

Tsuki ga Michibiku Isekai Douchuu

– Moon-led Journey Across Another World –

**- Volume 15 -
(Chapter 213-231)**

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[Reigokai: Isekai Translations]

Chapter 213

Today Kuzunoha leaves, and Limia must be having it hard

“What did you say just now, Joshua-sama?”

“I have come to suggest retirement, is what I said, Lord Algurio.” (Joshua)

The words of the guest that Algurio brought in were so unexpected that he asked again.

But the words that were returned weren't that different from before.

The day that Raidou and the Kuzunoha Company left Limia, there was one guest at the Hopelace's residence in the southern part of the kingdom.

The current Head of the Hopelace household, Algurio Hopelace, had returned to his territory in the time that Raidou's group was in the capital, in order to prepare for the welcoming of the guest.

Then he should have finished that business when they were in the capital, is the illogical action Raidou would most likely suggest.

Just that, when a noble takes an appointment, there's a specially troublesome custom of one side visiting and the other receiving.

Joshua feels like that's troublesome too, and Hibiki who has accompanied him also feels the same inside.

But right now is not the time to aggravate the situation. They have departed from the capital with Raidou's group, and so, have arrived at the Hopelace territory to see them off.

“...It seems like it is no joke. But Joshua-sama, it is still too soon for me to retire. My son has gone out temporarily, but I am thinking about having him succeed the household when the time comes.” (Algurio)

“As a policy of the royal family, we have prohibited evil intended actions towards Raidou and the Kuzunoha Company’, is what I believe I told you before. You have gone against it. Well, your failures in Rotsgard were also pretty pathetic though. Even so, this is troubling. It seems like you have thrown around quite a lot of money, but you must have already noticed that this is not a problem that can be solved with money.” (Joshua)

It seemed like Joshua himself didn’t intend to take back his words.

In this place, there’s only Joshua and Algurio.

Hibiki who’s here on the pretext of being the bodyguard of Joshua, and the knight that works for the Hopelace household, were in standby outside the room.

“I have not gone against it. Since then, I have not put a single finger on Raidou, and when they were on their journey to Limia, the family provided them a lodging. Joshua-sama spoke of throwing around money, but that was our contribution for the reconstruction of Rotsgard and the capital. I am sorry for the rudeness but, I can only call this an unjust suspicion from Joshua-sama. I don’t have any intentions of escaping responsibility or anything.” (Algurio)

“...It has already been exposed that you were conspiring with a number of nobles in this matter. If there’s the need for proof, I will bring that at a later time. Lord Algurio, when the Kuzunoha Company’s group lodged in this place, you clearly send assassins in order to murder them, right?” (Joshua)

“...”

Those were words filled with confidence.

Algurio maintains silence

In this occasion, his silence affirmed what Joshua has pointed out.

He immediately knew that the amount of information and basis of Joshua were not a bluff.

That’s why he decided not to respond by reflex and just wait and see what the other party has to play.

The silence also signified this.

“It ended with the tables being turned, but obviously, it is a big issue. The assassins that you brought to your territory were all people that secretly acted in the country. Not only did you ignore a recent order from the royal family, you even utilized criminals to realize your lynching. It is in no way how a noble of high class should act.” (Joshua)

“Joshua-sama, there’s the public position that one should think of in all actions. I judged that I had obtained your tacit consent and proceeded to act. The consent of Joshua-sama who is the counsellor of the king means that your consent is the consent of the king. Don’t tell me that you are going to deny the reality of the discussion we had before? There were several others there aside from me, you know?” (Algurio)

“Well now, I don’t remember telling you to kill the Kuzunoha Company, and don’t remember accepting such a foolish idea. And I also don’t remember promising that I didn’t see anything. My consent? If you are saying that I would be ignoring that stupid ‘joke’ you guys did there at that time, you are seriously wrong.” (Joshua)

“You are going to feign ignorance till the end? Isn’t that quite the poor treatment there.” (Algurio)

“Doing crafty actions towards the guests that the royal family had invited to express their gratitude, isn’t that quite the deed? If it’s you who has good intuition, there should be no need for more words than these, right? Please retire. Have your eldest son succeed your household, and disappear from the front stage of politics. It is quite the peaceful way of stepping back from top seat of the family.” (Joshua)

Joshua pushes Algurio into retirement with a smile.

The assassins that attacked Raidou were people sent by Algurio and his group, and the proof is already in the hands of Joshua.

This deed would normally merit heavy punishments like cutting off part of their territory, or a demotion of their status.

If it can be solved by just changing the head of the family, it is not a bad trade for the Hopelace household.

But...

As long as the Kuzunoha Company is involved, Algurio can't easily nod.

Even if it was indirectly, there's no way he would find it pleasant, because it would mean that the power of their household has been chipped off again by them.

"I see. You are really intending to get rid of me huh. But is that okay, Joshua-sama?"
(Algurio)

That's why Algurio decided to use his hidden card.

He knew that the other nobles have already been persuaded or incapacitated. He understood that all the groundwork has already been done, but even with that, he still struggled.

"What is it?" (Joshua)

"I know what you have been desperately trying to hide." (Algurio)

"...Ah, I forgot to tell you. Your elder son suffered a big injury a few days ago. We are currently doing our best in his treatment." (Joshua)

"?!"

"His physique has deteriorated quite a bit, but I hope he gets better." (Joshua)

"Impossible! I have not received a single notice of that! Besides, I was in the capital just a few days ago!" (Algurio)

"Yeah, I am truly sorry. It seems like the report ran late because of the matter with the Kuzunoha Company. I think that the notification will come tomorrow or the day after."
(Joshua)

"His life... his life can be saved, right?!" (Algurio)

Without minding about his words, Algurio presses unto Joshua.

After losing Illumgand, the only one left who can succeed him is the eldest son.

It couldn't be helped that he would lose himself.

“Of course. If that wasn’t the case, I wouldn’t be bringing out a conversation like changing Heads. Ah right, you said something about a secret of mine, right? What was it?” (Joshua)

“ ... ”

Algurio was shocked and revised his knowledge of Joshua.

The Joshua he knows of is a loyal counsellor of the king.

On top of abandoning the succession of the throne, he has a favorable relationship with his little brother Bredda; he is an exceedingly gentle person.

He has never heard of Joshua taking on dirty work.

Even so, the one in front of Algurio is clearly Joshua and not someone else.

Seeing a side of the prince he has never seen before, Algurio felt like he was being cornered.

But he already said that he knew the secret of the prince. Even if he goes without saying it, it won’t bring any benefits.

It would actually invite disadvantage, is what he thinks.

Now that it has come to this, he has decided that there’s no choice but to drag out the information.

He was being played by Joshua splendidly.

It normally wouldn’t be so easy to control the Head of the Hopelace household whose rank comes after that of the royalty.

Joshua was going strong because he knew he would be able to bring out a variety of cards from him.

“If you don’t have anything to say, then I want to hear your answer. You are going to wait for the recovery of your eldest son and retire right, Lord Algurio? (Joshua)

“There is.”

“...Hoh. Go ahead.” (Joshua)

“Then prince Joshua –no, princess.” (Algurio)

“ ...”

“The child that his Majesty had with a woman from the streets, had -at some point in time- become the brother of Bredda-sama. It would be another matter if it were a noble’s concubine; a lady that has the vulgar blood of someone that’s not a noble.” (Algurio)

“ ...”

