from inside, but judging from its composition, I thought that maybe attacks from outside would manage to reduce the effective time." (Makoto)

"!!"

The expression of Hitsuna changes.

If that expression was translated into words, it would be: 'yeah, that's right'.

Looks like she is the type that can't hide things.

I feel like we can be friends.

I feel like we can do some relaxing trades.

"Uhm, Makoto-kun? Where did that mass of magic power, that was coming out from you, go?" (Hitsuna)

"Ah, are you talking about the thing I can bring out whenever I want?" (Makoto)

In the time she was completely concentrated in the amazing combination attack of the

two adventurers against Tomoe, I utilized a blind spot she wouldn't have been able to notice unless she stood up.

"Yeah yeah, that." (Hitsuna)

"I was wondering if I could let it out from the Safety Zone, you see. So I stretched it a bit." (Makoto)

"What did you say?!" (Hitsuna)

"And... you know..." (Makoto)

"..."

Hitsuna gulps.

But the answer had no mercy.

"I managed to let it out." (Makoto)

It seems I myself can't get out, but the Magic Armor was able to leave by squeezing through a part of the Safety Zone that was relatively far from me.

"Geh?!" (Hitsuna)

"And so, I will be taking my leave now." (Makoto)

If possible, after assisting Tomoe and Mio, I would like to help out Beren and the others too.

By that time, we should be able to move the situation heavily.

We will achieve our objective while protecting everyone.

It is about time I make my move as well.

Chapter 277

Yarn, Crimson Lotus, and Asora Weapon

A big man that surpasses 2 meters in height.

Being covered by an armor of bursting muscle, he possesses defensive power and endurance that matches his physical appearance. But even when his appearance clearly tells that he is the frontline type, he also specializes in accurate and skillful support.

So unfair.

They are probably using some sort of method to dampen the healing magic greatly, in this current situation where the recovery of the injured is quite slow, the number of enemies has not decreased at all.

Three demi-humans.

Only three.

Even in this overwhelmingly advantageous situation that is fighting in their territory.

They haven't gotten haughty or anything, they are fighting to their best.

While being irritated by this, the captain of Picnic Rose Garden, Vivi, silently continues moving in hiding.

(Ageha and I will defeat that Arke man. Well, I say that, but that Arke called Hokuto is already different from the Arkes that we know. So this is what happens when those things get intelligence huh. Such a pain.) (Vivi)

It was already self-evident that he was an opponent that you would normally avoid battle with.

An organization that has enough war potential to attack their base, and even with overwhelming numbers advantage, there's still no knowing if they can win.

And that organization is a company. This is seriously a funny joke.

But for Vivi, there were no signs of the word armistice popping in her head.

Even if her prided mercenary group is having an unexpected tough fight, there's still cards remaining.

Also, the present leader of Picnic Rose Garden, Vivi Poze, is a deeply emotional person.

It is both a strong point and a weak point though. At any rate, anyone that she considers a comrade of hers, she takes care of them kindly.

Even if they are against an enemy that possesses mighty power that would defeat them in many scenarios, they are the guys that hurt Pione deeply.

And they are the guys that killed all the friends that Pione cried and was ready to lay down her life to save.

In the eyes of Vivi, Pione is family.

It doesn't go as far as seeing her friends as family, but even so, they are acquaintances that were taking shelter in their base for a period of time.

(I know plenty well that revenge doesn't bring forth anything good. But I also know plenty well that there are people that can't move forward without having any sort conclusion to it, not everyone can just forget. If it's for the sake of seeing Pione smile cheerfully once again, this leader of yours, Vivi-san, will be doing her best.) (Vivi)

Probing on the mysterious item lineup that the dwarf was drawing out, and, on top of that, deciding the coordination between one of her partners Ageha by eye contact, Vivi erases her own figure from sight, and finally caught the back of Hokuto.

The stealth skill training of Rokuya was showing its full colors here.

It is not as precise as the person himself, but the usefulness is incredibly high.

And to prove this, Vivi has been cautiously observing Hokuto, Shii, and Beren, and she is confident that they haven't noticed her.

In other words, it is the time to attack.

She has also received contact from the Marikosans that they have already finished their first job and were going to reconvene with them in a few minutes.

They planned on going to help those girls since they were in the most problematic side of the battlefield, and yet, it ended up with those girls coming to help them which made Vivi slightly mortified, but it is true that their enemies are strong.

She should just be happy about the reinforcement.

(Here it is!) (Vivi)

From the direction she was notified beforehand, she detects a volley of light spears, and decides that she will be moving right after that attack impacts.

She is currently in the place where that bombardment will be landing, but, maybe she has confidence in avoiding them all, she didn't show any signs of running away.

"Beren! Hokuto-chi! An attack with light element and a bit of earth element, incoming! The power is above average! Numbers... a lot!" (Shii)

(The Forest Oni, Shii, has already—?!) (Vivi)

"I have already noticed it too. No need to tell us the direction, Shii!" (Hokuto)

"Understood! I mean, roger!" (Shii)

A notification came from Shii, who was fighting in the sky with the thread of Hokuto and her own flying spell.

She perceived the attack almost at the same time it was released, and she let the two below her know.

"Beren, can I leave it to you?" (Hokuto)

"Of course! I have already somewhat understood the strength of this place, you see! It can be mostly blocked by the Aegis Film, but might as well just give them a blast!" (Beren)

In this battlefield where the tension has increased quite a lot, the dwarf Beren responds to the words of the Arke.

The magic attack of the Marikosans is a powerful attack that wouldn't fall behind the death traps of the dungeon's lower levels.

It would be another story if they knew of it beforehand and had prepared a countermeasure for it, but it is not an attack that you would be able to deal with right after seeing.

At the very least, not in the common sense of Picnic Rose Garden.

"Here we go! Bring back Shii here just in case! First of all, [Catapult]!" (Beren)

With the words of Beren, apparatuses that were not that big appeared at both of his sides.

Alarms inside the head of Vivi begin to ring when she sees those things she hasn't seen before within the mysterious items he brought out.

(They look similar to ballistas, but it is slightly different. What is he planning on doing?) (Vivi)

Her uneasiness grows increasingly.

But she can't change her plan too drastically at this point in time.

"Prepare, Blast Spears!" (Beren)

What was summoned now are spears.

In the middle of the handle of the spear, there's a strange mechanism. This is also a weapon Vivi has seen for the first time.

4 spears like the ones used in ballistas.

"Hmph... the attack power and scope... Umu, in that case, the angle would be... next, just have to adjust it, and..." (Beren)

Beren, who has equipped some tough-looking goggles, was muttering something, and then, as if abiding to his words, the 4 apparatuses begin to move.

"Shoot!"

(?!)

The 4 spears were pointed towards the mass of light in the sky -no, the wall of light-and were shot.

The spears and the light made contact, and an intense flash covers a whole area.

And in that moment, a weak vibration resembling an earthquake reverberated in the space.

“So it didn’t take all of them out huh! Well, this next one is something that was created by tinkering with a product the humans manufactured. [Aegis Film]!” (Beren)

(Tch, not a single one is falling! I can’t confirm by sight, but it was blocked! In that case...!!) (Vivi)

A flash and vibrations, even so, Vivi, who had accurately calculated the countdown for the impact, immediately understands that the support fire had shown no effectiveness.

But it can create a blank space where attack and defense are gone temporarily.

In the time they are relieved they were able to block the danger of several hundreds of spells, Vivi will move.

Surprise attacks, assassinations, finishing moves; all of those are her repertoire.

No matter how cornered they are, she is a person that shows incredibly high ability.

“History of the Asura Empire, [99 thorns]!!” (Vivi)

“?!! This is...!” (Hokuto)

Hokuto reflexively takes a defensive stance against the shadow that went around from his side to his front and activated a skill.

One of his hands was pulled by a string.

It is Ageha. Vivi’s partner and a trueborn mercenary.

Ageha had trained on the empty-handed techniques, and the Asura First that she utilized was the attack that possessed the highest power from within the attacks Hokuto received in this battle, but the combo attack just now was composed by attacks that were comparable to it.

With only his free right hand, he was unable to deal with the combo of attacks that were being driven onto him by this unknown shadow.

But, he is not a hyuman.

Two more arms appear and he begins to block the punches and kicks that were like a storm.

Hokuto felt that the damage accumulation surpassed the prided regeneration ability of the Arkes and shuddered.

Receiving the 99 attacks, and having sustained heavy damage in his body, what occupied his heart was not fear, but simple admiration.

Feelings of admiration that someone that's not from Asora and has been living in hyuman society could possess such a technique with this much power.

Even if the conditions are disadvantageous for him and his group, this was an opening that was created from him having the confidence of overwhelming the hyumans.

"The preparations are done. Rascal spider, get ready... [White Thrust]!" (Ageha)

The whole body of Ageha was overflowing with the aura of a finishing move.

The loose part of her clothes and her hair were slowly raising.

Seeing her take a half-body stance, Hokuto could tell that the fist that was on the unseen part of her body was gathering power she hadn't shown before.

"You are still continuing huh! Splendid, karate woman!" (Hokuto)

Hokuto slightly moves the hand that was controlling the thread, and he brings out the other remaining 5 arms he has and begins to create even more threads.

"[Adamantine Yarn]!" (Hokuto)

“Fake Art, black crawling hands, [All Hazard].”

“Wa—when did you—” (Ageha)

The fist of Ageha was thrusting onto the shield of threads that was made in an instant.

At that instant...

Hokuto sensed the presence of someone suddenly appearing from behind, and it had the same amount of power from the one he felt at the front, and when he turned his gaze towards that direction, he was shocked.

There was a woman he hadn't seen before right there.

The arm that was holding her dagger was covered with a black something that reached to the elbow.

That's dangerous.

Even Hokuto thought so about that skill.

This unknown woman, Vivi, had already jumped into action by propelling with the full strength of her body in order to take the neck of her prey.

Even if he has an increased number of arms now, he knows that he won't make it in time to guard.

Now that it has come to this, he had no choice but to endure it.

Hokuto, who had resolved himself to receive the attack from behind, was surprised by two things his eyes caught sight of.

“It broke through the adamantite?!” (Hokuto)

“The White Fist won't reach!” (Ageha)

The special technique of Hokuto, adding special properties to the thread that Arkes produce and strengthen it, yarning.

It is a technique that he learned when he decided on faithfully training in his thread

techniques first, and the special properties that can be given are truly varied.

Within those varieties, the adamantine property is short in effective time, but it has also shown that it is capable of repelling most attacks.

He didn't expect that a single punch would be able to break through it.

The finishing move of Ageha that she trusted the most was only able to pierce through a film of the thread and, with only that, it lost all its power and was unable to reach Hokuto.

And the other surprising thing was...

"Heave-ho~~!"

The appearance of an intruder that flew right between Hokuto and Vivi with incredible speed.

She swung down her tough metal rod with all her strength against the black lunge.

It was hard to believe, but the one that was bounced off was the metal rod.

"What unbelievable toughness and speed! Can't be helped then! Now that it has come to this, I will also be showing my trump card..."

"...From what an unbelievable place you are intruding from! Stay quietly at the backlines like the elf you are!" (Vivi)

The momentum of Vivi's attack was killed, but even with that, she once again accumulates strength directed not at the person that intruded but at Hokuto once again.

"If possible, I wanted to finish this fight without using it, but as the partner of Hokuto, I can't step back here!"

The identity of the intruder is the Forest Oni, Shii.

With the same yarning technique, the thread that was connecting Hokuto and Shii was given a strong rubber property, adding that to her own acceleration spell, she managed to interfere instantly.

This was a speed that even Hokuto didn't expect, and it is also the reason of his surprise.

Shii immediately digested that her own prided attack was repelled, and takes a long and narrow test tube-looking bottle with red liquid from the holder at her waist.

A high-pitched sound was made when she broke the seal of it, and she drank it all.

"It looks like the humans desire this as an ingredient for their elixirs, but for us, they are the ingredient for our trump card. Evolution Drug, [Crimson Lotus]!" (Shii)

Red magic power gushes out.

A torrent of raging magic power different from her usual state envelops the body of Shii.

"With this, I will bring you down!" (Vivi)

"No you won't! I won't let you!" (Shii)

The red magic power clad metal rod and the black thrust once again cross.

Both magic powers clash and a powerful shockwave assaults the surroundings.

"What crazy power..." (Vivi)

"Ouch ouch... it really hurts~. My hands went numb. But this is my win. Well then... fly away, [Storm Homerun]!!" (Shii)

Shii holds the metal rod with both hands, and swings widely at Vivi who had her posture heavily crumbled.

The leader of the mercenary group was smashed away to the distance.

And while that happened, Shii had thrown the metal rod and that metal rod chased straight after Vivi.

"Vivi!" (Ageha)

"That Shii, she really did it. Well then, let's take care of this one too then." (Hokuto)

“This is—?! A string?!” (Ageha)

“It is called yarn, a technique of mine. I add a variety of properties to the threads. Woman of valour, you were strong.” (Hokuto)

“...Tch. If the White Fist had connected, the story might have been different, but... this one fight, it is our lost huh.” (Ageha)

Hokuto and Ageha exchange fearless smiles.

A few seconds later, the thread that was coiled around the right fist Ageha used for her attack began to shine... and exploded.

Ageha was blown back towards the place where her comrades were, but they were unable to stop the force of it and were blown back together with her.

“Good grief. They really attacked us aggressively there. I want to believe those were their aces in the group.” (Hokuto)

The slight damage that still remained in his body clouded his expression.

“Yeah. Even if the calculations stated that it would be okay even if we shot the Burst Spears, these guys formed a space that weakened us to a point where we were made to shot those Burst Spears in an underground environment. This is not the handywork of some regular folk. If it weren’t in these kind of circumstances, it is to a level that I would want to bring some great alcohol and listen to the principle behind it. Seriously.” (Beren)

Beren was surprised that he was able to utilize the weapon that is normally not something that can be carefreely utilized outside, and even within Asora, it is classified in a relatively high position.

As a dwarf, he possesses more interest and ability in the generalistic area rather than the specialization area, so he was incredibly interested in the structure of this labyrinth.

“Is there no second volley of the magic attack just now? What are they planning on doing?..... Wait, ah, so that’s how it is.” (Shii)

“Umu.”

“As expected of Waka-sama. It looks like the barrage went to where Waka-sama is.”
(Beren)

The two nod in succession at this.

Because they felt that the thin presence of their lord had now become clear, and at the same time, the spell, that was clad around his body and had been weakening, was once again firmly clad on him.

“Well then, let’s go for one more push.” (Beren)

“Yeah.” (Hokuto)

“I even used an ampoule of the Crimson Lotus, so today I am okay in going at full power. Like, it is okay to wipe them all out, right?” (Shii)

“It probably goes without saying but, don’t kill anyone, okay? Keep it at half-dead.”
(Hokuto)

Shii, who had a fiery light in her eyes, was reiterated by Hokuto.

The fight was beginning to heavily incline towards the Kuzunoha Company.

Chapter 278

Origin of talisman magic

I managed to aim.

I solved the mystery of Hitsuna's Safety Zone and destroyed it.

To explain it in more detail, the space that was supposed to actually last 1 hour, received attacks from the outside and had its time reduced to the point that it disappeared.

Right after, I adjusted the sight at the powerful magician in front of me.

I managed to aim at her.

"You really are merciless!" (Hitsuna)

The time I used to confirm this reality and the time I used to make the attack was practically nothing.

In no time at all, I shot 2 Bridds.

And then, right in the middle of the first and second shot, as if sewing the two of them, an arrow I fired with Azusa slips in.

Seeing this, contrary to her quiet look, Hitsuna quickly took out not a staff but a magic book with unbelievable speed and opened it, but my attack hit both of Hitsuna-san's hands and book.

As I thought, the power was low.

It looks like my precision with [Sakai] has recovered and the prohibition of attacks is gone, but this whole floor is retraining the power of all intruders in this floor, in other words, us.

It is apparently the ability of someone called Takane.

I honestly don't know how to undo that one.

First of all, I will suppress Hitsuna-san, reconvene with Mio and Tomoe, and then, go to where Beren's group is.

And so, onto the first part.

"Protector of Paradise, [Guardian]; Blade of Determination, [Stiletto]; Conviction, [White Card]." (Makoto)

"You are using ritual magic class spells without any arias?! Ah geez! Origin page spell formation, [Note Spell]!!" (Hitsuna)

I reapply the support spells on everyone since they had slightly weakened.

Hitsuna-san opens her eyes wide when she sees my spells, and then, she does the same movements as just a moment ago and opens her magic book.

Wait, she healed already?

The 'preparation' that Tomoe, Mio, and I went through the trouble of coming up with... is not working at all on her.

Was it done unconsciously?

Or maybe she has crazy natural magic resistance?

But, when she was watching the projection, she didn't show any signs of noticing.

It would be better to not think too deeply about it huh.

I will have her sleep for a while.

"Oh ho. Now there, it seems you are also shooting quite the magic without the need of arias." (Makoto)

I kick the floor and jump to the side.

The space I was in just a moment ago was 'gouged out' greatly.

Not only that.

The eyes of Hitsuna-san were still locked onto me with precision.

“[Crimson Ice].” (Hitsuna)

The air in the surrounding changes.

This is...

Countless numbers of ice flakes, that create a relatively low cold wave, were forming a swirl with unbelievable speed and created a storm.

I remember this.

This is what the Demon General, Mokuren, used... right, talisman magic.

It is a special art that doesn't require the step of chanting an aria in order to activate.

This is pretty similar to that.

Hitsuna-san's method seems to utilize pages in order to activate though.

...Hm?

Maybe it is the opposite?

In the first place, she is the first generation of the Priestesses of Lorel. Isn't there a high chance that the talisman magic itself was created by copying Hitsuna-san's spell formations?

Thinking about the standing of the Priestess in this country, it wouldn't be strange.

“The power is stronger than that person. It looks like an interesting method, and it would be nice to gaze at it like I usually do, but today, I want to reconvene with everyone so, I'm sorry!” (Makoto)

I find the core of this ice storm, that is dealing continuous damage to my Magic Armor, and shoot through it with an arrow.

The spell disappeared and my field of vision recovered.

Next is...

Hitsuna-san who I caught with my eyes once again had the magic book in her hands, and around her, there were close to ten shining pages floating.

...So that just now was to take away my vision in order to prepare for her next move huh.

“[Full Chain Release], [Round Ardbeg], [Peerless Bad Fortune], Basic attack formation [Bridd]!!” (Hitsuna)

?!

Bridd?!

Because I heard such an unexpected and familiar name in the spells and perceived magic power that resembled it, my decision of shooting through all the floating pages at once was slowed by a beat.

“...This...”

A precise and peerless shot of fire element pierced through the Magic Armor.

And in that time, water, earth, and wind of the same spell did the same.

The four elements were surrounding me and were successively shooting me from all directions.

The Magic Armor was slowly gouged.

It was continuously getting gouged.

This is... strong.

It is simple and doesn't stop.

An ultra rapid-fire of several elements of Bridd.

A barrage where I can't find any openings from.

An opening to fight back... for now, I can't find it

It is a perfect plan to buy time.

Moreover, if I make any poor moves, it might even inflict quite the damage.

She really got me there.

I can't make any poor moves.

"Base attack formation, [Laser Pit]; [Fake Page, Silk Giant]; [Fake Page, Soul Slaughterer]!" (Hitsuna)

!!

The Magic Armor was shot by a relatively thick and strong mass of light.

About one third of the Magic Armor was shaved off, and on top of that, it didn't disappear and continued its attack, and I could tell that it was even trying to reach me.

It is that, that thing called Gerobi. *<A gundam game reference>*

For a moment, the nostalgic game screen of the Robot fighting game popped up in my mind.

An audacious and long lasting beam attack or laser; it is truly a dream-like attack.

Now that I think about it, maybe she did something to the Magic Armor itself, the strength of the Magic Armor as a whole is greatly weakened.

Because of that, the destruction of the Magic Armor by Bridd and Gerobi is proceeding smoothly.

And finally...

"Blade Wave?!" (Makoto)

As if saying this is the finishing move, the blade wave attack reached around my chest.

I unconsciously shouted it out loud, but this is definitely a blade wave.

I was cut.

Receiving this attack that surpassed the limits, the Magic Armor was scattered away, and the attack must have been higher than what the clothes the dwarves made could resist, I ended up getting cut.

Leaving that aside, I prepare myself for the four elemental Bridd attacks that still continue as I reflexively reconstruct the Magic Armor.

This attack possesses power that I would prefer not receiving with my flesh.

From the place where I was cut by the Blade Wave, I could feel that it was devouring my magic power and eating away my spirit, but this didn't affect me at all anyways, so I ignore it.

I calmly search for Hitsuna-san with [Sakai].

It looks like she intends to shoot several more spells.

Seriously, who is the one that's merciless here.

It is surprising to see a person that's able to utilize Bridd with the same amount of power as I.

You really can't judge a book by its cover.

I still can't find a way to stop this ultra rapid-fire of Bridds. But, from what I see, this is not aiming at me, but instead, aiming at a specified location.

In that case... let's try putting into practice the super basic way of dealing with a magician.

In other words, close combat.

If I can't shoot at her properly because the barrage is being an hindrance, I will try to punch her by passing through this barrage.

It wouldn't be good to continue receiving these spells after all.

Let's go with that.

I want to hurry to where everyone is.

I change my clothes to red and reconfirm the location of Hitsuna-san with [Sakai].

Okay.

I finish the recomposition of the Magic Armor briefly, and without caring about it being shaved off once again, I spring towards the place where Hitsuna-san is.

“Wa?!”

“...”

I managed to pass through it.

There she is.

“Could it be that even with that much magic power, you are the same as Bia, a are-you-even-a-magician kind of magician?!” (Hitsuna)

“...”

There's no pursuing attack of the Bridd barrage.

I can do it.

I accumulate magic power into my fist.

Utilizing the already build up momentum, I take one more step and strike her.

“[Safety Zone]!” (Hitsuna)

“?!!”

I was stopped on a paper-thin difference by a wall, and my fist along with my whole body was heavily bounced back.

“I-I can't tag along with that type of physical aria of yours.” (Hitsuna)

Safety... is it that?!

...I see.

So this is the original use of it huh.

An emergency type of ability for the moments when the enemy approaches her. So she can freely control the size when activating it, just like my [Sakai].

She is tough.

She had a face as if she had no confidence and, even if slight, she also showed actual fear for battle in her expression.

But she doesn't run, she doesn't break.

No matter how it looks, she is properly facing the duty she has to perform.

I ended up feeling respect towards her.

But I know that this zone of hers has a cooldown.

I won't let her block the next one.

Several shining pages became dust and disappeared, and several new pages appeared as if protecting her.

...I see, the progenitor of talisman magic.

It is probably not a wrong guess.

It was discourteous of me to think I would be able to quickly suppress her.

She is also one of the adventurers that was sung in legends.

"To think you would use Bridd, that was a surprise." (Makoto)

"Stole the words right out of my mouth." (Hitsuna)

"Well then, let's continue." (Makoto)

“Uwa, so readily. Takane-kun~, a few minutes might be my limit. You are watching, right? You are listening, right? Do something!” (Hitsuna)

She began weeping for help, and yet, her magic book was still shining powerfully.

This is the first time I deal with a type like her but... I don't hate it.

“Priestess-san, sorry for the wait!”

...

Eh?

What suddenly appeared in the middle of Hitsuna-san and I was... a Marikosan.

They really always appear so suddenly.

“It is obvious that you would be attacking but, it was towards me?!” (Makoto)

“Target confirmed, pulverize!!”

Pointing at me and making a bold smile, Marikosan shouts in a loud voice.

With that as the signal, I sense a great number of attacks from the front.

This time it is a barrage from the Marikosans?!

Like hell I have the time for this!

I am going to bring all of them down.

Their numbers are high, but Hitsuna-san is not the only one who can set up an automatic battery.

I grasp the number of light spears, and then, target them.

Transcribing the information to my magic composition... this time, let's show them MY Bridd battery.

“You are doing something outrageous again! [Recast]!” (Hitsuna)

You kidding right?

The magic in that magic book is just unfair!!

The four elemental Bridds that were pointlessly continuing their barrage at the back..... were now aiming here.

Even though it is a spell that was already activated once, you can still adjust or correct it before it disappears?

I feel as if I am being pointed a machine gun!

It is not like I have been pointed with one though!!

Anyways, let's deal with the attacks of the Marikosans first.

"Haaah!!"

"Woooot?!" (Makoto)

The Marikosan lunges at me with what appears to be a thin sword that looks like a rapier.

Even when they have shot a barrage at this place, you still rush straight towards me, are you serious?!

The tip of the sword hits the Magic Armor.

As expected, there was no such miracle like destroying the Magic Armor in one hit.

"I can read you!" (Hitsuna)

This time was Hitsuna-san.

But I have already finished preparing my attack. No matter what she read of me, she has no method of obstructing my activation.

"[Demonic Axe of Thurisaz]!" (Hitsuna)

The fourth page strengthens in its shine and disappears, and what appeared were two

big axes that were composed of darkness.

Ah, so that's how it is huh.

This woman can change gears in such a fast manner.

It is certainly the number one thing I don't want occurring.

Leaving aside if she can actually do it or not.

But... the words of Hitsuna saying 'I have read you!'...

Crap, she got me.

Now I understand the fearless smile of the Marikosan close to me that's getting even thicker than before.

Her charge isn't in order to support the barrage of her comrades, it is in order to have Hitsuna-san activate this spell of hers.

The big jet black axes chop the Bridd batteries that had just activated.

She is good.

It is vexing, but I end up praising her.

She didn't use brute force, she cut it by predicting the magic composition and element.

If I had to compare that technique to someone close to me, it would be Shiki.

"?!!"

A light *pon* sound was made and the Marikosan in front of me disappears.

Ooh, so she properly prepared a route to survive huh.

From behind me, there's the four element Bridd of Hitsuna-san; at my front, the light spears that are probably from the Marikosans.

Both of them have crazy numbers.

I have no choice but to turtle here.

My vision was sealed with light, and my hearing was sealed with a thunderous sound.

Only a few minutes left huh.

Can I escape from this in time?

Chapter 279

VS Hitsuna-san and Marikosans

“Wah... but, even if you defeat me, the fight won’t end. However, I will praise you. To think that they would be able to destroy a section of the Marikosans. Well done..... Fuhahahahaha!”

“With one attack? To think they would have the power to defeat Yellow-san with one attack. Captain!! Captain Red!! Your orders please!”

“How admirable. Truly admirable. Yellow was the weakest one among us, but her box cut *<a beard style, apparently>* was one you had to keep an eye on. But no need to fret. We can still do it. Don’t go on the defensive by any means. We will attack, and attack, and continue attacking! At the frontlines, we have our vice-captain, Black—”

“Captain! The attack that defeated Yellow-san penetrated all the way onto Black-san as well! Black-san has been KIA!!”

“W-What?!”

Damn it.

My power is quite weakened.

Even when I defeat these mysterious fairies that exist as a group, they revive immediately.

It seems the individuals that live long actually do grow as well but they don’t revive immediately like the rest... well, they still have that quirk of having beards though.

But those special individuals mix with the normal Marikosans and move together like an army to attack.

In other words, I have to defeat these leader type Marikosans that can’t revive immediately and make them a grouping without any chain of command.

...Group body.

...Army...

Eh, could it be...

No no no.

They are simply fighting in a style that fits their race. Yeah.

From my perspective, they are a race that everything looks like a joke, but they leave as many questions as well.

Now then, the bullet hell that was attacking me from the front had me reconstruct my Magic Armor around three times, but... for now, I decided on taking the offensive in silencing the reinforcement of Marikosans.

Not only am I in a situation where all of my magic and specs are attenuated and obstructed, if I take my time doing my aria to strengthen the attack, Hitsuna-san will come attacking me with no mercy.

If I am surrounded by several close combat Marikosans, it would be troublesome.

How to say it, even if I do short arias, there's some sort of problematic jamming that is eating out parts of the aria by force.

Most of the long aria ones, I can't bring them to activation because of that jamming and Hitsuna-san.

Even if I manage to activate it properly, the power is heavily decreased.

Inevitably, the only spells I can use are the ones that are arialess and their magic power is incredibly low.

How stressing!

For now, I have dealt with almost all the close combat ones and 2 of the ones that look like leaders.

Three of them had lined up pretty well, so when I tried shooting them with one attack,

I managed to defeat two of them. Too bad the spell lost most of its power and was unable to get the third one.

“There!!”

In perspective, I totally look like the bad guy here. I created several tentacles with the Magic Armor and controlled them to pierce through several of the close combat Marikosans that were left.

“Even when Takane-kun is reducing his power this much, he is still..... you magic power gorilla!” (Hitsuna)

So rude!

The jeer that was practically a scream from Hitsuna-san pierced through my heart.

Magic power gorilla she says.

“That’s my only strong point you see! I will be passing through!” (Makoto)

There’s already no Marikosans around me.

If it’s now, I might be able to crush the aria jamming and the quite strong magic book spells of Hitsuna-san with my gorilla magic power.

You see, gorillas are kind at heart you know! Apparently!

“Is that person not returning yet?!” (Hitsuna)

“Probably in around three minutes!”

“3 minutes?! Make it 30 seconds!” (Hitsuna)

“?!! Understood Priestess-san. Then, I am leaving it to you for 30 seconds.”

“Eh? Ah, could it be the Queen?” (Hitsuna)

“That’s right! If we have 30 seconds, we will have a way to defeat that guy!”

“Understood! Then, with all I’ve got, I will do everything I can without thinking about

the consequences!” (Hitsuna)

Hitsuna-san and the Marikosans are shouting at each other while in the middle of this bombardment of magic

Right after that, Hitsuna-san steps forward from the line of Marikosans at the back.

And then, the pages floating around Hitsuna-san increase by more than twice the number.

Geh!

You yourself are a magic power gorilla!

This is clearly weird!

In the first place, just how much dense magic barrages has she been shooting from the very start?!

She would surpass Shiki, no jokes.

Moreover, she sometimes throws me skills that are not like those of a magician.

With someone like her as an exclusive rear guard, you would have quite a lot of peace of mind.

She is like a babysitter that has a lot of steam power.

“Let’s give it our all!”

“I can’t use Safety Zone for one minute more though. Can’t slacken my hand here!”
(Hitsuna)

“We can’t either. Our long lives are not just for show. We do have a good number of tricks up our sleeves. Don’t look down on grandmas!”

Kuh...

“[Guardian of the Beautiful Country]! [Cat tribe claws]! [Songstress, Queen Teresa]...!”

With a glance, I look at the Marikosans that were at the back of Hitsuna-san.

Those girls respond to that gaze with a grin.

Sword, axe, and spear; their weapons that were mainly throwing weapons have been changed into close combat ones?

Just what in the world...

“[Fake Page, Mad Sublimation]!”

!!

A golden aura covers the Marikosans.

These aura was being breathed into them... and then, it once again gushes out from them.

Their hair had turned blond...

Ah~, I want to retort, but this looks like it packs serious power.

A powerful barrier spell that blocks my Bridds; an attack spell which magic power is shaped as cats were flying at me like bullets. The power of their claws and fangs were abnormally sharp, and in the end, they explode and gouge out the Magic Armor; I don't know if it's random or there's some sort of condition, but there's a songstress summon that seems to be the curse type negating my attack magic.

Honestly, each one of them might rival one ring spell of Shiki.

And yet, there's still a lot of magic power remaining in the body of Hitsuna-san.

I don't know what kind of trick she is using, but it looks like this is their last spurt huh.

I can somewhat imagine who 'that person' they are referring to.

In the end, I was unable to grasp the place and power of this person they call Takane.

It was a tougher battle than expected, but once the end is at sight, your mood changes as well.



“[Sticky Quagmire]”

I brought down the Marikosans called Red and Blue.

The bombardment from the rear guard had weakened by quite a lot.

Hitsuna-san had finally fallen on her knees and the last three pages floating around her had disappeared.

The air in the surroundings turned heavy like a bog and coiled around me.

But that only lasted for a few seconds.

The Magic Armor resisted against those restraints and breaks it into pieces.

“Ahaha, as expected, I can’t use anymore magic power huh. Has it been 200 years since something like that has happened? Ah... now record~~.” (Hitsuna)

Just like that, Hitsuna-san tilts forward and collapses.

She is sweating bullets, and her face is completely pale.

Hm, for our side, this is the ideal way of defeating her.

This girl that self-destructed herself by running out of mana. I don’t think they lasted for 30 seconds.

“[Green Maze, Crusher]!”

Ah, a leader-type Marikosan.

So there still was one left.

The Marikosan that jumped at me had a hammer that was bigger than me and swung it.

“Sorry but, I don’t have the time to keep you guys company anymore.” (Makoto)

I place both hands of the Magic Armor together and direct them at her.

Then, I fire them.

“Taste the finishing move of the number one Marikosan that possesses herculean strength in these mutton chops——asfasd?!!”

After a thunderous sound... Green became a star.

I did think she would penetrate the ceiling and a part of her would get stuck in it, but it is certainly true that her attack had quite the power.

It almost offsetted my magic power knuckle.

But what’s with these box cut and mutton chops. Even when I know that those are the names of their beards, I honestly still feel like that’s an unknown world for me.

“Okay, I am done. From here, it would be better to go for Mio. She is in a situation where she can’t move... I can’t even imagine a situation like that but, I will go and see.”
(Makoto)

“I can’t let you do that.”

“Eh?”

I couldn’t feel its presence at all.

But I certainly heard a voice.

There’s someone directly at my right.

“To think there would be such a strong person that would be able to defeat most of the Marikosans including the elites with only one attack. It was surprising. But you still haven’t seen the true essence of the one that governs over this dungeon.”

A tone that possesses dignity; a noble presence.

Even when it sounds like a big shot, I don’t have the time to hear what it has to say.

But I... was unable to eliminate it immediately.

Teleportation huh.

Several Bridds cut through the air.

“It is true that the time to exchange words has long been over. Then, receive this with that body of yours. The strongest trump card of the Marikosans; the strongest finishing move of I, the Marikosan Queen!”

“...”

In this place, even if it ends with just resisting, it is easy to get affected by it.

It is better to stay as natural as possible and prepare for as many situations as you can.

“[Bina Wall]”

My sight turned pitch black in an instant.

My ears have been blocked too?!

There’s no sound.

No, not only that, I can’t even move.

Then... a restraining magic?

Hey hey, wait.

I can’t even breath!

I can’t see anything, can’t hear anything, can’t move my body, can’t breath; just what in the hell is this? What is this? What the hell is this, what the hell is this, what the hell is this?!

My spirit that was heading in a straight line towards panic... stops after a few seconds.

The trigger was a sound.

I could hear it.

The sound of my heart.

That's when I noticed. That's right, I am still alive.

I don't feel the presence of the Magic Armor, but I am still alive.

The name of the last spell I heard was Bina All –no, was it Bina Wall?

And those girls were strangely like Japanese people.

Then that Wall she is talking about...

Dungeon... Wall... this situation where I can't see, hear, move, breath...

...

So that's how it is.

This is probably... no, there's no doubt about it.

I also remember the words Hitsuna-san said to the Marikosan.

That they have a method to defeat me.

It is for certain that they were referring to this skill.

Dungeon, related to wall, finishing move...

I remember the first time I played a retro game, I felt like throwing the controller at the television.

That's right.

Right now, I am... inside a wall.

I place all of [Sakai] into strengthening and forcefully create the Magic Armor.

It is probably quite the sturdy bedrock, I only managed to destroy around 1-2 meters of my surroundings.

If this is the very center of a wall, I should be satisfied that I at least managed to do it.

This is probably something my previous weakened state wouldn't have been able to do.

In that case...

This place would normally spell instant death, but maybe because it is outside of the weakening space of this Takane person, even in a situation where it feels as if my [Sakai] is still hazy, I feel pretty cleared up.

I wonder where's the 20th floor?

I don't know for how long I will manage to breath, so I should hurry.

But this Marikosan Queen, she had some outrageous trump card hidden.

I probably let down my guard because of how ideally I broke Hitsuna-san.

Hm.

As always, I can't properly pick up the situation there, but... I have found the 20th floor.

If the person they are referring to is just as I think, this knight by the name of Aznoval, even if he were to arrive, the situation wouldn't change much.

But, it is the truth that I do have a slight ominous feeling.

I want to return by the time that happens.

...Digging huh. It's been awhile since I have done that.

Since the time I broke through the barrier of the Akua and Eris combi.

Let's do this.

Dig, dig, dig like crazy, and return.

Wait for me, last round!

Chapter 280

The moment we have been waiting for

Two women were breathing heavily.

They are still alive.

How impressive.

Waka is in essence a hyuman but in terms of side, he is more of a human-ja.

Watching Waka all the time by his side, I learned of the strength of this living beings called humans... or at least that's what I thought.

Tenacious body, massive magic power, unique tactics that stem from their special powers, and most of all... their will to never give up.

It might also be attributed to the fact that these guys have lived for far more time than a normal human but, they don't show signs of breaking.

So this is a human huh.

Even when their opponent possesses far more power than them, they never give up on winning and struggling.

The moment I shed blood I wasn't intending on shedding, I stopped holding back because it might make Waka worry.

It goes without saying but, this is the enemy base; The moment Mio, Waka, and I entered this floor, they activated a large scale spell.

We are in no way fighting with them in even grounds, and can't say that we are showing our full strength.

But, in the first place, a battlefield is not a place where you can wish for ideal conditions.

Complaining about that would make you lower than a greenhorn-ja.

Because this also counts as strength and luck.

And so, I have seriously acknowledged them as enemies, and fought.

Even so, I am still unable to finish them.

“Illusion, illusion, illusion. Moreover, she overwhelms us in close combat as well. What’s with that?”

“I’m totally with you. Just lowering your guard for a little bit will result in being swallowed by illusions and the match would be decided. She isn’t giving a single bit of leisure in our movements. What a terrible opponent.”

Only seeing my advances as annoying, I am the one who wants to cry.

In our first encounter, even Waka was engulfed by the illusion mist, on top of that, I learned illusion magic from Shiki.

I also utilized normal elemental magic attacks.

Of course, my body has learned swordsmanship too.

I have thrown all of that against them, and yet, they resist it, cancel it, and create distance.

These two continue to stand before me.

That’s what’s been happening all this time.

“To think that the priest there would be able to use a bow as well. You really got me good there.” (Tomoe)

That’s right.

I permitted even more opposition and got injured.

I thought that the woman called Ginebia was someone specialized in only close combat and support. But the second my attention strayed from her, her partner Haku

kicks her the bow she let go in an instant, and with a stance that looked exactly like that of Waka, Ginebia shot me.

The power was also plenty enough.

I don't know if she aimed for it, but the arrow pierced the same place that her partner had shot me last time at.

That first battering at the beginning, the joint lock that followed after; I have been caught in their unpredictable attacks all this time-ja.

Well, everything has been healed, and -obviously- I have not been receiving them all without hitting back.

I have been paying them back little by little.

And so, the fruition of this is shown in the painful figure of those two.

"If that's the case, I would like you to show a little bit of a pained expression to visualize the damage."

"I see, it does sound reasonable. Next time, I will show you an illusion that fits your request." (Tomoe)

"..."

The patterns in the opposition of these two, and the magic power expenditure that these requires.

The former I have been observing it, and at times, when I receive damage, I had them pay by analyzing those attacks.

I have mostly grasped them all-ja.

Well, even if I say that, we are talking about these two here, so there might be some sort of trap set up somewhere. I can't lower my guard.

The latter one, the longer the fight goes on, the more magic power it is expended.

It is at the point where the end is finally at sight.

It was a pain to the extreme, but the magic power of these two is on the level of the heroes.

Their ability to manage their magic power and the way they use it is unbelievably good-ja na.

That's why, for a temporary amount of time, I even misinterpreted that both of them had the same amount of magic power as Shiki or even more than that.

"Sometimes, silence can be an easy to understand answer. Right, it's like you're telling me your falling point is close." (Tomoe)

"...Says the dragon. Also, if you are a superior dragon, go for the more rough and easy to understand attacks or it will be troublesome for us." (Haku)

As usual, the tone of Haku sounded as if she still had leeway.

No matter how cornered she is, no matter how much damage she receives, the attitude of this girl doesn't change.

So humans can grow to have such tenacious strength of mind as well-ja na.

"Fukuku, if I did that, I would have already fallen beneath your feet. You two would be able to hunt Superior Dragons with just the two of you, no joke." (Tomoe)

...If Waka wanted to, he would be able to do that while humming though.

Seeing that these two are compensating for their lack in strength with technique and experience shows me that these two clearly have something that surpasses Waka.

Specially their teamwork, it is already polished to the point that it can be called art.

"Doma-kun told us that too." (Ginebia)

Ginebia showed her tiredness in her eyes, but she doesn't lose her composure.

Those two have been analyzing my illusions and observing them, and even at this time, they are still trying to come up with a plan to reverse the situation.

Their healing and support is also fast and calm; their sense is top tier.

If I show an opening, I will get a taste of her fists -no, I have to take into account her bow as well huh.

On top of that, her attacks synergize and bring out the full potential of the straightforward and highly accurate attacks of Haku.

They are truly strong.

“Even if that NEET dragon tells us that, it doesn’t make us happy at all, but it also doesn’t make me happy hearing that from you. Even though this is a compliment that’s on the level of only being directed at heroes, and yet, I wonder why...” (Haku)

“Sleep for a while. Everything will end with that.” (Tomoe)

“...It is finally the time where we have no choice but to use all the strength we have left.” (Ginebia)

“[Dancing Bow, Septen—?!” (Haku)

“Septentrion, right?” (Tomoe)

Aiming for a surprise attack, the hand of Haku shone and her whip shoots seven light arrows.

Right now, I can’t use my ability of changing reality to illusion.

But, if it’s the opposite... to bestow temporary reality to illusions, it is possible.

What appears are seven arrows.

The arrows that appeared from the illusion mist and had obtained substance followed the same trajectory as the seven arrows of Haku and offsetted each other.

It is a skill that I have shot several times in my mind, moreover, it is a skill that I have seen in reality once already.

Reproducing it is easy.

“Skill copy?! What a copycat!” (Haku)

“A high-power skill that destroys seven magic pressure points of the target. Even if it doesn’t manage to defeat the opponent with all attacks hitting, it would still seal their magic. It is incredibly handy-ja na. I can understand why you rely on it.” (Tomoe)

“...I see, memories. So that’s how it is huh. We have an unbelievable opponent.” (Haku)

Haku Mokuren.

Her insight that’s mixed with instinct is also polished to an extreme.

“It means that I have as much methods to throw off your teamwork-ja. And... methods to cut it off completely as well.” (Tomoe)

“?!! Illusion?!” (Ginebia)

I appear right in front of Ginebia.

That’s right, just like she saw through in that one second, it is an illusion-ja.

But, from that illusion, only the blade of the sword has substance.

If it’s with this, no matter how excelling that person is, this should be enough. Well, even if they manage to deal with this, I won’t be surprised though.

“Ah, this is cheating!” (Ginebia)

She probably noticed the possibility that it has substance, she instantaneously prepares her arm and was intending on dealing with the katana.

Splendid reaction speed-ja na.

By the time she noticed the sword slipping through her arm without making contact with it, it was already too late.

The katana made a big cut on her shoulder.

“[Blessing of the Eccentric God, Almaty]!” (Ginebia)

...And with almost no space in between, she healed herself.

She did it in the instant she was cut-ja.

Seriously, the fact that they don't even show an opening for a second really doesn't let me take this with leisure.

In that second where Ginebia was concentrating to heal, I arrive right in between the two of them even faster than the time it took for the illusion just now to appear.

These fast legs I have been concealing from them until now.

I am truly glad I continued training diligently.

Seriously thinking this in that instant, I place a finger on Haku and Ginebia's nape.

Now that I am directly touching them, have caught them off guard, and, on top of that, have shaved off this much magic power from them, it should be possible.

"[Fifth Hamlet, Mist Gorim]" (Tomoe)

It has degraded quite a bit, but it is still one of my special moves-ja.

This is something that I had warmed up to use against an army, but these girls have a lot more backbone than your regular army.

I don't mind. They are fitting targets for it.

Glancing at the two that slowly fell into deep sleep, I heaved a big sigh.

They were with no doubt tough opponents.

Even if I was holding back, even if I was swelling in anger, I can't say it is a win.

...Wise huh.

I have learned a lot.



“Rokuya-san has been restrained, Haku-san and Ginebia-san lost, Hitsuna-san fainted in the middle of buying time?! And the side we expected to win first and provide reinforcements for the others, Picnic Rosegarden, is in a stalemate... Are you serious?”

This lineup that was practically assured victory is, for some reason, displaying a different result.

It is to the point that it can be called despairing.

In this place where many numbers are being continuously displayed in the various monitors, there's one man covered in cold sweat as he analyzes it all.

“If they had waited until Pione calmed down and waited until the messed situation aboveground was put in order, this fight wouldn't have occurred to begin with!”

It seems like he finally couldn't hold it in anymore, it was overflowing from his mouth already as the man, Makado Takane, slams the desk.

It was a stainless glass type of desk that's rare to see in this world.

This and the cheap-looking chair are the favorites of Takane.

Thanks to this, his room created a strange atmosphere that felt like that of modern Japan.

“In the first place, what is that person doing?! According to the information of the Marikosans, they should have already used the teleport formation a long time ago!”
(Takane)

“That's something I want to know too. Really, for some reason, I couldn't take the instant teleport formation.”

“There's no way that's possible! I have unlocked it so that all the members can utilize it the safest and fastest as possible!” (Takane)

“And I'm telling you I couldn't use it. Thanks to that, I had to use my ability ‘White Crow’ to somehow fly all the way here.”

“Now here—!! Eh?” (Takane)

“Yo, Takane-kun, long time no see. I suddenly received an emergency call, so I hurried back. It looks like the state at Kannaoui is fishy, but for now, I prioritized on returning.”

“A-Azu-san?!” (Takane)

“Yeah. And so, are they guests? Moreover, it looks like it has turned into a fight.” (Aznoval)

“T-That’s right! That’s why we called you. It looks like Rokuya-san and the others won’t be able to deal with it without you.” (Takane)

“...Fumu. Looks like they are invading with quite the small amount of people. Moreover, they are opponents that can set up a giant magic barrier in this whole floor without having you notice huh.” (Aznoval)

“That’s right, they are unbelievable opponents—eh? Barrier... magic?” (Takane)

Takane got surprised by the man that was suddenly inside the room, and then, he once again got surprised by what the man said.

“Umu. I couldn’t make a complete analysis of it, but it is placed in such a way that it won’t be noticed. The effects are: obstructing the trespassing to this floor, and probably some sort of illusion type of magic. But from what I see, I don’t know for what it is at all. I can’t read their intentions.” (Aznoval)

“No way. To think they would be able to form a magic in this floor of Yaso-Magatsuhi, the Prison Palace, without me noticing!” (Takane)

“That means they have quite the gathering of powerful ones. To the level that they have the chance of bringing down this place even when confronting us right from the front. I see why my strength is needed.” (Aznoval)

The fully armored man goes ‘umu umu’ as he nods.

He is calm.

On the other hand, Takane was busily typing on the keyboard at hand.

In front of him, there's a device that resembles that of a PC.

"Damn it, damn it!! Where is it, where is it, where is it?! Just what did they set up?!" (Takane)

"Good grief. In that case, I should first regroup with Rokuya. An opponent that is trying to finish this fight without killing and under these conditions huh. I am scared of the sermon of Rokuya but... I wonder, what will be happening." (Aznoval)

A white crow that came from who-knows-where perched on the shoulder of the knight.

Aznoval whispers: 'what is it?' with his head turned to it.

Right after, his figure disappeared from the room.

"Oh, these are the 'Grim Tale Gears' of Rokuya. But, for some reason, he is not here?"

"How dare he do this to me... inflicting pain and shame in such a way... no, that's not all there's to it, he dared to do this to me, a follower of Waka-sama... that man, Rokuya....."

What Aznoval saw right in his front as he finished his teleportation was a black haired girl restrained with a familiar power.

She seemed to be slightly crazy in the head –no well, seemed to be acting strange.

A japanese clothed beauty with long glossy hair wearing a kimono.

"...That Rokuya, to think he would be thought of this much by a woman that can stay so composed while caught in this..." (Aznoval)

The stiffened Aznoval lets out a strained laugh with a complicated expression.

"You..."

"Oh, what is it, young lady?" (Aznoval)

"If you destroy these gears... *I will kill you.*" (Mio)

Even without acting, the gaze of Mio itself felt like it was enough to kill a person, and this very gaze was being poured directly at the knight.

“Yeah, I understood that from the very instant I saw it. You are unbelievably strong but... it seems you have complex circumstances.” (Aznoval)

“...Yeah. That’s why, just leave me be. Honestly speaking, if I get released from this restraint in an undesirable manner... I don’t have the confidence that I will be able to hold myself back at all.” (Mio)

“Then, I will not destroy it under a condition. It looks like you know the man called Rokuya but, where is he now?” (Aznoval)

“He is running around somewhere..... no, he was. Fufufufu. From all the people, he ended up encountering Waka-sama. That ultra duper idiot.” (Mio)

“! Looks like I have to hurry.” (Aznoval)

The figure of Aznoval disappears once again.

“So that’s the trump card they were waiting for? He probably is. Because he entered from the outside after all.” (Mio)

Mio, who had slightly regained her sanity, pondered this.

“Then, he also noticed the spell that Waka-sama setup? Well, even if that’s the case, the trump card in our side is also about ready, so it doesn’t matter. Aaah... can’t these gears disappear quickly?” (Mio)

But that last part she said once again changed the tone of her voice into darkness.

“But I wonder how long Rokuya will be able to last against Waka-sama. If he can endure two hits, I will consider being a bit more gentle in the punishment. Let’s see, let’s spare him from the pocky at least.” (Mio)

With an innocent tone, Mio predicts the scene that will be reaching its conclusion in time.

“Since when did you change your job to mole, Makoto-kun?!”

“Hey there. It’s a long story. I was literally sent to ‘be in a wall’, you see.” (Makoto)

“...No no no, there’s limits to things, you know.”

The head of a person suddenly broke through the ground and appeared.

Seeing the identity of it, Rokuya inadvertently shouted.

Probably with the feelings of ‘why in the hell is he okay’.

And then, the person in question said something absurd as he makes a wry smile.

He smoothly comes out from the earth and makes a big stretch.

“Leaving aside the many talks for later, the fact that you are moving around safely must mean that Mio is in a bad situation.” (Makoto)

“...”

“I will have you go down.” (Makoto)

The ringleader and also intruder, Makoto, instantly changed the atmosphere around him and declared this.

“Tch, we chose the proper opponent for you though!” (Rokuya)

Is he going to fight, or flee?

Measuring his own strength and the strength of Makoto, Rokuya instantly arrived to an answer.

Flee.

Especially because his compatibility against him is way too bad.

In a situation where they are already facing each other, he has practically nothing he can do against Makoto.

Even if he were to have a party to fight against him.

In this current 1 vs 1 situation, the conclusion that Rokuya arrived at was 0% chance.

In that case, even if it's reckless, the best choice he has is to escape from him and head to the other battles to provide reinforcement.

"[Sky Wal—]" (Rokuya)

With incredible initial velocity, Rokuya took distance and was about to use his forte, presence erasure -but at that instant...

His face stiffened at the fierce numbness that was running from his stomach to all over his body.

In the instant Rokuya took to create distance from him, Makoto already had bow in hand and even locked him on.

The prayer of the assassin for his skill to activate was not heeded.

His abdomen had been pierced with an arrow.

"..."

"Damn... it... As expected, it was no use." (Rokuya)

"Just in case, I used a paralyzing arrow for capture. Please take a rest. This battle is already over after all." (Makoto)

"I wonder... about that. It seems... our trump card... appeared first." (Rokuya)

Rokuya, who was shot in mid-air, fell just like that and made a dull sound once he dropped.

He twitched several times, but it seems his body can't move as he wants.

But after that, he must have caught the presence of someone, he made a small sigh, and then, showed opposition towards Makoto.

Hearing that, Makoto also searched for the presence, and then, turns his eyes towards the one that appeared.

“So the star arrives huh.” (Makoto)

“Well, you may say that, but it seems like I was slightly late. I am Aznoval, and you? Are you an acquaintance of that black haired beauty?” (Aznoval)

“Yeah. I am the representative of the Kuzunoha Company, Raidou. It might be easier to understand for you guys if I were to introduce myself as Misumi Makoto though.” (Makoto)

“Kuzunoha... Raidou... I see, so you are the one. Looks like fateful encounters do exist. This is just my personal feelings here but, if possible, I would have wanted to meet you in different circumstances.” (Aznoval)

“I also don’t have any grudge against the Adventurers of Origin. Once the matters are solved, it will definitely go well. I still think that.” (Makoto)

“Well, all that said, you are currently an enemy that hurt my comrades and attacked the members of this base. So...” (Aznoval)

Aznoval points the strangely-shaped big sword with one hand at Makoto.

“Can you please wait for a bit? With that, the battle will be over.” (Makoto)

“I don’t know what you guys are scheming, but I wonder about that. If you guys who don’t wish to fight are still here putting your lives at stake, it must mean that both parties -or maybe only one side- has a decent reason for it. It is not like there will always be a way to wrap things up nicely, you know?” (Aznoval)

With fighting spirit and pressure still directed at Makoto, his right arm continuously rose in power.

“I learned of the core reason for this battle. That’s why, I created a counter-plan for it. Aznoval-san...” (Makoto)

“And in that plan of yours...” (Aznoval)

“...”

“Was the reason for pointing my sword at you also accounted in it? Even if you resolve this ‘core reason’ you speak of, reasons to continue the battle will be born in the

middle of the battle. And as proof of this, here I am, pointing my sword at you for hurting my family. Without knowing the basis of all this fighting.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

“Once again, I introduce myself. I am the Beast Knight, the squire Aznoval. The public calls me by many names, but not properly introducing myself against an opponent I will be facing seriously would be rude after all. The Kuzunoha Company’s Raidou, as an intruder, I will—-” (Aznoval)

“It is here. Finally broken.” (Makoto)

The expression of Makoto suddenly changes to one of joy while he was hearing the knight introducing himself.

“Hm?”

“Aznoval-san, it is true that we injured your comrades. But! The ones who attacked us no-questions-asked when we wished for a talk and negotiation were Picnic Rosegarden. Please hear the circumstances first. Our circumstances, and the circumstances of your comrades; both of them!” (Makoto)

“ ... ”

“No one has died. We have not killed a single person in this battle. We can still make up. Isn’t that right?!” (Makoto)

“Circumstances huh. I somewhat understand the circumstances of you guys but... it is true that I still don’t know the reason why our side is aiming to kill you guys from the Kuzunoha Company.” (Aznoval)

“Yes.” (Makoto)

“...Understood. It looks like this time buying of yours has already bore fruit anyways, so first, let’s hear what you have to say.” (Aznoval)

Sheathing his sword back, Aznoval faces Makoto with a calm expression and nods.

The short but fierce battle between the Kuzunoha Company and the guardians of the labyrinth was finally reaching its conclusion.

Chapter 281

A fight to wrap up the fight

Why did this happen?

By interfering with the cognition of the body and mind of everyone, the fight was being directed little by little to an advantageous one, and we removed the one that's the main reason for this battle.

The [Fifth Hamlet Mist] of Tomoe that can realize the desires the person wants to see, and the black thread of Mio that can connect the magic power and senses of others.

We casted such large scale magic with us three, applied a stealth effect on it, and continued maintaining its activation.

The impression I have after trying it is that... it is surprisingly tiring.

I distributed magic power to Tomoe and Mio and strengthened them, and in exchange for them controlling the magic, I am the one that's fueling most of the magic power it requires.

How do I explain it so it is easier to understand.

For example; it is like bringing things to another person's house and trying to stealthily set those things inside it. Moreover, that house has quite the amount of security cameras, and has a mechanism that reacts when moving bodies are perceived.

...Was it that difficult to accomplish?

Yeah, it was as difficult as the example given.

In the end, all three of us participated in battle.

I fought against Hitsuna-san and the Marikosans.

The Marikosans are seriously dangerous. An attack that puts you inside a wall? That's

way too deadly.

Being caught in a spell that the usual me would have been able to deflect if it were outside this dungeon, I had fallen into panic.

Hitsuna-san was using strong spells that clearly surpassed her own magic power and was smashing them against me. Moreover, not only was it powerful, her sense and ability was top notch.

That talisman magic felt like, in exchange of a short aria, it costs quite a lot of magic power.

The fighting style of utilizing talisman magic in important points or utilize it simultaneously was clearly superior to that of the other mage that utilizes talisman magic as well, Mokuren. *<the demon general>*

The talisman magic at the demon territory was the mass produced type.

The ones Hitsuna-san utilized were not activated with talismans but pages, and the power, cost, magic power, and effects were different in a lot of different ways.

In other words, an original.

I see, I gotta say, I really did portray their monstrosity properly.

There's no way the magic of hers and her skills were inherited just as they are, on the contrary, the talisman magic that remains in Lorel has been made to be more practical.

I glance to the side and I see Tomoe looking at me.

Her opponents were Haku Mokuren-san and Ginebia-san.

These two were probably thinking about stalling Tomoe by themselves, but in the end, they received a weakened version of the [Fifth Hamlet Mist] and are now inside their dreams.

They fought a long battle with Tomoe, moreover, managed to damage Tomoe a number of times.

There's no one in Asora who can achieve that... with only two people.

Aside from Mio, Shiki, Tamaki, and I, the only ones who have been able to achieve a proper hit on Tomoe have been the transcendent team combination of three counting Serwhale; the four Arkes fighting together; or a team that has five people or more.

Tomoe also learns in those instances, so, lately, she has been starting to manage the group of three people where Serwhale-san is part of.

In that sense, the team of Arkes is the one who shows the highest evaluation average.

Within my followers, Tomoe and Tamaki are the ones who the closer you manage to get them serious, the more they stress in evasion. Tomoe with magic, and Tamaki with super-fast physical evasion.

In Mio's case, her attacks get steadily vicious; she begins to add traps into her attacks. The irregular attack type.

With Shiki, it depends on his rings, but instead of his mobility getting higher, he is more the fortress type that smashes the opponent with consistent barriers and attacks. He can be called an all-rounder type that can deal against close combatants and mages, but he is currently more of a jack of all trades and master of none.

At any rate, to be able to deal damage to this Tomoe, who 'attacks don't hit' while coping with her illusion magic, for several tens of minutes is something worthy of admiration.

Let's have Tomoe show me her fight later for future reference.

At the side of Tomoe there's Mio who has the eyes of someone that had crawl from the depths of hell and, with those eyes, she was looking at the still paralyzed Rokuya-san.

It was a scary truth, but Rokuya-san seriously managed to shut out Mio.

He couldn't provide assistance on the other battlefields as he first planned, but... he accomplished that against *that* Mio... alone.

No seriously, that's unbelievable.

No matter what tricks he pulled, if he was able to accurately pinpoint the weakness of Mio and the compatibility in this short amount of time we met, that in itself is impressive.

If we were to compare purely on attack and defense, he shouldn't be able to pin down Mio.

This is not about being a Wise or whatever, I think that Rokuya-san himself is impressive. Yeah.

That gear restraining barrier is something I have never seen before and it is certainly strong, but Mio should be able to break something of that level.

It was a gamble huh... against *that* Mio.

Well, that's how it is. Our own plan wasn't proceeding as smoothly either.

Even so, when their trump card, Aznoval-san, arrived to the battlefield, our number one most important plan had succeeded.

"...That's why I said. There won't always be a convenient method to calm things down perfectly. I would say creating one is the hardest part." (Aznoval)

Aznoval-san, who is standing at my front with great sword in hand, says this with a wry smile as if admonishing me.

At our surroundings, there's us the Kuzunoha Company, Picnic Rosegarden, and the Adventurers of Origin; all assembled in one place.

Aznoval-san and I are the only ones right in the middle.

But even if that sword looks exactly like Masamune, that size makes me question if it can even be categorized as a weapon.

In terms of weapon, this one looks like the joke kind.

Can you really fight with that?

"Wouldn't you normally think that once something is done about the hatred of Pione-san, things would go better?" (Makoto)

Because this is the biggest wall between us.

The hatred this girl, that is a part of the mercenary group, is directing at me, Raidou.

It is certainly a difficult matter.

But if we manage to remove this part, we would be able to somehow talk it out and proceed with the negotiations.

I myself had the resolve to accept the title of Wise if necessary.

And yet...

"The way you did it was bad. Not being able to extend your hand in the times when your comrades are suffering is painful. Also the fact that, even in this overwhelmingly advantageous scenario, we couldn't defeat a single one on your side and one-sidedly suffered." (Aznoval)

"...No matter the case, I don't want to lose any of my comrades either. Please don't ask for the impossible." (Makoto)

"...And you don't want them to get hurt either." (Aznoval)

"Yeah." (Makoto)

"That's respectable. If you think that way, it might not be too late yet." (Aznoval)

For a moment, I saw pity in the eyes directed at me by the knight.

" ... "

"What did you do... to Pione? In the battlefield where her comrades were fighting, she suddenly collapsed, and declared the end of the battle. She also apologized to you guys. Yeah, really suddenly." (Aznoval)

" ... "

"Tears from her eyes and mucus from her nose; from her mouth, there were remains of vomit. Her clothes were lightly wiped, but it was still quite dirtied. It was definitely not the state of someone fighting." (Aznoval)

Speaking all of this plainly, there was silent anger added into every word he said.

"I did explain it though." (Makoto)

“You showed her an illusion via magic, was it?” (Aznoval)

“Yeah, I showed her the death of her comrades and of herself in the scenario where the battle continues because of her hatred. We transcribed our fighting force and battle techniques into the head of Pione-san, and with that information as the basis, it will compare that with the information she has of her own comrades and show her an illusion of the foreseeable annihilation.” (Makoto)

“...And repeats it... infinitely.” (Aznoval)

“Until the moment she wishes the end of this battle from the bottom of her heart. It is not infinitely.” (Makoto)

It seems like Pione-san truly hates me for killing her friends in that unfortunate twist of fate.

That’s why, I wanted her to learn that if she continued holding that killing intent and hatred, this will only end up spreading even more and lead to the death of those precious people of hers.

The *other* precious people she has.

Our power level compared to their power level.

With the premise of us actually killing each other, everyone aside from the immortal Adventurers of Origin would die.

Of course, we wouldn’t do that for real. We wouldn’t be able to gain their cooperation if we did that.

That’s why we only did it inside that illusion, only in the head of Pione-san, and showed it in a way that’s no different from reality and repeated it.

For the sake of her choosing to have a talk instead of fighting.

“It is not only that. You made it so not only Picnic Rosegarden, even Takane-kun wouldn’t be able to notice that abnormality in her.” (Aznoval)

“Of course. If you had noticed it, you would have dispelled it before she understands after all.” (Makoto)

“That was also illusion magic huh. Also, shared senses and perception, was it?”
(Aznoval)

“That’s right. The instant we entered this floor, we changed a part of the senses of sight, touch, and perception from all the people here. Putting it in detail, it was to have them see it as if Pione-san continued providing support from the backlines and was fighting alongside them even if she were to suddenly faint in place. Also, this would be a fight where we are outnumbered, so we had their body perceive the healing magic and support magic they receive as if it was only showing $\frac{1}{3}$ of its efficiency. Well, there were some other small things we did as well, but the big ones are those.” (Makoto)

“There was also one that obstructed the people that tried to enter this floor.” (Aznoval)

“Ah, yeah. That was mostly to avoid having other people accidentally coming here and end up dragged in it.” (Makoto)

That’s right.

In the end, it seems this proved useful as well, delaying the arrival of Aznoval-san by a lot.

Pione-san persisted quite a lot. Even when she was continuously shown the death of her comrades, she didn’t throw away her hatred, and the fight was prolonged more than expected.

Thanks to that, Shii was forced to use her Forest Oni drug in order to endure, and Hokuto had to use the yarn that he only uses when he is serious.

Beren told me that he also used a number of Blast Spears that had my rings embedded in them.

That’s way too far.

Even with that, Shii was inflicted with a status ailment from an assassin team called Ryuma or Ryoma and was feeling lightheaded.

The healing made it in time and she has already calmed down though.

“...And so, this leads to the ceasefire of Pione and her apology. Raidou-kun, it is true that with this, the hatred Pione-san has towards you guys is gone. But in exchange, it

looks like not only will this affect her activity in the mercenary group, it will even affect her daily life.” (Aznoval)

“Of course, if you wish for it, we can provide her nursing.” (Makoto)

“What’s clear right now is that Picnic Rosegarden had the heart of one of their comrades turn into pieces right in front of their eyes.” (Aznoval)

“...”

But we didn’t kill anyone, and even if it won’t show effects immediately, we can properly nurse her back.

That’s what I have been telling them.

“On top of that, even with the help of the Adventurers of Origin, they were unable to defeat a single one of the enemies that did this. It is true that there were no lives taken, but you guys achieved your objective and broke Pione. In other words, our 0 to your 100. We totally couldn’t vent anything out.” (Aznoval)

Well, even if you tell me you couldn’t vent anything out...

If this were a contest, there’s the option of a rematch, but this was a serious fight, so even if it was a regrettable defeat or a total defeat, shouldn’t you accept it?

...No, it is exactly because it was a serious fight that it leaves grudges which is troublesome.

That means... even when we have entered negotiations, they won’t be having a proper negotiation with me even if I accept the title of Wise?

T-That would trouble me.

We went through the pain of coming to Lorel, went all the way to this underground labyrinth, tired ourselves, and used our heads; but even with that, it wasn’t enough, you say?

...Give me a break already.

In terms of fighting force, they are perfectly fit for Tsige.

Even for people on the level of Toa-san's group, there's plenty enough things they can learn from this mercenary group.

They are truly the perfect fit without doubt, in other words, it is a jackpot!

I would really like to dispatch them.

With this Pione-san girl as the centre, the other members of the mercenary group had their spears pointed at us and they are currently directed at me, creating emotions that are incredibly unwelcomed for us.

"And so, Aznoval-san, why are you pointing your sword at me?" (Makoto)

"If I had to put it bluntly, to vent." (Aznoval)

"Vent..." (Makoto)

How great.

"I personally want Picnic Rosegarden to have a good relationship with your Kuzunoha Company. I have a personal debt with you guys after all." (Aznoval)

"Eh?"

"Ah, forget about that. Anyways, Rokuya and the others already know the strength of Tomoe-san, Mio-san, and you. But the mercenary group hasn't seen the true strength of the main cast here, right?" (Aznoval)

"...Well, yeah." (Makoto)

"In that case, if we were to show a fight between me, who has been acknowledged here as a person with decent individual ability, and you, the representative of the company, they would be able to digest a variety of things." (Aznoval)

"Have them accept it by showing them our fight huh." (Makoto)

I don't understand it well.

In the first place, even if Beren's group was weakened, they were still able to fight on even grounds against them, so they should be able to somewhat gauge my strength.

Can't they acknowledge it unless they see it with their own eyes?

Or is there any other reason why?

Is something like this really going to accomplish anything?

"The fight will end when either side admits defeat. With this kind of fight, we will show our full-power and let it be water-under-the-bridge no matter who wins." (Aznoval)

"Okay?" (Makoto)

Is this really going to be resolved with such a haphazard method?

Then what was the point of the plan I struggled my best to make...

"The Adventurers of Origin, Makado Takane, and also Picnic Rosegarden, have accepted this. What's left is... whether the Kusunoha Company -no, Raidou-kun accepts or not." (Aznoval)

'Or more like, they wouldn't accept it if this were to end without me fighting. I would be blamed by everyone if that were to happen', is what I heard from Aznoval-san as he muttered this with his eyes turned away.

...He does look as if he is playing dumb, but it is also true that he has shown me an easy to understand method to resolve this.

I don't know what circumstances Aznoval-san has at all, but I don't feel any hostility from him.

Maybe he doesn't have that much deep of a relation with Pione; he looks like the most composed one here.

And yet, I can feel no hesitation from the sword that's pointed at me.

Rokuya-san told us before that as long as we manage to wrap this battle in a safe manner, he would be our ally in the negotiation.

In that case, it is fine to just fight this person and show the mercenary group my power.

Hitsuna-san already understands it, and the other three Adventurers of Origin seem

to have acknowledged it as well.

There's no problem in having one more fight.

Okay.

"...Got it. Then, let's go at it with our full-power." (Makoto)

"Sorry about that. It is slightly painful that I have to clash blades against you who protected the descendants of the Hiiragi household. Let's make it flashy and show our best. On a level that would blow away all the troublesome grudges and make us all laugh." (Aznoval)

Hiiragi household?

It looks like we have some sort of connection that is completely unrelated to the labyrinth or the mercenary group.

A mysterious knight that acts cordially, and yet, also hit me with the most bloodthirst and pressure I have felt today.

His peculiar greatsword and his silver full-body armor.

With his large frame coupled with this equipment, he looks even bigger.

But the incredibly problematic large scale spell that was weakening us is already gone, and my strength has already returned.

I can also utilize my magic power as I please now.

Once I call for Azusa, it was soon in my hand.

It can also be said that I am in perfect condition.

Because I switched [Sakai] to strengthening, the Magic Armor that was covering my body is now visible.

My preparations here are done as well.

"Then, Rokuya... still can't talk properly huh. Takane-kun, please give the begin signal."

(Aznoval)

Being called, a man wearing a long white robe stood to the front.

Ah, this person is Makado Takane.

The labyrinth's designer.

"...Raidou-shi, are you ready?" (Takane)

"Ah, yes. Go ahead." (Makoto)

His peculiar atmosphere reminds me of my high-school friends.

In regards to PCs, those two helped me out a lot.

I remembered the faces of my truly nostalgic friends, but time won't wait for nostalgia.

"Then... begin!" (Takane)

Takane-kun, who was assigned to signal the beginning of the battle, confirmed if I was prepared, and gave his signal to begin.

As this occurred, I prayed that the thorny gaze being poured at me from the surroundings will lessen by the time this battle ends... and so, I focus straight on Aznoval-san.

Chapter 282

Moonlight Slash

Hitsuna-san is seriously cruel.

She can use the techniques of her comrades?

No wonder there were a lot of things mixed in there that didn't seem like magic!

Maybe the effect is slightly weakened, or it might be that the cost to use is high; no, this is not the time to be analysing that.

Mad Sublimation, Zero Berserk.

The spell of Hitsuna-san that super-buffed the Marikosans -or maybe it is a skill.

So Aznoval-san was the actual user of it. The aura that is cladding around him is also slightly different.

A second after he said something nice like: 'it is fine to call me Azu-san', that guy suddenly charged at me.

And then, shouldering that sword that looks like a joke, with speed that felt like a joke, he cut down the Magic Armor like a joke.

When Shiki mimicked the movements of one of my master's acquaintances with his ring, I was surprised by the resemblance in his moves.

But the starting swift attack of Aznoval-san surprised me in how similar it is in character to my master's acquaintance.

'He might be an idiot, but he is an Oni with the sword', is what my bow master Natsu-sensei said.

A sword Oni in the modern era, that's quite the mistaken time he was born in.

I heard that he had been a mercenary in the strife zones like Natsu-sensei.

...When I look back at it, there are times when I think that maybe everything that she told me was actually true.

The way to use the gun as well... maybe she really...

Leaving aside if he is an idiot or not, Aznoval-san had a similar air to those people.

For some reason or another, I can tell the identity of this vague atmosphere-like thing.

That is the presence of someone that has stood in the battlefield and experienced the taking away of lives in a daily basis, moreover, the kind of people that stand in that kind of battlefield on their own will and consider it their place to be.

In this world, adventurers and mercenaries are not rare.

In my world, battlefields itself felt like faraway existences for me, so I couldn't reach that answer in my time there.

"That's really tough!! Just how much magic power do you need in order to reach such an intensity in that magic power armor?!" (Aznoval)

Says the person that cut it easily.