“If this were to be known in the country, it would be clear that it would become an unwelcoming situation for Joshua-sama. A princess that has their same blood, moreover, someone that has been calling herself as a prince and deceiving the whole country; the masses would never accept this.” (Algurio)

“ ...”

“How’s that? How about we act in a manner that benefits us both? I don’t have any plans on retiring in the near future, but when the time comes, I promise that I will peacefully yield the household to my son. He is already the only one who can succeed it after all. If Joshua-sama accepts this, and promise not to do any unnecessary intervention after my retirement as well, I will take the secret of prince to my grave.” (Algurio)

“Fufufufu.” (Joshua)

“Joshua-sama?” (Algurio)

“Ufufu, ahahaha!! Take my secret to your grave? You will? Are you telling me to believe that? I don’t mind. If you think you are able to, try doing it.” (Joshua)

Joshua laughs away the proposal of Algurio about feigning ignorance.

Being sure that she would be able to finish this while maintaining several cards, Joshua pushed aside the threat.

“Are you telling me to try and expose it? It makes me question your sanity.” (Algurio)

“Revealing a card -that can’t even be considered one- on your own... that’s quite funny.”
(Joshua)

...

“Just like you said, I am a woman. And my mother is a plebeian. Lord Algurio, your information is correct. It is certainly true that if this were to leak outside, it would plunge the capital into great confusion, and it will create a big opening in Limia for foreign countries to exploit.” (Joshua)

“...That’s right. So Joshua-sama, you have no choice but to accept my proposal. Right?”
(Algurio)

Joshua didn’t overlook the small opening in the words of Algurio.

“That moment of hesitation there, is telling me everything. The information of me being a woman... if this were to be known, the ones troubled would be the royal family and you nobles.” (Joshua)

“It is a problem of the royal family, but it is not a problem for us.” (Algurio)

“Even though you already know. If it were in an era without war, in a peaceful country, this information would be incredibly valuable and the uses would be many. But in a situation where we are fighting with another race, it can’t even be considered a card. It is simply useless information.” (Joshua)

“...”

“If the current Limia were to show an opening, there’s the chance that the demon race will be attacking again. Even if that doesn’t happen, Gritonia, Aion, and Lorel, will do a variety of interventions in our domestic affairs in the pretense of preserving the frontlines. Hyumans are not a monolith after all.” (Joshua)

“No matter the reality, many hyumans still believe that this war with the demon race will finish with the victory of the hyuman race huh...” (Algurio)

Algurio can also see the situation of the war.

He has also stood in the battlefield, and he understands that the war with the demon race is a serious one that has the survival of the race at stake.

That's why he had Illumgand go to Rotsgard in order to polish his commanding ability and battle power to high levels.

Algurio speaks of an immature ideal; he wanted to have Illumgand work in the battlefield, and in exchange, return his eldest son to begin his education towards succeeding as the Head.

"Yeah. I have done this much, and today, beginning with lord here, I will be swinging a hatchet at many other nobles as well. In the near future, I will be revealing this to a set number of people inside the castle beyond a certain standing, and at the same time, I will be preparing to leave the castle. In other words, it will be a simultaneous strike between everyone and me, right?" (Joshua)

"Are you saying that you will be abandoning the reformation that is merely halfway - no, that has barely started?" (Algurio)

"To establish a big reformation, I am way too dangerous. Because I am holding a big bomb after all. That's why I have already requested another person to take the leading role in changing the country. Also... if it is known that I am a woman, Bredda will have no choice but to resolve himself to be the king of the next generation." (Joshua)

"...The hero Hibiki huh." (Algurio)

It is a dangerous conversation, moreover, it is an important one, but it is not something big enough to warrant the company of the hero.

And yet Hibiki came as a bodyguard, which Algurio reads into it deeply.

"Who knows. How about confirming it, not from the stage, but from the spectator's seat?" (Joshua)

From beginning to end, Joshua didn't panic at all, even her body spoke of her indifference and calm.

With her blood and gender, Joshua understands that she is in a position that would not even allow her to serve at the side of the king.

From her way of speaking, Algurio could tell that plenty enough.

And he could also tell that she had the resolve of making it end with a simultaneous

strike no matter what.

“...Fuh~, this is my lost. Well, you got me there. You really had some sharp fangs hidden there. It is my total defeat.” (Algurio)

After a while of silence, Algurio makes a bright expression as if an evil spirit had come off his shoulders, and said these words in a gentle expression like that of Joshua.

“I am glad to hear you have understood, Lord Algurio.” (Joshua)

“Don’t mind it, I am already a geezer. I will just think of it as a good opportunity. If I can receive it happily, there’s no right or wrong. Well, for my retirement’s farewell gift, I wouldn’t have any objections if you accompany me once in a dance. Of course, you will be filling the female role, Joshua-sama.” (Algurio)

“If it’s only that much, I will happily be your partner. Well then, this matter has been wrapped up, so I will be taking my leave. See you at a later time.” (Joshua)

“Yes, later.” (Algurio)

Joshua stands up with a smiling face.

Algurio also stands up with a smile that didn’t lose to hers.



“Good job, Joshua.”

“Yeah, it was tiring, Hibiki. But it has ended as Hopelace also yielding their family headship. With this, the noble clique that is clinging to the old predisposition is as good as gone.” (Joshua)

“Turning over half of the nobles with that inclination into enemies; a sane person wouldn’t be able to do that. Now if we are able to take away the eyes of the outside interference, their strength will naturally dwindle.” (Hibiki)

Joshua answers the welcoming of Hibiki who was in the room.

Normally, Hibiki shows her usual respect towards the prince, but when they are alone, the atmosphere is that of two close friends.

“The young nobles that will be succeeding the households are mostly influenced by Hibiki’s thoughts already. From here on, there will be progress.” (Joshua)

“And, how much did that old man show?” (Hibiki)

“Our side’s cards were not as effective as I thought. That we have proof of them going against our orders and attacked the Kuzunoha Company, the fact that I am a woman, and that the eldest son is currently in the middle of treatment. About that much.” (Joshua)

“...Instead of your secret, wouldn’t it have been better to attack with the dishonest amassing of wealth in this place?” (Hibiki)

“It was a hidden card from their side. He utilized it, so I turned it over. I told him that if he were to expose it, it would chip away the national power of Limia, and he won’t be getting away unscathed from that either.” (Joshua)

“That old man is already old enough to be senile huh. To speak it out without realizing that it wouldn’t even serve as a card.” (Hibiki)

Hibiki sighs as if amazed.

“It probably helped that we crushed most of his surroundings and stole his leeway before tackling the matter regarding the attack to the Kuzunoha Company. It ended with a result that was close to what was planned. He said something admirable like asking me to be lenient towards the nobles that had cooperated in the act.” (Joshua)

“‘Close to’?” (Hibiki)

“...Should I say, as expected of a high noble? At the end, he made a bright smile as he accepted his defeat.” (Joshua)

“Admirable... no, you mean crafty, right?” (Hibiki)

Hibiki rephrases it.

It wasn’t an admirable attitude nor was it a manly one; it meant that Algurio was able to splendidly smooth it over by understanding the situation.

“That’s right. I was expecting him to get exasperated and rage when I cornered him,

but after the retirement talk was brought down, leaving aside the matter with his eldest son, he was pretty composed. Looking at that, we can't lower our guards. It was as if he were announcing that he can still act." (Joshua)

"How troublesome. So it really was the right choice to reserve that card of the eldest son." (Hibiki)

Joshua nods at Hibiki's words.

"If Lord Algurio were to lose the life of his other son as well, we would have literally struck each other down. Limia would have fallen into chaos." (Joshua)

"For a moment, I also thought about the long term method of having the eldest son die at that time, and wait for the current Head to die from old age though. When thinking about it, a high noble like Hopelace should have seeds spread all over the place, so I thought that successors would be sprouting from here and there, and that's why I decided it was better to have him feel indebted by saving his eldest son though." (Hibiki)

"...Hibiki, that's underestimating Lord Algurio too much. It is certainly true that he has many mistresses, and has as many children with his blood, but..." (Joshua)

"Now there, if I listen to that talk, my evaluation of that old man will only lower. I am actually beginning to feel that I have overestimated him." (Hibiki)

"But that's a well-known secret. The children that are accepted as the heirs are only those two. The dead Illumgand, and the eldest son that was in the battlefield. When the mistress had a child, he provided them with plenty enough consolation money and threw them away, after all." (Joshua)

"..."

Joshua talks about the inhuman actions of Algurio as if they were not a big deal.

On the other hand, Hibiki responds to the talk about him throwing away mistresses one after the other with a complicated expression.

"A number of them have tried to use the blood relation as a weapon to enter the Hopelace household, but the lord took care of them without exceptions. Playing things are playing things, and it displayed that they did not intend to have them involved in

the household. If the eldest son were to die, they would have probably chosen a relative to succeed it.” (Joshua)

“It makes me want to say that he shouldn’t do those kind of plays to begin with. Well, I have now understood well that the protection of the Hopelace household is thorough, but... they are really concerned with the lineage.” (Hibiki)

“For good and bad, they are nobles after all. Even when he is like that, he doesn’t do outrageous things towards the obedient populace, and is also considered a kind and tolerant landlord. For the poor lands he would postpone the tax collection, and when the people increase, he would use his own money in order to increase the farming land and jobs.” (Joshua)

“...However, he lies about the tax that the country has, and the own money he uses is in the end, from the tax that he obtained from the people and he uses it to enrich his own clothing.” (Hibiki)

“...That’s why I said, for good and bad. And in reality, the Hopelace territory is famous for being easy to live in, and he is being evaluated as an excelling landlord.” (Joshua)

For Limia, the Hopelace territory is known to be easy to live in and being a wealthy land.

Many people enter it, and there are few who want to leave.

As long as the people are obedient, Algurio shows them a government that recompenses it after all.

Of course, this was simply a difference between obvious exploitation and ingenious exploitation though.

That’s why the reputation of the Kuzunoha Company in the territories influenced by the Hopelace household was so bad.

It was obvious since rumours were flowing around.

From the rumours that have been circulating, the one that is most consolidated is that Kuzunoha is evil and Hopelace is just.

For the people that live without problems and are actually being cared for by their

feudal lord, Algurio, there's no way they would think of him as evil, so this is also an obvious result.

Moreover, the tax profit that he provides to the royal family is more than that of other territories, even when he is reported to do fraudulent practices.

A company that is an enemy of the Hopelace, even if they are guests invited by the royal family, there were many nobles and general residents who didn't welcome this.

Hibiki and Joshua utilized this.

As a move to destroy the nobles that were too into the old doctrine of noble supremacy.

With the attack of Raidou as the onset, they snuffed out the people that acted on a sense of defeat while Raidou was in his stay at Limia.

Lime Latte worked as a cooperator of the company, so the plan advanced smoothly, and combined with the evidence they had gathered of frauds until now of the many nobles, they were able to put it in motion.

And so, the Kuzunoha Company were used as bait.

By the way, Raidou doesn't know of this.

Because not all of the interferences reached him after all.

He was simply slightly bothered by the fact that he made the priestess collapse, leisurely gazed at the recovery of Limia, and moderately ignored the talk about business.

Mio had sensed something shady to a certain degree, but she limited herself to simply brushing away the sparks. Because she already had an objective bigger than that, which is to have Raidou learn that Hibiki is a person he can't be together with.

After being promised by Hibiki that she would be giving retribution to the assassins and the ones involved, Lime was persuaded.

In the depths of Lime's heart, he felt anger. He was sure that it wouldn't be disadvantageous for the company, so he decided to cooperate.

“But in that case, even if we were to have the eldest son be slightly indebted, it doesn’t seem like we will be able to cajole the Hopelace household. As I thought, it might be necessary to prepare ourselves for a long term solution.” (Hibiki)

Hibiki recalls the time when she saved the Hopelace’s eldest son in the battlefield.

He is faithful to his father, and even though he is young, Hibiki didn’t feel youth in him.

Even if he were to become the Head, she is sure that he would be heavily influenced by Algurio.

The trouble will most likely continue.

But well, thanks to Kuzunoha Company, the situation has progressed quite a lot, so looking at the whole picture, it is a positive result.

She knew this isn’t the time to be dejected, so she renewed her mood.

“Even if we have the puppet of Lord Algurio take over the household, there’s not much meaning. That’s why...” (Joshua)

“...”

Hibiki was about to answer with a ‘right’, but seeing that Joshua’s words still continued, she makes a dubious expression.

“Let’s change him.” (Joshua)

“...How?” (Hibiki)

“The ones changing gentlemen are always women, right?” (Joshua)

“To reach that conclusion, I feel like you have been reading and listening to literary works way too much.” (Hibiki)

“Really? I admit that I am a young woman with a lot of superficial knowledge of sex, but I think that it is actually an effective method, you know? At the very least, I think there’s plenty enough worth in trying.” (Joshua)

Joshua speaks with a serious face.

“There’s no disadvantages for us in doing it, but...” (Hibiki)

The enunciation of Hibiki’s words was bad.

“He is currently looking at his lost arm and thinning legs in despair. It is said that the best moment to make someone fall is when they are weakened.” (Joshua)

“You are planning on doing it immediately?” (Hibiki)

It was a vulgar talk, but Hibiki didn’t retort to the contents and asked if they were going to be sending someone directly while he is still in the middle of his treatment.

It seems like Hibiki also thinks that it is a good moment to do it.

“I have already begun. The ones nursing him are all experienced children of houses with a somewhat high standing and strong people. The appearance and age are all within the range of his likes that have been determined beforehand. There’s around 6 of them gathered.” (Joshua)

“...”

Hibiki is speechless that the plan has already started.

She thought that it was great she didn’t say anything about her going to visit him herself and changing his own thinking.

Because it would turn into getting in the way of Joshua after all.

“The only thing we can’t do anything about is his arm. There will be six people working on his treatment and nursing, so by the time his legs recover and he is able to move, he would have probably placed his hands on one of them.” (Joshua)

“As expected, that arm can’t be helped huh. But Joshua, even if you say that you have something to do with those women and he does place a hand on them, aren’t the chances of them going out or marrying pretty low? To change him, I think there’s the need of at least that much good will though.” (Hibiki)

When Hibiki saved him, his right arm had rotted, and that poison was about to further corrode his body.

Both of his legs were mangled, and from its looks, it seemed to be completely late.

It is safe to say that he was saved mostly because of luck.

At that instant, she cut off his right arm, only did emergency treatment, and just in case, she brought his right arm back as well, but Hibiki thought that that arm was already beyond saving.

And that really was the case.

Actually, just having his legs connected can be considered worthy of praise for the healing magicians.