This is the first time I have seen someone cut the Magic Armor in his first swing. Moreover, at first he certainly did use power to cut the Magic Armor, but since the time he activated that skill Zero Berserk, he has been cutting it as if it were butter or tofu!

Ah, I used cooking ingredients for kitchen knives as examples.

Wait?!

"He disappeared?!" (Makoto)

Teleportation?!

The giant kitchen knife that was big enough to cover my whole field of vision disappeared together with Aznoval-san.

Hiding his body with an exaggerated move like that, and yet, what he used was a movement spell?!

Geez, he is seriously going all out with the jokes!!

“Good job, you are right!” (Aznoval)

Without even trying to hide, a voice came from above.

When I look up, I saw Aznoval-san swinging with all his strength that big joke-like sword at me.

This feeling has a close resemblance to the time I first encountered Sofia.

I move away my body from the trajectory of the sword, and as a test, I buff the Magic Armor with magic and Sakai and try to take it on with a 10 o'clock stance.

Uwa.

With resistance that I would even have to wonder if it lasted for a second, it yielded to the kitchen knife.

Both arms of the Magic Armor were cut in a single stroke, and not only that, even the Magic Armor was destroyed.

The Kuzunoha Company side was surprised by this.

Right, even I am honestly surprised by it.

He is fast and strong.

How to say it, for now, he is a truly simple person.

In other words, after activating his skill and his whole body was clad with a bluish aura... he has been unbelievably fast and strong.

But, for now, it seems like that greatsword will be missing to my side.

Let's try taking distance and set up attacks concentrated on mid and long distance magic attacks.

And let's mix in Azusa with that.

I want to make this battle flow to my advantage as fast as possible.

"You are unexpectedly honest, Raidou-kun..... I am surprised!" (Aznoval)

"Wa?!"

In mid-air, the knight on full-body armor holding a crazy big greatsword... turned around.

The greatsword turns into a blur and disappears from my field of vision with only pure speed. The wind that was born from the speed of the sword brushed my skin.

The sword didn't hit the ground.

...Well, this is a given huh.

The movements of a weapon are something that are not easy to follow with the eye. That's a matter of course.

Moreover, my opponent is a Japanese person.

If I watch Aznoval-san himself, I should be able to predict his moves a bit.

Will it be a sword technique, a skill, or maybe something new will be coming out?

He was forcefully twisting his body to guide the greatsword into the next attack.

Looking at that forceful twisting of his... his next attack will be from the side!

There's no signs of a skill activation!

I rebuild the Magic Armor. Even if I don't block it, it should be able to buy a second, and in that second, I will fall back!

"Wow, to think you would be able to rebuild it in no time!" (Aznoval)

That won't work.

If I just fall back, I won't be able to make it up.

I have to go on the offensive with Bridd and Azusa.

The rebuild Magic Armor was destroyed just as expected.

It bought enough time and I was able to jump way to the back though.

In that moment, I felt it wouldn't be good to wait until I land to make my next move, so I fired Bridd blindly to my front.

After spreading that around, this time I concentrate on Azusa, target Aznoval-san and... shoot.

Just as I thought, after the horizontal sweep, Aznoval-san seems to have been thinking about pursuing me, but the arrow of Azusa was sucked up into the smoke screen that the Bridds created, and its presence disappears.

While being cautious of teleportation, I shoot three more arrows.

I know for sure.

All of them hit the mark.

"I didn't expect that Magic Armor to be able to cast magic continuously without any arias." (Aznoval)

He appeared like normal.

His arms, and thighs; I certainly did hit him, and yet...

"I did show those moves to Hitsuna-san though. Stop being so barefaced." (Makoto)

"It would be unfair if I were to hear about your information before the battle, don't you think? I call myself a knight, gotta follow the principles." (Aznoval)

...Seriously? He hasn't heard information of me from his comrades?

And on top of that, he came out unscathed.

“No, aren’t you Japanese?” (Makoto)

“I was, that is. Since coming here, I have called myself a knight, and I also obtained the power of one. By the time I met Root and heard a variety of things about the powers, it was already too late -I already chose to live in this way. If I had learned faster that this was simply a special trait of this parallel world, I might have chosen a different way of living.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

“I saved people as a game of make-believe, I killed people as a game of make-believe; as expected, I stopped that. I couldn’t help but feel disgusted at that.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

“That’s why, I resolved myself and decided on staking my life as a knight. But well, the knights I know of come from games and novels, in other words, the image I have is of fictitious knights. Quite laughable. Even so, if I push through it with my all, there might be a day when I will be able to understand what it truly is to be a knight.” (Aznoval)

With his all.

Do it for the rest of his life huh.

I don’t know when and what experiences he went through to resolve himself to do that; I wouldn’t be able to understand it, and I can’t measure it at all.

Just that... for an instant, I felt like my archery had overlapped with that image of his.

“ ... ”

A strange sensation of empathy.

But no words were coming out.

“But, what I miscalculated was that... I lived a lot longer than I thought I would. That truly got me good.” (Aznoval)

“...By the way...” (Makoto)

As if shaking off this strange sensation, I ask him a question.

“Oh, what is it?” (Aznoval)

“I thought four arrows had hit you.” (Makoto)

“Yeah, they hurt like hell, you know.” (Aznoval)

There’s no way I would accept that it just hurt!!

Even the Bridds, even if I blindly shot them, several of them should have hit him.

Just what’s up with this knight.

“So you are telling me to confirm it myself. Well, obviously huh.” (Makoto)

With a bold laugh, Aznoval-san once again takes a stance with the greatsword he is holding with both hands.

There were no words; his movements were the answer.

You wouldn’t be able to tell from the easy-going chat we just had but, as troublesome as it may be, we are currently trying to kill each other here.

He said that this is a fight in order to vent out, and that it would be over once one side concedes, but this is a serious fight.

I finally understand the meaning of those words.

Both of us will try to crush each other with the intent to kill.

Namely, a battle to death.

This is... a problem.

Just when will this ‘I give up’ even come?

For some strange reason, the desire to speak out the words ‘I give up’ was not welling up from inside me.

“Sad to say, we are currently mutual enemies. Raidou-kun, I was thinking about having you show me your serious state, and grasp your nature from it. But honestly, I am troubled.” (Aznoval)

“I am not really hiding my personality though.” (Makoto)

This is the truth.

I am no good at acting, and I don’t like doing that anyways.

“Yeah, but if that’s the case, we would be hitting a big contradiction.” (Aznoval)

“?”

“...Right. This is something that I should be confirming in this fight of ours. Now then, let’s resume the fight. Don’t worry, there’s still things I can show you.” (Aznoval)

“If that greatsword can awaken and become a cool Japanese sword, I would like to see it.” (Makoto) <*Bleach reference?*>

“...Oh, close, but no cigar. You are going the right line there, Raidou-kun. We might have similar tastes! In that case, let’s go with that next!!” (Aznoval)

“!!”

It can shrink huh.

Even if you say our tastes are similar, a big sword compressing and becoming smaller is something that’s pretty cliché already.

If there’s something with the greatsword, the first thing that comes to mind is that it can transform and become a katana.

In the first place, in all those instances that sword was swung at me, I couldn’t help but think about the kitchen knife, Masamune.

Aznoval-san holds that greatsword with a backhand grip and... takes a stance by placing it horizontally from his body.

A part of the blade was hidden behind his back.

Uhm...

“Transform into the Calamity Snake, deity of the night blade, God Yato!!” (Aznoval)

“This is bad! Vivi, Ageha!!”

With the words of Aznoval-san, the presence of something was born at his back. <An enemy Stand!>

Maybe Rokuya-san guessed what was coming next, it seems he had already recovered from the paralysis, I could hear him shouting at someone.

Two presences gazed at me sharply, they didn’t show any substance; after that, they revolved around Aznoval-san, and entered the greatsword.

The greatsword that had been shining with the simple radiance of a bladed sword, at that moment, began to shine with the color of the night sky.

This looks bad.

I must stop him this instant.

With Bridd and Azusa, I aim at his hand, handle of the sword, and his elbow; and then, shoot.

This is a good chance to confirm how he came out unscathed a few moments ago!

“[Unveil, Moonlight...” (Aznoval)

...

He is... not moving?

The arrow and magic flew towards the knight directly in front, and... it hit like normal.

To the exact locations I aimed at.

Passing through the joint of the gauntlet, it pierced the wrist, and I also pierced his elbow. The Bridd hits the blade of the sword and creates an explosion.

And yet, he is not minding it.

For just a real small amount of time, an incredibly unexpected thing made me blank-out completely.

I think I saw the greatsword shining with the color of the night sky -pulsate.

“-Slash]!!”

The vigorous voice of Aznoval-san resonates.

“.....?”

It looks as if both of his hands that were still injured had grown a size bigger.

In those hands, there was a japanese sword.

Being taken in by this sight, I let out a dumbfounded voice.

Our tastes are similar? What a lie.

The greatsword..... had gigantified.

It is true that if we were to ignore the size, it had good balance; it might be a japanese sword, but—! This is already not a size that a human can hold.

I can feel a pressure that surpasses that of Beren’s ‘Mountain Cleaver’ from that thing!

From THE ‘Mountain Cleaver’ that’s on the 150 *galanas rate*, you know?!

A slash came out from his horizontal stance.

This is bad!!

It is fast!!

The mad sword, that makes me question in the bottom of my heart if I should evade it, was approaching me.

Should I jump up?!

Block it?!

There's no time to ponder about it!

Jump!!

"What an outrageous technique!!" (Makoto)

I felt I heard some sort of roar; I felt like I was being watched by something.

This is... if I remember correctly, this happened before...

And then, to my surprise... the trajectory of the sword changed.

I don't know how many times it has happened today already, but even so, the words reflexively came out from my mouth.

"You must be kidding me!!" (Makoto)

Having escaped by jumping, it was a height that would pass right below me.

My head was telling me that a sword like that wouldn't be able to change trajectories to up or down.

But if we were to narrow it down even more, it would be because it is more difficult to deal with a target that has jumped up. That's probably my thought process when I chose to jump up.

Honestly speaking, I did it out of instinct though!

And yet, it changed to up, the trajectory of the sword went up.

Evading is already impossible.

The only time I have is to move my body.

Looking at the sword that was approaching from my left, my last move was...

"Hahahaha! That's also a joke-like move there, Raidou-kun! As I thought, we really do have similar tastes!!" (Aznoval)

The speed of the sword didn't show signs of slowing down.

Thanks to that, I was able to grab the blade of the sword with my elbow and knee just as I aimed.

But... it was tough!

It was far tougher than the armour that the eldwas make!

This... won't break.

I could tell from my elbow and knee that the blade was closing in onto my body.

At the same time, because an object of gigantic mass had collided onto me at high-speed, my body was also swept to the right along with that sword.

"...At this rate... it seems like I might be needing my silver arms." (Makoto)

This floor is quite robust, so if I am careful, it might withstand.

My basis of that is mostly on the experience I had digging the bedrock of this floor though.

"Big is great!" (Aznoval)

I still have time before the blade reaches my waist.

I cast as many barriers I can arialess.

I also recast my body strengthening.

With the approaching blade held in between my elbows and knees, I heard the hearty creed of Aznoval-san as I put my all into defense.

And at the same time, I thought this: 'No matter how you look at it... this attack doesn't fit a graceful name like Moonlight Slash!'

Chapter 283

The Beast Knight and The Devil

‘Hoh~’, is what Tomoe let out with plain emotion.

She was looking at her surroundings.

No matter where she looked, there was the sight of the battle they had not that long ago.

Right when Aznoval swung his giant japanese sword, Takane and Rokuya nodded to each other and advised both camps to move from the place.

There were no objections from the Adventurers of Origin and Picnic Rosegarden; in the Kuzunoha Company side, Tomoe and Mio looked at each other, and after a few second later, they nod.

They judged that they are not the type of fellows that would do an inane plan like taking hostages in the middle of the fight between Makoto and Aznoval.

At the same time, now that the weakening spell was gone and the strength of Tomoe and Mio had returned, they had the confidence that even if all of them were to turn hostile, they would be able to have everyone return to Asora in the worst case scenario.

“I see. So being called the Dungeon Master here is not just for show or a bluff huh.”
(Tomoe)

“...You can tell?” (Takane)

“In regards to the management of the environment, you are doing something similar to us after all. I can imagine what kind of place this is and how it functions.” (Tomoe)

“...And?” (Mio)

“...”

Mio follows the words of Tomoe.

Takane looked surprised at Mio who cut into the conversation.

“I can also understand that the reason you led us to this place was to show your will of an armistice. This place is a part of the labyrinth’s heart, isn’t it? If we were to rampage here, it would create fatal damage.” (Tomoe)

“...As you have discerned. You guys accepted our condition for a 1 vs 1, so this much is a given. Honestly speaking, we are the ones at a disadvantage here anyways. Even now, I still find it hard to believe that you guys seriously pulled through settling this matter without killing anyone, but... well, I would be grateful if you were to take this as a show of good faith that I believe you are truly aiming to do that.” (Takane)

“...”

After the words of Takane, the mercenary group showed their agreement to it with their eyes and sighs.

Within the group, there were also some that were sending hostility towards the Makoto that was projected in the monitor.

The primary cause of this battle, Pione, was simply looking up and trembling.

If the words of Makoto were true, she experienced an unending illusion of her comrades dying until she threw away her hatred, so it is no surprise.

“It is true that instead of calling it a bout, it is more of a one on one till death-ja na. But that man is good. To think he would be able to fight against Waka to such an extent even when his body is that of a human.” (Tomoe)

At the direction of Tomoe’s gaze, there’s a grand battle taking place between a big framed knight and Makoto, who has his body wrapped in a mass of magic power.

The Adventurers of Origin and the mercenary group were directing eyes of surprise at Makoto, and the Kuzunoha Company was directing those same eyes at Aznoval.

With Aznoval’s literal big move, Moonlight Slash, Makoto was smashed onto a wall, and because of it, a rain of boulders poured down onto Makoto, which he used as footholds to fix his posture, and shot a barrage of Bridds like a machine gun.

Before confirming Makoto's figure, Aznoval had already mounted a giant gold shining wild boar and soared through the sky to pursue him.

The small concentrated barrage of Bridds against the golden wild boar and the knight mounted on it; the wild boar received all of the Bridds, and Aznoval jumped from its back and plunges onto the point where the Bridds were shot.

But before he arrived, a red shadow jumps out from the cluster of boulders –it is Makoto.

While he continued shooting Bridds, he took a stance with his bow, and instead of the wild boar, he shot straight at Aznoval.

He is also firmly cladded back into his Magic Armor that was small just a few moments ago.

Stopping the charge of the wild boar with the barrage of Bridds, he poured Aznoval with a barrage as well, and at the same time, he also shot several arrows with Azusa.

–But the knight didn't stop.

Plunging towards the red shadow without caring about being showered by a barrage of attacks, he swings the sword that had already returned to its previous size as if nothing.

The Magic Armor stops it for a few seconds... before being sliced.

Makoto receives the approaching blade with the sleeve of his red coat to deviate it, and punches Aznoval who surprisingly had a face as if he was having fun.

After that, the sword of Aznoval changed shape and ability again, and Makoto was taking it on clad in his red coat.

“...Even if he fights as a mage or an archer, his compatibility with Azu-san should be the worst, and yet, how is he able to fight to such an extent?”

The words leaking out from the mercenary group make Tomoe let out a sigh.

“That's what I should be saying-ja na. That knight has several illusory beasts under his command, and that sword is also incredibly weird.” (Tomoe)

“This is the first time I have seen a type like this-desu wa ne. But it looks like my compatibility against him would be quite good though.” (Mio)

“If it’s you, you would just devour all the illusory beasts... along with that sword, right?” (Tomoe)

“Yeah, I think I will be able to enjoy quite the variety of flavours. If it’s Tomoe-san... ‘Pure Illusion Substance’ might get repelled, but won’t ‘Fifth Hamlet’ finish it?” (Mio)

“Something like that-ja no. He is an opponent I would like to enjoy a sword battle with if the situation allowed though...” (Tomoe)

Tomoe and Mio were having such a conversation.

They didn’t have a single trace of worry towards their master.

And about the other members of the Kuzunoha Company; Beren, Shii, and Hokuto simply had their eyes wide opened at the opponent from the outside world that was stronger than themselves.

“Takane-kun, this is the place where you set up as your base, isn’t it. That means you should be able to double the power of Azu-san like you did with us, right? Why did you obediently cut that off?” (Hitsuna)

Hitsuna asks Takane with the complexion of her face still not recovering.

“...I didn’t.” (Takane)

“Eh?”

“Azu-san is being buffed just like everyone else. Locational advantage is also part of the battle; seems to be a rule of Azu-san.” (Takane)

“That means... Raidou-kun is still in his weakened state?” (Hitsuna)

“Yeah. That’s why Azu-san is able to summon his illusory beasts one after the other without problems, and his recovery speed and defensive power are stronger. And, that Raidou person has unbelievable resistance, but around 30% of his power all around should have been reduced...” (Takane)

“Ueee. A fight between a physical strength monster and a magic power monster huh. It is already about to lose all of its seasoning, and yet, it is frightening how it is still worth watching~.” (Hitsuna)

Because of the exhaustion of running out of magic power, Hitsuna mutters this with a tired face.

“For some reason, that idiot wants to make Raidou-kun go serious though. I don’t know what he is trying to probe, but as always, he is a guy I don’t understand just what he is thinking. Though, it seems he was able to notice that he wouldn’t be able to bring that out of Raidou-kun if he didn’t use the locational advantage.” (Rokuya)

Rokuya spits these words out with an expression as if saying ‘Good grief’.

“Azu-san is the type that has muscles for brain after all. But because of this, when he is interested in something, he gets scary.” (Ginebia)

“Bia, when you get serious, your fighting style becomes more brawny than that of Azu-san, but your way of thinking still stays the same. How to say it, cunning, or composed.” (Haku)

“I just use my fists when I have no choice but to teach someone a lesson~ It is how I show my affection~.” (Ginebia)

“Well, he did arrive late. It would trouble us if he didn’t fight at least this much. That man is the one that has been involved with the world for the longest within our group after all.”

“...Right. It seems like he has been leaving Lorel from time to time.”

“Quite the troublesome guy, even though he is the Guild Master.”

“Only showing growth in his fighting ability is also something to grieve about, seriously.”

After the words Rokuya said while holding his forehead tiredly, all the Adventurers of Origin throw their own balls regarding Aznoval.

At times, they will mix in words of compliment and surprise towards Makoto as their conversation grew livelier.

“...So something like that is still playing an active role in the outside world huh.”

“Unbelievable. Or more like, he has that much power himself and his subordinates are not lacking at all, and yet, why did they need to come here at all?”

“I am... interested.”

“Aniki <bro>, what did you say?”

“I said I am interested, Yamato. Just what do those guys want from us? What do they want Picnic Rosegarden to do after they drag us out of here?”

A taciturn man that was being called as Aniki by others, spoke out his interest in the Kuzunoha Company, and from there, the assassin team of Picnic Rosegarden began conversing.

“Vivi, what do we do? When that fight ends, no matter who wins or losses, I think it will end up with us having a discussion with the Kuzunoha Company.” (Ageha)

“It seems Rokuya-san will be taking their side as well. Honestly, what they did was unforgivable, but... we can't just forget it, don't you think?” (Kremyu)

“Ageha, Kremyu... yeah, you are right. Azu-san is most likely... interested in the reason why that boy called Raidou did all this.” (Vivi)

Vivi, who is the leader of the mercenary group, is watching the state of the fight with a meek expression.

The one nodding at her side while watching the battle is Nomad, or also known as Noma; the one in charge of the foreign affairs in the mercenary group.

With the one in charge of leading the priest team, Kremyu, and the one in charge of leading the martial artist and frontline team, Ageha, at her side, Vivi was beginning to think about the negotiations that will be taking place after this. They can be said to be the brains of Picnic Rosegarden.

“Reason huh. Isn't it because he is a guy that's super messed up in the head?” (Ageha)

The unfiltered words of Ageha. It is true that the bad treatment of Pione would lead to such an answer.

“If we think about it normally, that is. But that doesn’t seem to be the case. If he is truly just as Ageha sees -an incredibly cruel person that would accomplish his objectives by any means- several of us would be dead already. What he did was nasty, and yet, what he is saying is actually kind. Azu-san is probably trying to press onto the mysteries of this fearsome person.”

“With such a fighting style that looks as if he didn’t care about anything and was just aiming to kill him?”

“It is because of that that this can be considered a battle. He probably thinks that if he doesn’t strike with his all coupled with the advantages he already has, he won’t be able to catch a glimpse of that boy’s serious side. That’s most definitely the case.”

“...Hah... And so, we have to watch over this fight that just shaves away all of our self-confidence?”

Noma makes a wry smile. It was as if they were watching an army of one fighting against an army of one.

“Yes, that’s exactly right. Let’s watch over it without missing anything.” (Vivi)

The words of Vivi sounded a bit as if she had given up.

“...By the way, about the costs for repairing our base...”

The one who poked ‘his’ head out from the side of Noma and asked this was the finance manager, Dorasena. *<From now on, when the gender is not specified, I will use ‘he’ and ‘his’.>*

‘He’ also participated in the frontline team, but ‘his’ main profession is using the abacus.

“...Let’s hope for the assets of the Kuzunoha Company.” (Vivi)

Vivi made a small pause to think, and decided to stop thinking.

That’s how much power unexpected expenses have, and that’s just how fearsome columns of red numbers are.



“[Moonlight... Slash]!!”

“I have already received that too many times! Come, Silver Arms!!” (Makoto)

If it's the red armor, I can keep up with him in defense and speed.

And, I have already grasped the fighting style Aznoval-san calls Squire where he uses illusory beasts via a special summoning method.

Even if I try to shoot through them right after they are summoned, they instantly enter into the sword, and I can't even target any other beasts aside from the wild boar and the white crow.

Fighting with illusory beasts possessing his sword.

That's an incredible concept, and most of all, that sword that makes it possible is incredible.

Its looks might be a complete joke, but its capabilities are top notch.

Beren will definitely ask Aznoval-san later to let him touch it.

...If the sword is okay by that time, that is.

“Summoning armour?!” (Aznoval)

“Big is great!! Wasn't it?!” (Makoto)

The stupid size and speed of the sword is already weaved into me.

With the two silver arms... I grab the giant blade. And just like that, I activate the destructive power that lies within the arms without holding back.

The presence of the two types of beasts inside the sword... are crushed!!

“T-This is—! Tch!!” (Aznoval)

“You can pull out from that?!” (Makoto)

Aznoval-san jumps to the back with his creaking sword still in hand.

With his sword still in hand!!

The blade that the silver arms had caught was forcefully pulled out.

What a guy.

“Golden Wild Boar, Green Blue; Death Bringer Crow, Reibun!” (Aznoval)

He is absorbing that wild boar into his sword!

With that endurance and charging power, just what kind of sword will it turn into?!

“!!”

“[Unveil, Nameless one who must not be spoken of]!!” (Aznoval)

Aznoval-san proclaims the name of his technique and takes a stance.

A thrust huh.

The size of his sword has not changed though...

“Fast!!”

Aznoval-san lunges at me with speed faster than that of me in my red coat.

A man of large build and incredible muscles holding a giant sword is a lot faster than me.

“Haaa!!”

A scream filled with fighting spirit.

If I didn’t have my Silver Arms, I would have had no choice but to take a direct hit - with the resolve of receiving damage from it.

But, I now understand that it is okay even if I use the Silver Arms.

Then, I will face his attack straight on.

“I will have you do some work, Silver Arms!” (Makoto)

That person’s personality is easy to understand.

He will definitely come straight at me.

All other movements are feints.

I take a stance with Azusa.

Concentrating deeper than before.

...I aim... between the brows of Azu-san.

It is doubtful if he will be stopped with this or if he will surrender.

He is supposedly immortal, but I wonder if he doesn’t feel fear of death or feel any pain.

No, don’t think unnecessary things.

Aim.

“Now then, how will you take it?! Is it going to be with those ominous arms there?!”
(Aznoval)

Straight in front of me, there’s Aznoval-san.

I will show you right now.

I stop the thrust by holding it in between the palms of the Silver Arms.

And then, crush... and shoot at him!!

“Stretch!!” (Aznoval)

“...”

The sword stretches.

The blade stretched in an explosive manner.

...And my back is close to a rock wall.

Hahaha, I have already grown tired of being surprised.

This must be what they call 'no words for it'.

It is going to reach me.

But the Silver Arms are also doing their best.

The edge of the blade is slowly being destroyed, and the blade itself is thinning.

It doesn't matter who wins; that won't decide the match.

As long as I have the time..... I can shoot!!

"Cold resolute eyes. So you have finally gotten serious?!" (Aznoval)

The speed of Aznoval-san himself increases and the size of the blade also increases without stopping.

If I lower my guard, I will be swept instantly.

Ah, that has always been the case.

I just don't have to lower my guard.

No matter if he is immortal, if I pierce his head, it should show some effectiveness.

If he was a human, that's for certain.

" ... "

The sword and the arms struggle with each other.

And in that gap, I shoot my arrow.

The arrow flies to the target with conviction and without pause.

I watch over it.

Aznoval-san tries to move his head slightly away from it, but as if reading that... the arrow moves as if being absorbed by his forehead.

Right in target.

At the same time, his force, his blade, and his energy weakened radically, and then, stopped.

The sword that had increased in size by who-knows-how-much was destroyed, and returned to its previous Masamune form.

My back hit the wall.

Aznoval-san silently fell onto his knees.

I unconsciously gulp the saliva accumulated in my mouth.

Silence came back to the place.

After being pressured for so long, relief was slightly born inside of me.

“Didn’t you hear from Rokuya and the others that I am immortal, Raidou-kun?!”
(Aznoval)

“?!”

With an arrow still in his forehead, the hung down head of Aznoval-san was lifted up with force, and made an upward slash with his sword.

A-Are you a zombie?!

Immortal as in, seriously immortal?!

Even I don’t know what I am saying anymore!

“[Sword Spirit, Over...]” (Aznoval)

I was totally caught off-guard.

It is a development I wasn't expecting much.

“Rampaging Drive]!!” (Aznoval)

The blade of the kitchen knife Masamune that was... being driven into my red coat... exploded with the yell of Aznoval-san.

The intense ‘pain’ I haven’t felt for a long time... attacked my body.

Ah... this person...

This person is... dangerous.

Chapter 284

The Grand Battle between Monsters

One of the clear weak points of the body, the head.

Moreover, he was pierced right in between his brows, and yet, he counterattacked in a matter of seconds.

This is already an enemy that I can't consider a human as I fight him.

Seeing Aznoval taking out the arrow from his head, I was convinced of this.

"Because this is the first time I have been pierced here by someone who aimed at that location, I can tell that your aim is frightening. It hurts, and it is scary." (Aznoval)

...Pain and fear.

Is that what someone feels when they get an arrow pierced into their brain?

That's something a person would normally only experience once before dying right after.

Right now, I am not even minding my burned skin and the pain I was feeling from the pieces of metal that were pierced in me.

I have already healed from those after all.

I could only laugh.

About a lot of things.

" ... "

Unless he is using some sort of skill, I have the upperhand in speed; and with that speed, I move around him as I rain arrows at him.

And at times, I would jump on footholds I create in midair and make the pattern more difficult to read.

He showed no movement. But I won't feel relieved.

In the time he is not moving, I think of a way incapacitate him.

Tomoe and Mio are here.

My cards are limited.

I could emergency summon the two of them as a last resort, but it is not necessary yet.

Now then, a way to increase the power even more.

The field of vision has been bad all this time, so I left Sakai in perception to catch the movements of my opponent. On top of that, when I increase the power, the rapid-fire speed decreases without fail.

Even if I create space between us with Bridd, the power increase limit is around 55% only.

It would be fine if that was enough power to create damage on the level of shaving off his flesh. If that's not the case, I have to go for the next move.

I can't kill him, he is tough, and his heart won't break.

He does regenerate, but the damage is still going through.

In other words, I can spread his pieces of flesh all around and have the gallery decide the end of the battle.

He can regenerate in time, but he shouldn't be able to regenerate instantly.

And that greatsword, even though it exploded, the moment I took my distance, it had already regenerated as well.

So the weapon takes after his master huh.

I really have met the worst weapon and user, seriously.

“Then, let’s do it.” (Makoto)

A mutter of confirmation leaked out from my mouth.

I reduced the amount of arrows I shot, and in exchange, I increased the strength of each shot.

Head, chest, waist, arms, legs; while confirming every difference between the reactions and his way of dealing with it, I readjust the power as I go.

The instances are: moving, defending, receiving it, and evading.

I prioritize the places where he chose to evade -mainly on the vitals- and concentrated on the aim of it, but the moment the arrow comes in contact with his skin, he grabbed it or deftly broke it with his greatsword.

It looks like he hated when his movements are stopped, even if it is only for a few seconds.

Even if it reaches the point of making contact, if he goes blocking them in such a way, I can’t do anything about it.

The time I need to make my arrows do further than that, the opening it would create, that in itself is a luxury I can’t obtain unless I make a direct hit to his vitals.

The wounds I have that are still hurting even now are because of that Overdrive skill; maybe I should mimic that and have my arrows explode?

There’s the demerit that it would take more time to shoot, and the number of arrows will decrease once again.

...No problem.

Waiting-and-seeing without hitting the target is a poor move.

If I manage to hit him, I might be able to get time to aim and shoot his vitals. Once that hits as well, I can connect it with exploding arrows and sniping.

The return is big and the increased risk is low.

It has been decided.

“It looks like you have gotten serious after the ‘Sword Spirit, Rampaging Overdrive’, but you have become incredibly difficult to deal with now. Well then, this is quite troubling.” (Aznoval)

I wonder. It doesn’t sound like you think that way though.

No matter if he was actually honest about that, his tone of voice made one think he was telling the truth there.

Even when his movements have been sealed, there were no words of surrender from him.

The attacks that are not hitting directly deal practically no damage to him, and even with a direct hit of the arrows and Bridds, that damage regenerates after only a few seconds.

That’s not the recovery speed of a normal person.

Maybe it is the benefit of his job called Squire, or it might be the effect of a special equipment.

He evades, defends, and when there’s no choice to, he receives the attacks.

The concentration he has to be able to decide all of those in an instant is also a threat.

All of those points lumped together make up his unbelievable defensive power.

It is so unbelievable that I can even believe the stories about him plunging into magma to stop an eruption.

It is funny how I can easily picture him plunging into fire or lava.

And... this is not the behaviour of someone that has lost all cards he can play.

In other words... he still has something up his sleeve.

A slight risk has been born.

Should I not hurry the fight and wait until he has shown all his cards before making my move?

No... time is currently in Aznoval's favor.

My wounds don't heal completely, and his wounds do.

If I could cut off all his attacks with my Magic Armor, I would have been able to push this into a battle of attrition, but this opponent can easily destroy my Magic Armor with that weapon of his.

I have now understood that this kind of opponents exist, so I should train my defensive power more.

Right now, his anti-magic specialized equipment and abilities are making him the worst kind of opponent I can have.

It is a pretty rare case, but I should come up with countermeasures so that it doesn't turn into something as troublesome as now.

I can eliminate the pain I feel by utilizing the anesthesia I used on Rokuya-san.

Right now I can still endure it, so I haven't used it though.

The problem is the bleeding.

They were severe enough that I can't completely stop it, and on top of that, I can't feel signs of it stopping naturally.

I can't tell well how the bleeding in my neck is doing. A part of my coat is torn off and the inner part that was apparently knit with the hair of the Gorgons was exposed around the waist; I think somewhere around there is bleeding internally.

It must have been because of the explosion.

It can't be helped huh.

Let's go with no changes in my decision.

"...So you are finally making your move huh." (Aznoval)

I feel I heard such mutter from the knight that was hardening his defenses like a turtle.



“No way, is Azu planning on continuing the fight? After using ‘the Nameless one that must not be spoken of’, he shouldn’t have any other cards left.” (Rokuya)

“...Right. I totally thought he would call off the fight after that.” (Haku)

“Even using the ‘Sword Spirit, Rampaging’ that he rarely uses to continue fighting, it is not like him to do that.” (Ginebia)

“He normally treasures that child quite a lot after all.” (Hitsuna)

Rokuya, Haku, Ginebia, and Hitsuna; all of them saw that moment and had their eyes wide open.

And then, they were bewildered by how the fight resumed with Makoto’s atmosphere changing.

By the way, what Hitsuna-san said about ‘that child’ referred to Aznoval’s sword.

“The last time I saw the ‘Sword Spirit, Rampaging’ was... ah, at the time with Doma.” (Rokuya)

“I wasn’t there at that time, so this would be... my second time seeing it?” (Haku)

“In my case, it was also at the time with Doma.” (Ginebia)

“Same.” (Hitsuna)

Rokuya, Ginebia, and Hitsuna let out a heavy sigh as they mention their memory about Doma.

‘Pffft’

A laugh of Tomoe mixed in when Hitsuna ended talking, probably because she took a peek at that memory of theirs.

“He injured Waka-sama..... I see, so these men that are supposedly the ancestors of

the adventurers are all... seriously... ufufufu. I see, I see..." (Mio)

"Calm down. In the first place, Waka was aware that he would be getting injured when he accepted. If he by some chance calls us, we will crush them without mercy, but if he hasn't, keep your mouth zipped. This is a battle that Waka has acknowledged." (Tomoe)

"...Hmph, I know. Leaving aside the acknowledging and all that stuff, seeing it actually occurring before my eyes still stings my heart, so I can't help it." (Mio)

"That's fine then. I am saying this just in case but, just because Waka is not watching doesn't mean you can do something to Rokuya, okay?" (Tomoe)

"Whatever might you be talking about?" (Mio)

"...I have been asked this of Waka-ja." (Tomoe)

"Ugh... r-really?" (Mio)

"Really-ja. If you really want to do it, you will have to ask Waka-ja na." (Tomoe)

"Uuuh, then I will endure it. I will properly ask him-desu wa." (Mio)

"...So you are actually going to ask him. You are not going to give up? Good grief." (Tomoe)

Tomoe holds her head after those words of Mio, and then looks at Rokuya.

As a pitiful sacrifice that will be receiving the same torture as her colleagues.

Tomoe also doesn't hold a good impression towards the knight called Aznoval that has injured Makoto, but she was greatly interested in the weapon and techniques he uses.

But right now he is currently at the other side of the monitor, in that case, Tomoe was thinking about having a talk with his comrades instead.

"Now then, Rokuya, it seems like your comrade has quite the reckless fighting style." (Tomoe)

"In my opinion, I think he should have stopped the fight after the Moonlight Slash

though. He is not the type of man who would do such reckless things.” (Rokuya)

“From what I see, he still has an ace up his sleeve-ja na.” (Tomoe)

“The special move of Azu is without doubt the ‘Nameless’ attack he showed just now. And all the attacks that came before that were all the previous versions of his special moves, Tomoe-dono. Seeing Raidou-kun receive all of those makes me want to die.” (Rokuya)

“You can just call me Tomoe. From what I have heard, you are quite the old one despite those looks, right?” (Tomoe)

“Kukuku, it is true that I am old.” (Rokuya)

“But that ‘Nameless one that must not be spoken of’ is quite the nice name. And the Moonlight Slash that came before that was also to my liking. It really stirs me up.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe speaks in good mood.

“...You go to the extent of acting like a samurai after all. You probably like those kind of things. But the ‘Moonlight Slash’ <*Ame Tsuki Ichi Moji*> may sound like Kiku-Ichimonji, but they are different type of techniques; and the ‘Nameless one that must not be spoken of’ was simply the name of a Sake that Azu liked the most. Those names are not that big of a deal.” (Rokuya)

Rokuya reveals the origins of the techniques’ names.

But, even when he said that those names were not a big deal, he also felt that the strongest technique of Aznoval being named after his favorite Sake is really like him.

“”As I thought, you also do know about Kiku-Ichimonji huh. Umu umu, good good.” (Tomoe)

“Whatever the case, this fight will be over soon. When that happens, we will be able to begin the negotiations.” (Rokuya)

“...So, in you guys eyes, has Waka gotten a passing mark?” (Tomoe)

“...This may be an unfair way of putting it but, it depends on the viewpoint. If he

manages to make Azu surrender, he would get a passing mark, but if the original basis is applied, he has already failed.” (Rokuya)

“Why?” (Tomoe)

“In the first place, the reason why it turned into a 1 on 1 was because Vivi and her group were unable to vent, and the cruel treatment of their comrade.” (Rokuya)

“Fumu.”

“With those in consideration, Raidou-kun should have fought Azu decently, gotten injured decently, and then, to be concrete, he should have received that ‘Nameless’ attack and announced his surrender. That would have been the best result.” (Rokuya)

“...”

“If we are talking about the merchant Raidou-kun, that is. It is the so called ‘cost for gain’. In this case, the only cost it would take Raidou-kun would be him feeling a sense of defeat, but it is the best result that he shouldn’t hesitate to take. I repeat, this is the decision as a merchant.” (Rokuya)

Rokuya emphasizes the position of merchant as he spoke to Tomoe.

It was not that different from the scenario Tomoe was internally thinking of.

It can be considered a pretty effective method in order to bring the negotiation that will be following into a better position.

No matter if the knight belligerently wants a fight at full-power; no matter if it didn’t result in the conclusion Makoto thought of when bringing out Azusa and piercing him with its arrows.

“Then, what did you mean when you said it would be a passing mark if he wins?” (Tomoe)

“Azu is also mental for not surrendering there, but that probably means he is planning on doing something. If with all this, Raidou-kun still manages to make that muscle-headed idiotic stubborn knight to say that he has lost, that would mean he is an eccentric that surpasses him.” (Rokuya)

“...”

“The negotiations will still take place, and the weight of his words will be heavier -in a different meaning. ‘Live for the future’, this goes against my style, but well, it would be like a big reversal from his fail.” (Rokuya)

“...I see.” (Tomoe)

“That said, it has currently developed into violent fight where it looks as if he is trying to turn Azu into pieces of meat. Honestly, it has been a long time I have seen Azu being so one-sidedly cornered. If he is thinking about driving Azu into a state where he can’t even declare his defeat to force us into declaring the end of the fight ourselves, it would reverse his passing mark into a fail once again though.” (Rokuya)

“...”

(It is possible-ja na. It is incredibly possible that that’s what Waka is thinking-ja na...)
(Tomoe)

Tomoe kept silent at the contents of what Rokuya said while he was watching the fight and narrowing his eyes.

Because she thought that what he guessed of the bad future was actually pretty close to the truth.

“This is not just violent, Rokuya-san. That boy, Makoto-kun -or was it Raidou-kun?- whichever it is, he has definitely learned to use the bow in our former world.” (Ginebia)

“Must be. Having that much magic power and possessing this much skill with the bow, I can only think that he had already been practicing archery from way back.” (Rokuya)

Rokuya answers Ginebia who joined the conversation.

He has that much magic power. There’s no doubt he would have become a mage after arriving to this world.

But Makoto is able to utilize the bow to this extent.

Inferring that this is because he had experience before coming to this world is not that

hard.

“...No, this is not archery. This is a more combat-specialized bow technique. I am not that detailed about it either, but those are the movements of someone that has learned a bow art oriented to real combat.” (Ginebia)

“Bow... art? Uhm... is it like a martial art kind of thing?” (Rokuya)

Not understanding it much, Rokuya tilts his head.

“I don’t know if it’s an old art. But he is able to show that much accuracy without relying on skills and only on his own ability. It is unbelievable.” (Ginebia)

“Now that you mention it... you had a stance with the bow that was similar to Waka’s. I see, Ginebia, you have experience in archery huh.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe seems to have been convinced of something and nods several times.

“Shooting with a bow at that speed without using any skills... is that even possible? No, it is indeed possible. We are being shown that right in front of us after all.” (Rokuya)

“In modern Japan, there’s by no means many places where one can learn combat-oriented bow arts. And yet, the one that boy is showing right now looks like a bow art used in the battlefield. Those are definitely not the movements one can do with normal archery. Maintaining that precision, power, and that crazy rapid-fire. Archery wouldn’t ask for those kind of movements, and you wouldn’t be able to learn them there.” (Ginebia)

On top of that, his ability to snipe the vitals to the point that it is nasty.

Ginebia didn’t say it out loud, but they are probably witnessing a bow technique to murder people that had silently survived in her own homeland.

But there was no happiness in seeing the inheritance of an art. Rather, she was feeling the ugliness of humanity and how scary it is; she was enveloped in a hard to get used to sensation, as if she had bitten something bitter.

‘I wonder just how Makoto, who has learned both archery and bow arts, sees the practice of archery as’, this question was born inside of Ginebia.

That's probably why she felt like joining the conversation of Tomoe and Rokuya.

"Oh, Waka is going to make a move." (Tomoe)

Just as Tomoe said, the shot Makoto made exploded grandly around the face of Aznoval.

His vision was blocked by the smoke that was created.

"That idiot, he even took off his armor?!" (Rokuya)

Unknown if it was right after or right before, Aznoval appeared behind Makoto.

But his appearance was strange.

Aznoval's upper half was practically naked. The only things that could be seen were the remains of his ragged clothes, and in his hand, there's a shield big enough to cover his whole body.

"That shield was his armor?!" (Ginebia)

"Eh, what is he thinking taking off his clothes this late in the game!!" (Rokuya)

Ginebia and Rokuya realized the reality of things and yelled.

It seems like they have seen the shield before.

Aznoval goes for a ram with his big shield as he shouts something.

Makoto immediately shoots several arrows and prepares his Magic Armor.

The arrows pierce into the shield, and stop.

The arrows had enough power that it would have destroyed the shield if he had shot a few more.

Makoto was bashed at full-force in mid-air along with his Magic Armor and was blown away in the direction where Aznoval was previously.

The knight who had bashed with his giant shield showed his figure with his posture

still broken, and that figure of his was slightly strange.

“Oh?”

Tomoe voices out exactly how she felt.

Aznoval had four tufty tails at his back.

“A-Azu-san’s four-tailed fox.”

“So he had the illusory beast hold the shield!!”

“So that man... should still be there!” (Tomoe)

The guess of Tomoe was correct.

She could feel a great power that made chills run down her spine.

“Eeh, that kitchen knife’s... scabbard?!” (Haku)

Haku raised a voice with a 100% surprise.

What came out in that instant the smoke screen dispersed was... was a half-naked Aznoval with no tails at his back, and in its stead, he was taking a peculiar stance with his kitchen knife Masamune.

But, this also had a strange point.

The kitchen knife Masamune that was usually laid bare –was now sheathed inside a scabbard.

His stance... and the existence of the scabbard.

““An Iai?!””

Tomoe and Rokuya shout at the same time.

They didn’t hide their emotions of disbelief and voiced it out.

Aznoval, who was lying in wait for Makoto’s approach, had his kitchen knife

Masamune in his hand disappear practically at the same time the sword left the scabbard.

The greatsword, that anyone who saw it would describe it as imposing and peculiar shaped, looked as if it had literally disappeared in an instant.

“!!!”

“Waka-sama!”

After that instant..... the kitchen knife Masamune stopped slightly past Makoto.

And the face of Makoto was dyed bright red.

The Magic Armor that protected his body is not there anymore.

But Makoto also had a stance with his bow that had an unnatural posture.

The arrowhead pointing at Aznoval.

“I give up! It is my lost.”

Aznoval, who had done an Iai, had also stiffened into a strange posture.

The words of surrender had come from him.

“?!”

With none of the spectators understanding the reason of it, the immortal knight Aznoval admitted defeat.

Thus, the curtains closed to the 1 on 1 that stories will be told for a long time to come in Asora and the people of the 20th underground floor; the fight that they would be calling the Grand Battle between Monsters.

Chapter 285

Invitation to the inner area

Do~ne.

“Shii, shouldn’t you return? You are a bit–no, you are quite weird right now.” (Hokuto)

“...I feel kinda... spaced-out. My body is tingling, and I feel restless. But, it doesn’t feel bad. I don’t mind feeling like this forever.” (Shii)

“Hah...” (Hokuto)

“What’s with that sigh?” (Shii)

“I was wondering if that Ryoma infected you with something.” (Hokuto)

“Ryoma? Ah, one of the assassins that fluttered around like a butterfly, and danced like a honeybee.” (Shii)

“Yeah. Since the moment that person approached you, you have been acting weird.” (Hokuto)

“Hm~, I wonder. I only have memories of being pricked by something.” (Shii)

“Waka-sama is also in that state, so... well, let Shiki-sama or Tamaki-sama check it out. Understood?” (Hokuto)

“Yes~.” (Shii)

Looks like Shii and Hokuto are conversing about something.

Ah... but it really feels disheartening.

I feel heavy.

“Now now, Waka. Whatever the case, the negotiation has been safely turned to our

side.” (Tomoe)

“It is just as Tomoe-san said-desu wa, Waka-sama. Later, I would like to ask you for permission about something in regards to Rokuya and Aznoval... That’s right, you just have to nod once, and later, I will take care of everything...” (Mio)

Tomoe and Mio seem to be saying something at my side.

By the way, Beren is stuck onto Aznoval-san on a talk about his sword.

...That’s right. It is the fault of that sword.

It is way too compatible with Aznoval-san.

Even when broken, it has enough regenerative ability to restore itself in the middle of battle and has the ability of allowing illusory beasts to possess it to obtain a variety of powers.

It was a sword just for him.

But... now that I think back, the people at their side gave several hints of him.

In the battle with Aznoval-san not that long ago, I judged him as a danger, called him without honorifics like an enemy, and was trying to finish the battle by rendering him into a state where he wouldn’t be able to speak at all.

It was the worst.

Because I thought I could defeat him.

It is because I judged he was an opponent I could defeat, that I decided on doing it.

Even though I should have acted as if I was having a tough fight against him so that it would reduce the animosity of Picnic Rosegarden, and on top of that, surrender while everyone was watching to finish the fight.

It was an easy answer.

If it was Rembrandt-san, he would have been able to draw the picture since the moment he received the proposal of fighting with Aznoval-san, and would have

perfectly carried it out.

By surrendering, I would have been able to enter a positive negotiation environment with Picnic Rosegarden for the sake of our objective, and what I would be losing is nothing at all.

It was truly a ‘no risk, high return’.

I am not a battle junkie or a warrior; I am a merchant.

That should have been the case, and yet...

What I actually did had no positives at all. Not only that, I simply got injured and made everyone worry.

This is nothing but disheartening.

“Mio, don’t do anything to those two. Also, I won’t nod. Got it?” (Makoto)

“N-No way. Just a bit, it will be just a little bit. Towards the man that humiliated me to a point I have never felt before, and the man who cut W-Waka-sama’s face..... If a bit is no good, let it be only a tiny little bit. With my discretion—” (Mio)

“.....Mio.” (Makoto)

I have heard of what Rokuya-san did to Mio.

I do have my thoughts regarding that.

But rather than feeling something towards him... it is more correct to say that I am feeling something towards myself.

Honestly, I am hating myself right now.

I would normally be able to get back up decently, but I currently can’t.

The negotiation has turned with Tomoe as the focus, and from the other side, there’s Vivi-san, Ageha-san, Nomad-san, who are advancing the matter, and it is practically already wrapped up.

I used the medicine of Shiki that Tomoe, Mio, and Beren brought from Asora, and treated the wound on my face and was present in the negotiations only in form.

Because I had lost quite a good amount of blood, Tomoe told me: 'I will take the front and advance the negotiation'.

Well, in the end, my role was practically coercion. Like the scary Gargoyle statues outside mansions.

Now that I have acted in such a stupid manner, the most I can do is that much.

...Hah...

"Uh... Understood. Uhm, Waka-sama, is your wound really alright now?" (Mio)

Wound.

The wound on my head.

At the end of the fight, the lai that was the trump card of Aznoval-san had scraped my face.

Right after... he stopped his sword in an unnatural posture, and then, closed his eyes and surrendered.

If I had been the one saying those words, all of this would have ended harmoniously.

When I heard that, I returned to my senses.

Rather than calling it 'returned', it was more like, I remembered.

The objective of why we came here.

It was not to fight.

My vision was completely red, and the inside of my head had gone completely pale.

His sword had cut around the part slightly above my eyebrow, and with an unpleasant sensation as if it had touched my bone, it slid and passed by.

The heat, that came right after, had cooled down the insides of my head instead.

In other words, my vision was reddened because of the blood.

It seems I was bleeding real hard.

The head is an important part, so even with small things, it would bleed extravagantly, is something I think I heard somewhere, so I myself didn't mind it much.

But, right after 2 seconds of Aznoval-san's words of surrender, everyone from the Kuzunoha Company here had surrounded me.

It seems it was good that at least one layer of skin was still adhered to it.

Even if it wasn't on the level of instant death, it could still be categorized as a grave injury.

And yet, what I was thinking at those last moments of the fight... was truly nothing good.

"Of course. Thanks, Tomoe. Thanks to you, I will be able to give a good report to Rembrandt-san." (Makoto)

"Don't mind it. I am accompanying you in this journey after all. Gotta be of help." (Tomoe)

"...Hey, if we had continued fighting just like that, what would have happened to the negotiations?" (Makoto)

"The result itself... wouldn't have changed much. The negotiations would become an order, and the cooperation would have become subordination instead though." (Tomoe)

"Haha, that would have been the worst then." (Makoto)

That wouldn't have been a negotiation or a contract anymore.

"Don't worry about it that much, Waka. In the first place, the proposal of that Aznoval was basically a gamble in itself. Waka is not a gambler, and you are not the apostle of good luck either. On top of that, the Adventurers of Origin are all ruffians, not only him.

I think this result couldn't be helped." (Tomoe)

"Is that so." (Makoto)

"Yes." (Tomoe)

"In that case, should I be happy about this result where we have wrapped the negotiation up as a request with a reward, and see it as safely accomplishing the first step in making the defense of Tsige firmer?" (Makoto)

"That's right." (Tomoe)

Tomoe nods, and Mio shakes her head up and down several times.

"Dispatch their main force to Tsige without sparing anyone and have them join in the defense, accept teaching as well. A two year contract, renewal possible. Well, the price is on the high side, but personally, in this occasion, this group is worth the price. Waka-sama, congratulations on the successful contract." (Beren)

"Beren." (Makoto)

At some point in time, Beren had returned and spoke of the result of Picnic Rosegarden's negotiation result and evaluated their war potential.

At his back, there's Aznoval-san.

Even though we were fighting not that long ago, he lifted his hand and greeted with a 'Yo'.

His sword was on his back.

The armor that had transformed into a shield, was now covering his body once again. There doesn't seem to be any visible damage in the armor.

So this armor also has regenerative ability huh.

It is truly an equipment made for continuous battle.

Is his offensive ability reliant on the illusory beasts?

“In reality, Beren, you and the others were the ones who held them down. That evaluation you have of them is the most trustworthy one we can get. Thanks.”
(Makoto)

Beren bows deeply and falls back to where Shii and Hokuto are.

The pay for the mercenary group huh.

The contract was formed between them and Tsige.

However, if Beren has evaluated them to that extent, maybe the Kuzunoha Company should also recompense them in some way in the form of an extra pay.

In the first place, we were the ones who trespassed when they were in a bad state after all.

“Hey there, we sweated real nice back there, didn’t we, Raidou—is it fine if I call you Makoto-kun? I am relieved to see that the mercenary contract went well from beginning to end. It is great that the good word we put in, counting Rokuya as the first one to start it off, helped you guys out.” (Aznoval)

“Yeah, thank you very much. Tomoe, about the pay for Picnic Rosegarden...” (Makoto)

In truth, the good word that the Adventurers of Origin added in had quite the influence in the negotiation.

The words of Rokuya-san, who was present as well, had the ability to convince Picnic Rosegarden into complying.

“Understood. I will reconsider a part of it. Luckily, we haven’t contacted Tsige yet. With Beren saying that much about them, it might be necessary to prepare a clause in the contract for extra pays. Leave it to me.” (Tomoe)

...As expected of Tomoe.

She can see right through what I think.

“I am counting on you. So, Aznoval-san, did you have business with us?” (Makoto)

“Looks like your body is already fine. So you are also sturdy. That’s great.” (Aznoval)

“You as well. But well, it looks like my left arm that has been weird since before our fight hasn’t healed yet.” (Makoto)

At first, I was bothered by it.

Because it seems it was wounded before he fought with me.

Well, even if I say that, I was fighting in such a way right as the battle began.

I stopped any reservation I had... and I even brought out my Silver Arms... hah...

How disheartening.

“Oh, don’t worry about it. On the contrary, thanks to the wounds I got, I was able to utilize the illusory beasts I can only utilize when receiving a certain extent of damage, and thanks to it, I was able to recover faster. At any rate, you look pretty down. You don’t seem to be okay.” (Aznoval)

“...Cause my decision was worth zero as a merchant.” (Makoto)

“...I see. Ah, Makoto-kun, in this kind of moments, thinking about it in reverse is also a valid way.” (Aznoval)

“What do you mean by reverse?” (Makoto)

“As a berserker, you got full points. In terms of underground dealings, I think it would also have a positive grade. When you change the evaluation terms, the grades you get are pretty exemplary, you know.” (Aznoval)

I don’t want either of those grades.

I am being told this by a person that actually has a skill to turn himself into a berserker, so it makes me feel even weirder.

But well, instead of calling him a berserker, it was more like he simply activated the skill and was utilizing it in a composed manner.

“But, in that case, this is good timing. This will serve as a good mood-changer.” (Aznoval)

“Hah?” (Makoto)

Now that I think about it, I still haven’t heard what business he had.

It looks like the other ones don’t know the reason why he is here either. Just what is Aznoval-san planning?

“I am sorry for Beren-kun and Mio-san, but...” (Aznoval)

“...Hah?” (Mio)

At that moment, Mio let out a voice as if it had come out from the depths of earth.

Mio looks like she is in an incredibly bad mood. And also, scary.

On the other hand, Beren was dumbstruck.

They had a look as if they didn’t understand why their names were mentioned.

“There’s a place I want to guide Makoto-kun and Tomoe-san.” (Aznoval)

“Tomoe... and I?” (Makoto)

“Yeah. In this dungeon, or more accurately speaking, in this Prison Palace’s inner area.” (Aznoval)

...

“...Hoh?”

“It is also the place where this sword was pierced into.” (Aznoval)

“!!”

Beren’s reaction was incredible.

His eyes opened wide as if they were going to pop out of their sockets.

“Even this floor is a pain in a lot of ways-ja, and yet, what is the merit in us going there, Aznoval?” (Tomoe)

It is true that there's the possibility of a trap.

From what I sensed in our fight and thinking about this person's personality, the possibility of that is close to zero though.

It is also true that he is strong and scary, and is a person that you just can't predict what he would do next.

But his core personality is simple.

It is only his body, techniques, and mind that are weird.

...Eh? Isn't that just saying he is weird all over?

"About a merit for Makoto-kun, just as I said before, it is a small change of mood. In terms of Tomoe-san, it is not about merits or that sort of things, it is simply because you are a Superior Dragon." (Aznoval)

"?"

Tomoe was confused and tilted her head.

Inviting her because she is a Superior Dragon is one strange reason.

Now that I think about it, this is a place where the name of two Superior Dragons - Doma and Futsu- are mentioned.

Doma is the useless one, and Futsu is the mysterious one.

"It is true that Makoto-kun battled with his life at stake. But that wasn't because of hatred or because of vengeance. Then, now that the battle is over and both parties are safe... shouldn't it be possible to hold hands?" (Aznoval)

"Well, that's true." (Makoto)

"..."

And in reality, the battle ended and neither of us died.

If I was asked if I had some sort of personal grudge on Aznoval-san, my answer would

be no.

Hearing those upright words of his, I was a bit relieved.

Tomoe simply narrowed her eyes and was staring at him though.

“...Yeah, you are like that. Then, will you come with me?” (Aznoval)

“Understood. I don’t mind. But, about Tomoe...” (Makoto)

“I don’t mind either, Waka. Please do let me accompany you as well.” (Tomoe)

Oh.

Looks like she didn’t keep silent because she was against it or was cautious?

But Mio cuts in between Aznoval-san and I.

“...”

Without making a face as if being troubled, Aznoval-san approaches Mio and whispered into her ears.

“.....There’s no lie in those words?” (Mio)

“Of course there’s none. A knight doesn’t go back on his words.” (Aznoval)

Isn’t that supposed to be a samurai?

Is it the same for knights?

I am not well-versed in that, so I’m not sure.

“Then, be sure to bring back Waka-sama safely.” (Mio)

“I promise. I would be grateful if you were to change a bit of your opinion towards us if he were to return with a healthier shade though.” (Aznoval)

“I will consider it.” (Mio)

Mio slowly gets out of my front with an evil smile.

I am grateful that you are worried about me, but at least ask for the safety of Tomoe as well, Mio.

“Then, Makoto-kun, Tomoe-san, I will be your guide.” (Aznoval)

“Have a safe trip, Waka-sama.”

“Have a safe trip!”

I am a merchant, and a teacher at the Academy.

I am not a berserker or something close to that.

My objective is by no means battle, it is simply a mean to an end.

Excluding a single being in specific, I don't really care about winning or losing.

It is not something to be bothered with.

Hah... looks like I have now gotten a big task to fix.

Tsige is in the middle of war, and yet, I am like this.

It is true that I am interested in the inner area of the biggest labyrinth in this world.

But I really don't think it will be something big enough to change this gloomy feeling I have.

Chapter 286

You are going that far?

With the help of Makado-san's ability, we were transported from the 20th floor to the 25th floor, and after that, we walked down the spiral stairway with Azu-san at the front, me, and Tomoe in that order, and continued going down.

In that time, we spoke about a variety of things.

We first began with self-introductions.

How to say it, maybe because we have already exchanged words several times in the middle of battle and have probed each other's heart, this feels really late.

And we also talked about his sword.

This place is a location where faint red light leaks out from the floor, and it seems the sword was pierced into the flat big rock that's right in front of us at this moment.

...

Rather than calling it a big rock... it makes me think of it as a rock seat.

More so when the surroundings are filled with a mysterious atmosphere.

Also, it gives out the feeling of a lid, or a seal.

He said that they weren't able to draw it out by force, so they tried a lot of things, and as a result of it, the method of using one of the Guild Skills managed to draw it out.

It makes me question if it was actually okay to draw it out.

Well, even if it was a bad call, it is all in the past now though.

Imagining the scenery in the past, a wry smile naturally surfaces from my mouth.

“And, what’s in this place? From what I see, I can’t find anything that might serve as a mood-changer for Waka, or something that a Superior Dragon like me would have interest in-ja ga? I also don’t know what is your aim at all in this.” (Tomoe)

After checking out the surroundings, Tomoe slightly narrows her eyes and looks at Azu-san.

His life as a japanese person, his life when he just came to this world, his life as a swordsman, and also, the life in his game where he was a knight and acted as the Guild Master. On top of that, he also told us about many sides regarding the Adventurers of Origin.

He readily told me to call him Azu instead of Aznoval, and in the end, I felt like Azu-san was the way of calling that felt the most fitting inside of me, so I decided to do so.

I don’t think I will get used to calling him without honorifics though.

This is the same for Azu-san as well as his comrades.

Tomoe resolutely said that this won’t serve as a mood-changer for me, but honestly speaking, that conversation with him was fun.

Even if there’s nothing here... I am already grateful.

“Now now, being impatient at times will lead to losses, Tomoe-san. Right. First, let’s go with the main objective. Makoto-kun, after our talk, I am now confident that this will be satisfying to you.” (Aznoval)

“?”

Me?

What did I say that prompted this confidence?

Most of the talk we had was him talking of himself. Compared to that, I only spoke a bit about my time in Japan.

What could it be?

“Those words just now, should I take them as you using that talk as a pretext to extract

information from my master, Waka?" (Tomoe)

"No no. It is just that now that I have invited you two, I thought that it would be best if all three of us were to benefit from it. At the very least, I wanted you to learn that I have also gained plenty enough benefits from this as well." (Aznoval)

"Azu-san..." (Makoto)

"Then, I will explain now. This is the deepest area of Yaso-Magatsuhi's Prison Palace. This small space that doesn't even reach the *100 tatami mats*." *<Around 165.29 square meters>*

"..."

That is indeed small.

But well, if we were to call this the garden of a residence, it can also be considered extravagant though.

Compared to the 1st floor that was a plain that extended as far as the eye can see, this is certainly small. And the entrance was also crazy.

Wouldn't things get heated up if they were to do an adventurer festival there?

They could even bring a float there.

"And so, this place is..." (Aznoval)

"..."

Maybe he is planning on saying something hard to voice out, I could feel slight nervousness from Azu-san.

Tomoe and I wait for his words.

Is there something here?

What meaning does this place hold?

Is he about to talk of a secret truth that only a few in this world would know?

“This place is also the border between life and death.” (Aznoval)

...

Border of life and death?

Even if you tell me that... what does that mean?

“Life and death. So, this is like the Yomotsu-Hirasaka?” (Makoto) *<Boundary between life and death in Japan. It holds the same ideology as the River Styx.>*

What I somehow manage to speak out were words that fit the image Azu-san just described.

A name that appears in Japanese myth.

“Makoto-kun, you are quite knowledgeable. Yeah, that’s exactly right. This is the Yomi-Birazaka of the Goddess’ World. You have saved me a good amount of explanation. A happy surprise.” (Aznoval)

I still don’t have a clear image.

Azu-san nods in satisfaction, but I on the contrary... feel like it would have been better if I hadn’t said anything.

Yomi-Birazaka... is the boundary of life and death depicted in Japanese myth.

In terms of myths, I do know about it.

But that’s all I know!

“But of course, myth and reality are different. It is normally difficult to think of life and death as different from the death of the body. Of course, I will be explaining that as well.” (Aznoval)

“...That would help a lot.” (Makoto)

It seriously would.

“From what I know of the modern Japan, it works differently. In this world, life and

death are connected to the present world and the world of the dead. They exist in the same world. In other words, they have borders that can be crossed.” (Aznoval)

“...Okay?” (Makoto)

“But, even if I say that, it doesn’t mean they are completely connected. Makoto-kun, do you know of balloon art?” (Aznoval)

Now he talks about balloon art?

Isn’t it the one where you inflate a long balloon to make things like dogs out of it?

A poodle surfaced in my mind.

“Is it the one that you twist balloons and make animals out of them?” (Makoto)

“That’s right. You can think of this place as the torsion. It is the place that’s the closest to life and death. In other words, the border of life and death; the ravine.” (Aznoval)

“...So... the sword of Azu-san that was pierced into that rock was...” (Makoto)

“Just like what you imagine, it was a lid. In order for the torsion to not loosen.” (Aznoval)

“Uhm... Doesn’t that mean drawing the sword was a bad idea then? You know, in a lot of meanings.” (Makoto)

Wouldn’t it create a big war between the living and the dead?

“It is just as Waka says. If your story is true, it would have created a big disaster that would never disappear from history. But there’s no such records in this world. It is a pretty hard to swallow story-ja na.” (Tomoe)

True.

“Yeah, it was pretty bad. I only learned about the full picture not that long ago though.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

Uuh, it looks like he is going to ignore the question of Tomoe for now; Azu-san showed me the greatsword he had on his back.

Right now, it has no sheath.

At the end of the fight, he had a sheath for it.

And after stopping his released Iai in the middle of it, he declared his surrender.

“Nameless one that must not be spoken of’, that’s the name I gave to this sword. And it is also the name of the best technique I trained on together with my cute illusory beasts.” (Aznoval)

“...It had astonishing power.” (Makoto)

Honestly speaking, it is to a level that if I was fighting against a party and I had received that finisher technique in a timing where I was open, I might have died.

“When I hear that from you, it sounds like it is sarcasm or the biggest compliment that I can receive. It is a complicated feeling. Well, after forcefully drawing out the sentient sword and taking possession of it, it didn’t want to tell me its name, so the name I gave to it can be considered a self-deprecating name.” (Aznoval)

‘Now that I think about it, it might have been because of the anger I felt when I learned my own selfishness created a big problem’, is what Azu-san muttered as he makes a bitter smile.

“What about the answer to my question? Are you going to ignore it?” (Tomoe)

“I will answer in order, Tomoe-san. Please wait for a bit more. I have had several questions for many years, and it was just recently that I found the answer for a number of questions I had given up on. One of those was the true name of this sword.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

Now that I think about it, Azu-san’s behaviour towards Tomoe is polite, and soft.

Is it because he is a knight and that prompts him to be polite to women?

At first, I thought he did it accidentally, but it seems he is actually doing it consciously.

Is there some sort of reason behind it?

Anyways, the name of the sword huh.

If he said it was something recent, it must mean that since the time he obtained the sword, a crazy long time has passed... he assumed that the sword was sentient... and after living together with it, he finally heard the name of the sword.

I am interested in what served as the trigger, but as expected, I am interested in the name itself.

“So, what’s the name? Uhm, only if it’s okay to hear it, that is.” (Makoto)

“Of course. The real name of this sword –no, the name of the will that dwells in it is - according to the person herself- Princess Seoritsu.” (Aznoval)

“Princess... Seoritsu? As in the Japanese one?” (Makoto)

“By the way, that name and form... that sheath... and the power after releasing the attack; I learned all of those for the first time while we were battling. You see, that Iai I did at the end was that. I am glad that something as impressive as that came out in a climatic moment. If I had obtained something like that in an earlier stage, I might have changed my job to samurai. Hahahaha!!” (Aznoval)

No, it wasn’t only that.

It was at an even earlier stage than that.

Far before I was bashed with the shield the illusory beast transformed in Aznoval was holding, I had sensed its presence.

Also, that timing of surrendering...

If at that moment he learned of Princess Seoritsu’s name and obtained the hidden power it possessed... taking into account a number of weird occurrences in that fight, and the actions of Azu-san later, the power that can be inferred from it is...

“Clairvoyance.” (Makoto)

“!! Wow wow, seriously. Forget about fearsome potential, you are already fearsome. Counting all the things that I have learned of you, I seriously think this from the depths of my heart. As I thought, it really was the right choice to surrender there. I was on the verge of being rendered speechless in the very literal sense of the word.” (Aznoval)

I unconsciously muttered the possibility that came out from my mind after connecting the dots.

It seems like I hit the bullseye, the face of Azu-san lost all semblance of emotion for a moment, was dyed in surprise, and then, he began laughing like crazy. After that, he nods as if praising his own decision.

Tomoe was at a lost for words. It is probably not because of the name of the sword, but because of its power.

In that fight, Azu-san was probably able to see at the very least 30 seconds, 1 minute, or maybe even further into the future, most likely since the moment he released the ‘Nameless one that must not be spoken of’, and was fighting using that information.

That’s why he stopped.

...At that timing... when I stopped trying to avoid the Iai, and right before I was about to finish Azu-san with the method I thought of.

It wasn’t to kill him, but to render him unable to fight anymore.

I did think he was blocking my attacks way too perfectly, I did think he was attacking all the openings in my awareness too well; all of those are not things that can be aimed at in those timings that are shorter than an instant.

I was surprised, wondering what kind of instincts and experience he had that would make it possible for him to achieve all this, but in truth, it would be more natural to think of it as some sort of special ability.

Moreover, it was unnatural that it suddenly slipped into his battle style.

Right now I am unable to understand it in detail, but if we think of it as an ability that dwells inside one of the strongest weapons in the world... I feel like I can agree to it.

But, I didn’t expect it to be such a convenient ability that could be used without any

cost.

“Depending on the situation, it is a power that might become the natural enemy of Tomoe-san.” (Aznoval)

“Hmph, bark all you want.” (Tomoe)

...So he has already accurately grasped the way to use it huh.

Extensive combat experience affects the level, but the knowledge that you gain from it, doesn't; even so, it is still fearsome.

“By the way, Azu-san, I remember hearing the name of that God in my time at Japan. I don't know the fine details of it though.” (Makoto)

If I remember correctly, it is a Goddess that is related to purification.

But... damn it!

I can't bring out any info about what kind of God it was, what was her history, or what other name she possessed.

Or more like, I know nothing.

The only things I know is that it is a Goddess related to water, and that she is related to purifications.

Since it was a sealing sword that existed for a place like the Yomi-Birazaka, it might have been a God that had that kind of backstory.

I look at Azu-san.

When he said it, it felt as if he already knew that the name of that sword was the name of a Japanese Goddess.

He probably more knows of her than me.

For some reason, I was vexed by that.

“It is the name of a Goddess that many people don't even know the name of. It is from

a really old land. But well, beginning a lecture about that land at this moment would be too inadequate. Let's return to the main topic." (Aznoval)

"The only thing I know is that she is a water Goddess that is connected to purifications." (Makoto)

If I had more knowledge, I would have been able to understand a bit more the emotions Azu-san is feeling now.

"...That's plenty enough -no, this might even enter the knowledgable area already. You have splendid amounts of knowledge, Makoto-kun. You see, I have an interest in shrines and myths, and it seems you do as well. And they are limited to Japanese ones. That's why I am slightly knowledgeable about it, that's all." (Aznoval)

So he even saw through this vexing of mine. Azu-san smiles at me with a kind expression.

His gaze felt incredibly far, as if he were looking at the past.

"...I was born in Shiga, you see." (Aznoval)

Shiga.

The prefecture where the Lake Biwa is located in huh.

I have never gone there. I did think of going to Chikubushima one day.

...I couldn't realize it though.

Of course, I don't know much about it either.

"There was a shrine there that enshrined Princess Seoritsu. It wasn't that much of a popular spot, it was a small shrine named Kawasogi shrine. And so, after a number of strange chances I got, I ended up being especially knowledgeable about this Goddess named Princess Seoritsu." (Aznoval)

"Strange chances huh." (Makoto)

Is it like how it happened with me and Tsukuyomi-sama?

I also feel like it is something different from that.

But I can somewhat understand.

I am not from any of the six prefectures of Honshu, or from Kyoto, and I haven't gone to Shikoku either, but even with that, I have still gone to a number of places that were related to Tsukuyomi-sama.

For example; the shrine at Gassan, one of the shrines of Tsukuyomi at the side of the Kyoto's Matsuo Grand Shrine, and the shrine of Tsukiyomi at the depths of the mountain Tokushima.

There's more places like that as well, and I still remember going to those places.

Since before meeting with the God itself, I already held decent knowledge of it.

This might be... different from a debt of gratitude, and more like... fate.

Then, in the case of the other Gods, there are as well, but the numbers decrease by a lot.

"Well, even the name is steadily being forgotten by the general populace, so Makoto-kun remembering the name is a surprise in itself. The fact that there's a sword with a name like that in this world, and that I swung it around without knowing about it... makes me feel that it is a strange coincidence." (Aznoval)

"..."

"Ah, right. That's just talk about me. It has nothing to do with Makoto-kun, the heroes, and the Goddess. It is not something I should be talking about. Now then, let's answer Tomoe-san's question next." (Aznoval)

"...Now then, I am looking forward to what words you are going to use to slip away from answering-ja na." (Tomoe)

"It happened not long after I obtained this sword. Explaining the sequence of events at that time would be way too long, so I will be giving a rough explanation of it. We, who had come here before Takane-kun appeared, heard a voice when we were at the mid-floors." (Aznoval)

"A voice?" (Tomoe)

“Yeah. At that time, we didn’t know that this place was the Isekai version of the Yomi-Birazaka, so we forcefully obtained the sword that I wanted no matter what, and we were on our way back.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

“The owner of that voice was the one who stopped this big disaster that you were talking about, Tomoe-san.” (Aznoval)

“...Hoh? Are you saying this is where the Goddess-sama appears?” (Tomoe)

The voice of Tomoe sounded somewhat irritated.

She probably made the connection; the reason why she was called here together with me.

“Root, that was in those days called the Sky Dragon and also the Harmony Dragon. At that time, we thought Root was on equal footing with the Goddess. The one who taught us about how wrong this thought of ours was, was the Land Dragon, that was at times also called the Boundary Dragon... a giant dragon by the name of Futsu.” (Aznoval)

“Futsu again. I don’t know about that Superior Dragon.” (Tomoe)

“Of course, I will be showing you decisive proof for you lady who doesn’t know of it and doesn’t believe in its existence. That’s right, proof of its existence! Makoto-kun, please deploy your Magic Armor firmly! Now then, I will be introducing you briefly to the world of the dead!!” (Aznoval)

“Eh?!!” (Makoto)

“What did you say-ja to?!” (Tomoe)

Before we finished speaking, Azu-san, who had his back facing towards us, raised his sword -Princess Seoritsu- and stabbed it into the big rock.