“If those six make him fall that’s good; even if it ends as just playing around... I still have a certain one prepared just in case.” (Joshua)

“A certain one?” (Hibiki)

“Professed to be a top-grade healing magician, but in truth, she is the number one wife candidate.” (Joshua)

“Chiya-chan is definitely a no.” (Hibiki)

Hearing that she was a top-class healer, Hibiki mentions her comrade Chiya as a joke.

“If I did something like that, not only would it be a diplomatic strife with Lorel, it would instantly turn into war.” (Joshua)

“Then I am relieved. And, is it someone I know?” (Hibiki)

“No. In the eyes of Hopelace, it would be the second daughter of a slightly lower ranked house. ‘Divorced once, and no kids’.” (Joshua)

“Did he have that kind of taste?” (Hibiki)

“Whether she is a housewife or a widow, he doesn’t care. It is just that he seems to have a strange taste for older women.” (Joshua)

“For the Limia nobles, they normally say that past their twenties, the value of the woman falls after all. Even though there’s still much more to develop as a woman. In

that point, there are way too many idiots. Then, is that second daughter a leftover? In other words, desperate?" (Hibiki)

"She is already 23 after all. I think that internally, she is quite impatient already. There were no marriage proposals in this one year, and she jumped on my proposal. The other party is a Hopelace, so there weren't any complains from the parents. It was an immediate answer." (Joshua)

"That person is your real card? Is it going to be okay?" (Hibiki)

"I will be directing and cooperating, so I think we will be able to expect something though." (Joshua)

"I see." (Hibiki)

'Isn't it a weak hand?', is what Hibiki thought.

23 with a history of being divorced, that reduces the worth of a woman in Limia quite a lot.

Leaving aside the man in question, it wouldn't be easy to convince the parents.

The hurdle is too high and it isn't something that one can expect much, is what she thought.

"Well, she will be devoutly nursing his loss arm to its original state, so she will probably leave a big impression. Moreover, she matches his own preference and her parentage has no problems, and the girl herself is eager, so in the worst case, she can become a mistress." (Joshua)

"...Healing his arm, you say? Didn't you say it was currently impossible?" (Hibiki)

"It is impossible for us. But when I tried to consult about the matter of Hopelace to Raidou, he said that something like that can be easily done." (Joshua)

"You are saying that he is able to grow an arm out of that shoulder that is still in that dark-purple shade?" (Hibiki)

"He was going to give the job to Mio-dono, saying that if it's with magic it can be done immediately. But something like that would be noticed by people of Hopelace, so I

politely refused. When I asked him if we can do this by treating it with medicine, he said there's no problem with that either. Of course, because of the process, it increased the price by quite a bit more, but I bought it. After acquiring the information completely, I plan on having the girl that will be doing the treatment to enter." (Joshua)

The Hopelace house that not only got entangled with the Kuzunoha Company in Rotsgard, they are also the very masterminds that send assassins at them.

Even if it is Raidou, if he were to mention that matter, he could refuse, is what Joshua was also thinking.

But conversely, it could be used as a hand to harass Algurio or the people involved, is how she thought.

And so, while taking utmost care in not having Mio and Lime hold suspicions, she persisted in the conversation with Raidou.

"His arm... with medicine?" (Hibiki)

"It seems it is pills and ointment. There is the need for magic support, but it is an outrageous craft. Well, it helps us quite a lot at this moment though." (Joshua)

Hibiki mutters with a complicated expression.

Because she was picturing a side to be happy about, and a side that would be troublesome.

"Just like planned, we will have him marry someone within those seven, and if he were to make the others concubines or mistresses, it would make it a lot easier for us. They are all girls that know who prepared the table for them and what they are expected to do after all." (Joshua)

(My real objective would be getting their gratitude and invite the child of Algurio, Amelia Hopelace... we would be able to not only change the Head, but the whole body of the Hopelace house. If it's her who doesn't have any connections, Hibiki and I can easily send retainers that support our notions after all. But that girl is... from the Kuzunoha Company, or more like, the student of him. The variables are so many that I can't use her. It would be the best if we were to obtain the cooperation of the company, but if by chance, we were to invite displeasure and she ends up in a favorable relationship with a foreign country, all would go down.) (Joshua)

Joshua looks back at one of the ideas she originally had and laughs.

The scholarship student in Rotsgard Academy, Amelia.

It was already investigated that she is the child of Algurio and a mistress.

And so, Joshua knew that Amelia doesn't think well of the Hopelace house, and she thought that depending on the case, she could ask her to help in their weakening.

Taking into consideration her relationship with Raidou, this idea was not implemented though.

"...I feel like Joshua has plenty possibility to be a ruler. Isn't it fine to become the queen? If Bredda says something about it, I will persuade him." (Hibiki)

"Please stop the jokes. I don't have the capability to become a ruler. A ruler needs to have the strong power of attracting people. The larger the country, the more your individual governmental affairs ability comes into play and you have to work as a symbol of the country, make the people and retainers think of you; that's what it means to become a ruler. If we talk about people that have experience, by making a careful selection, we would be apply to find as many we want." (Joshua)

"A symbol that people can hold up high has the ability of a ruler huh. Being a queen has a strong impact, and I think you are plenty qualified though." (Hibiki)

"That can only be called a curious point. Bredda has the ability to make people help him unconsciously, and support him; that's the kind of appeal he has. But the one that has a stronger appeal than him, moreover, has practical experience as well is... you, Hibiki." (Joshua)

"I don't have the blood of royalty. I am excluded from the very beginning." (Hibiki)

"It will increase the process by one, but there's enough ways to do it. For me, that's the ideal for the future. If the day comes when Limia receives a queen, it shouldn't be me, but you." (Joshua)

"Hello? A dependable beautiful friend and collaborator of mine, is encouraging me to marry her little brother. What should I do?" (Hibiki)

"Please accept it. I have opened the path wide, and after that, I plan on watching over

from afar as well.” (Joshua)

“...Give me a break.” (Hibiki)

Right now there’s still things to do in Limia kingdom.

The reformation forces centered around Hibiki are gaining power as the capital’s reconstruction advances.

The upheaval that will occur inside Limia, the ones that will work as an explosive agent for that is a small scale company that was invited by them; this truth will not be left in any record.

Just a single person’s memories will that name remain.

The winter that is providing a temporary armistice for sporadic fights.

The Kuzunoha Company and Raidou are existences that will be bringing about a big influence, not only to Limia, but to all the upper stratum of every country. It will become a tacit reality that will be edged in them.

Chapter 214

Speaking of winter...

Now that I think about it, Limia is really a wealthy and easy to live in country.

I remember Hibiki-senpai, the priestess Chiya-san, Prince Joshua, and the other many that came with us to the national border to see us off.

I felt like it was quite extravagant for an escort, but it seems they also had some other business.

If it's that, I can understand.

Even till the end, Chiya-san didn't open her heart, and had a stiff face from beginning to end.

She didn't leave the side of Senpai, and it seems I have become quite the scary existence.

With Chiya-san in that state, and the good willed attitude of Hibiki-senpai and prince Joshua, I thought that their load of work must been heavier because of that, which made me depressed.

...When looking at the priestess being all business-like and doing her best because it is needed, I just can't see her being the same age as Rinon, and within me, she had become Chiya-san.

I can't bring myself to call her Chiya-chan.

Senpai calls her that way though.

"Even so, this is my first time coming here but, is Kaleneon always snowing?" (Lime)

It is Lime.

Right.

The reason I began thinking that Limia is a wealthy land was because of this snowy landscape.

I can't see a speck of light brown ground.