I already had the Magic Armor deployed even before he told me to deploy it anyways, so there was no problem in that front.

The problem is... not only the big rock, even the ground itself had cracks running through all of it, and from there, a thick dark red gushed out from the openings.

And there's also the fact that we are probably being taken to the world of the dead that I am definitely not mentally prepared to go to!

"Azu-san?! Rather than calling this an invitation, isn't this more like kidnapping?!"
(Makoto)

"Aznoval, you bastard!" (Tomoe)

"It is not a place that you can normally go while being alive, Makoto-kun! Don't worry, this is just the beginning of an extravagant journey! It will be only the tip, so don't worry!" (Aznoval)

He didn't deny it.

So you are aware that this is practically kidnapping huh! Damn it!

What's that about 'only the tip'?! My heart is not prepared for this!!!

Chapter 287

Can I get a hundred?

“Ah, if you don’t feel well, tell me as soon as possible, okay? Well then, over here.”

I am already feeling terrible though.

As expected, even I am questioning all this.

Azu-san was walking to the front of us carefreely as if he were a tourist guide.

This is the other side of the balloon torsion. In other words, the world of the dead.

Something shining faint red was drifting in the atmosphere.

Or maybe not? Is the air itself changing colors?

Is this air that can be inhaled?

From what I remember him saying, I should be fine as long as I have the Magic Armor deployed, but... well, I can’t feel relaxed.

I feel as if we are walking at dusk in a place where sound has died out.

For some strange reason, there’s no sound of footsteps either.

The sensation at my feet is soft like that of sponge, a soft sandy beach; there’s no other words I can find that can describe this accurately.

From here, the landscape before Azu-san who is at the front is changing constantly.

At times, he stops and continues walking again, and at those times, when he does a step forward, the surrounding landscape changes completely.

A stone paved path, a forest, sand dunes, lake surface, deep inside a jungle, and also a townscape that felt familiar... and at times, there’s even the ironic cemetery. Even

though the feeling at my feet was not changing at all, the scenery in front of us was changing constantly.

“This is no illusion, but this is not real either. World of the dead huh. What a strange place.” (Tomoe)

Looks like Tomoe is still fine.

Just in case, I have strengthened her into her silver haired mode.

Even so, I have no assurance that allows me to feel relaxed. That applies to me as well.

The impressions she is voicing out are not that different from the ones I have.

But, as expected of a person that uses illusions, it seems she also suspected that the abnormality in our surroundings could have been the work of an illusion or something related to it.

I see, an illusion huh.

It is true that this view is somewhat similar.

I have only experienced this a number of times in the past though. It reminds me of the feeling I get when I experience the ability of Tomoe.

There's similar points with what's happening right now and the experiences inside my head.

Even if this is not an illusion, it might be related to the past memory of a lifeform.

“Calling them inhabitants would be weird but, aren't there any dead people here? I don't see anything of the sort here though.” (Makoto)

I try asking what was bothering me.

It seems this is not the first time here for Azu-san, so it should be worth a try.

“...Fumu, if you are imagining something like undeads, there's nothing like that here.” (Aznoval)

“...”

It is true that I was imagining things like skeletons or zombies; in other words, things that were related to bones and dead bodies.

So there's none here?

Now that I think about it, undeads are dead people, but maybe they are the figures of the people that didn't want to come here and stayed in the world of the living.

Or maybe they had grudges or lingering feelings that bound them to the world of the living?

...

It may not always be that way in Buddhism, but in Shinto, I feel like there's a tendency of judging them as impurities.

Or more like, practically everything was like that.

In that case, my way of thinking of the world of dead might be closer to that of Shinto.

“Apparently, they are going around in the form of souls. I don't really have much perception abilities of that type, and I am not the type that has high sensitivity to those things, but there's souls existing here and there, so it seems people that have perception abilities normally die here.” (Aznoval)

“Heh~.” (Makoto)

The situation is overwhelming me right now, lessening the amount of words I let out.

I try to deploy the [Sakai] I normally use to search for living things in the other side.

At that instant, everything I could see in the area was filled with reactions.

I see. It doesn't work at all.

I have to adjust it to one that can be used in this world. I wonder if it is possible.

“It seems the landscape here is also because of the ubiquity of the souls or something

like that. If you have interest in the details of the area around here, Futsu who is waiting at our destination can tell you about it, but... if you can't understand the world travelling explanation of Root, you won't be able to understand this one either, you know? By the way, it was impossible for me." (Aznoval)

"In that case, it would be impossible for me too." (Makoto)

"So you felt dozy at the middle of it until it ended huh. From what I remember, there's only one time I have been able to hear that explanation of hers until the end and the questioning time also lasted for several hours. There's no need to feel ashamed about it. It was a pleasant experience after all." (Aznoval)

Azu-san laughs heartily.

This lively laugh of his didn't fit this place at all.

Or more like, pleasant experience?

"..."

"Root has spoke of this to most of the Wise she has met, has made joke-like conditions, and has carried them out. Could it be Root was Makoto-kun's first?" (Aznoval)
<Reminder: Root gave the condition that if they didn't manage to listen to his explanation till the end, he would 'eat up' Makoto>

"...What?" (Makoto)

"If it's that explanation, we were also present and listened to it till the end. And while at it, Waka... hasn't been attacked, Aznoval." (Tomoe)

"...Oh, that's quite the rare case. There's only been one who has been able to listen till the end, and they had a discussion in a mysterious language, and after that, if it's from the opposite sex -and at times, even of the same sex- she would attack them and it would go all the way. Makoto-kun wasn't able to understand the explanation, moreover, wasn't attacked huh. From the atmosphere you let out, I thought you were born in the Heisei period <modern times>, but maybe you were born in the Showa period <1926-1989>?" (Aznoval)

"Why did it turn into talk about my age?" (Makoto)

I don't understand what this has to do with anything.

"Refusing something like that would need quite the hard personality, right? I simply thought the Showa period had more guys made of tough elements, you see. Or maybe you already have a woman set in your heart?" (Aznoval)

"...Ah."

The face of two women surfaced in my head.

...Eh?

Without even one second passing, the figure of Tomoe and Mio were also added there.

...

This is the worst.

Is my way of thinking such a pushover? That's no good.

"Hm, but even if you had such a woman in your time at Japan, you are currently in a parallel world. It won't serve to inhibit your desires at all. Then... aah..." (Aznoval)

"...What-ja, Aznoval? You are making a face unbecoming of a knight-ja ga." (Tomoe)

"So that's how it is. It is not Mio-san, so that means, you were already in that kind of relationship with Tomoe-san huh. Ah, so that's why Root noticed this and didn't try anything." (Aznoval)

"...I am impressed by your discerning eye. Umu, you didn't hit the mark, but it isn't far from the truth-ja na. It is true that Root couldn't do anything because of me-ja yo." (Tomoe)

It is far from the truth.

We are not in that kind of relationship.

Regarding the latter half of that, Tomoe listened till the end, so we were able to reject it ourselves, so in a sense, he is indeed correct though.

“...Is Ne-san a court lady? I see... that is plausible. But Makoto-kun, Mio-san is lovable as well. That woman is definitely the type that would be by your side till the end no matter what happens, you know? Luckily, this world accepts polygamy, so...” (Aznoval)

In the time I was feeling self-deprecation at the harem thoughts that were somewhere in my head, the conversation between Azu-san and Tomoe was flying at unbelievable places.

Seriously, these two ride way too well in horrid topics.

“Once the legal wife is decided, things might turn that way unexpectedly fast. Umu, now that I think about it, we haven’t had much of this kind of conversations. Looks like even a troublesome knight-dono like you can be of use to some extent.” (Tomoe)

“Oya, isn’t Tomoe-san the legal wife?” (Aznoval)

“Hm? I wonder. I don’t really mind the order anyways.” (Tomoe)

“But if you get married faster, it would make it possible to leave many more children faster, right? Giving birth to the child of the man you love; this is the privilege given to women. From the people I know, there’s a Japanese man who married a dragon woman half, and many have lived happily.” (Aznoval)

“...Children huh. The holy child of Waka... Fufufufu... kukuku... True. I do want it. I want it fast.” (Tomoe)

The face of Tomoe had turned into the ‘grinning face’ she rarely shows.

But this doesn’t look like the face of a woman that got happy about understanding the privilege of women.

The closest comparison would be that of a grandparent waiting for her grandchildren.

It probably has already surpassed the level of parents.

“It is something natural.” (Aznoval)

Azu-san nods in understanding.

No, don’t go nodding.

In the head of Tomoe, I probably have married who knows how many wives in the future.

...

What's this?

Just now, I felt a strange chill running up my body.

Also, I feel... a strange gaze I have never felt before.

It is not the gaze of someone. I feel as if I am being watched by the whole world. That shouldn't be possible, but I have no other way of describing this feeling.

"I was thinking of arranging everything first so left it for later, but it might have been a huge mistake. Mio and I are different from humans, so who knows what will happen in the future. Are you saying this was a task that we should have tackled as soon as possible?!" (Tomoe)

"You are still young, moreover, it seems your company is doing well. In that case, there's no worries in terms of the assets. If you can count on the support from your surroundings, this troublesome knight proposes this foolish idea that even if you don't suddenly aim for childbirth, you should begin training for the step before that, princess Tomoe." (Aznoval)

The step before that.

Ah, I see. So that's what it is.

"No, troublesome? I was simply ignorant of your consideration. Forgive me, Aznoval. Now that I think about it, it is exactly as you were worrying about-ja. There should be women aiming for him even within the Gorgons, and his resistance towards us might make him wish for a child from Tamaki." (Tomoe)

...

H-How should I enter the conversation to change the topic?

It is so deep that my countermeasures for it are right now completely blank.

“It seems like you have heard about the knowledge of Japan from Makoto-kun, so there’s probably no need to say this but, in Japan, no matter how excelling or appealing of a man or woman you may be, you can only marry one person.” (Aznoval)

“Umu, I know.” (Tomoe)

“That’s why, you may at first not care about being the second wife or lower than that. The men that have become the husbands of Root get used to harems pretty fast, but Makoto-kun is most likely different.” (Aznoval)

“Fumu fumu.” (Tomoe)

“That’s exactly why being the first wife is important. Depending on her, it will affect his view of a second wife.” (Aznoval)

“I-Indeed.” (Tomoe)

“From what I have seen, there’s no doubt that first wife will be Tomoe-san or Mio-san. A happy married life is definitely awaiting you! In that case, when are you going to make your move? There’s no need to even ask that! Isn’t that right?” (Aznoval)

“You are right! The moment is now-ja!!” (Tomoe)

No no, it is still only been one day since we met Azu-san for the first time...

Saying stuff like ‘isn’t that right?’ and ‘when are you going to make your move?’, from which company did this seller come from?

Also, no, the moment is not now-ja.

“Yeah yeah, I am glad to see that you understand. I want Makoto-kun to have a fulfilling Isekai life with no regrets.” (Aznoval)

That’s totally a lie.

You are currently trying to destroy my peaceful life with all you have, you know?

“By the way-ja ga, how many wives can a Japanese man manage to support-ja?” (Tomoe)

“...This one depends on the person. From my acquaintances, the highest number is 60, but I also know one who fell apart with 4.” (Aznoval)

“Mumuu, even when thinking about the highest number, there’s the need for each one to give birth twice to even reach the hundreds. T-Then what about the age-ja? Is it possible to make children no matter the age?” (Tomoe)

“...”

T-Tomoe brooke!!

No, she got broken!!

My throat is dry.

Throwing away the part about the number of wives... a hundred children, she says?!

Moreover, it sounds as if she is not satisfied with that many?!

Is this a conversation you should be doing in the world of the dead?

Or more like, this is just a joke right? Where is the ‘you got pranked’ panel?!

“Sorry, but this also depends on the person. The top age I know of is 82, but the lowest was 40, he was unable to fertilize children no matter how much he tried...” (Aznoval)

“W-What?! If we think about it from the worst case scenario, that means Waka only has 20 years left?!” (Tomoe)

What are you saying with such a straight face, Azu-san?

The guy that was able to make children at 82 years old must have been some sort of superhuman, and the guy that couldn’t make children by 40 probably had some sort of circumstances behind it!

A disease, a wound, or maybe something happened in an adventure, there’s also the possibility that he led an excessive sexual life and it dried him before time.

I totally refuse a lifestyle like the latter one, okay?!

Also, don't say things like 'only has 20 years left', that's incredibly improper!

"Ah..." (Makoto)

The moment I opened my mouth because I felt like my life was seriously going to be rewritten...

"Aznoval, what are you joking around for? I thought you were going to be guiding them here as guests, but you have only been talking loudly about their lives. Don't you see that the souls are losing their composure and beginning to get noisy?" (???)

I could hear a voice reverberate in my head.

It was a voice that was directed at Azu-san, but I certainly heard it as well.

Tomoe must have heard it as well, but...

"Making babies... what a blunder-jatta. Making babies-ja..." (Tomoe)

She probably heard it as well, yeah.

I have an idea of who that voice is.

There's only one possibility after all.

"Futsu, it has been a while. Also, I wasn't joking at all." (Aznoval)

The words of Azu-san confirm my guess.

A blue hitodama in a form similar to the souls that I imagined them to be were appearing countlessly around, gathered together, and combined to make a single form.

It is a dragon, but the oriental snake type of dragon.

What a fresh sight.

It is floating, and compared to its big body, its arms are small, and on its hands, it is holding spheres.

The contours of its head are slowly becoming clearer.

The horn is incredible.

An extravagant horn with ramifications like that of a reindeer, and at each section, it becomes wider as it goes up.

“So this is the existence that is on equal footing with Root... Futsu.” (Makoto)

“Now I am only the manager of souls though. Nice to meet you, outstanding one, Misumi Makoto-kun.” (Futsu)

A pleasant voice permeates inside my head.

At the place I am looking at, there's Futsu.

It has taken form with its body covered in silver scales.

But it wasn't as if its form was fixed to only that one.

At times, Futsu would turn into a pale dragon that felt as if it were made out of ectoplasm, and at other times, it would turn even paler, transparent like wind. And there are times when it is in the middle spot of materializing and being transparent.

But the form Futsu used to greet me with, the one where it materialized completely into a body where it is covered wholly in silver scales, was a mysterious view like no other.

“...”

Tomoe's eyes were wide open.

It was easy to tell that it was because of surprise.

This type of presence is not one that can be faked.

Meaning that, at the very least, it is already clear that there's actually a dragon that's comparable in strength to Superior Dragons.

The appearance of a comrade that didn't exist in the vast knowledge she had of this world.

It would be great if she gets into her serious mode and the conversation just now gets washed away though.

Chapter 288

Wish of Futsu

‘Well then, over here please’, the moment those words reverberated in his head as always, the landscape around changed completely.

The faint red world disappeared, and a forest overflowing in natural beauty appeared.

The shadow of animals could be seen in the corners here and there.

At the place where a tree that was thicker than the rest was located and the sunlight was shining, Aznoval finds a stump and immediately takes action. In other words, he walked to it and sat on it.

His moves felt practiced as if this wasn’t his first time.

And then, he looks at his right, and as if this served as a signal, the contour of a pale blue woman comes out from the shrubs.

That figure didn’t have any specific individual traits, it simply had the figure of an adult woman.

At her hands, she holds 2 mug cups.

There’s no other people here.

There was no Makoto or Tomoe.

“Looks like you were beaten up pretty badly, Azu.”

“Futsu... Even though it has been so long since the last time we met, why are you appearing in such a half-assed appearance?” (Aznoval)

“There’s no point in putting on airs using my figure with you guys anyways. I have already used up all my surprises.” (Futsu)

“What a regret. Truly a regret.” (Aznoval)

“Even if it is something important, I refuse. And so, are you going to answer me? That person, did you finally piss it off?” (Futsu)

She gives one of the mugs to Azu, and while at it, points at his shoulder.

“This is the result of an unlucky encounter. The misunderstanding has been resolved.” (Aznoval)

“‘The misunderstanding has been resolved’? It is been awhile since I have heard that classic phrase of yours. Should I interpret it as your muscles pushing through? Why did you even end up fighting against an apostle of the Goddess?” (Futsu)

“...It was to protect the lineage of my little brother. Well, it was one the few connections I have. Have to treasure it.” (Aznoval)

“I see. Sorry.” (Futsu)

“Being one of the few friends that know my favorite dishes, there’s no need for you to apologize.” (Aznoval)

Inside the mug, there’s a completely white liquid.

It is letting off warm steam.

It is hot milk.

“...It is just milk. But well, it is true that providing a feast for a person that can actually eat is pretty hard in this place though.” (Futsu)

“There was no need to prepare my share, you know. It is the same anyways.” (Aznoval)

“I have to provide the best warm reception for the person that will be bringing the guests I have been waiting for after all. The matter of the shoulder is fine already. Other injuries are... from him?” (Futsu)

“...Yeah.” (Aznoval)

“Fuh~, I was prepared for this, but seriously, he truly is a fearsome outstanding one.”

(Futsu)

The mug of Futsu was filled with a blackish brown liquid that looked muddy.

Without hesitating, Futsu drinks from it and sighs once.

“I completely agree with you. Truly fearsome. If I hadn’t surrendered at that moment, I wouldn’t have been able to come here for sure.” (Aznoval)

“Even in your state where you had learned the name of the Princess?” (Futsu)

“...So you really did know. No, I won’t ask you about about how you know about me knowing the name of Princess, okay?! No way I will!” (Aznoval)

Maybe Aznoval remembered something of his past, he screamed as if in a spasm.

“Yeah yeah, I said something unnecessary there. And so, about the future you might have ended up in...” (Futsu)

“First of all, Makoto-kun stopped in the middle of evading the Iai I unleashed. It is the technique that was activated when I first heard of the name of Princess Seoritsu.” (Aznoval)

Aznoval recalls the fight.

The fight that he was doing just a while ago.

It still remains vividly in his memories.

“He purposely received an attack that he could avoid? A technique that you yourself had unleashed for the first time? Isn’t that just you misunderstanding?” (Futsu)

“In my eyes, that’s how I saw it.” (Aznoval)

“What was his aim?” (Futsu)

“In order to bring me down.” (Aznoval)

“...He should have known you are immortal, right?” (Futsu)

“But I do get injured. If I receive a grave injury, there’s the need for time to recover. The worst the wound, the longer it immobilizes me.” (Aznoval)

“...”

“He stopped evading in the middle of it, and received my sword with his head. It cut the meat at his forehead and the blade slipped from his skull. But well, I don’t know at all how much of it was calculated. But for him, that must have been the ideal moment to go on the offensive.” (Aznoval)

...

“And then, before I can shift the katana and seal the battle with a reverse swing, Makoto-kun would create distance by shooting an incredibly powerful arrow that had several ring-like things added to it.” (Aznoval)

“...Was that his trump card?” (Futsu)

“Next, he would shoot four rapid-fires of the light arrows that incapacitated Rokuya at the *openings of my armor*, and in those few seconds restrained, the silver arms would be appearing at both of my sides.” (Aznoval) *<pretty sure he had no armor at that moment>*

“Silver arms? What’s that?” (Futsu)

“I don’t know at all. I have never seen them before or heard about them. The Elder Dwarf seemed to obey Makoto-kun, so maybe it is a treasure of them, or maybe it is something Makoto-kun had them make.” (Aznoval)

“So he is controlling armor designed for giants with magic power?” (Futsu)

“...Might be the case, but my intuition is telling me otherwise. Rather than calling it an equipment for giants, it was more like... the arms of a robot.” (Aznoval)

“Robot. Aah, an evolved version of a Golem? The Japanese people called them Robots.” (Futsu)

“Umu. But even so, I felt that even for something like that, it consumed an incredible amount of magic power. He didn’t look like the type who would wish for robots, and it didn’t look as if he was utilizing equipment for giants. The one point I am certain of

is that it possesses dreadful efficiency.” (Aznoval)

“To the point that it would make you unable to act for a long period of time?” (Futsu)

“...No doubt about it. And then, I would be captured in some sort of barrier-looking thing, my whole body would be steadily crushed by some superhuman strength, and in the end, me together with my sword Princess Seoritsu... would be wrung into meat paste.” (Aznoval)

“...Uh, that’s quite the image.” (Futsu)

“Of course, in that time, he continued looking at me with eyes as if he wouldn’t miss any sort of opposition or obstruction as he maintained his bow locked at me, and then... a bizarre conclusion was reached. Seeing that much into the future, I decided on surrendering. Because if I let him go that far, what would be waiting after would only be bad for everyone; the worst end to it all. Nothing good would be left.” (Aznoval)

“Decisive judgement... maybe?” (Futsu)

Was that honest praise, or was it sarcasm?

Futsu looks at Aznoval’s face with a bitter and complicated expression.

“I was about to be made unable to move for half a century.” (Aznoval)

“Against a youngster that hasn’t even been here for a decade?” (Futsu)

“...That’s the part that makes it the scariest. The three this time, counting the heroes, are all a group of excelling individuals. But within them, he is a special one. He is a person that I think fearsome from the bottom of my heart.” (Aznoval)

“I agree that he is special. Even from my eyes, there’s no doubt about it. Yeah, to the point that even if we were to fill up the place with warning posters all around, it would never be enough.” (Futsu)

“Well, that’s why I brought him here ‘while at it’. I wish that he will be able to obtain some sort of experience in this place.” (Aznoval)

“Yeah, I am truly grateful. You have finally brought Makoto to my place. My request has been fulfilled without room for complaints.” (Futsu)

“I am a superb adventurer after all –is what I want to say, but this time was completely a godsend. Also, don’t call it a request. I was simply fulfilling the favor of a friend. Ah, refill for the milk please.” (Aznoval)

Feeling the warm sunlight, Aznoval spends a relaxing time.



‘Well then, over here’, with those words of invitation, the landscape changes in an instant.

The faint red world disappeared, and what appeared was a hermitage.

She sat on the veranda, and then, looks at the woods.

There’s no one else here aside from her.

“Well well, I thought I had returned to my home, but that wasn’t the case. In this place, what we see, what we touch is all what you wish it for huh.”

Without making any special movements, Tomoe let out a clear sounding voice.

“Well, it is more like, this is the appearance, aspirations, scenery, and the projection of the heart that you wish for though. Doesn’t look like Lorel. Could this be Japan?”

This place looked like the hermitage Tomoe had made at Asora.

And that hermitage was heavily influenced by a period drama that Tomoe really liked, where the main character had retired to and was living in.

The only thing that was clearly different about it was that in the woods you can see from the veranda, there’s a conifer that has never been seen before.

“So, woman, what business do you have with me-ja?” (Tomoe)

Tomoe talks to the woman that had approached her with the appearance of a village girl from the Edo period.

Being asked her business, the village girl stopped her feet for a moment, but continuing her silence, she sits at the side of Tomoe.

Tomoe, who was sitting in the veranda, stands up.

She didn't place her hand on her katana. She simply sat back at the fireplace that was at the back.

The village girl nods once and sits opposite of Tomoe.

"Nice to meet you, I am Futsu. Aside from Root and Doma, the other Superior Dragons don't even know of my name, a very old existence." (Futsu)

"You are a Superior Dragon, right? It was just recent that I heard that you and Root had an era where you were acclaimed existences in the long past." (Tomoe)

"Close. That woman -no, he is currently a man, right. Well, whichever is fine. In the old era, it ruled over the skies and harmony, and I ruled over the land and souls." (Futsu)

"But you incurred the wrath of Root, and as a result, you were killed or imprisoned, hence, you are now here. Was it a fight over a man? Whatever it is, what a loser-ja na." (Tomoe)

The tone of Tomoe was calm, but there was probably displeasure and hostility mixed in it.

Because she had concluded that there's a 9/10 probability that Futsu will prove to be a harmful existence for her master.

That's because even if there have been twist and turns and in the past they couldn't let their guards down around him, Makoto and Root are temporarily in a cooperative relationship.

It would be better to have a shallow relationship with Futsu, who is clearly antagonistic towards Root.

"Yeah, it is just as you say. The biggest reason was because of a man. And so, now I am the manager of the world of the dead where I know only few." (Futsu)

"Moreover, after several centuries, even in Lorel, the name of Doma and Futsu are being mixed up. And it will most likely fuse with Doma who actually exists." (Tomoe)

"I am truly at a loss against the persistence of Root. But in this occasion, that's of no

importance.” (Futsu)

“No importance, you say?” (Tomoe)

“That’s right. My existence has already been accepted to a certain extent by Makoto – no, by Tomoe, so the next important thing is to have you lose your hostility and cautiousness towards me.” (Futsu)

“Are you saying you want to be friends?” (Tomoe)

“...I don’t hold a grudge towards Root. I was the reason why the relationship fell apart to begin with anyways. I am not in an antagonistic relationship with him, and I don’t have any intentions of involving Tomoe’s master into our problems. I promise this.” (Futsu)

“...”

“Actually, the main guest this time is you.” (Futsu)

“...What did you say?” (Tomoe)

“I have no discontent in being the manager of this world of the dead and the souls in it, but... there’s only one thing that I regret.” (Futsu)

“The manager of the world of the dead’s regret. Doesn’t give any good vibes.” (Tomoe)

Grudge of the dead.

Associating it with that, Tomoe furrowed her eyebrows.

“Fufufu, true. When put in words, even I think it wouldn’t be anything decent.” (Futsu)

“Then... Umu, Futsu, that fight between you and Root for a man, what was it that caused your failure? If you tell me that part, I would be fine with hearing what you have to say.” (Tomoe)

Maybe Tomoe thought of something, she showed interest in Root and Futsu’s relationship and an evil smile surfaced in her face.

“Ara, that’s simple. I was unable to accept being the second wife. I wanted to be

number one. And, I didn't want other women aside from me." (Futsu)

"...I heard that the man that was the husband of Root made a grand inner palace and shut-in there drowning in carnal desire though." (Tomoe)

"That's why I lost against Root who didn't care about other women as long as she were given the chance to give birth to the child of a human." (Futsu)

"In a place where an idiot and a retard are, if a normal one tries to join in, the normal one will be repelled huh. Even when your wish was normal and humble." (Tomoe)
<Normal is Futsuu in japanese. Probably a play in words here.>

The face of Tomoe was showing clear amazement at it.

"I wonder about that. It is difficult for normal women to get close to heroes. And in truth, he married Root and lived a happy life... and died. The people that were loved by him left numerous children and he was wrapped in love and died in happiness. He truly had a nice face in his final moments... to the point that all of my unsightly emotions towards Root melted." (Futsu)

"...Did you... meet him here?" (Tomoe)

The eyes that were always directed at Tomoe had for the first time looked away, and Futsu looks at the garden, answering with silence.

On the other hand, Tomoe was at a loss of words in a different meaning.

Because the experience of Futsu was the one that Tomoe had been fearing the most since the time she met Makoto.

"...Ara, I might have found an ingredient for a deal. But it might not be needed... hmm. For now, let's leave it aside! Well then, can I finally talk about this regret I have?" (Futsu)

Maybe Futsu was aiming to blow away the heavy mood that was going on, she continues the conversation with a pretty cheerful tone.

"Umu, let's hear it." (Tomoe)

"I have something I govern that I want you to take over. Even though I'm the manager

here, for a long—a truly long—time I have uselessly held a treasure of an ability. Isn't it a waste?" (Futsu)

"What an outrageous thing to say. There's no way a Superior Dragon can pass over the powers they govern over." (Tomoe)

"It is possible. Azuma, Doma, Ryuka, Grount, Lancer, and you are the proof of this. For Root and I, it is possible." (Futsu)

"In other words... you are saying our powers are things that Root had passed onto us? Are you saying that those were originally a part of his powers?" (Tomoe)

Tomoe showed a truly displeased expression.

She didn't even show any signs of trying to hide it.

"Don't hate it that much. It already cannot be affected by Root, it is your own power now. Also..." (Futsu)

"What more is there-ja?" (Tomoe)

"Your master will in time -in a not so far future- be breaking into a domain that is the most dangerous within the Wise that have arrived to this parallel world." (Futsu)

"...The Goddess huh." (Tomoe)

"So it goes without saying. At that time, it wouldn't be troubling to have as much power as possible, right?" (Futsu)

The curtains of silence fall.

Futsu waits for the answer of Tomoe.

It was a silence as if everything that had to be said had already been spoken.

Tomoe thinks; about Futsu's aim, wish, and what she is plotting.

The silence continued for long.

Chapter 289

Dragon Mother, Dragon Pulse; Succession

‘Well then, over here’, the landscape changed instantly without even giving me the chance to nod.

Under a sky that doesn’t have a single cloud in the sky, the sides and up and down were surrounded by deep darkness.

The presence of Azu-san and Tomoe has disappeared.

I was the only one who was separated?

But I didn’t feel hostility from that dragon that called itself Futsu.

It doesn’t seem to be an attack.

I don’t know how the world of the dead works, so I am troubled by what to do.

I can’t see anything aside from my own body.

No matter where I look, it is the same.

I also don’t feel as if something is hiding or erasing its presence and observing me. Not being able to grasp a presence at all is exactly how this feels.

...Well, it would be a different matter if this were a world where people like Rokuya are all around the place though.

“It took me a bit of time to prepare. Sorry for making a guest of mine wait.”

A voice reverberated in my head, and the snake-like dragon from just a while ago was floating in front of my eyes.

What, so it didn’t go to change or transform huh.

“How tasteless. So I am in this form.” (Futsu)

No well, you are the one that presented yourself in that figure.

Even I find it rare to be in a place like this where there’s nothing.

If you want to change your appearance, just go change it yourself. If you are an incredible dragon, something of that level shouldn’t be hard.

“I was the one who was told ‘well then, over here’, so receiving that impression of yours troubles me though.” (Makoto)

“...Right, sorry. I am currently entertaining the three of you in different places, so I tried my best so that the space were to recreate the place you wished for, but it looks like I made a mistake somewhere.” (Futsu)

“Wished for?” (Makoto)

But there’s nothing here though.

“Aznoval is in a forest that shines brilliantly with life, and Tomoe seems to be in a place of retirement in seclusion. In that case, this might be the kind of place that your heart finds respite in...” (Futsu)

“Stop it. That makes me feel kind of sad.” (Makoto)

I felt like I was told my imagination was abysmal, and that made me sad.

Not only that, it was vexing.

If at least some stars were shining here, it would have turned into a starry sky.

There really is nothing here.

“In this world of the dead that serves as the temporary residence of the souls, their outer appearance and landscape can be changed as much as one wants. That’s why the landscape that the souls wish for spreads in this land here and there, and in the cases when living beings like you guys visit it, I can change its look to a certain extent. For example, like this.” (Futsu)

The words of Futsu stop, and then, right in front of me, a plain chair and table appeared as if it had risen from the darkness.

Wow.

“So you can create things as much as you want huh. That’s impressive.” (Makoto)

This probably means she wants me to take a seat, so I do so.

I could clearly feel how the seat received my weight at my back.

“It is completely different from Creation. Please view it similarly to the one your follower Tomoe uses, where she temporarily provides substance to her illusions.” (Futsu)

“Tomoe’s... I see.” (Makoto)

I do know that Tomoe has obtained the ability to grant substance to her illusions.

If it is in battle, there’s absolutely no problem at all, but to use it in daily life situation, the bottleneck is that it is a power that can only be used for a short period of time. When Tomoe is silver haired, she obtains the ability to strengthen the vague sensation of the boundary between reality and void.

“The invitation to come here was mainly for Tomoe. I thought about having you give your opinions regarding this, so I asked you to come along as well.” (Futsu)

“Business with Tomoe?” (Makoto)

Oho, looks like this is not good.

Feels like I will have to be cautious.

The other party is an existence that stood on par with Root.

Just what kind of unreasonable request will it be asking my important aide for.

“Yeah. Aznoval said that this might serve as a mood-changer for you too. Of course, I will be lending my help in that aspect. If you want to learn about this world, experience it, and on top of that, there’s something you want to ask about, I promise you to answer

whatever you want.” (Futsu)

...Even if you tell me that...

The world of the dead and things about souls; I might have a lot of things to ask about that unknown and mysterious topic, but... what about things I myself want to ask about?

As I thought, the thing that bothers me the most is regarding Tomoe.

She is an important family member after all.

...Family huh.

Now that I think about it, using that as an excuse, I have done something cruel to Mio. And I might have hurt Tomoe as well with it.

That’s probably why she broke so grandly when the talk about children was brought out.

Regarding Mio, there’s also the issue with Rokuya-san and... damn it.

When I leave here and return to Tsige, I must resolve myself properly regarding that matter.

Leaving aside the other matters, I have already reached an answer regarding those two a long time ago after all.

“It is true that this is an important experience, and a chance. But right now, the thing I am the most interested about is what you plan on having Tomoe do. There’s no other thing that bothers me aside from that.” (Makoto)

“There’s no need for you to worry. Not only do I currently not have the power to hurt you, I don’t possess the power to hurt the current Tomoe either.” (Futsu)

“This is the world of the dead, right? When I was told that, it reminded of many old stories and myths. For example; an existence that had been semi-imprisoned in this world and was searching for someone to take its place and tried to deceive that person into it.” (Makoto)

“That’s a myth passed down between the Wise -between Japanese people huh. Ah, I see. It is true that this place has a number of rules that are unique to this place alone, but I don’t have any plans on leaving this place, you know. That’s why, when I learned about Tomoe’s existence, I thought about calling her here. I asked this of Aznoval, but I didn’t think it would be fulfilled so soon.” (Futsu)

“I don’t understand what you are trying to say. I also don’t understand at all why you are aiming for Tomoe. Those words didn’t serve much in erasing my suspicions.” (Makoto)

“Fufu. In terms of binding the living to this place, well, putting it in an easy to understand way, there’s one that states that you can do it by having them eat food of this world while they are in this world.” (Futsu)

See?

In the stories I know of, most of them are basically like that too.

Most of the myths I only know about them roughly, but the times the world of the dead appear in the story, they are mostly because they wish to revive a specific important someone. And in those kind of stories, it is filled with traps like: ‘don’t drink, don’t eat, don’t turn back, don’t open your eyes’.

She easily revealed it, but it looks like this place really does have those kind of rules.

“...As I thought. Owa?!” (Makoto)

A short mutter leaks out from my mouth.

As if using my conviction as a signal, Futsu’s figure shrinks to a size similar to that of mine.

‘Ooh, in this size, even Dragons are cute’, is the stupid thing I was thinking when a broadleaf tree, which wasn’t too big, sprouted at the side of Futsu

It blossomed, withered, and stays in a form in between yellow and orange and a number of colorful fruits had sprouted from it.

It looked like tangerines.

“For example, if you were to eat the fruits -that are called *Golden Apples* by Aznoval- here in this place, your mind and body will be powerfully bound to this side, and even if you try to leave, it would take quite a lot of time and work.” (Futsu) <TLN: ときじく
not really sure of this one. Just found the closest one that fit the description which can be the Golden Apples or the Peaches of Immortality –might be something more obscure though.>

Golden Apples.

I remember hearing about it. If I remember correctly, eating it would grant you immortality?

Eh, or was it longevity? Heal diseases? Or was it simply a symbol of eternity?

Crap, it is incredibly vague.

I feel like it had a longer name than that.

But why did he put a name like that to a thing that would entrap you in the world of the dead?

That’s a fruit that would imprison you in this side forever.

“Golden Apples huh. I remember hearing that name in myths.” (Makoto)

“Must be. He said that he used that as a reference. About those Golden Apples, if you were to bring them to the outside world and have a living being eat it, they can obtain an immortal body. If you want to, please take a few with you.” (Futsu)

Is that why.

“I don’t need a single one of them.” (Makoto)

“With a person that holds this kind of landscape inside of them, I did think that you would be saying that, but to think you would answer instantly. From what I heard, you are supposed to be a merchant. I don’t think there’s any article that would make you as much profit than this, you know.” (Futsu)

“No need to mind it.” (Makoto)

“Understood. I won’t force you. Fufufu, but really, you...” (Futsu)

“...What is it?” (Makoto)

“I simply thought that the Goddess and Root must be having quite the hard time with you. I personally don’t like the two of them, so from my point of view peeking at you from this side, you are the best. Please do drag them around to the brim of their patience. Yeah, without any restraint -thoroughly.” (Futsu)

I could tell that the cute-looking Futsu in front of me was laughing in an evil way.

So even if she doesn’t have any plans on revenge, she doesn’t hold that much of a good impression towards the Goddess and Root huh.

She says she doesn’t like them, but in truth, she probably actually hates them to the core. Yeah.

“...*Cough*, a bit of resent got mixed in there, but I personally am looking forward to what you will be achieving in the future. That’s why I have no intentions of imprisoning you here, and I also have no intentions of stealing your important companion, Tomoe. What I wish from Tomoe is... to transfer my power.” (Futsu)

“Transfer your power?” (Makoto)

Even when she has told me, I don’t understand the meaning.

Is there a reason why she wants to get weaker?

“For someone like me who passes her days managing souls, the past powers that are still inside this body of mine are a waste of a treasure. To be more specific, it is the strongest power of I, who was called Mother Earth Silver Dragon, ‘Dragon Mother.’” (Futsu)

“Mother Earth Silver Dragon... Dragon Mother?” (Makoto)

Now that she mentions it, when I pour a lot of my power to Tomoe, her hair turns silver.

Is there a connection to that?

Also, what kind of power is Dragon Mother to begin with?

“I have already said this before, but I have no intentions of binding Tomoe. ‘Dragon Mother’ is a power that is related to the nucleus of life. It is difficult to explain it in words, and it would be best to understand it from intuition and experience. Hm... Azu... I see. I understand.” (Futsu)

Hm?

It looks like Futsu’s mind is currently not here right now.

From how she is talking, it seems as if she is thinking about something.

It feels like the times when someone is having a talk in thought transmission.

...Ah, could it be that Futsu is currently speaking with all three of us at the same time?

If that’s the case, she is quite skilled.

Having a conversation with three people separately at the same time; just thinking about it makes me confused.

Anyways, Futsu, who is most likely concentrating on her conversation with Azu-san, seems to be gentle.

It is pretty different from her attitude towards me that is as if she is receiving a guest.

It must be true that Azu-san and his group are in a close relationship with Futsu.

“I’m sorry about that. I received a small advice just now.” (Futsu)

“No, I don’t really mind.” (Makoto)

“About the power of ‘Dragon Mother’, putting it plainly, it is a power that lets you understand the world’s dragon pulse and utilize them.” (Futsu)

World’s *dragon pulse*. <Ryuummyaku>

Like the Ley-lines.

Even if you tell me that, I only know that it is like the energy of the earth. I am not knowledgeable about feng shui or things of that matter.

Did Azu-san think I would be able to understand with this?

It is true that this gave me a clearer image in that part about nucleus of life though.

“Regarding the part about comparing it to this so called ‘Dragon Pulse’, I would also like to ask Aznoval about that later, but putting it in a different way, it is like the fossilization of the soul of all things. Because of the result of something that’s similar to friction produced in the moment when the souls come and go from that side to this side, at the depths of the whole world, there’s a mass of power that flows like a river and— no, as I thought, it really is difficult to explain.” (Futsu)

“...You are saying that Tomoe has the ability to utilize this?” (Makoto)

“I certainly did feel it. From the current Superior Dragons, the only ones that can obtain this specialty are Tomoe or Root. And for a certain reason, it is impossible for Root. Also, seeing Tomoe with silver hair, I was convinced.” (Futsu)

“By accepting it, will it forcefully affect Tomoe’s position and personality in some way?” (Makoto)

“No. I ascertain this. Strictly speaking, this is like an access permission of sorts. It will be done in an instant.” (Futsu)

“...”

In reality, it sounds like a sweet deal.

She says that she will be giving power for free, so it is extraordinarily sweet.

But you know... no matter how much you don’t like the Goddess and Root, would she really go to such lengths?

“From what I see, you are seriously intending on confronting that God. In that case, the power of ‘Dragon Mother’ should serve to protect Tomoe. Even if Tomoe wishes for it, if you as her master rejects it, it is impossible to transfer the power. Can you please give me the answer? What do you think about it?” (Futsu)

“If there’s no demerit at all. In my personal opinion, I want Tomoe to get stronger. BUT! If she herself doesn’t wish for it, it is a definite no. That’s my conclusion.” (Makoto)

“Okay. You guys have a nice relationship formed there. That scarily powerful Spirit, and the hyuman corpse that has obtained growth are probably the same as Tomoe. I am slightly jealous.” (Futsu)

“...”

Spirit and Corpse.

Tamaki’s existence hasn’t been noticed by even the Goddess, so... is she talking about Mio and Shiki?

I somewhat understand about Shiki, but is Mio categorized as a Spirit? Not in the Calamity category?

“Tomoe said the same thing. That if it will serve to protect you and sweep away your uneasiness, she would want as much power as possible. But she also said that if it is something you don’t wish for, she will not put a single finger on it.” (Futsu)

“...”

That Tomoe, she sometimes says really admirable things.

I seriously am only blessed by people.

“Understood. Tomoe will be taking that ‘Dragon Mother’ power. But, when something abnormal happens...” (Makoto)

I definitely won’t forgive you.

“You definitely won’t forgive me, right? I know. I was sure you would say that. As I thought, you really do resemble him. It is vexing, but I understand why Root is so stuck onto you.” (Futsu)

“If you understand... that’s good.” (Makoto)

Honestly, receiving power for free in a state where I still can’t trust the other party completely, is something that I don’t really want to do much. It doesn’t feel good.

Even so, thinking about the battle with the Goddess that will be coming in time, it wouldn't be bad to have the others aside from me also gain a lot of powers.

"Ah right, if you are thinking that it doesn't feel good to receive power for free..."
(Futsu)

"Hm?"

As if seeing through my heart, Futsu speaks.

Is my way of thinking that similar to this guy she is talking about?

I don't think I am similar to a guy that would take Root as his bride though.

"Can you please take care of the trouble in Kannaoui? About that matter, if we were to trace it to its origin, it is a fight that stems from their love for their country and territory. That's why, you should be able to take care of it even through their tricks. It is originally something that I wouldn't be getting involved with, but thanks to one of the two royalties that the Goddess has bestowed being up to no good... things have gotten quite complicated." (Futsu)

"Royalties? Are you talking about the charm eye?" (Makoto)

What does she mean by 'the royalty that the Goddess has bestowed'?

That's the power of Tomoki's demonic eye, and that's certainly something that the Goddess bestowed upon him but...

"The power that the Goddess has bestowed to the heroes is royalty conferment. A strong body and magic power, also a power that is fitting for them as rulers has been selected and manifested. I don't know how she explained it to them, and that's something only the person herself knows though." (Futsu)

"..."

"The Goddess has invited two heroes. The likes of the Goddess are biased, and the power of the sacred treasures she gave them may have differences, but it seems like the power they obtained is pretty similar." (Futsu)

"So that's a part of their power huh..." (Makoto)

“Without meeting each other, without speaking with each other, without being in contact with each other; a disgusting thing to see and touch that has the power to cut into pieces the bonds between people and capsize it. In this Lorel, in this country that loves Wise, there’s no need for this disease.” (Futsu)

“It is true that I did think badly of it since it was something done by a Japanese person.” (Makoto)

I didn’t think the charm power would evolve into such a way of using after all.

“Of course, I will have the Adventurers of Origin cooperate as well. But they have a limit in how much they can intervene, so I want to ask of you -who lives in the present- to bring a close to this.” (Futsu)

...Could it be she also knows about my relationship with Iroha-chan?

If Rokuya-san has told her about it via Azu-san, it might be possible.

But if the Adventurers of Origin can’t stand at the front stage of history and are trying to reduce their influence to it, even if it is possible, it is most likely impossible for them to solve the problem.

...Right.

A happy ending where everyone views the dawn with a smile doesn’t exist. That includes matters where a country has turned muddy.

There’s people who wish to reach even if it’s only a bit better of a conclusion, and without minding the amount, they do their best without sparing any effort.

And, I know about that girl to a certain extent.

That eager figure of hers.

“I will be telling you this in advance. It is not certain that it will reach the conclusion that you wish for, you know?” (Makoto)

“I am already aware of that. Many lives will most likely come here. But that’s also the usual. I won’t blame you for that.” (Futsu)

“In that case, as an honorarium for giving power to Tomoe, I will try to do as much as I can.” (Makoto)

It makes me feel more relaxed when it is a work that has a reward after all.

“Your arrival to Kannaoui probably made the issue proceed in an accelerated manner. Revolts will most likely be occurring in the towns at the vicinity. Please go at it at your own discretion.” (Futsu)

Leaving an ominous prognostic, the darkness is wiped, and returned to the previous landscape where Azu-san and Tomoe are also in.

Well, it doesn't matter whatever it is.

At a glance, it doesn't look like Tomoe has changed, and Azu-san is probably the same.

Mio and the others are probably waiting, so this is a good time.

Let's return to the world of the living.

There's no traps, right? We can return, right?

Chapter 290

Interlude – In the middle of the night

The Osakabe household that has been ruling over Kannaoui for a long time, and there has been worries that they have been shouldering for that same amount of time.

-For example; Yaso-Katsui's Grand Labyrinth.

It existed way before the Osakabe household, got a name for itself, and it was an unexplored labyrinth that was older than even the city of Kannaoui.

It was said to be the place where a Superior Dragon lives, and at times, it would spit out a crazy amount of mamonos that would bring forth heavy damage to the settlements.

But in peaceful times, because of the adventurers that the labyrinth attracts, it becomes a big blessing. It was like an abundant large river that isn't rare when it overflows.

Even when it is dangerous, people still find worth in gathering there after all.

Learning how to utilize it well will be a subject that the city of Kannaoui will probably be racking their brains about for a long time.

-For example; the military department known as the Ikusabe household.

In the past, they were only one, but at some point in time, they fought, competed, and now, even the word hate feels like a lukewarm word to describe their antagonistic relationship.

Their names changed, the lands they governed over were separated, and the master they worked under also changed.

At present, the core of the territory is the Osakabe household, but the master the military family serves under and the treatment they receive is better.

In general, the military family possesses more power.

Of course, this isn't a situation that the Osakabe would like.

-For example; the bloodline of the main household.

Most of the current people of Kannaoui had weaker bodies than that of the general populace.

Even if they raise a family head with care, it is rare for them to live long. To the point that there was a time when they thought this was the work of a curse from some antagonistic power. *<the work of an enemy stand!>*

That answer has not been found even to this current day.

At any rate, if they were to try to maintain their bloodline to a certain degree of thickness, it makes it that much easier for the child to be born with a weak body.

It was the biggest dilemma of the Osakabe household.

But for some reason, there would be many in the group of people with thick blood that were talented, and there were many who would be revered to as a lord by many.

And so, magic, medicine, and the many experiments to better the constitution of the body were serious matters that the people that serve the Osakabe household couldn't ignore.

Ironically, to this current day, the one who possesses the best healing properties in Lorel Union is the Osakabe household.

Even though they can't save themselves, others ask them for salvation; it was already comical in their eyes.

In that history of the Osakabe household shouldering this complicated circumstances, there's the vassals that have been serving them for generations.

The Kougetsu and Shougetsu brothers also originate from a military family and serve their master.

The older brother Kougetsu received training for the gifted as a warrior and a tactician

in his homeland, and protected the household straightforwardly.

The younger brother, Shougetsu, after experiencing being an adventurer and travelling around the world, he supported the household from the shadows as a stealth corps member.

In time, the younger brother would learn all about the conflict between the households and the sad circumstances behind it, and would retire into being the protegee of a princess at a place that was faraway from the center of this conflict.

On the other hand, his older brother stayed at this center... and decided on reformation.

No, what was in his heart was not something that would so gentle as to call reformation.

Revolution or maybe rebellion would be words that would be more accurate.

“With this, things should progress faster. Now that we know the Kuzunoha Company that Sairitz invited surpasses my forecast by so much, it makes it questionable just how much that fox of a woman knows about the situation. The speed in which the plan of Haruka progresses is not enough.”

In the room of Kougetsu, unable to obtain any decent sleep, Kougetsu was measuring the effectiveness of the moves he made in order to make adjustments.

In the scenario that was in his head, there's the woman that wouldn't be an exaggeration to call the one who holds the most authority in Lorel, Sairitz.

A resident of the political world that possesses power fitting to be called Empress.

This woman, that still has the card of marriage remaining, was being glared by all the people in the domestic affairs and diplomatic area of Naoi.

And the move she made was the Kuzunoha Company.

On the other hand, the move of Kougetsu was the Empire's hero, Tomoki, and the brave woman of Osakabe, Haruka.

But those cards of his are not functioning in the way he wishes to.

Leaving aside if the scenario of everything functioning properly actually leading to

success, this was creating impatience in Kougetsu. On top of that, the achievements of the Kuzunoha Company in the labyrinth, and them meeting with Osakabe Iroha.

The deciding move to reform Kannaoui and the Osakabe household, he couldn't manage to reach that point for some reason.

Even though it is so close.

He has remained in obscurity for so long for the sake of that.

Enlarging the power that gathers under Haruka, the immense power of the charm ability of the Empire's hero that has joined into his playing cards, and also, the existence of Sairitz and the Kuzunoha Company.

Until now, he has been careful and calm, without hurrying no matter what.

Kougetsu, who has been advancing his plans at a decent pace, made one move hurriedly.

In order to move Iroha's mother -Haruka- a bit faster, an action that was solely for the sake of speeding up the whole of his plan was made.

But that was... a mistake.

Kougetsu understood the mysterious area of the Grand Labyrinth called Alternative Floor, and yet, the Kuzunoha Company proceeded their exploration at breakneck speed, and he was scared of Sairitz' shadow that stood at their back, which made him hurry.

Even though he is not a religious person, he had gone to the Kishimo temple that he has already grown used to going to, and in that underground where Haruka and a number of her vassals were, he whispered them something.

"The Kuzunoha Company -especially their representative Raidou- seems to be mutual enemies of the Empire hero, Iwahashi Tomoki", is what he said.

Kougetsu's miscalculation was just one thing.

He completely underestimated the power of those words. He thought that those words would serve as a trigger. He was expecting it to become an ingredient to make the

preliminary battle shorter. He thought it would simply be like putting coal into the fire.

But in truth, it was heavily different.

Those words were a bomb in itself.

Without the requirement of a preliminary battle, those explosive words of his would create a grand explosion.

Only a few days left until its effectiveness becomes a movement.

If it were just that, it would actually be as he wished.

But just by learning that Raidou was an enemy of Tomoki, even the Shadowless tried to kill Raidou the moment they found him.

The moves of the charmed people was something that easily surpassed the imagination of Kougetsu.

But here, there's one more misfortune.

The woman called Haruka is considered a top-class warrior even when looking back at the history of the Osakabe household. And that power of will is also on the level of a Brave.

That's why she didn't become a simple puppet of Tomoki, and was still able to act as a leader.

Her maddened love and her tenacious will had fused into the worst combination.

It was as if she had no lingering feelings towards the man she loved and her own daughter, and was devoted to following her desire of acting for the sake of Tomoki.

She knows about ethics and common sense, but she doesn't feel worth; all of her decision standards are based on her love to a man she has never met before.

If it is for his sake, she has no problems with doing things that are not allowed to do in society –that is the current Haruka.

Kougetsu has been evaluating the power of the charm all this time, and still hasn't

evaluated the woman called Haruka.

With the piling of this small doubts, a misfortunate coincidence occurred.

Kougetsu will learn in the worst possible way that the woman known as Haruka that he had seen as an ideal hero was nowhere to be found anymore.

“Kougetsu-sama!!”

“What?! You are being noisy!” (Kougetsu)

“Forgive my rudeness, but this is an emergency!! We have received a report from the patrol!! A mysterious group is trying to do a night raid at the Chihiro-Manrai Restaurant!”

“...What? What... did you just say?” (Kougetsu)

“A night raid at Chihiro-Manrai Restaurant!! We have formed a suppression team and are on the way, but the enemy is powerful!! Moreover, this may not be information that has been 100% confirmed, but there are people that said they saw the figure of the missing Haruka-sama there too!!”

“...Impossible.” (Kougetsu)

Kougetsu unconsciously stepped back.

The surprise of the man after hearing about Haruka, the anger of allowing the attackers to the center area where the Chihiro-Manrai restaurant is; these supposed factors made it seem like the stepping back of Kougetsu was a natural reaction, but the truth was different.

He finally understood the mistake in the move he made.

He didn't understand just what kind of meaning it held for the charmed people to learn about an enemy of Tomoki.

And he didn't understand just how they would act when they had obtained plenty enough fighting power.

Haruka, who is not simply a fighting puppet but a person that can investigate on her

own and is able to make flexible decisions in a sense. After investigating the information of the actual Raidou and Tomoki, she had begun preparations with a face of wrath.

It is true that the Chihiro-Manrai restaurant is a facility that possesses high security and defenses, but the preparations of theirs had already surpassed that.

This wasn't an attack; this was practically a war.

Forming groups of skilled adventurers, warriors, and stealth corps, and on top of that, having Haruka take the command position herself.

"We are currently putting the confirmation of the situation as our top priority!! The customers that are staying there have already begun evacuating with the guidance of the hotel personnel, and the defense unit has already been dispatched! We should cooperate with the unit and make a pincer attack to settle the situation and..."

This was too soon.

This isn't how it should have been.

They have not suppressed the information line at all.

At this rate, information that a large scale fight has occurred in Kannaoui will spread in the blink of an eye.

There's already no way to stop it at this late of a stage.

Now that it has come to this, Sairitz can use this battle and call it an insurrection, and declare doubts on their political management, letting her use that as an excuse to put official troops or a military family in Kannaoui.

Thinking of the worst, the future that they use the confusion to take away Kannaoui from the Osakabe household to give it to a military family is also possible.

Against an opponent that they would normally not want to show a single opening against, they have shown a completely conspicuous opening, and hence, a fatal mistake.

The fall of the Osakabe household.

Whichever it is, they are all things that Kougetsu doesn't wish for.

He wishes for a strong and accomplished Osakabe household after all.

He wants to make Kannaoui which is the place that the Osakabe household rules over to be the number one most flourishing city in Lorel.

To the point that he would use the descendants of a family lineage that has lost themselves to their grief of their body.

"Haruka... you bastard. Don't joke around. Are you telling me that in order to kill the enemy of a foreign country's hero, you don't care about what will happen to the city you have been born in and your household?" (Kougetsu)

"Kougetsu-sama?"

"...I will be going too. How is the evacuation state at the surroundings of the Chihiro-Manrai restaurant?! Send a messenger!! Try your best to reduce the casualties to the residents as much as possible! If it is the units that are permanently staying in that hotel, just them alone should be able to fight decently. We will be prioritizing the protection of the citizens!!" (Kougetsu)

"Yes, sir!!"

"I won't let you do it. I definitely won't accept a conclusion like this! Haruka, what's the point of you moving on Sairitz interest?!" (Kougetsu)

After the person reporting had left, Kougetsu shouted as he hurriedly proceeded with the preparations.

He was completely dismayed.

As if his own pawns had turned onto himself; they are creating scenarios that are working in the favor of his opponent.

A countermeasure against it has still not appeared in his mind.

But he absolutely cannot ignore it.

The trump card that he has been hiding has been exposed, and the charm power will

probably be discovered as well.

Even so, there's no way he can give up.

He has been living for the sake of creating a strong Osakabe after all.

The Kannaoui citizens will be killed by the military of Kannaoui.

That is a scenario that cannot be forgiven.

Because the military is an existence that is supposed to protect the citizens after all.

Devoting himself to plot scheming for a long time, Kougetsu had also been estranged from swinging a sword in battle.

And now, he will be taking the sword after all this time.

Ironically, it is in order to protect the citizens of Kannaoui from the result of his own plans.



"A battle in Kannaoui, you say?"

Sairitz, who heard of this report in Naoi, had stopped reading her documents and lifted her head.

"Yes. They are apparently doing a night raid at Chihiro-Manrai Restaurant. The troops of the Osakabe household have been dispatched and are cooperating with the defense unit of the hotel."

The one reporting this had an attire that was easy to tell that this middle-aged man was a stealth corps member.

Surprisingly, they had a grasp of the information of a faraway place at practically real-time.

They must have quite the surveillance in that city, or maybe this is the result of excelling information gathering skills.

This time, it was the former.

The information gathering skills of Lorel are indeed growing by the year, though it may be a different story if it were a neighboring settlement, but the more the distance, the lower the accuracy of the information is.

Then, why did they have such surveillance prepared?

It is not because they felt a strange atmosphere from Kannaoui, or because the Osakabe household was showing strange movements, nor was it because the Empire was interfering in a suspicious manner.

It is because there's a guest that Sairitz had invited herself staying there.

"I see. No matter how it rolls, it won't change the fact that this will serve in our favor."
(Sairitz)

If it were the usual, Sairitz would be having a wide smile in the face of this overwhelming luck, but she still maintained her calm expression.

"Yes."

"And, what about them?" (Sairitz)

"A few of them have gone to the labyrinth since morning, and it seems like a number of their personnel are in standby at the hotel. We still haven't grasped the information on the inside, but we do know that the hotel personnel is evacuating the people."

"Marito, make gathering information of them as the highest priority. Also, contact the site. Do your best to provide them support. No matter what they ask of us, don't refuse. I will do something about it, so accept anything. Understood?" (Sairitz)

"I will contact them as soon as possible. How should we move after?" (Marito)

"...No need to." (Sairitz)

"Hah?"

"We do nothing. Only in the case where the Kuzunoha Company requests for our help will we do our all to execute anything. Right... if there's extra hands, help out in the

evacuation and rescue of the citizens.” (Sairitz)

“...Uhm, I know this may be me overstepping my bounds but... can I ask what we will be doing regarding the way we will deal with the Osakabe?” (Marito)

An unbelievable chance has fallen in front of them.

It should be completely impossible to not do anything.

Thinking this, Marito mixed slight self-interest as he urged an answer from his master.

This may be an opportunity to finally reach a conclusion to the long history between the military family and the Osakabe household, so it can't be helped that he would lose a bit of his composure.

“Didn't I say we won't be doing anything? Marito, it is not like I don't know about the antagonism between your military family and them, but... hold it down. Right now in that city, there's the tails of a dragon and a tiger that we can't step on. Listen well. If we were to step into this matter thoughtlessly... all the military family will be wiped out, you know.” (Sairitz)

“Y-You jest.” (Marito)

“I am as serious as I can be. Because of the encounter between Iroha and the Kusunoha Company, the situation has changed into an abnormally delicate and dangerous matter. The representative Raidou-sama, who is staying there, is the one that is working as the teacher of your son, Izumo, at Rotsgard.” (Sairitz)

“.....”

“By the time you meet him again, that child should have definitely become stronger than you. Raidou is the kind of man that possesses that much achievements to even accomplish something like that as a teacher in his spare time. That's why, don't place your personal feelings in this occasion and just watch over it. This is an important test case.” (Sairitz)

“I admit the matter with Izumo. He is several steps better than me. But I am not planning on being overcome for at least 10 to 15 years though... I understand. If it is okay, can I hear about the meaning of the words 'test case'?” (Marito)

“Just how will they react when attacked directly? Just how will Raidou-sama see the approaching danger to his comrades, and how will he move? In Rotsgard, there was that big of an incident, and yet, it looked as if he viewed it as not his problem after all. That’s what I meant.” (Sairitz)

“Thank you very much. Well then, we will be doing our job as eyes, if there’s spare hand, we will rescue and assist the citizens, and in the case that the Kuzunoha Company requests our help, we will do our all to fulfill it.” (Marito)

“Then, step out. Also, there’s no need to hold back regarding this matter. Come report to me whenever.” (Sairitz)

“Understood. Well then, I will be excusing myself.” (Marito)

Marito’s figure disappears.

The only one that remained was Sairitz who had a complicated expression in her face.

The reason for that expression was because she has been unable to process the many changes since the time she invited them to her country.

“A perfume that possesses the charm power, the inside fight of the Osakabe household, the many testimonies of people that say have witnessed the Adventurers of Origin: Aznoval, Rokuya, Ginebia, Haku Mokuren. The representative of the Kuzunoha Company and a temporary teacher at Rotsgard Academy, Raidou. To think he would be such a potent medicine.” (Sairitz)

It would have been fine if they were to just do something about the problematic group of mercenaries that were carefreely shut deep underground in Lorel without minding about political influence.

The existence of Picnic Rosegarden may be popular inside the country, but in terms of the outside, they have a side that is slightly difficult to handle.

For Sairitz, they are an existence that she would prefer if they were to enter the control of the country, or just disappear.

If they were to be lend for the war between Aion and Tsige, their name won’t be heard in a bad light by the foreign countries royalties, nobles, and merchants for a while.

Of course, she made this proposition to the Rembrandt Company with the premise that they will provide plenty enough fighting strength to have an active participation in Tsige. Sadly, it was obviously not a proposition that was purely out of goodwill.

But the Kuzunoha Company easily surpassed the expectations of Sairitz, and have made big accomplishments that they didn't even mean to.

In the end, the diplomatic negotiations and the domestic affairs' undercover moves she was planning on proceeding with had been stopped almost completely.

Thinking about what would have happened if this were in the city of Naoi, and it involved her and the Priestess, the heart of Sairitz felt slight pity towards Kannaoui and the Osakabe household.

But because of the many new tasks that were piling up like a mountain due to this, all that pity had dispersed without lasting even a few minutes though.

"Now then, I wonder what kind of conclusion it will bring about. The dirty plan of the Empire, the darkness of Kannaoui, and they have also dug out the legends of Lorel splendidly. Really, if possible, I would have wanted to enjoy this story as a spectator."
(Sairitz)

With half expectations and half fear, the Empress of Lorel didn't take off her tired expression as she extended her hand to the remaining documents.

Chapter 291

The third time a city burns

“Why is it that when Boss is involved, everywhere becomes a haunted city?!” (Lime)

The unrestrained shout of Lime reverberates in the corridors.

He was simply supposed to be waiting for the return of his superior in Kannaoui -no, in the super high-class hotel of Lorel that is famous for its safety.

It was a lot safer of an environment than the time when he came to this country on his own, and the only thing he had to do was babysitting.

For a sudden call, it wasn't that hard of a job.

But right now... the Kuzunoha Company employee and spy, Lime Latte, was being exposed to even more danger than the time when he had come to this place, moreover, when he was camping at the forest.

It was an unit that was not only completely armed, the people that comprised it all had dangerous eyes like those of fanatics.

A group of people that were a lot more troublesome and dangerous than the run-off-the-mill mamonos.

It was a bit after dusk, at the time when the night activities were about to begin.

Thinking about the security of the city and thinking about the special nature of this hotel, the possibility of being attacked is practically none.

Lime that had gotten used to his job as spy judged as so, and was looking forward to his fried rice for dinner.

The quick mobilization of the Chihiro Manrai restaurant was great and succeeded in intercepting the attack, and their ability to evacuate the guests to safety was also perfect.

Then, why was Lime in such a tense state?

Because he noticed that the movements of the insurgents were clearly aiming at Lime's group -more specifically, the party of Osakabe Iroha that was in the same room as him.

On top of that, there's also the fact that the insurgents were comprised of strong people.

This was a night raid.

Meaning that, now that they have been intercepted, the attackers will become the ones in a disadvantage. That's how it is supposed to be, and yet, the morale of the insurgents has not fallen.

The whole unit was reorganized swiftly, and with their morale still intact, there's a unit that is trying to aim for the head of Iroha.

Lime wanting to hold his head in pain was understandable.

If it were just running away, it would be easy for him, but right now, he has to protect Iroha along with his colleagues.

It is of course difficult to command an escape with a group of people. There's also several people intercepting them. The enemies are many.

Even if it's the Kuzunoha Company, the situation is not good.

"Tch!! Those bastards have already caught wind of us!" (Lime)

His ability to sense presences that he polished as a spy have told him that several presences have begun to move as a group towards them.

He quickly made eye contact with his demi-human coworkers, had Iroha and the others go ahead as if drawing the attention to them, and with his hand, he communicates with signs and forms a rear guard.

"Until Boss returns, I won't let a single one of them get injured!" (Lime)

"I don't know what they are trying to do, but they got quite the guts to pick a fight with

us!! If they are boring humans, I will crush them without reservation!"

The first one to respond to the shout of Lime was the only scylla in the Kuzunoha Company, Levi.

After being a failure at the snowy mountains, she polished her strength even more, and was internally happy that she had gotten a job.

For Levi, who has the prime objective of pursuing fights and power, this job that was everyday duty training for the people that leave to the outside of Asora was slightly boring.

The sudden call made her expectant about what it was about, so for her, this turn of events was right in her alley.

The two take a battle stance at the hostile presences that were swiftly approaching.

Since he made protecting the target and escaping the hotel as the highest priority, the only ones staying there were those two.

"...Ara, a miss. This is strange. I thought there was no mistake it was here though."

(This is bad...) (Lime)

The clear voice of a woman.

A woman appeared from the door that turned into ashes without a single sound.

By the way, what was resounding in the area were the sounds of the activated traps that Lime and the Chihiro Manrai restaurant set up in the garden.

Lime, who had heard her voice and the sounds, had both his instincts and reason screaming of danger.

Having accumulated battle experience with Tomoe as his master, Lime had felt danger from this woman that was completely armed as military of the Lorel Union.

It felt the same as the time when he witnessed the power of the hero, or even more than that.

“Hey, unfamiliar people. My daughter Iroha, where is she?”

“...”

“...This woman is the best.” (Levi)

Lime stiffens his face.

If what she was releasing was the bloodthirst of a mother trying to take back her daughter, it would be something normal.

But that wasn't the case.

The woman in front of them was releasing unrestrained bloodthirst and hostility towards Lime and Levi with love that was not for her child but for a different someone, while she was quietly laughing.

Putting it in other words, it is ugly.

That's why Lime maintained silence and simply took a stance with his sword while holding the highest of cautiousness.

On the other hand, Levi had a dangerous smile surface on her face at the strong aura of that woman and evaluated her as the best opponent to fight against.

Scyllas hate hyumans instinctively.

'It is similar to how some people can't physiologically stand cockroaches', is how Makoto described it, but it is probably something that is at least several times more than that.

It is not a repudiation that makes them want to avoid them, it is a repudiation that makes them want to kill them all, so it is quite the instinctive reaction.

In the case of the current Levi, it is limited to only hyumans that have the label of 'strong', but the instinct itself is still kicking in her.

And in front of her, there's a suitable enemy.

With a woman that is worth killing right in front of her, Lime was looking at the Levi

that had a smile he hadn't seen before.

(Whichever the dice rolls huh. Well, in terms of numbers, there's several tens of them, but everyone aside from that woman seems to not be that big of a deal, and on our side there's the two of us. If it comes to worst, we just have to wait for Boss to return and things should settle one way or another.) (Lime)

Lime looks at the situation positively.

There's no need to pointlessly kill the enemy.

'We should make them reveal as many playing cards they have while buying time', is what Lime thought as he arranged his thoughts when...

"Uugh?!" (Levi)

"Levi?!" (Lime)

"Slender arms just as it looks. It is like brushing away a bamboo branch. You, what's your battle experience?"

"You—!!" (Levi)

The right arm of Levi flew away.

It was cut off.

The figure of the woman was still in the sight of Lime.

He couldn't see any movements aside from her mouth moving.

Levi distorted her face in pain for an instant, but soon let out an angry roar and rushed towards the woman with an expression of joy.

She has probably forgotten about Lime.

While thinking of a possibility as he looked at the expression of his coworker, Lime begins his follow-up.

Increase the power of Levi as much as possible, analyze the enemy, and push the state

of the battle to their advantage.

It is the usual work he has.

(There's no signs of her using a skill. But she did something with the weapon in her hand. If I remember correctly, that's... a naginata. There's no doubt that she cut off the arm of Levi with it. It is slight, but I can tell that there's scylla blood on it. Meaning that the seed of that sleight of hand was her excellent technique and body strength. In other words, it wasn't actually a sleight of hand, but high-class technique. Wait, that's of no importance. It simply means that this is baaad.) (Lime)

Fortunately, Lime has experienced a bit of a similar technique.

At the time when his superior Tomoe was training in Iai, he has seen similar spectacles like this several times.

(It is frightening how this woman's ability is sharper and more silent than Sis'. She is without doubt an expert..... But in the first place, Sis being able to swing around a katana so sharply in that way without the guidance of anyone is pretty weird in itself. The weapon is different, but this woman is really a troublesome opponent. Damn it!) (Lime)

First, make the enemy move.

At any rate, smash the enemy.

Lime and Levi head towards the same enemy, but their thoughts were practically water and oil.

"Ara ara, can't even introduce yourselves? Okay then. If you are going to repent with your lives, that's also fine with me. No matter the opponent, it wouldn't be good if I don't show respect after all."

With her instincts going at full-throttle, Levi's hyuman lower half had returned to 8 pitch black octopus legs, and she was pulling a fierce attack only possible with that kind of body.

Matching her rhythm, Lime joins the fight with perfectly coordinated magic and sword techniques.

The woman slightly widened her narrowed eyes as she repelled the attacks of the two and unleashing sharp attacks of her own. And with a voice that leisure can be felt, she continued speaking.

"I am the Osakabe household's, Kasumi Haruka. I am the woman that in the close future will be presenting this city and country to my true love when I arrive to his side." (Haruka)

"Levi! The name of the one who will crush you! Remember it!" (Levi)

"Be at peace, monster. Depending on how it is used, even someone like you can be accepted by Tomoki-sama." (Haruka)

"Tch!!"

The katana of Lime was skillfully deviated by Haruka's shoulder protector.

And when that happened, the blade of the naginata missed Lime by a hair's breadth, he tried to pull a follow-up attack, but was repelled by the returning naginata.

"You are pretty strong. However, you don't know how to use a katana. You don't have a proper master. Could it be a self-taught style?" (Haruka)

"Something wrong with that? Sorry to say that I am a newbie with the katana." (Lime)

"No no, when you have become a comrade serving under Tomoki-sama, I will teach you the basics. Be relieved, you have plenty enough talent." (Haruka)

"Too bad but, I already have a master I serve under, so I am good." (Lime)

"Fufufu, everyone says something similar to that at first. But after a few days, they have a complete change of heart. Our master is that much of a great one after all." (Haruka)

"...How about you come to our side? If it's with that monster-like strength of yours, you would be plenty useful even in our place. Even that far too gone head of yours! If it's our Boss, he can clean it nice!" (Lime)

"...What did you say?" (Haruka)

"As I said, instead of serving under a small fry like the Empire hero that would easily

be wiped on the floor by our Boss, how about serving our master, Raidou?! Wow?!”
(Lime)

An invisible blade sends the katana of Lime flying.

It was probably the same as when the arm of Levi was cut off.

By the way, the arm of Levi has already regenerated. Covered in tough scales that serve as weapon and armor, she was freely moving that arm around.

So it finally regenerated.

Lime felt a slight sense of accomplishment as his provocation was worth.

And right now, it is not exactly the same situation as before.

This time, it was slight, but he could see her hand blur for a moment.

Motion and speed; it was a feat as if this were the epitome of those. It was a speed that was impossible to catch by the naked eye, is what Lime judged.

Even so, this is the first time he has seen something like this, and it is not realistic to try to have his eyes get used to it in actual combat.

That's why, by gathering information of Haruka's whole body movements and her habits, he has to read the trajectory and range.

Being able to bring out one of Haruka's cards with words was big.

(It is still a complete mystery how she is able to manage such movement with a naginata that doesn't have something like a scabbard though. Somehow managed to make one step forward huh. Now then, I am counting on you brats. If you lead the guests to Boss, our win will be settled... Wa?) (Lime)

The mistake of Lime was by no means a blunder caused by him alone.