It is also because this is the outside of the town, but this is the very definition of a snow country. No, it makes me wonder if this is even a place where people would be able to live in.

Honestly speaking, I have grown tired of looking at it, and to reach the town, there's the need to walk for several more minutes.

Let's hop there.

I wanted to show myself to the Winged-kin and Mist Lizards that are guarding the national borders, so I didn't teleport directly to the town that Eva is in.

And I thought it would be nice to walk through the snowy path, which was a mistake.

The path had snow pushed to the sides and it rose like walls, making it feel like an enclosed area. Are they doing this everyday?

They must be. If not, the path would be covered in snow and I wouldn't be able to tell which is the path.

How fearsome is the north.

When heading to the demon race territory, it turns from a snowy field into an icy one after all. The wind also turns hectic. Well, at least Kaleneon is better since you are able to live in it after shoveling the snow huh.

"Isn't it nice to have a lot of snow? If you put sweet concentrated fruit juice, it can become a splendid desert-desu yo, Lime." (Mio)

"Nee-san... frozen sweets taste good in hot weather, but in this cold it is just..." (Lime)

Mio's thought has probably been imagined by Japanese people at least once.

...Like for example; grade schoolers that love shaved ice.

Tired of seeing the same pure white landscape for who knows how long, I didn't feel in the mood for that.

And in reality, for the people that have to do work in this kind of place everyday, they wouldn't think of such an idea.

"Normally, there's the need of shaving the ice, so in a place like this where it snows this much, I can eat until I am satisfied-desu wa." (Mio)

"If you eat too much at once, your head will hurt, Mio. At this rate, it will be the same sight until we reach the town so, let's hop there." (Makoto)

"Yes, Waka-sama." (Mio)

"That will be a great help-ssu, Boss."

For some reason the two began a conversation about food, but it seems like internally, they both felt the same way as me, they gave an immediate answer to my proposal.

With a Mist Gate, we hop to the only town currently existing in Kaleneon.

The location is the second floor of the Adventurer Guild branch in Kaleneon.

When going to the town, we normally teleport there.

"Ah, are you new adventurers?"

"Idiot! They are from Kuzunoha Company! The representative Raidou-sama, his escort Mio-sama, and..."

The staff member stationed there mistook us for adventurers.

But the person on her side soon retorted to this.

This is the first time I see someone mistaking us, so maybe she is someone that hasn't been here for long.

But well, the staff member that corrected her was stuck in her words cause it seems like it is the first time she sees Lime.

“I am Lime Latte. I do miscellaneous jobs for Kuzunoha Company-ssu. I am a former adventurer so well, just be at ease around me.” (Lime)

“So you can become an employee of Kuzunoha Company even when you have the history of being an adventurer...”

“You, just shut up already.”

“Aw... , I-I am sorry~.”

The newbie staff member returns a reaction that’s off point towards the self-introduction of Lime.

It is not like the Kuzunoha Company doesn’t employ adventurers though.

Being chewed by her superior for a second time, she scratches her head as she apologizes to Lime.

“I have come to check the state of the town. Can you tell me where Eva and Ruria are?” (Makoto)

“At this time... I think both are at the hall. There have been unexpected snowfalls in succession, and adding up with the current situation where it is getting colder by the moment, they should be in the middle of a meeting.”

“As expected, this amount of snow is a lot.” (Makoto)

“It seems like removing the snow is taking quite the amount of personnel and expenses, by using magic, it is possible to settle the matter for the moment but... it is easy to see that in the future, this problem will be continuing, so they are thinking of a solution for the root of the problem.”

“You are pretty detailed.” (Makoto)

“Even if we are the Adventurer Guild, having the town enclosed by snow in the winter isn’t a desirable situation. If there’s a good countermeasure for this, we won’t be frugal in our cooperation. Of course, there’s already permission from the tops.”

“For this town -no, for the country, the Adventurer Guild is a big power. I look forward to working with you from now on.” (Makoto)

“Here as well.”

She lowers her head deeply.

Kusunoha Company is in charge of practically the whole supply of goods in this town, and we are being held up relatively high.

I have already gotten used to this treatment.

It seems like they are in the middle of a meeting, so I didn’t use thought transmission and look at the state of the town while heading for the specially big building that is used as the center for administration.

“The energy is still insufficient-ssu ne.” (Lime)

“In the first place, it is a mistake to compare it to Tsige and Rotsgard, Lime.” (Makoto)

“I know that, but with the Guild and the state of the town, I feel like there’s a variety of things that are lacking.” (Lime)

“Well, yeah.” (Makoto)

Even though it is not to the level of when we were walking through the walls of snow, even when we entered the town, there was still a certain pressure, or more like, a sense of enclosure.

As if the snow that is falling continuously in the town was piling up and silently cornering the whole town.

The environment is completely different after all.

It seems like the land Eva and Ruria had as their territory in the past didn’t have such deep snow.

This place in itself was made half because of our own circumstances after all.

It would be nice if we could be of help somehow.

“To begin with, there’s no soil to grow delicious things with how the town currently is-desu wa ne. Instead of calling it a newborn, it is more like on the verge of death-

desu wa.” (Mio)

Mio doesn’t have mercy.

“That’s saying too much-ssu, Nee-san. I concur with what you say though.” (Lime)

“Eva is doing her best though.” (Makoto)

Lime and I were of the same opinion as what Mio said at the latter half.

What Mio said about there being no soil to grow delicious things might be referring to the lack of energy.

“This is! Raidou-sama, Mio-sama. It’s great that you have come visit us.”

After walking for a while, the guard of the building confirmed our figures, and after fixing his posture, he welcomed us.

“I didn’t give any contact beforehand, but I have come here to see the faces of Eva and Ruria. Can I meet them?” (Makoto)

If it can’t be done immediately, I can just walk around town for a bit more.

Thinking about it in that way, I ask.

“...Right now, it might be important to have the opinion of someone that is not a resident, or so it seems. I will guide you immediately.”

He probably conversed with someone in thought transmission, the guard opened the path for us.

The one that is currently stationed here is... Ema or a friend of hers.

No... maybe a hyuman or a demi-human that they have selected.

We were guided by a Highland Orc that came from the inside, and the meeting room..... we pass by it and stand in front of the private room of Eva.

Weren’t they in the middle of a meeting?

Maybe it didn't go well.

Just me being here is probably enough to make one's stomach hurt.

"Come in."

When the Orc knocks, a voice comes from inside.

Eva's voice.

From the voice, I could perceive exhaustion.

"Long time no see, Eva. I heard that you are being quite troubled by this cold and snow." (Makoto)

Since coming to Kaleneon, Eva has been using formal speech with me even though she is older, which I don't like.

Before I got used to it, it felt incredibly uncomfortable, but now I think I am somehow able to talk normally.

"Raidou-sensei." (Eva)

Looking at Eva straight from the front, I could certainly tell that she was incredibly tired.

Things like make-up, her hair, and her attire; the parts that she would normally not be negligent about, I could tell that she was slowly growing negligent about it.

In my time at Japan, I wouldn't have been able to tell this at all.

This is one of the specialties that I learned when coming to this world. I don't know whether it will be useful or not though.

This is a standard ability that humans come equipped with though.

"Honestly... there's a lack of personnel. And the money... the money to move people... We are training people specialized snow removal magic, but as expected, we won't be able to deal with it promptly. It may be a taboo word but, because it is winter... it is a situation I feel like giving up in." (Eva)

“Hearing that, can I assume that the pioneering and cultivation of new land is not advancing?” (Makoto)

“Yeah. The fields that we have, have been plowed and crops are being cultivated, but we were unable to secure the planned scale.” (Eva)

“With this amount of snow, it can’t be helped.” (Makoto)

“I think... there’s plenty enough methods to deal with it. But the problem is that I am lacking in experience and knowledge. In my time as a noble, if I had learned of how to manage the territory from the nobles that possess territories in the north, the situation might have been different. Seriously, just what was my past self doing?” (Eva)

Stressing over that won’t help in any way.

Eva must be pretty tired out.

Seeing her muttering is kind of scary.

“Even for Ema and the others that were dispatched here, with this much snow, I don’t think it is a matter of experience. It is the first year, so in the beginning, I think it would be best to not be completely influenced by the plans and continue in a pace that is adequate.” (Makoto)

There’s still several years of leeway before we get involved with foreign countries after all.

It wouldn’t be good to hurry it.

“We can’t do that!!” (Eva)

“...Eh?” (Makoto)

It was an unexpected reaction.

Eva suddenly raised her tone.

“I am not at an age where I can waste year after year! You know just how important time is for Kaleneon right... Raidou-sensei? I am sorry for shouting.” (Eva)

“N-No, don’t mind it.” (Makoto)

It has become an atmosphere where I can’t say that since it is an unexpected situation, it should be okay to think up a countermeasure this year.

“Ema-san and the others have become a big help as well. They introduced a number of crops that generate heat, and even if it’s not all, there’s some crops that were in the land of Kaleneon in the past growing in the fields as well. The growth is fast, and the snow of the surroundings is being removed in an acceptable level, so it is become a priceless treasure.” (Eva)

It is the first time I hear of such a crop.

...No, from the crops that I was taught of the wasteland, Asora, and this world, there were no hot things.

If it becomes an ordinary occurrence when gathering them, it is obvious that I wouldn’t know huh.

I have practically no involvement in the farm work after all.

The amount of people that know the specialties of the crops that are in the middle of growing are few.

The most I know is that the crops of Asora require a lot of nutrients, and when these crops are grown outside of Asora, it becomes a situation that can’t be laughed at.

A crop that produces heat huh.

Must be a wasteland one.

“It is an amount of snow that would even make you lose the location of the fields after all. Ah, but if it just melts the snow, wouldn’t the earth get all soppy because of water?” (Makoto)

It is not like the snow will disappear.

It most likely only melts, so obviously, the melted snow becomes water.

Can it be used in the fields?

I feel like it would become a paddy field though.

“Regarding the water, we have a root crop that has good affinity to it, so there’s no problem. Of course, we are contemplating in creating a waterway to drain it to a river. Just that...” (Eva)

“Just that?” (Makoto)

“When the water flows through the waterway and gets slightly apart from the field, it ends up freezing. On top of that, the three rivers that are flowing around the surroundings of the town, are currently all frozen and can’t be used.” (Eva)

“...”

A river frozen over?

It is a word that I am not used to, so my thoughts stopped for a second there.

...No well, it is running water, so when it gets cold it does freeze huh.

The harbour of the demon race is practically on an unusable state from the end of fall to spring, that’s why they wanted to secure an ice-free port so much.

If the sea freezes, it is a given that rivers will freeze too.

“The bottom part seems like it is not frozen, so it is not like it can’t be used at all. By melting the snow, we can procure water for living. It is a fact that we will have to utilize unnecessary personnel and it is more trouble.” (Eva)

Eva places a hand on her forehead and makes a small sigh.

I see. So in the end, they are going around in circles.

The lack of personnel, and the snow and cold that is the main culprit of this.

If we are able to at least reduce the trouble it causes in the daily lives of the town, it would make it more comfortable.

Like for example...

“If there’s something that can be used as reference, I don’t mind if it’s about anything, I would like to hear it.” (Eva)

Oh, the moment I was thinking about saying my idea, she came out with convenient words.

“You are saying that if we reduce the trouble that the snow in the town and the fields is reduced, you will be able to put your hands in other matters, right?” (Makoto)

“Yes.”

“Then the irrigation canals that are being used in the town and fields, sewers, the barrels and vases used as water storages... how about changing the roof of the houses to make it produce light heat in order to make it so that it doesn’t freeze?” (Makoto)

Have the places where the snow piles up produce heat on their own, and with that, we melt the snow in one end, making it easier.

The footing will be consistently filled with water, but thinking about the amount of work it will take, I don’t think it can be put to practical use.

“That has been taking into account. We adopted that method by the proposal of the dwarfs, but we are way too lacking in production materials. And regarding the houses and waterways that have already been made, there would be the need of a large scale construction work, so it isn’t progressing as expected.” (Eva)

“Ah, so you have already tried that huh.” (Makoto)

“When Raidou-sensei had gone to do a business discussion with the demon race, you said that instead of having the waterways for drainage in hard to see places, it would be better to have them underground, right?” (Eva)

“I did say that.” (Makoto)

“At that time, the dwarfs had the idea. When it lowers to a set temperature, there’s a sedge used in ceramics that produces heat and doesn’t freeze. It is currently being implemented in the roofs and as a material for construction works. Just that the manufacturing can’t catch up, so it will most likely show its effectivity next year.” (Eva)

In other words, it won’t become a solution for the current situation.

And they have already thought of the years to come and begun preparing them.

I have underestimated them.

As expected of the Elder dwarfs.

I haven't brought many people here, but even with the low numbers, they are doing their very best.

Fuh~, I should think about the recruitment of dwarfs from Lorel, or I will feel bad for them.

Cause their environment itself is at a place with a relative amount of volcanoes.

...

Volcanoes?

Speaking of volcanoes, there's many ores... no not only that... the smell of sulfur... Oh!

Hot springs!

That's right, it is not about the dwarfs' living environment or the mineral resources.

This is it!

The memories I had of travelling with my family revived in an instant.

"Hot springs!" (Makoto)

I ended up abruptly raising my voice.

But it has come to me.

No, I remembered it.

"Hot springs? If I remember correctly, it is a local word of Lorel. Warm water that gushes forth, is what I think it meant..." (Eva)

It seems like Eva knew of hot springs, her words didn't carry certainty, but she still

said it.

That's not it.

Hot springs can't be defined with such cheap words.

You can enter them, at times, you can drink it as well.

The soul of Japanese that love bathing... but well, let's leave that aside for now.

"I honestly feel complicated in having it being defined as simple warm water, but it is that." (Makoto)

"What is it about that hot spring? Don't tell me, are you saying that hot springs can also come out from Kaleneon?" (Eva)

"There's plenty enough chance. But what I thought of is the method to use the hot springs." (Makoto)

"Ehm... hot springs are supposed to come out from locations with a pretty high temperature. And even in the times when Kaleneon was in good health, I hadn't heard of hot springs, so even if you suddenly speak about a usage for them..." (Eva)

Eva is bewildered.

"Hot springs come out even in cold places. In the place that I visited in the past, it was winter, and was used as an effective method to remove snow. Because it is water that is warm the whole year after all." (Makoto)

"...In other words, you are saying that that place is cold enough to have snow and be able to freeze, and yet, they have warm water, that is hot enough to let out steam, flowing all year long?" (Eva)

Oh, she is making an incredibly doubtful gaze.

But I don't think hot springs rely on the temperature of the area.

Is it not the same here?

Maybe I should check out the hot springs in Lorel just in case?