Insulting Tomoki, bringing out the name of Raidou, stimulating dissatisfaction; it was close to impossible for him to understand the meaning of that at this point in time after all.

The eyes of Haruka were showing anger.

In the blink of an eye, that anger became hatred, on top of that, she glares at Lime with something close to that of grudge.

“!!”

Levi, who was absorbed in the fight, took distance at the extraordinary aura that came out.

Lime was dumbfounded for an instant at the change of Haruka, but reprimanded himself for stiffening and soon followed after Levi.

“Raidou is better than Tomoki-sama, you say?” (Haruka)

“...At the very least, our Boss doesn't use drugs to recruit people.” (Lime)

“It is simply a necessary tool to efficiently teach others about the charms of Tomoki-sama. Not having his subordinates use the most efficient technique is proof that Raidou is incompetent as a superior.” (Haruka)

“Leaving aside whether Waka-sama is incompetent or not...” (Levi)

(Oi Levi, you are not supposed to say 'leaving aside' there.) (Lime)

The voice of Lime's heart almost leaked out.

The reason why he managed to safely stop it was because the aura that Haruka was releasing was steadily entering into a dangerous territory. It was one of the few blessings that this tension was providing.

“From what I have heard, he left the Empire hero half-dead. It is certain that Waka-sama is the stronger one. If I am going to be following someone, I prefer the stronger one. That's why this Tomoki-sama is out of the question. Understand?” (Levi)

“...Half... dead?” (Haruka)

That was the switch.

Those were the words that even Haruka herself didn't know in all of her life that would

bring out her true anger.

Her anger to herself for mistaking the man to love, her anger for sleeping with that man that wore the mask of a husband, her anger for the many times she has whispered her love to him, the anger she directed at the father of Iroha; those were all small sparks compared to this. *<All of those refer to her actual husband>*

Those words that state they have injured the man that fate designated as her true love. The reality that not only were they in an antagonistic relation, they have already directly hurt him.

It is not something that can be forgiven.

Raidou and the Kuzunoha Company are not simply the enemies of Tomoki anymore; inside Haruka, they have changed to being sworn enemies.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

The left hand of Haruka was placed on top of the naginata.

Lime who had a simple thought like ‘she will be using both hands now’ was left speechless.

The naginata splitted.

The left hand returns to its previous location with the same motion —with another naginata in hand.

Dual wielding naginatas.

From the black and white naginatas, magic power of their respective color was wafting from them.

An unfamiliar weapon, and on top of that, an unknown fighting style.

Lime remembered something. At a turning point in his life that already feels like it happened long in the past already. The figure of his superior that released a fire that managed to instantly turn the wave of mamonos that appeared in the wasteland into

charcoal as she laughed with a refreshing smile.

“I don’t care about the man anymore. I will kill him. About the monster, I will tear off the arms and legs before educating her. The wait-and-see phase for recruitment is over now. We haven’t retrieved Iroha yet after all.” (Haruka)

“Wait, Lime. For a moment now, I was reminded of Mio-sama.” (Levi)

“Same here. I was reminded of Sis Tomoe.” (Lime)

Even if the person they were reminded of is different, they were still the two tops of Asora.

To think that just by it being related to Makoto, this Lorel that they would easily be able to come alone would become such a dangerous.

With a feeling of wanting to gaze at the sky, Lime makes preparations to clash against Haruka with all the skills and techniques he has.

“I am a former adventurer that was polished in the wasteland. Don’t think you will kill me easily.” (Lime)

“Of course. Don’t even think that you will be dying an easy death.” (Haruka)



The city is writhing in pain.

The smoke that is rising from the many areas and the screams that can be heard from afar had given me that impression.

This is the third time I have seen a big settlement caught up in a fight in this way huh.

Academy Town, Limia capital, and here.

Now that I think about it, I feel like no matter which of those it was, my heart didn’t waver much.

I am in the place where it is occurring, and I am feeling the wind directly in my skin, and yet, what am I thinking... when facing a settlement that has turned into a

battlefield?

Even when my mood goes down, it was because of other reasons. Also, in this time's case, just a few moments ago, I was in a place that was basically the world of the death.

As long as we are alive, we will of course die one day.

That obviously doesn't mean that you would just abandon someone because of it. It is just that... it is true that I have begun feeling that it is not that pressing of a matter to lose your life.

No... was I feeling that way from the very beginning?

From what I can remember, I don't think... no, there's no way, right?

The human woman that was my first kill, I...

"Waka?"

"...Hm?"

Tomoe suddenly called me.

It looks like she received a power from Futsu called Dragon Mother, but her looks have not changed. Her internal power has splendidly increased though.

Rather than calling it an enhancement of the body, it is more like a boost in magic power and skill... For Tomoe, who is aiming to become a samurai, this might not be to her taste though.

Well, in Tomoe's case, her body strength is already quite high anyways. It is only a matter of how to use it, and that's something that can only be gained by experience and training, or so I think.

"It looks like this avenue is burning but, what should we do first?" (Tomoe)

"Waka-sama, I think we should prioritize the protection of the soy sauce stores, miso stores, and the ingredient market." (Mio)

"Mio... Fumu, leaving aside the market, the soy sauce and miso can serve to make Sake.

If we were to get their favor, it would make negotiations in the future easier. Waka, I think Mio's proposal is good. What do you think?" (Tomoe)

"...It is true that the more samples the better huh. Fine. Mio will go to the warehouses and then the market. Tomoe will..." (Makoto)

"...I was thinking about dealing with the small fries after confirming my power and showing it off. I would be grateful if Waka were to accompany me." (Tomoe)

"I'm fine with that. Then, the other two, cooperate with Rokuya-san and Rose Garden in the evacuation of the citizens." (Makoto)

""Yes!!""

Beren and Hokuto nod with strength.

Shii was in a weird state, so I had her return to Asora. Tamaki is looking after her, so there's no problem with the emergency treatment. Even if something were to happen and she is unable to manage, she can just ask Shiki.

And so, I will be dealing with the people that have been affected by the drug of Tomoki and are rampaging around huh.

Well, this is my third time dealing with something like this, so it should be fine.

I use [Sakai] to get a rough idea of the situation.

Hm, the hotel is being attacked.

I am glad I increased the number of personnel there as insurance.

...Eh?

There's one around the hotel that is pretty strong.

The ones there with that strong one are Lime and Levi.

They are quite injured.

"Tomoe, sorry. Lime and Levi are in trouble at the hotel. Can you go there?" (Makoto)

“Hoh~, those guys huh. Understood. I hope it is a samurai that I can enjoy my time with. Well then, I will be taking my leave now.” (Tomoe)

“Okay.” (Makoto)

After having Tomoe head to the hotel, I go back to confirming the situation more deeply.

There’s still no casualties yet at the warehouses that Mio has gone to.

The mercenary group, Picnic Rosegarden, and Rokuya-san were here with me just a few moments ago, but when they confirmed the state of the city, they immediately separated and began acting.

It looks like they will be prioritizing the escape of the citizens.

There’s around three hundred attacking the city. The levels are all pretty high, but the numbers are low.

Thinking about that after comparing it with the scale of the other situations I have been in, I try expanding ‘Sakai’ to the outsides of the city as well.

Oh.

There’s several armed people heading to Kannaoui.

It would be nice if they were allies but... oh, they are enemies huh.

Ooh, Kannaoui is truly in trouble.

There’s a group of people heading to this city from the south; numbers total around a thousand. The levels are around the same as the ones attacking here; average of 200.

Kannaoui was about to be destroyed.

But.

We are here.

First of all, let’s regroup with Iroha-chan and the others.

Now then, where is she—

“...Wa?!!!”

Once I got the location of Iroha-chan, I involuntarily let out my voice.

Why...

Why are you here, Izumo?! Or more like, you guys!

I change my coat to red and teleport to the closest place of the group of people.

No really, give me a break, Rotsgard Children!

Chapter 292

Izumo and Iroha

The numbers are 14.

Since learning about the existence of the scent that contains the charm power of Tomoki, I have prepared a special filter, and when I looked through it, I learned that everyone is quite the severe case of Tomoki worshipper.

It went well when using it in conjunction with [Sakai], so I tried to see if I could use it when looking through it normally, and it seems it is still useful.

I had no need and chance to utilize it when I was at the deep parts of the labyrinth fighting with Picnic Rosegarden and the Adventurers of Origin, but it is great that I came prepared.

Maybe they were former skilled adventurers and soldiers; their level is high and their movements don't show openings.

Of course, the equipment they have is also quite good and stands out.

There's mostly women, but there's a decent amount of men as well.

From the little bit I investigated, I learned that Kannaoui has send their military force and their public order unit, but due to the difference in levels being pretty big, it is practically impossible for them alone to control this situation.

Levels don't mean everything, but when battle happens and all circumstances are the same, the one who wins is the one with the higher level.

It is definitely not a factor that should just be ignored.

...Especially in this situation where, for some reason, my students have come to this city.

The deep bad feeling I felt for a while now had swelled up greatly.

I want to ask Shiki about this right this instant, but calming down this situation comes first.

Even so, there's no way that Shiki would bring them to such a dangerous place without a single thought in mind. He worries more about their growth and future than me after all.

And there's no way that Shiki is completely unrelated to Jin and the others being here.

Aah~, this is bothering me.

This is not good. I have already decided on what to do, and yet, I am feeling so uneasy.

Hm, eliminating the threats comes first.

"Rai... dou..."

One of the 14 people there noticed me who had suddenly appeared inside their formation.

A merciless bloodthirst was directed at me all at once.

"If it were in the Empire, I wouldn't complain about your situation, but you know, this is Lorel Union, a country that's not yours." (Makoto)

It is true that the bloodthirst is sharp and strong, fitting of their level. But today, I have already been bathed in bloodthirst that's on a whole other level.

Let's do it in the same way as the Shadowless before, and instantly—-ah.

"Fuh!!"

I was about to crush the head of the handsome youth, that made a sharp slash at me, by using the Magic Armor, but at that moment, I noticed. This might become a repeat from last time.

It is the factor that the gruesomeness of the corpses might swell up hatred.

As long as we are fighting for our lives in the battlefield, it is natural for one side or the other to die as a conclusion. But there are times when the way of doing it is

important as well.

It would be another case if we were to wipe them all out, but it is especially true when there's witnesses and there's the need to protect them.

In the first place, this time, there's enemies that killing would be the wrong answer.

I have absolutely no intentions of having a war with Lorel. But depending on how I deal with this, there's the chance that it might become unavoidable.

The way I got rid of the Shadowless, and the one before that... the matter with Illumgand as well.

My uneasiness has numbed my thoughts in a nice way.

This is a good opportunity.

"Silver One, [Lapushka]" (Makoto)

I stop going arialess and purposely mixed an aria and form a spell by manifesting magic power.

"Fall back!! An enhancement spell; the activation time is bizarrely fast!"

"!!"

With the aria that surpasses by a bit the 5 seconds, it is enough for the enemy to know the type of spell.

From the index finger and middle finger I extended, a magic power needle that is slightly shorter and narrower than a dagger appeared.

I will leave the Magic Armor to rest in this occasion and just keep it at covering my body.

And then, seeing the equipment and outfit of the man in front of me, I decided on how to deal with him.

I grab the blade of the katana with my left hand and deviate its trajectory, and just like that, I pull the katana and him onto me.

“Have a good night.” (Makoto)

“!!!! Tomo... ki-sama...”

I pierce the needle into the neck of the man that even though he is a man has quite the beautiful neck.

Instant death? No no, ain't that a bit too rash there, Boss?

Wait, why did I say that in the tone of Lime?

Well, there's no problem at all. I just used a spell that easily creates people in a state of apparent death. By the way, I was taught this by Mio.

I don't know what type of spell it is, but it is a mysterious spell that I can tell from its aria that it is different from normal.

When I separate my left hand, the magic needle was still pierced in his neck, and the handsome boy fell onto the ground. He is not moving at all.

A similar needle extends from my two fingers again.

It looks like the people that have been affected by the charm of Tomoki have all been equally sent to the battlefield, but their original positions are definitely not equal. There's probably big-shots in that group of people and people connected with big-shots.

In that case, we leave them on the verge of death, and later, have Tomoe inspect them to decide what we should do.

If the needle is taken out just like that, they would die, but well, if that happens, let's just leave it as being their bad luck.

“I think that ‘the current you’ are hopeless beyond salvation. But, even so, if people out there wish for you guys to keep on living, for today... I am thinking about leaving them that chance to. My apologies.” (Makoto)

There's 13 remaining.

The highest leveled one is around 400.

For now, I will make sure they don't die while properly gauging their danger.

Let's hurry.



"However, there's no assurance you will survive. Even if we were to take just one of the enemies, they are all higher than any of you guys here. Not only that, this is a true battlefield where you don't know what will happen at each passing second. Izumo, you are prepared for that, right?"

"Yes." (Izumo)

An immediate response.

Being told about the incident occurring in the second biggest city of Lorel Union, Kannaoi, I didn't hold any hesitation.

High level adventurers and influential nobles all know that any citizen would want to stay in the Chihiro Manrai restaurant, and this high-class restaurant has received a night assault.

There's Raidou-sensei at that place and there's also his aides.

No matter what happens, I feel like the city will be okay.

But... right now, at that place, there's princess Iroha.

I heard that the insurgents are aiming for her.

Even so, if asked if I had to go there, that's not the case. There's already fighting forces here that I wouldn't even be able to lift a finger against after all.

But she is my fiancée.

I have only met her a few times. I can't properly imagine what she looks like right now, but I can tell how she is from her letters.

It is certain that I hold warm feelings mixed with admiration towards her.

Of course, we are not in a sexual relationship. The princess is still young after all.

If asked whether this is love that is directed to the opposite sex, I wouldn't be able to tell.

I simply want to be by her side and protect her.

I want to be the one to protect her.

I want to eliminate the dangers that approach her.

Once I heard about the situation from Shiki-san, I naturally thought of this.

I was thinking about meeting her in a not so far future.

Whether it is my dream, or to fulfill my duty of joining the princess of Kannaoui; I want to have a talk until we can reach an understanding, and then... no matter what kind of result it brings forth, I won't allow the very chance of even having a conversation to be lost.

No matter how strong Sensei is, I don't want to leave it all to him.

Sensei refused to let me accompany him, but right now, what I want to do is clear.

The current me has experience living in the Academy. I have increased my level to a decent degree. I have a clear oath, a clear conviction that I didn't have in the past.

I have to go.

"That's a nice face you have there, Izumo. Everyone else as well. I will say it with confidence here. Once you return alive from this, you will have completely surpassed the power of a student. You might even obtain a big step that will connect to what's further ahead. Well then, go. Make sure not to forget greeting Waka-sama." (Shiki)

"Yes!!"

Several voices overlap.

I wonder what kind of expression I have right now.

At the very least, I haven't felt this fresh since the time I understood the concept of the movement aria and began to apply it.

This is the second time in my life.

Shiki-san holds his staff in both hands and draws a circle.

As always, there's no aria.

The inside of the drawn circle had white dense mist coming out from it.

"Yeah, the current Izumo-kun is truly cool. If you didn't have a fiancée, I might have fallen for you." (Yuno)

Yuno gives me a praise that I couldn't tell if she was joking or being serious.

As she is always saying that if she were to marry someone, she has to be the number one or she doesn't want to, it must be a joke.

If it were a marriage with the second daughter of a merchant, there's the possibility, but it is most likely impossible for her to become my first wife.

Also, the Rembrandt Company is definitely not a simple wealthy merchant company.

I look around.

Jin, Amelia, Misura, Daena, Sif, and Yuno; the first comrades I can rely with this life of mine that has always been living dryly all this time.

I was thinking about going alone to Kannaoui, but they said they will be coming along as if natural. They are the best friends I could have.

Even when Shiki-san has told them about the danger, their decision still didn't change.

If I didn't know what laid ahead of this mist was a battlefield, I definitely would have been crying.

I readied myself and wear the amulet that Shiki-san distributed to everyone. An equipment that he told us not to take off no matter what.

Now, let's go.

I stand at the front and step into the mist.

We didn't walk through a mist corridor, I simply saw the nostalgic buildings of Lorel. At that place, there's the one working at Kuzunoha Company, Lime-san, and one girl I have never seen before.

And also...

"Izumo-sama?"

"Princess Iroha." (Izumo)

There were several people who had the clothing of Lorel.

We both called out each other's name.

From behind me, I heard the voice of Yuno saying: 'thanks for the meal~', but I ignore it. And after that, I also heard a blunt sound followed by an 'Ouch, that hurts Onee-chan!', but I also ignore that one.

Good grief, do these kind of things really happen?

We both shouldn't know how we look, and yet, we both were able to know who each other was the moment our eyes met.

If my dream, the happiness of this person, my duties of the household, and the many obligations I have, all connect with each other, there would be nothing as blissful as that.

"..."

After calling her name, I was filled with so much emotion that I couldn't bring out any words.

Ah, I love this girl.

I have never felt like this in Academy Town.

I can clearly declare this.

“Ah, so it was Izumo huh. And Jin and the others as well. I have heard about the ‘circumstances’. Nice to see you here. Welcome to the battlefield.” (Lime)

“Lime-san.” (Izumo)

“Sorry, but leave the romantic reunion for later. We don’t have much leisure of time. We will be escaping this place as soon as possible and leave the city. And the highest priority is to regroup with Boss –Raidou-sama.” (Lime)

“Y-Yes!”

“Jin, I heard you just came out from sickbed, but this is a decision you made. Since you have come, you will have to show results.” (Lime)

“...I know.” (Jin)

Jin replies to the instructions in my stead.

He didn’t come out for a while since the time he got injured, but I wonder what happened. Jin has not told us yet. But the resolve that lies in those eyes, there’s no doubt that he has become stronger than before.

...Compared to that... what am I even doing?

For an instant, I forgot completely about what kind of situation we are in.

Right.

I will protect princess Iroha. Even if my ability is poor, I came here in order to protect her.

“I have heard plenty about you guys’ strength from Brother Shiki. Let’s wrap up the self-introductions while we are escaping from here. What’s important is the safety of princess Iroha. The protection of the princess will be firstly done by the maids. That’s why, there’s no need to think about unnecessary teamwork. In the fights, you just go about your usual teamwork with your usual comrades to protect princess Iroha.” (Lime)

“...Understood.” (Misura)

Misura nods.

How reassuring.

If he were to seriously do the protecting, I feel like the escape and bodyguarding can be done at the same time.

“Then, let’s go. I have already spoken to the princess and the others about the route. Once we go outside, don’t trust anyone. Also...” (Lime)

“ ... ”

Lime-san glances at Sif and Yuno, and for only an instant, he stopped his words.

“...Don’t hesitate. On the enemy side, there’s people with higher level than yours and more experience, and most of them won’t hesitate in killing anyone except the princess. It might even be that everyone there won’t hesitate.” (Lime)

...

With an incredibly indifferent voice that held no emotions which I have never seen before from him, Lime-san continues.

“That’s why, don’t hesitate. No matter who it is, anyone that’s directing their blade at you, don’t think about it and just cut them down. There’s millions of people who have died while they were thinking. You guys make sure you never enter those numbers.” (Lime)

“...Thank you very much, Lime-san.” (Izumo)

A kindness that couldn’t be detected from simply his tone of voice could be felt.

Words of gratitude honestly came out of my mouth.

Now that I think about it, have I ever been able to feel true gratitude at warnings before I met with Sensei?

“I will hear your gratitude at tomorrow’s breakfast. Definitely will. Now go!!” (Lime)

“Yes!”

My eyes met with princess Iroha’s.

As I thought, a warm feeling wells up.

I forcefully push them back and concentrate my fighting will—in order to protect.

“Izumo-sama and his comrades! I am Akashi! I work as the bodyguard of Iroha-sama. It may be for a short time but, I am looking forward to working with you. Well then, first of all, let’s escape the hotel! Follow me!” (Akashi)

“Same here. A bodyguard of Iroha-sama, name’s Yudoku. I will not think of you people as students, but close aides of the princess. All excuses like ‘this is my first time’ are a no. Do your best, okay?” (Yudoku)

“My name is Shougetsu, Izumo-sama. In order to decide a date for the wedding, let’s overcome this long night!” (Shougetsu)

I will do it.

Even if I have to bring out everything that is held within this body of mine.

If it is not enough, I will bring out everything out of my future self as well!

I will bring the Princess to where Sensei is.

We will all bring her there!

Chapter 293

It was an irreconcilable enemy

As fast as possible.

It is my intention to deal with the Tomoki fanatics, but there was a single miscalculation.

It looks like... I am being incredibly hated by these people.

I understand that for the Tomoki side, I may not look like a likeable person, and I am aware of this. But to think that they would be hating me this much... Even a person like me who isn't aiming to be liked by thousands would get depressed by this.

As a result, I, who was thinking about reuniting with Jin and the others, ended up being attacked by high level adventurers one after the other.

Until now, I have somehow appeased around 60 of them with the needle.

"Tch."

What was reflected at the side of my vision made me click my tongue.

I saw people driven by their hatred killing the attackers that I had incapacitated.

Suddenly having their city burned and thrown into chaos, and some having their family and important people killed, it is obvious that there would be hatred born inside the hearts of the citizens.

Just that... if I was planning on killing the attackers, I would have done so myself.

Can't they take a hint that I have a reason why I am leaving them alive?

Impossible huh.

I am completely sure of my safety even in a situation like this. It is just by chance that I have enough power and I am able to think in this kind of way.

I currently don't have the leeway to complain about the actions of the citizens.

The most I can do is warn them with the writings I do with magic power.

Slipping through three attacks of approaching weapons, I stick a needle in one of the attackers. While at it, I offset the magic that they cast at me without caring, not only of the city, but even their comrades getting dragged in it.

Really, this is a battle in a city, and yet, this way of fighting doesn't make me think that's the case at all. In a sense, you could say that these attacks are quite manly.

If this were the outskirts, I would also have more options you know!

A light armored girl suddenly jumped out from the shadow of her comrade.

A thief skill, maybe? But I don't see anything weapon-like on her—wait, oi oi oi!!

“Gunpowder?! I thought it would be something like a molotov cocktail, but that thing can already be considered an explosive!” (Makoto)

Without a single trace of hesitation, the girl approached me with her body wrapped in explosives.

The needle won't be enough for this.

In a moment, I did an arialess fire element nullifier magic.

It is originally a spell that would create a veil that nullifies the element, but in this occasion, I had it slip in between the girl and the explosives wrapped around her, and covered her body in it.

Ah geez.

I can't tell how much power it has.

Gotta pray this is enough then!

“Raidou, die.”

“I refuse!” (Makoto)

I hug the woman that had finally spoken something.

Ah, I could have made the Magic Armor bigger.

If this weren't in this kind of situation and she were a bit more of an adult, this would have been a nice situation where a girl is wishing to hug me.

An explosion occurs inside our curled up bodies.

The sound wasn't that big of a deal.

Now then, the girl is... okay, she is alright!

Well then, excuse me while I stick this needle in you! OK!

While at it, I also stick the needles to the neck of the other two that were stiffened.

"But there's no end to them. When thinking about the damage lessening due to them swarming towards me, this is not that bad of a situation, but..." (Makoto)

It is troublesome that they are not caring about the damage they cause to the city.

The next wave is already heading towards me.

My location has already been completely grasped between them it seems. Even so, if I were to leave this place, I wouldn't know how the gathered up people would move next.

It is fine for them to just chase after me.

But in that case, they could have just form an enclosure at the entrance of the dungeon. Now that they have attacked the hotel and the city, I don't think they are only moving in order to attack me.

I should reduce their numbers for a bit more in this way, and go to where Jin, Iroha, and the others after I am done with that. It seems like they are together after all.

(Waka-sama! I have secured the warehouses. The miso, soy sauce, and craftsmen are safe as well.) (Mio)

(Thanks, Mio.) (Makoto)

Mio's thought transmission.

Looks like the seasonings have not received any damage.

...Well, I wasn't so worried about that though.

There was plenty of a possibility that they would be destroyed as collateral-damage, but I didn't think it would be a priority, moreover, Mio went there, so there was nothing to worry about.

Even if the boss of the bunch were to try to destroy the miso and soy sauce as if their life depended on it, I think it would have been impossible.

Boss huh.

I can tell that there's one clear individual that's a cut above the rest. An individual that I would have to wonder if Lime and Levi, who stayed at the Chihiro Manrai Restaurant, can actually defeat.

But well, there's no doubt that Lime and Levi, who are prioritizing keeping the people in place, will be enduring for a good while.

That person's strength is around the middle of Azu-san's group and the adventurers. It is a woman and, in truth, I can somewhat tell her identity.

If possible, I want to be wrong, but... no way I am.

(Then, I will also be helping out Waka-sama—) (Mio)

(No, this place is fine.) (Makoto)

(Eh?)

(Mio, can you bring out the name of the Osakabe household and Iroha-chan in order to evacuate the residents in that district to a place that's slightly separated from the city?) (Makoto)

(B-But I want to be by your side too...) (Mio)

(There's Tomoe already, so I will be fine. Sorry, this might be a pain for you.) (Makoto)

(No no! Understood.) (Mio)

(Okay. There's a strange gathering of people outside the city that are heading this way. Be careful.) (Makoto)

(Yes, Waka-sama as well.) (Mio)

Mio was trying to come to where I am, so I gave her a reason not to.

Hah... did I make her sad?

It felt like she wanted to say something. But if possible, I don't want Mio to fight too much today. That's what I thought when I heard about the fight Mio had with Rokuya-san.

Good grief, I am... truly pathetic.

Sorry.

(A~h, test test. Makoto-kun, is it working? It is Rokuya) (Rokuya)

(...Yeah, I can hear you, Rokuya-san.) (Makoto)

(To be frank here, there's apparently people who agree with the Empire's hero heading towards the city.) (Rokuya)

The information that Rokuya-san had brought to me was something that I had already grasped with Sakai.

(Yeah, they are approaching from several directions, and their total numbers might surpass the ten thousands. I am aware of this.) (Makoto)

(!! As expected of you. But from several directions... and tens of thousands huh. Fumu...) (Rokuya)

(When I finish doing something about the inside of the city, I will deal with them while at it—) (Makoto)

(No.) (Rokuya)

?

(I will do it.) (Rokuya)

Rokuya-san will?

I was internally surprised by what he said.

Rokuya-san is strong. But I don't feel like his strengths are oriented to fights against groups. On top of that, in the case of the Tomoki fanatics, just crushing their leader won't work. There's the need to kill everyone or incapacitate them.

(No, that's just...) (Makoto)

(Hahaha, I overdid it a bit underground against you guys after all. Please let me atone a bit here. More importantly, Vivi and the others are helping out in the evacuation, but the bandits' way of doing things is way too extreme.) (Rokuya)

(...Yeah.) (Makoto)

I experienced a suicide bomber just moments ago, so I agree with what he said.

Evacuating the residents to a safe place against people, that do things in such ways, is close to impossible.

(And so, I want to increase the allies.) (Rokuya)

(Allies, you say?) (Makoto)

(You know, the saying 'the enemy of my enemy' kind of thing. It is a man named Kougetsu. In the matter that they are trying to bring a revolution to Kannaoui makes him no different from an insurgent, but he is someone that can cooperate in the matter of dealing with the people that are going as far as burning down the city to smoke you and princess Iroha out.) (Rokuya)

Kougetsu.

If I remember correctly, he is the older or younger brother of Shougetsu-san. Well, they

are brothers.

From what I have heard, he is a person that didn't really welcome us since the moment we entered the city.

From what Rokuya is saying right now, Kougetsu probably doesn't have a shallow connection with the Tomoki fanatics.

(The one that is in charge of the patrolling, insurgencies, and the suppression of foreign enemies is Kougetsu. He is currently desperately taking command in order to appease the chaos.) (Rokuya)

(...Can't pity him though.) (Makoto)

(Umu. When this matter is wrapped up, he will most likely take responsibility in some form. He is an upright man at his core after all. But right now, it would go better if we were to have him help out. He is a specialist regarding this city after all.) (Rokuya)

True.

...Ah, right. In that case, if I had them arrest the people that I have already dealt with, we might be able to decrease the rampage of the residents like the ones just now, right?

That's nice.

That's a good idea.

(Makoto-kun?) (Rokuya)

(Understood. Then, I will try calling them.) (Makoto)

(Thanks. Well then, later.) (Rokuya)

(Wish you luck.) (Makoto)

(...Luck huh. Well, watch over me.) (Rokuya)

The thought transmission of Rokuya-san cuts.

I wonder how he will deal with that army.

...Ah! Maybe he intends to show me as atonement as well!

Is that his intention?

“Well, first of all, it is the army that’s outside the city and the patrol.” (Makoto)

The ones who are down with a needle pierced in them are the attackers and they haven’t died yet; in order to avoid having the residents make a panic and kill the incapacitated attackers, ask for the arrest of the attackers; and the members of the Picnic Rosegarden have come out from the labyrinth and are helping out in the evacuation of the residents, moreover, the Kuzunoha Company is participating in that as well.

While evading the sharp attacks of a 4 member party that surpass level 300, I think of the situation.

Why are such high level people that can even manage in the wasteland attacking me?!

I create a template and somehow manage to send the writings to a place close to where the army and related party that ‘Sakai’ perceived is located.

“Hm?”

The boss is moving.

The barrier of Lime and Levi that was covering the Chihiro Manrai Restaurant has been destroyed.

Impossible. It is too fast.

On top of that, that should be where Tomoe headed to.

(Tomoe!) (Makoto)

(Waka, if it’s about Lime and Levi, they are still alive. I had something I had to confirm with Shiki and was slightly late. I am truly sorry.) (Tomoe)

(What happened?) (Makoto)

(It seems like even when they were inferior in numbers, they still managed to maintain a balanced fight, but our arrival seems to have worked in a bad way.)
(Tomoe)

(...As in?) (Makoto)

Our arrival worked in a negative way?

(The two of them must have thought that with this they have won, and they must have relaxed their guard because of it. Levi got several of her legs cut off and went berserk; Lime prepared himself to challenge the enemy, but he couldn't manage to do follow-ups on the rampaging Levi and the barrier ended up cracking... is how things happened.) (Tomoe)

Several legs, she says.

Levi turned into her scylla form?

In that form, she has thick octopus-like legs after all.

In reality, she has a mechanic in her fighting style of changing her leg shapes, and when Levi has become like that, her fights become pretty interesting to watch.

And even with that, she lost?

Good grief.

I have not seen a hyuman stronger than Sofia yet, but even if it's not to that level, there's still strong people in this world.

(Well, Levi is a battle-junkie after all. As long as she is alive, she can laugh it off.)
(Makoto)

(...No well, it seems like quite the amount of steam has risen to her head. She is repeatedly muttering things like 'I will kill that bitch' and 'I will bite her to death'.)
(Tomoe)

(Levi is? I can't imagine it at all. At any rate, if they need treatment, return them to Asora.) (Makoto)

(I will do so. Leaving aside Lime, Levi doesn't have arms and legs after all. Truly disappointing.) (Tomoe)

...

Isn't that incredibly serious then?!

What is she saying so nonchalantly?!

Hm, so that's why she was consulting with Shiki huh. No, if that's the case, the order of the events wouldn't match.

Woops, the next opponent is a samurai huh.

He has a slower iai than that of Tomoe, so it doesn't amount to a surprise attack.

I grab the katana's blade with my left hand and break it, step in, and pierce him with the match-decider needle.

(So, what did you talk with Shiki about?) (Makoto)

(A bit about the reason why the students are here.) (Tomoe)

...Ah, I see. It is true that I want to know that too.

(What did Shiki say?) (Makoto)

(He said he wanted to explain it to Waka directly. It is just that...) (Tomoe)

(Just that?) (Makoto)

(His explanation was... something that, in my opinion, I agree with.) (Tomoe)

Tomoe says it in a way that bothers me.

In her opinion, she says.

In other words, maybe it is a reason that I wouldn't agree with?

(Ah, no. I am not saying it in the meaning that Waka wouldn't agree with it, okay? It is

about Mio. She most likely wouldn't agree with Shiki's action. That's all I thought. In regards to what Waka will think after hearing the explanation of Shiki, well, there's a fifty-fifty.) (Tomoe)

Mio?

And I am fifty-fifty?

Hm?

(Well, okay. I will hear what Shiki has to say later.) (Makoto)

I don't think it is something that can be resolved while listening to it in a battlefield.

In that case, there's nothing the both of us would gain from hearing it at this moment via thought transmission.

(So, about that woman, she isn't moving her gaze away and heading directly towards where Iroha is. Fortunately, there's an idiot in between that can't even hold the reins properly and is moving around in confusion outside the city, so there's still some leeway in time.) (Tomoe)

The idiot she is talking about must mean Kougetsu.

And when Tomoe says that woman, it is already a given who it is.

Osakabe Haruka.

Iroha-chan's... mother.

Don't like this.

Even so, we just had a talk not that long ago about leaving the idiot alive being better.

Can't be helped. Let's request this of Tomoe.

(Understood. I will head to where Iroha-chan is. Sorry but, can you please safeguard that idiot?) (Makoto)

(Hah? Safeguard?) (Tomoe)

(Yeah, there's a matter in mind, you see. For now, I am dealing with the Tomoki fanatics without killing them, but the people of the city, you see...) (Makoto)

(...I get it. Using Kougetsu and his subordinates, you want them to apprehend them?) (Tomoe)

After a small silence, Tomoe answered.

She splendidly deduced what I was thinking.

(Yeah, something like that.) (Makoto)

(As you wish. Well then, I accept the duty of safeguarding and persuasion of Kougetsu. By the way, Waka.) (Tomoe)

(Hm?) (Makoto)

(You said 'without killing'.) (Tomoe)

(Yes?) (Makoto)

(This is just a possibility but, could it be that you are utilizing that thing that Mio and the Arkes showed off not that long ago?) (Tomoe)

...Tomoe is seriously incredible.

She even pinpointed the magic that I selected for this occasion.

It is a mystery why her voice is slightly raspy and trembling though.

(Correct. How scary, Tomoe. Is it that? The power of that so called Mother Dragon thing?) (Makoto)

(N-No. Honestly speaking, what I was worried about was exactly that. I myself can tell that my strength has jumped up, but uhm... it is quite the mischievous one, you see. I am currently in a state where I would heavily overdo it even when doing only one illusion...) (Tomoe)

(As I thought...) (Makoto)

(That's of no importance right now, Waka!!) (Tomoe)

(Uoo?!)(Waka)

(Meaning that! Right now! Waka is! Using that spell, right?!)(Tomoe)

(Y-Yeah.) (Waka)

(At that place! Waka is!)(Tomoe)

W-What is it?

What's making Tomoe so excited?

Did I miss something again?

(Doesn't that mean a theater play of Shikake-nin Baian is taking place there?!)(Tomoe) *<Couldn't find any context regarding this. But it is a 1981 film.>*

.....

(*Cough*!! S-Sorry. I got so high strung that I ended up getting a nosebleed and vomiting blood. Aaa~h, I want to go see i~t!! I want to go there and act as lad Kosugi~~. Gununu, that damn Futsu, pushing such a troublesome thing onto me~~!!!)(Tomoe)

.....

Okay. For now, let's concentrate on this bearded men that are releasing a trio fusion attack at me. Don't know if they are blowing it out or vomiting it out, but let's not think about it.

Also, Futsu wouldn't think that there would be a flashy battle in the middle of the city the day that she gave you her powers, so I think blaming her for that is way too harsh.

(Well then, Tomoe, see you later.) (Makoto)

(Ah, Waka! I implore you, please let me watch that scene later! Please~~!!)(Tomoe)

Shikake-nin.

Geez, I had absolutely no intentions of that though.

I am beginning to get embarrassed now that Tomoe said it.

“With this, it makes 108! If it were worldly desires, I would already be done with this, but the Tomoki fanatics are persistent!” (Makoto) <108 worldly desires in Buddhism.>

Jin and the others are also moving as they defeat a decent amount.

Incapacitating the attackers would be an impossible request, so they are killing them, but in terms of level and battle experience, the opponents that are going full bloodthirst at them are in the advantage, so the situation is difficult.

Jin and the others are clearly bringing out more than their current strength when fighting.