“That’s right. Well, I think that it will be fine to have warm water in places that are currently troubled with the freezing and the fallen snow. At the very least, it will decrease the trouble with personnel quite a lot, right?” (Makoto)

“True, that would be the case if it can actually be realized. The Adventurer Guild has a massive amount of snow removal requests and it has become hard to find requests in other matters.” (Eva)

“Places like roofs, I honestly can’t think of anything right now about it, but for main streets and the waterways utilized for irrigation, it will be dealt with, right?” (Makoto)

The more I think about it, the more useful it sounds.

Thanks, hot spring district I forgot the name of.

“In other words, Raidou-sensei is saying that we should look for hot springs in this state of affairs?” (Eva)

The expression of Eva who was sitting down in front of me was saying: ‘that is unreasonable’.

...Does she think I am a person that would say something unreasonable?

Why is it, I feel kind of depressed.

Something like looking for hot springs can be done by us, and with that as the onset, I think that the town will be able to move.

“No, we will be the ones doing it. Also, you have the construction work to look after, and looking at the situation of the town, it would be impossible for you. The point is that it is fine as long as there’s warm water, so in this moment of urgency, if we are able to endure the situation with this, it will be fine.” (Makoto)

“...Where are we going to find warm water at this time?” (Eva)

“I have a perfect plan for that. If you leave it to us, we will begin tomorrow or the day after. At a price.” (Makoto)

“If the Kuzunoha Company will move, our side’s weight will lower, so I will do something about the money, but... no, I understand. There’s still things I have to take

care of, so I will believe in Raidou-sensei. The talk of Sensei leading Kuzunoha Company to take over the country has become famous in the taverns.” (Eva)

“...As extra compensation, I would like you to reduce those talks about Kuzunoha Company and me.” (Makoto)

“It is something to be proud about though.” (Eva)

“My heart is not ready.” (Makoto)

If I leave it be, it might become a conversation that will persist as the founding of Kaleneon.

I am counting on you to rewrite that. Please fabricate a truth like: ‘the fallen noble daughters, Eva and Ruria, stood up against adversities and caused a miracle’.

Chapter 215

Failure and Success

Now then, let's begin.

The snow country's hot spring plan -no wait, the big step to revitalize Kaleneon.

Just in case, I went around the hot springs of Lorel and learned about the special traits of the places where hot springs might come out of.

If I search for similar places in Kaleneon and dig a hole there, hot springs should come out.

An unexpected guest is also cooperating, so it is just a matter of time before it succeeds.

"Fuhahaha, it is truly cold! It tenses the body, right Waka-sama?"

He is laughing it off, so I don't know how cold he actually feels.

Special guest number 1, Neptune Serwhale-san was lively, even within the blizzard.

It seems like he has had experience in the north sea, so this cold should be nothing for him.

Is what I thought but...

"Impossible. This cold is simply impossible. I can't move anymore; I can't feel anything. I am dying~uuh~."

In contrast to Serwhale-san that is practically naked, there's one girl that is wrapped up in layers of clothing and yet, is sitting down and trembling heavily.

This one here supposedly lived in quite the northern parts of this place though.

"Levi, you are exaggerating. In the first place, you guys live in the sea in winter, so the cold in the land shouldn't be such a big deal, right?" (Makoto)

If normal people were to jump into the sea in winter, their bodies wouldn't be able to stand it.

And she is living in a place like that, so her feeling cold in land looked strange to me.

“Waka-sama, excuse me for interjecting, but this place is quite cold. On top of that, the wind here is also strong. I think it would be harsh for most of the sea races.” (Serwhale)

Serwhale-san does a follow-up for Levi.

Is that true?

I look at Levi once again, and as if denying my words completely, she nods her head up and down.

Eh?

“Is that so? I thought that if the sea race lives in the north, they would be fine with the cold. And when I said there would be somewhat strong mamonos, Levi-san, you were the one who said that you wanted to come.” (Makoto)

When the talk about hot springs came out, I went to do a preview in Lorel, and after that, I returned to Asora where I coincidentally met up with the Neptunes and the other sea races who had come to the town, and from there, it ended up with the talk about hot springs.

At that time, Serwhale-san said that there's a place where the temperature is increased because of things like the eruptions of submarine volcanoes, and so, they ended up accompanying me to Kaleneon.

He said that within the Neptunes, there's people that 'bath' in the warmed waters.

Bathing when already inside water, I don't understand that sensation.

It seemed like the battle-junky Scylla, Levi, was interested in the mamonos at the blizzard regions, so she came with us, but... Levi, who was the most vigorous one when we were leaving from Asora, was now the most weakened one. The reason being that it is cold.

“This is impossible~. Fighting in a place like this is suicidal. I want to go back. I

seriously want to go home, Waka-sama~." (Levi)

She is a goner.

I return Levi, who was trembling inside her blanket, to Asora.

Hm, I have found an unexpected weak point.

"If I was lacking a bit more training, I might have turned out that way too. If there's a fight in the northern lands, it might become fatal. I have earned a nice experience."
(Serwhale)

Serwhale-san doesn't seem like he wants to return.

Actually, he looks fine.

"Then, let's go." (Makoto)

Resuming our search for hotspots, I speak out.

But Serwhale-san looks at me and nods as if in admiration.

"...Ehm, is there something wrong?" (Makoto)

"No, I was just impressed. As expected of our master, is what I thought. Even in cold of this level, you are able to move like normal." (Serwhale)

"Serwhale-san as well, you are totally different from Levi." (Makoto)

"Me? By nature, we people that live in the sea have the ability to adjust our temperature. But Waka-sama is different. Even though you should be unable to live underwater, you can act in water like normal, and in land, no matter if it is hot or cold, you are able to advance without caring about it. On top of that, if the opponent is in the sky, you are able to reach all the way up there. You are already unrivaled; able to accommodate to any terrain." (Serwhale)

Land, sea, and air; I have already reached S class when dealing with those.

No wait, that's not it.

When talking about terrain adaptability, I feel like I am being treated as a hyuman-shaped weapon.

“I am forcing myself by using magic after all.” (Makoto)

“If it’s Waka-sama, you would most likely be able to move freely in the starry sky sea as well. For us Neptunes, there’s a legend that says that when you continue to train yourself, you will become a hero that can even adapt to the starry sky sea.” (Serwhale)

Serwhale-san retorted to me with a joking tone mixed in it.

Serwhale-san, what a scary person.

“Ahaha, but I was also surprised. To think that a race of the sea would be weak against cold.” (Makoto)

While climbing a mountain in Kaleneon which I have gone to for a decent amount of times, we do idle talk.

It is not a mountain of incredible height, but it is a volcano.

It resembles the underground space I saw in the Lorel hot springs with the magma and the arrangement of the water vein, so I think I can expect quite a bit from it.

“Fumu... It is not only in cold. The races that live in water are weak to the changes in temperature by foundation.” (Serwhale)

“Is that so?” (Makoto)

“Even if we talk about the sea of winter, it is more normal that the water temperature is higher than that of the outside. Just like how people like to play in the sea and rivers at summer, the water is colder than the outside. The temperature change of the water is more stable, and the difference in high and lows is not that big.” (Serwhale)

“...That’s true.” (Makoto)

Putting an example, Serwhale-san makes it easier to understand.

I feel like instead of going into a detailed explanation, he is putting it all together in a way that it can be understood as a whole.