If possible, I don't want any of them dying.

No matter the reason, having a student die when the teacher is at their side would make it impossible for that teacher to face them.

I have already dealt with the people that were fighting me in close range.

My head is hurting already.

So, let's go finish this!

Chapter 294

Encounter with the worst

Lorel Union sheltered many Wise and had received their power and blessing.

Their national power increased and grew to a point where they would be counted as one of the major powers, but their base policy had not changed.

According to the teachings of the Goddess, they have to put importance in outward appearance, but at times, they would positively receive the bad looking Wise and welcomed the hard to earn knowledge that is overflowing inside of them. But that doesn't always bring good.

Wise; they are mostly modern era japanese people and were people that had no connection with war. These people were excelling as warriors or as sages, however, they practically felt no desire to direct their blades at the world thanks to Lorel.

From the standards of this world, the Wise had obtained important peace.

There were some who wished for battle and pursued it, but they left Lorel, and most of them didn't return. That's why, even when Lorel Union increased its power high enough to be called a major power, they didn't do any invading type of war even once.

Civil wars occur and there are times in diplomacy where it was close to becoming a war, but in terms of big wars, Lorel Union splendidly managed to not have any.

The Wise turning their backs on them was the one thing that Lorel feared the most after all.

In the current war with the demon race, they have felt the danger to their race, so they are mostly providing assistance from the back and are participating actively in it though.

At any rate, they possess strength and knowledge, and yet, they didn't exert it without reason and lived a peaceful lifestyle.

These supermen that had strange appearances were politely received by the people of Lorel at first as 'envoys of the Spirit-samas'.

They weren't explorers that sought for knowledge, and yet, they had mysterious knowledge in wide areas, and they had that knowledge as if it were natural.

In time, because of the way they were, the people began calling this envoys of spirits as 'Wise'.

...At times, marrying his bride and joining her family; or it can be, she marries her groom and joins his family.

The blood of the Wise remains thinly within the people of Lorel.

Many don't manifest any power. It simply served as a pride and boasting ingredient; simple blood.

But at times, that blood can awaken.

Those people are sometimes called Rebound People.

For example; people that haven't trained at all, and yet, possess a tough body. For example; manifesting a special power that's not magic or a skill. For example; possessing strong magic power like the breathtaking magic power of the Priestess.

There are times when they would inherit great power, and there are times when the generation would lean onto that person.

If you look at the past of the military households in the current Lorel Union, you would most likely find roots of the Wise somewhere.

The military household Ikusabe and Okasabe fall in that category.

The student of Makoto, Izumo, also holds faint Wise blood in him.

When talking about talent, you could say that his blood is showing its power, but sadly to say, he has no power manifested from his Wise blood.

The ones who have manifested that power in the current Lorel Union are three according to the information the Empress Sairitz holds.

That's right. The Lorel that possesses the population of a major power only has three.

One of them is the Priestess. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it is a person that Sairitz raised. A person that respects her without bounds.

The other one has disappeared. They don't know its whereabouts, but it is a mage called Mokuren. An eccentric person that utilizes old techniques like puppet and talisman magic, and aside from his Wise blood, he also had demi-human blood in him which made the people in his surroundings glare at him.

At the times when Sairitz regrets her failures as an Empress and central politics in the past, she would always mutter 'how regrettable', and one of the people she would think of is him.

And then, the one other person. A brave woman that was only active for a short amount of time, and yet, remains vividly in the memories of the soldiers that knew of her at that time.

Her name is Osakabe Haruka.

She is person that is sung as the main character of a blighted love story, but Sairitz mourns the fact that she had lost such a military strength just because of a love affair.

It is said that the first time she took a sword in her hands was when an assassin's dagger was directed at the man she loved.

The villain that jumped at them in the secret rendezvous point was the first victim of hers.

Contrary to the man of good social status that got weak on his knees, Haruka had taken the sword that was left on the floor, stood in front of the man, and without a single trace of hesitation, cut off the head of those assassins.

Two skilled assassins that were sent there in order to assassinate the man of good standing.

A princess that had taken sword in hand for the first time in her life had managed to defeat two trained fighters... without receiving a single injury.

From that day on, her name was sung as a brave. And whether it was a sword, a spear,

or a bow; she would utilize them like a master, and in the battlefield, she would not face a single defeat.

Princess of Many Weapons, Onihime, Hyuman Ogre, Blood General, Neck Hunting Naginata, Head Slicer, Vessel of Thousand Monsters; from the knowledge of Sairitz, there's already this many nicknames tagged onto that woman, so there's no doubt that she is the strongest one-woman army in Lorel.

However, even the invincible woman disappeared from the battlefield as an offering in a political strife, and it has been long since she became a retired person sealed inside the land of Kannaoui.

But just by having that person of name inside Kannaoui, it served as a screen that deterred any kind of artifice from all directions.

And in reality, Sairitz had mostly given up on doing something about the labyrinth, the mercenary group, the Superior Dragon, and Haruka that were all in Kannaoui.

Until the appearance of a joker called Makoto, she had zero intentions of taking any flashy moves.

Osakabe Haruka is a super first rate military power even without training after all. Moreover, she possesses magic power that's close to that of the Priestess, on top of that, she even holds a special ability. She is a Rebound Person through and through.

"I... I..."

A weak voice resounded at the back of Misura.

Misura was about to bend his knees at that, but he gritted his teeth and stopped his feet.

This was possible because he had taken the classes of Makoto and had faced trials that pushed himself to his limits. And most of all, the voice of the people at his back that he must protect properly entered his ears and became his strength.

Important friends that he has experienced joys and sorrows with.

(Then, they are also important people for me.) (Misura)

Making a smile in order to relieve himself even if for a bit, he faces slightly to the side and confirms the state of princess Iroha.

“Princess-sama, it is okay. We are talented people. We will definitely take Izumo and Princess-sama to where Sensei is. If it’s that person, he can wrap up this fighting as if it were a piece of cake.” (Misura)

The color of Iroha’s face was pretty bad.

It is a matter of course.

The city is covered in flames and people that are obviously all strong veterans were attacking Izumo and the others with the intend to kill.

Since a while ago, the rate has decreased quite a lot. However, they were all of high level and were literally warriors that didn’t fear death as they pour swords and magic at them.

Being able to defeat five of those people even if it had been with the help of princess Iroha’s bodyguards is close to a miracle, is what Misura thinks.

Moreover, it is a battle in an urban area.

This battle circumstances are bad.

“Yooou!! [Vine Spike]!” (Sif)

Sif used an earth element spell and a vine with black thorns and decent size was created, crumbling the coordination of the enemy.

Without a moment’s delay, Jin and Daena concentrate their attack on one of the enemies that have been divided while mixing feints, as they pour their all.

Jin at the same time estimated the situation, especially the front, as he draws a route.

Amelia concentrated on sniping from afar and sensing the presence of the moving mages while accurately interrupting and dealing damage to them. On top of that, she is taking command of the whole backline, even does healing, and cooperating with Sif.

(The Rembrandt sisters are a problem. Sif’s power is proportional to its scope. If she

increases the power too much, she is unable to make detailed corrections. That's why she can't fulfill her role as a cannon in the middle of this rural area. We haven't been in situations where we would have to worry about that, so... our imagination was lacking.) (Misura)

Misura bites his lips.

If Sif were to use a lava ball, he thinks they could have progressed a lot more.

No matter how injured he gets or how cornered he gets, he should never forget himself in the heat of the moment and keep his calm, and maintain the frontlines even if for a second more. That is Misura's role and this is something that has been beaten into him by Makoto, Shiki, and Tomoe.

That's why he thinks as he analyses this bad situation.

(Also, Yuno. I and most likely she herself was relaxed because of that incredible equipment. She had become a second shield. The meaning of that in our party, the importance of the coordination between Yuno and I, and our role as shields; I hadn't properly taught her that. This was my blunder. I'm such an idiot.) (Misura)

Yuno has been a skillful girl from the very beginning.

That's why, in a party, she was able to cover the frontline or the backline; a switch-type of combatant that was mostly in charge of attack.

But due to her not having a high ability in receiving attacks and dishing them back, they didn't put serious consideration in the coordination with Misura and her in a party.

That situation has changed recently.

Obtaining high level equipment that served as armor and weapon from the Kuzunoha Company, she became an existence that surpassed Misura only in defensive power.

For Misura who was the one who supported the party as its sole shield, this was a happy change.

Even if the role is called a shield, it doesn't mean that its functions are only one.

Looking for someone to fulfill all functions with only one individual would be impossible unless you are a legendary fighter.

That's why it was a joyous thing that there was now a shield that could maintain the frontlines which was him, and also a shield that possessed speed and could provide strong defense to the backline which was Yuno.

But the current Yuno was becoming desperate listening to the instructions of Amelia in the backlines as she tried to join in the attack.

She has been able to do anything until now, so it couldn't be helped.

A single line of blood trails down the lip of Misura.

It was a bad move to move back from the frontline to take the role of guarding princess Iroha the moment they left the hotel.

And what brought this was the lack of sense of danger that he always feels which led him to such decision.

(If I had kept a proper head on myself!! If I had, we would have managed to bring this girl to a safe place, and yet...!!) (Misura)

No, that's not it.

It is true that the situation is bad.

The momentum of the enemy is decreasing, but the advance of Izumo and the others is visibly decreasing. This is proof that they are receiving more damage than their enemy. This is the sad reality.

Misura thinks of it as his own mistake.

He himself has been troubled with thinking about the course of his future, the conflict with his parents, and the invitations of close priests; a lot of things have been gnawing at him and he is in a dilemma.

While thinking that this is not like him, he couldn't concentrate in the classes, and made stupid mistakes as well.

That's why he thinks that's the case here as well, but in reality, it is the contrary.

Not only Misura, but Jin, Amelia, Daena, and of course Izumo were showing strength that surpassed their actual ability.

Sif has also fully realized that she is lacking in control of her own firepower, and is silently shifting her spells to ones that serve as follow-up for Jin and Daena.

Yuno is also at the back of Misura and he is feeling insecure about her, but she is turning the gears in her head in her own way.

That they haven't been checkmated is the achievement that they should be the most proud of.

If Amelia and Sif were not doing precise healing to Iroha's bodyguards, Akashi and Yudoku, they would have died a long time ago.

The maids that were the shadows of the princess had all died outside the reach of Misura, but even with that, the losses are way too few.

Akashi and Yudoku also had their jaws drop at the way the students were fighting. They even felt weak-minded that they were being saved by the students when they should be the most experienced ones here.

Shougetsu was surprised at the unexpected strength of the Rotsgard students, while holding the old mallet handle he used long in the past to provide assistance in the battle, at times dealing the finishing blow to the enemies that had their coordination crumble as he contributed in maintaining the frontlines.

(Lime-san and that woman stayed to protect the back, and yet, the bad feeling from my back is still there. Damn it.) (Shougetsu)

The moment Shougetsu sent a sign with his eyes to Akashi and Yudoku who were wounded all over their body and were about to continue moving with Jin and Daena leading, three new shadows fell from above.

"Damn it~!! Aren't there way too many high level assassins no matter where you see it?!" (Izumo)

Izumo releases a tornado at the same time as he shouts this complain.

Misura also agreed with this.

He understood this when he clashed blades with them but, these enemies are skilled to a scary level. Putting it bluntly, there were only enemies that have more experience and level than them.

It isn't as despairing as in their classes, but this is actual combat.

If they don't win, they die.

"I-It's okay! I will give it to you! That's why...!" (Iroha)

"...Princess-sama?" (Misura)

"Princess?!" (Izumo)

"Iroha-sama?!" (Shougetsu)

With that trembling voice of hers, Iroha lifted her head and suddenly opened her eyes wide and shouted.

The contents of what she said were hard to understand, and Misura, Izumo, and Shougetsu call back at her worried.

"Ein-Khalif; I will give you Hotarumaru. That's why... protect... protect the people that are important to me!!" (Iroha)

"Iroha-sama? What's that about Ein-Khalif?" (Shougetsu)

Shougetsu directs his attention at the sword that was inside the katana bag on his back as he asks Iroha.

Ein-Khalif.

They took it with them with her request at the hotel. A sword that was said to have been used by an ancient swordsman and to judge the end.

(Keke, understood. As of this moment, I will consider you my present master as per contract. I will be eating that exquisite sword Hotarumaru right now, okay?) (Ein-Khalif)

The voice that Iroha had suddenly begun to hear recently and could only be heard by her says this in a happy tone of voice along with the words contract.

(It has been long since my last fight. My master is lacking in blood and heart but... I am a piece of crap that has forgotten how to hold back. Let's have her get used to it with all I have!) (Ein-Khalif)

“Uo?!” (Shougetsu)

The katana bag that was at the back of Shougetsu had blown open.

The handle of the katana fell onto the hands of Iroha, and the sword for protection, Hotarumaru, that was hanging at her waist released green light as it disappeared.

(U~h, what a delicacy~~~!! Let's go all jilly-jolly on this people from the very beginning!!!) (Ein-Khalif)

“Munching?”

The sword in Iroha's hand didn't have the blade part.

“What?! The two archers and the mage have suddenly fallen!” (Amelia)

Amelia confirmed both sides and announces that the enemies have collapsed.

“Izumo-sama! I have made a contract with Ein-Khalif! The blade that is flying at high speed is not an enemy! I will also... fight!!” (Iroha)

“Small blade?! Wait, it is true that there's something moving. It is fast, moreover, I don't know how many there are, but if it is not an enemy... Jin!” (Izumo)

Daena glances at Jin.

They should utilize it.

They are already in a state where they can't fight long, and unless they use whatever they can, they won't survive.

It is a dangerous thought that might bring them down a trap with a single wrong step, but that's how at their wit's end they are right now.

“...Understood! Princess-sama, you have our gratitude! Everyone, we are cutting through! At any rate, we have to reorganize or it will definitely be bad!!” (Jin)

“Aerial, [Critical Bind]!” (Izumo)

Jin understood that the party was not coordinated. Even so, it wasn't a situation where they could take time for a strategy meeting.

If the battle will continue mercilessly even if they are at their limits, they have to take off even if a bit of that messiness inside the party or there won't be a future.

The big move of Izumo had restrained the two enemies at the front for a few seconds. That was plenty enough.

Believing in the attack of the blade that is flying around, Jin and Daena bring down one. The remaining one was attacked by the flying blade and died.

“Iroha.”

At that moment, the voice of a woman resonated.

A clear voice.

It was by no means loud.

The shout of Iroha not that long ago was a lot louder than that, and yet, this particular voice resonated inside the ears of everyone.

Everyone looked up with conviction that someone was there.

The back of Misura had shivers run violently down his spine.

That memory at the lake where he felt this kind of sensation had resurfaced.

The shadow of a person holding a weapon that looked like a spear had come down.

The falling point was where Iroha is.

Jin and Daena noticed this instantly, utilized body enhancement, kicked the wall at their sides, and moved in order to intercept her in midair.

No, they *tried* to move.

“Splendid. You are still young, and yet, you are working really hard. I love those kind of kids. That’s why this is regretting.”

“Jin, Daena!! Don’t do it, don’t move!!” (Misura)

A shrill shout that Misura hadn’t let out before in his life reverberated, and the movements of Jin and Daena stopped as if they had been hit by lightning.

“Yuno!!” (Misura)

The shadow that was falling at high speed shook the tip of the spear-looking weapon slightly.

‘Intercepting her with those two would be bad’, was the presentiment of Misura as he barely managed to call the name of Yuno.

It was a gamble whether she would move or not.

“Okay!” (Yuno)

Answering immediately, Yuno lunges onto the shadow with the supplemental strength provided by her armor.

It was slightly different from what Misura wanted, but the reaction was plenty enough to award a passing grade.

Silently sending praise to Yuno, Misura used those few seconds to activate his skill.

“[Carnage Heart]!” (Misura)

An inherent skill even when he is so young.

He learned this in the harsh training of Tomoe, and it was the one thing this modest man could boast of.

A special ability that only he possesses in this world.

Misura hasn’t noticed that.

Because he is surrounded by geniuses like Jin and the others, he hasn't noticed that - currently- he possesses the power that is closest to that of a brave.

Calling the name of the skill, even when he saw Yuno being blown away to the side by a single swing of the shadow, Misura didn't move to save her at all.

Iroha, who was at his side a while ago, had already been taken by Izumo to a wall faraway where Jin, Shougetsu, and the others are.

"How manly. Most of the people that call themselves warriors of Lorel should learn from you."

Misura who had swung his greatsword from below in order to divert the spear had once again heard her voice.

When looking at her up-close, you could tell that her body was injured more than that of Misura, and yet, the thrusts that she unleashed were sharp to a scary extent and refined.

Misura, who was sure that the greatsword had made contact, didn't feel the sensation of having clashed blades with her in his hands.

It felt as if it wasn't a weapon but a snake coiling around it, a strange sensation that made Misura forget to even breathe and had robbed him of words.

Unable to even do the action of drawing back, Misura's chest was being drawn into the blade.

Even if it was a cheap one, it was still a metallic armor made by dwarfs, but it didn't show any resistance as it was penetrated.

"Wuuuoooo!!"

"..."

A side sweep with all of his strength.

A move by Misura.

It is true that his chest had been pierced and he had swung his greatsword just like

that.

The woman was making a puzzled expression as she uses the other hand that's holding the naginata to separate it, and attacked as she pulled back, lightly jumping backwards.

Misura had received a fatal wound on his neck as a parting gift from her, but he also followed the moves of her and falls back close to where his comrade are.

"I will take care of Misura! Sif, help Yuno!" (Amelia)

"Okay!" (Sif)

Amelia who knew about the situation entered to action a second faster than the others.

His body was pierced and his neck was cut open.

If his skill were to run out and his body were to reflect the damage, Misura would die instantly.

"Aaah..." (Iroha)

"Could it really be..." (Shougetsu)

Iroha and Shougetsu saw the face of the attacker and their expressions distorted.

"...This is strange. The double strike should have been an attack that brings death. Your defense is still rough in the edges and is not on the level where you can stand in my way... and yet, you are still alive."

"...Hah... hah..."

"Even so, you haven't done anything to my naginata. This is a bit... interesting. Just like that Golem-like girl from before."

The woman smiles.

An overflowing smile that doesn't belong in the battlefield.

Her armor is in tatters and her whole body is smeared in blood. She has several sword injuries, and, as if she had fought against a wild animal, she also had claw injuries and torn up areas.

Even when she was so heavily injured, her bearing showed leisure to the extreme.

It was truly an unbalanced sight.

“Mother... Mother.” (Iroha)

“Haruka-sama. Why are you burning the city and chasing after Iroha-sama?” (Shougetsu)

“Ah, right. Iroha, your mother has come to get you. There’s no need to do a marriage that you don’t wish for. I don’t want you to end up like me. And Shougetsu, good work on looking after Iroha. Stand back now.” (Haruka)

“Haruka-sama!” (Shougetsu)

“If you don’t stand back, I myself will grant you eternal respite. You have worked well. Your brother will be waiting for you there.” (Haruka)

“?!”

“Sorry but! We are here too, you know. If you only want to meddle with the future of your child, draw back and just get your injuries treated. My important friends are risking their life here. We also have no intentions of withdrawing!!” (Misura)

Misura points his greatsword at Haruka.

“I see. It was foolhardiness huh. In that case... there’s no choice.” (Haruka)

(I am a shield. I can’t let anyone get pass me, and most of all, I have to continue taking the blade of the opponent. I definitely won’t let my comrades die before me!) (Misura)

With heroic resolve, Misura provokes Haruka in order to have her attention directed at him.

In an instant... a number of sparkles were visible at the surroundings of Haruka.

“Ah.”

The voices of Jin and Daena overlap. They were completely caught off-guard.

The small blades that Iroha spoke of attacked Haruka with the intent of cutting her down.

“Annoying.” (Haruka)

“?!!”

With the two naginatas, Haruka strikes down all the many blades.

Those moves were at a speed that even Daena was unable to catch.

Gulping their breaths was a reaction they couldn't help.

The blades that were as big as an adult finger had dropped onto the ground and soon went and gathered back to where Iroha is, turning into the blade of Ein-Khalif.

“...Fuh~. Understood. So you won't be hearing what your mother says unless you feel some pain huh. What a troublesome child.” (Haruka)

Haruka takes a stance with her two naginatas.

“Oi, Izumo. Is that really just a mom?” (Jin)

“There's no doubt that that's the mother of the princess, but I don't know if the word 'just' can be used for her. She is a brave woman that is called things like Vessel of Thousand Monsters and War Beast. She apparently has long since finished her active days, but it looks like that doesn't matter.” (Izumo)

“How dare you damage my Juuki!” (Yuno) *<AN: Juuki is the name of the armor. It was first named as Yunbo, but due to circumstances it was changed.>*

“...I know that we definitely wouldn't be able to defeat her in normal circumstances, but Sensei and the others are surely close by. Also, Lime-san and the other woman have fought her and have weakened her to this extent. I don't know what will happen in the next minutes, but... we have no choice but to do it.” (Jin)

Seeing that the armor of Yuno had been cracked, they were dumbfounded, but Jin says these words to his comrades, and most importantly, to himself.

Also, if Raidou -their mentor- makes it in time, they win.

If they get overtaken before that happens... everything's over.

While being grateful to their teacher for beating into them, not fights in perfect condition but fights that push them to their limits, Jin and the others resolve themselves.

Chapter 295

Izumo's resolve, Haruka's resolve

"You can still stand up huh." (Haruka)

There was only one boy that is standing by relying on a staff and a katana. Looking at the figure of this boy, Haruka lets out a heavy sigh.

The words that followed after held no ridicule and you can tell there's confusion in it.

Even now, the eyes of the boy still release strong will.

That boy is Izumo Ikusabe.

Jin and Daena were overwhelmed by the difference in technique, but they fought bravely. Without forgetting about their teamwork with the backlines, they resolutely faced an enemy they couldn't defeat with their own ability.

Amelia and Sif also didn't make any mistakes. Or rather, they showed a miracle-like fight. Those girls who showed strength that far surpassed their actual ability should be commended for it.

Misura, with a special ability and tenacious spirit to endure, exposed his body to the attacks of Haruka to the bitter end.

And then, there's Yuno. She learned a variety of things from Misura in the middle of the battle and became a tough shield for the backlines as well as coordinating with them to increase the firepower.

The user of Ein-Khalif, or more like, the person that was participating in the fight with it as her proxy, Iroha, also lasted till her last attack.

Being able to maintain a strong heart until then is also something that should be commended.

The failure of the wave attack had severed her connection with it and she lost

consciousness, but no one can blame her for that. The Ein-Khalif in her hands had returned to the appearance of a normal sword and already didn't move a single bit.

A secluded girl like her that hasn't experienced a battlefield before managed to stay conscious for so long because of the existence of Izumo.

Due to the violent attacks of Haruka that came often, the bodyguards of Iroha -Akashi and Yudoku- as well as Shougetsu had already fallen.

This situation could be called many things.

Wiped out.

Crushing defeat.

There was only one backline magician barely standing, but aside from that, there was no one else left.

The others are still alive –but they are unconscious.

Their life-or-death was already being grasped by Haruka.

“That just a while ago was... the everything of you people but... are you telling me you still have more to show me?” (Haruka)

‘That’.

The ‘that’ Haruka was referring to was the attack that Jin and the others squeezed their all to do.

The few seconds that the frontline gained with their bodies on the line, Amelia used them to cast enhancement magic on the combined element magic of Sif.

Yuno utilized that power to release a big move ‘Red Salamander’.

After shouting: ‘If we can't bring you down from above, we will break you from below!’, the combined element magic that Sif released had changed the form of the armor of Yuno, Juuki, but this powerful combo technique was deflected by Haruka.

Faced with the retaliation of Haruka, Juuki was completely destroyed and there wasn't

a single person who had the leeway to catch the falling Yuno. There was also no one who could go against the Haruka that summoned mamonos from the sky.

And so, it leads to now.

“That’s why you pushed to end us... like toys you have gotten bored of.” (Izumo)

“‘Toys you got bored of’, that’s quite the self-deprecating way of speaking.” (Haruka)

“...Don’t underestimate us.” (Izumo)

“...”

“Don’t underestimate us! What’s with this!! We... we were doing our very best! Even if you are stronger, I will never forgive an act like making fun of them!” (Izumo)

“Make fun of them? I had no such intentions, child of the military family Ikusabe. Just that—” (Haruka)

“My comrades and I had the resolve in this fight!!” (Izumo)

“That’s simply delirious talk from the weak.” (Haruka)

“!!”

“I had no obligation of doing my best to answer to your resolve.” (Haruka)

“Why...? Aren’t you a warrior?! Is ridiculing the people who do their best something that a warrior would do?! I have not been taught that by no one! Not my sword master, or my magic master, or anyone from my household. And I feel pride from that!” (Izumo)

Izumo’s expression was distorted in anger.

Even Iroha had chosen to clash blades with her mother.

Izumo wouldn’t allow anyone to dare say that there was no resolve in that.

He wouldn’t let that happen.

The attack of Ein-Khalif that she used was vicious. Leaving aside how much Iroha herself was able to control that, it was an attack that showed absolutely no signs of holding back.

Her expression also showed no hesitation. She had a strong face as she viewed the attack towards her mother –without showing a single sign of bitterness.

Izumo was deeply moved by the strong resolve of Iroha.

“I definitely won’t acknowledge you!” (Izumo)

“Stop it already. There’s no way you don’t know that you have been shaving off your life as you wring out magic power, right? No matter how much power you bring out, I can summon mamonos that can serve as shield and mamonos that can interrupt your aria. It is an ability that’s said to have been used by the Wise Tokito-sama, called Hyakki Yagyo.” (Haruka)

“I know, you can use it as a Rebound Person. That doesn’t matter anymore.” (Izumo)

Izumo also understands.

Osakabe Haruka is a Rebound Person. Moreover, an abnormal Rebound Person that possesses several Wise powers.

She might even be stronger than a Wise.

But even if that’s the case, Izumo has absolutely no intentions of changing his plans.

“...If you still have something you want to do, go ahead.” (Haruka)

“ ... ”

“If that’s the way you want to use your life, go ahead. Do it.” (Haruka)

“...Is that your way of pity?” (Izumo)

Izumo grips his staff and katana.

He was bringing out dangerous magic power from inside of him and shaping it.

“Fighting is by no means something that I find fun. What role did God give to me when it granted these many powers to this body...” (Haruka)

Haruka wasn't showing a single trace of feeling danger.

“Then watch. I will be showing you right now what lies beyond the power of a military household!” (Izumo)

Finishing his calculations, he spreads many fragments of arias.

Multiple magic activation, a technique that is passed down and classified as a special move by the military family.

(Fourteen activations of ‘Garuda Tempest’ and four ‘Dust Wings’. It should look beautiful.) (Izumo)

Fully on the know of what will come out, Izumo gathers more aria fragments.

“Well, leave that for later, okay?”

A voice suddenly resounded.

But that wasn't an unfamiliar voice for Izumo. Or more like, the moment Izumo heard it, he felt as if he would lose all strength out of relief.

—A voice he has been waiting for eagerly.

“...Wa?”

The voice that Haruka heard right in front of her was from someone Izumo knows.

The dumbfounded voice he let out was a reaction after seeing the shining needle pierced in the neck of Haruka.

“Who goes there!” (Haruka)

“Woah now.”

Without caring about Izumo, Haruka's naginata leaves a shiny trail as she turns around, but the person easily jumped away from it and stands in the middle of Izumo

and Haruka.

“Sensei?” (Izumo)

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

The quest has been accomplished.

Even if this was the result of them being made light of, no one died.

‘Ah, with this, I can let go of my consciousness’, is what Izumo thought as his knees hit the ground.

It must have also been the backlash of him exploding with the most anger he have had to feel in his whole life until now.

But, sadly, their Sensei won’t be easy-going.

“Sensei. Then... you are Raidou?” (Haruka)

The state of Haruka made a complete turn.

Bloodthirst that would make you shiver was released in an instant from her whole body.

The magic power needle made a small sound as it broke.

“...Right. Izumo.” (Makoto)

“Y-Yes?!” (Izumo)

“Wake up everyone and watch.” (Makoto)

Without turning back, the Sensei says these short words and faces Haruka.



Osakabe Haruka tried to receive everything that Jin and the others brought out.

She was trying to bring out their power as she hurt them to an extent where she

wouldn't kill them.

A delicate job that required the highest of care.

Their anger, bloodthirst, and the many miracle-like techniques that these young group of talents were giving birth to; she received them all and crushed them.

That's how it looked to me.

And that delayed it enough for me to intervene.

In other words, it could be that..... ah... this is hard to deal with. Even if it is something that I have decided on, I wonder if this really is the correct choice.

Fighting really doesn't bring out anything good.

"The enemy of Tomoki-sama; the one who injured his personage... is how I should think of it, right?" (Haruka)

"You can." (Makoto)

Was it at the time she fought Lime and Levi? Or maybe after seeing the fight of Jin and the others?

It... couldn't have been at the time when she killed Kougetsu-san.

At that time, I thought we were too late, but due to the power-up of Tomoe's illusions, it seems she can even interfere with the boundary between life-and-death.

After reviving the whole unit, we have had them cooperate for the time being.

...But she sulked quite a lot though.

'I will become lad Kosugi~~!!', is still burned in my mind. *<Take this one with a grain of salt.>*

"Fufu, so the one I was looking for has finally appeared. Moreover, it looks like you are pretty strong." (Haruka)

Haruka-san rubs the back of her neck.

How did she nullify the needle?

If it's her who possesses several Wise abilities... ah, it is this one huh.

Investigating with 'Sakai', I gather detailed information of her.

This person has quite a lot of real combat experience and is quite strong.

"It is called Wings of the Saint." (Haruka)

"..."

So she already knew that I was investigating her and about the result as well huh.

That's right, Wings of the Saint; the last power that she hadn't displayed until now.

"Because of this, fighting had become nothing short of boring." (Haruka)

Because of that huh.

"Must have been. A Wise power that activates the moment you receive a certain amount of damage or are afflicted by a status effect that affects your life." (Makoto)

And after activating, all damage will be healed and you receive a permanent resistance against that status effect.

It truly is an unbelievable power fitting of its name.

Get injured for long, and in time, become immortal huh.

Was that the power of a brave of that era, or maybe a Wise of reputation?

"How scary. It is correct. It also heals wounds and poison disappears." (Haruka)

"...No way. That's cheating." (Izumo)

I heard the pained voice of Izumo coming from my back.

Looks like Jin and the others have woken up. They are making noise.

“ So, what will you do? That mysterious needle attack of yours won’t work on me anymore. This is the first time I have had Wings of the Saint activate with a single attack though.” (Haruka)

“Of course, I will be incapacitating you.” (Makoto)

I glance at my students.

Jin, Daena, Misura, Amelia, Sif, Yuno... and Izumo.

They have... truly become strong.

Just how much experience have they gained in this short amount of time.

I couldn’t understand the reason of them being here until I saw it directly with my eyes.

I even thought it could have been a mistake that stemmed from Shiki indulging the selfishness of Izumo.

No, if we think about the danger, my thinking is correct.

But that’s not it –it wasn’t solely a mistake.

They have already grown a lot more than someone like me.

I am simply a teacher though.

Shiki must have talent as a mentor.

“Incapacitate? The more I swing my weapon, the stronger I become; just by receiving an attack, I gain resistance against it; I can’t use big magic, but I can summon a number of mamonos that possess many abilities –you want to incapacitate someone like that? Even if you look around the world, there’s no one who can clash upfront against me.” (Haruka)

Haruka-san shows a praiseworthy feat of smiling while not loosening her bloodthirst at all.

...How vain.

“In reality, I have been thinking for a bit. I was wondering if you and I are similar. But it looks like I was wrong.” (Makoto)

“That doesn’t answer anything.” (Haruka)

“Haha, you say you have ‘become’ bored?” (Makoto)

“What’s so funny about that?” (Haruka)

“In that case, I might be able to express my gratitude towards you for stimulating the growth of my students.” (Makoto)

“ ... ”

“I will make it so your last fight will be slightly fulfilling at the very least.” (Makoto)

“?!!”

When I look at Haruka-san, she takes a stance with sharp eyes and points her weapon in my direction.

“Haruka-san.” (Makoto)

“What?!” (Haruka)

I call her as I stand right before her eyes.

Being suddenly closed in in such a short space of time, she was clearly agitated.

“You see, I...” (Makoto)

I pierce her with a needle.

The needle that had a petrifying effect endowed was pierced in her chest.

“Why?! But!” (Haruka)

The needle crumbles.

It doesn’t matter.

“Things like ‘a fight being fun’...I have never thought of it before. Even the battle trainings, I only do them because they are necessary. No matter if I get injured or not, no matter if it is a complete victory or a crushing defeat; I don’t feel worth in battle. Honestly, inside of me, there’s only the feeling of whether it is necessary or not.”
(Makoto)

“Are those your words as a warrior?!” (Haruka)

“Is that a joke? This is simply a farewell gift. If Haruka-san is a person that’s fickle about victory or defeat, it is still possible to bring out something that will make fighting worth after all!” (Makoto)

This time, I create a fire needle and attack.

She tries to evade, but it looks like she still has some leeway in her.

Utilizing the power of the red-colored coat, I accelerate without reservation, and break through the evasion and defense of hers that was mixed with hesitation.

“It doesn’t have any effect! Raidou!!” (Haruka)

Two naginatas are swung inside the hot wind.

The trajectory of the blades are on the level of a master, but I am the faster one.

I grab both blades around the base with its respective hand.

“You grabbed it?!” (Haruka)

“It is pure physics. I wonder if you gain complete immunity if you were to be hit with physical damage.” (Makoto)

“Wa, guh!!” (Haruka)

I continue by striking her with my Magic Armor.

Aiming up.

The strongest team attack of Jin and the others began just like that.

Was it the 'Aerial' of Izumo? That had stayed in my mind, so I might have punched her up unconsciously because of it.

But the figure of Haruka-san in the sky disappears while she was still hanging in the air.

Teleportation?

No, this is...

I move my gaze to the side and I found her using the crumbling rubble of buildings as foothold to jump and approach me.

A feat that's impossible for a hyuman; ability on the level of a Wise.

Is that the blessing of the ability that enhances the body whenever it receives damage; War Beast?

She is making moves like those of a wild animal.

"Dwell in it, fifteenth beast; the inescapable black thorn, Great Tusk Ogre!" (Haruka)

Summoning a familiar and endowing it into her weapon with no aria, just simple words, Haruka-san moved at lightning speed with a blade that's clad in a black muddy-something and came mowing down at me on both sides.

She said it was inescapable, but it seems possible to evade.

I move back at the place slightly before the two blades intersect.

"I got you!!" (Haruka)

So she had my evasion in mind huh.

The two naginatas became one and was thrust at me who was trying to evade.

A charge that came at me together with her whole body.

The part of the Magic Armor that came in contact with its tip was blown away.

Literally blown away.

Hm~.

I crouch my body; my two legs properly staying on the ground.

Grabbing the naginata that was still clad in a black aura, I pull it towards me.

Now that she was at close range, I create a needle endowed with blast power from my right hand, and pierce it onto the shoulder of Haruka-san.

“...!!”

She is blown to the ground without letting out a single word.

But that’s not the end.

From the dust cloud that was raised, several shadows aside from hers appeared.

So she summoned something again huh.

“Scary. You truly are a scary monster, Raidou. Even so, I won’t be losing.” (Haruka)

I am beginning to feel as if I am being attacked by a zombie.

“Why do you think of something that’s so far from the truth?” (Makoto)

“The Wings of the Saint will remember all of your abilities in time.” (Haruka)

“And?” (Makoto)

“And I am saying that’s the moment where you will be prostrating!” (Haruka)

“If you want to win against me, immortality is not enough.” (Makoto)

I am certain.

If she were really charmed by Tomoki, Jin and the others would have been all killed in just a matter of seconds.

Izumo called it an insult and was angered, but she wouldn't have let them show their abilities and the limits of their power.

Haruka-san —you, just how did you do it, and when?

Did you undo the charm of Tomoki on your own?

I was thinking this while listening to her frivolous talk.



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