“It is the same with the frozen river you saw just now. Below it, there’s water flowing. The surface is the part of the water that has touched the air and froze, but in the bottom part, the fish and living beings are still continuing with their lifestyle. Of course, it is warmer than the place we are walking in right now.” (Serwhale)

“No matter if you live in the seas of the north, it doesn’t mean that you have adapted to the cold of the north’s land huh. You are saying that the temperature inside the water is easier to live in?” (Makoto)

“Yes. There’s a thick cover of ice on the river; the mountains will be dyed in pure white, and the blizzard will not stop. In that kind of place, it is not an environment that people living underwater would be able to endure. And in reality, the sea races that are participating in the Asora ranking are all suffering by the fire and ice magic.” (Serwhale)

Inside the water huh.

I have learned something new.

“Thanks for the lesson. I was thinking lightly of it, thinking that you guys would be fine since you live inside the water. Ah, it should be around here. Serwhale-san, how is it?” (Makoto)

“Being able to advance without getting lost within this field of vision, as expected of Waka-sama. Please wait for a bit. Hm, it is certainly true that I feel the slight presence of a bath from below here.” (Serwhale)

It is a bit sad that for Neptunes, hot springs equal baths, but I was a bit happy knowing that there’s a race that knows of its existence.

It seems like the other sea races found it dangerous to get close to it, so there’s a lot of races that don’t know of submarine volcanoes and hot springs.

The races living at the shore were also in a similar situation.

The eldwas may have known of it, but it seems like they didn’t think of taking a bath in it.

Anyways, I have received the confirmation of Serwhale-san.

Now there's only the digging left.

"Now then, let's try digging. Ah, a guest." (Makoto)

"Good grief. If Levi had endured for a bit more... no, looking at that state of hers, I don't think she would have been able to move at all." (Serwhale)

Serwhale-san makes a bitter smile.

And then, he slowly takes his stance.

He points forward his trident that surpasses his height.

The numbers are three.

The hot spring challenge is waiting for me, so I don't mind dealing with them myself.

But even if I say that, they are not enemies I have to bring out Azusa to deal with.

It seems like they are just simple mamonos living in this mountain.

It should be fine with Brid.

"Waka-sama, please leave it to me." (Serwhale)

Maybe Serwhale-san noticed my movements, he told me not to act.

Well, this person doesn't seem like he would lose, so I can tell that it would be fine.

When I cancel my Brid, he thanked me.

Can't be helped. Let's just do the preparations for digging.

I am simply taking out the tools of the Elder Dwarfs though.

"If you are going to camouflage, do it in a harder to perceive way!" (Serwhale)

The white beast that was poking out its head from the snow and camouflaged in it, was turned to shreds.

Instead of camouflage, it felt like its body had melded with the snow, but... well, for him, something like this is a small deal.

Blue blood and pieces of meat are scattered around.

A headbutt huh.

Even though he has no horn on his head, that headbutt had impressive power.

There's nothing left of that mamono's original form.

Next, Serwhale-san thrusts his spear to the right.

He said that the field of vision was bad, and yet, he has a perfect grasp of his opponent's location.

The spear of Serwhale-san moved as if it was gravitating towards the bird-like mamono that had made a nosedive from the sky.

Being skewered from head to torso, the bird of notable size explodes from the inside and this one also didn't maintain its original form.

Truly simple and strong.

There's one who ignored him and plunged at me.

It is fast.

This way of moving, a snake?

"How pretentious!" (Serwhale)

But the movements of the snake stopped.

Ah, the place that seems to be its tail has been pierced by the spear.

And then, I think I heard something resembling a tremor, and...

At the side of the snake, there's a whale.

“Hah!!”

His fist pulverizes the head of the wriggling snake.

Serwhale-san, even if you left your spear behind, it would have still been fine.

“Splendid job.” (Makoto)

“No, as expected, when it comes to land and on top of that being cold, my movements and senses get duller. I will try even harder in my training.” (Serwhale)

That’s considered duller?

It was a total smashing though.

The mamonos around this area are supposed to be relatively strong, but it seems they were no enemies in the face of a Neptune.

“I see. Then I will be digging so I am counting on you to keep an eye o-ooout?!” (Makoto)

A spiralling spear.

Well, only the pointed part of the spear is a drill though.

I used the spear that was given to me, set it properly right down, and the instant I pour magic power into it... it suddenly began spinning!

No well, I can understand that it spins, since I could tell that from its shape, but I thought it would only be the drill part that would be spinning!

Even the handle part was spinning, moreover, it is spinning with such speed that even I am spinning!!

“Waka-sama?!” (Serwhale)

“I am fiiineee~~~ probably!” (Makoto)

I just have to let go of it.

I could understand that in my head, I could understand, but because of the centrifugal force, it felt like I was being pulled from the outside, and my body reflexively gripped the handle harder.

I can't explain the reason for my reflexive movement.

For some reason, I was still holding it.

Also, as long as the drill part is not the only part that is spinning, I thought for a second that if we left it to brute force when trying to stop it, it might break.

"U-Uwaa!"

The drill that has wedged into the ground was scattering earth in a grand manner while increasing its speed and going deeper underground.

The voice of Serwhale-san is already far and I can't hear it.

I use the Magic Armor to block the earth and stones that were spouting forth as the spinning continues to increase in speed and digs underground at lightning speed.

Aside from my eyes spinning around, there's no real problem, but as expected, I can't just advance underground until the end of times.

I steel myself and release my hands from the handle.

The spear that was spinning for a while more, had stopped moving by the time I recovered my balance. It settled down, stuck into the ground.

It was an incredible attraction.

For now, I try checking upwards.

"I have dug pretty far~. If it doesn't work after digging so much, this place is a failure huh." (Makoto)

It had surpassed the planned profundity by a lot.

But when I confirmed with Sakai, I was supposed to have plunged onto the hot spring before reaching this depth though.

“Could it be, I missed the mark? It is possible. I didn’t know what was happening in the middle of that, so it is possible that the trajectory shifted at some point in time.”
(Makoto)

Within the damp and humid atmosphere, I imagine a lot of scenarios.

Of course, I was also determined in having them remodel this spear so it only spins at the tip.

“For now let’s get out of here. If I make some footholds, I should be able to jump out... Wait, humid atmosphere? Damp?” (Makoto)

Ah.

As I was looking up, I suddenly realized.

That this place is actually the correct one, but me being here is pretty bad.

As if confirming me this, the place where I was looking up at, the left side of the earth wall swelled up in an unnatural manner.

Right after, it crumbled.

A massive amount of water -no, boiling water, ended up falling right down at me.

“That was dangerous. It looks like it has quite the high temperature. Seems like it would be hard to enter this water in its current state. Seriously, it is great that I have this Magic Armor.” (Makoto)

The seething boiling water began to fill up the place.

I let my body be pushed by the boiling water, and I float along with it.

If I had been bathed in it with my flesh, I would have received burns, or more like, it would have been a matter of life and death. While feeling indebtedness to my own power, I felt relieved that the first step has been successful.

I jump out one step before the water, and land safely.

“...To think that... you would dig it out at your first try... I am filled in awe. So even in

places like this, baths can come out. Welcome back, Waka-sama.” (Serwhale)

“That’s not a bath, it is a hot spring. It seems it was a place with more hot water than I thought. It might be hard to make a path.” (Makoto)

“If you are not in a hurry, you can let it accumulate over there. Since the stream is far away from the town, it should be fine to just leave it as it is. It doesn’t confluence with the rivers of the surroundings after all.” (Serwhale)

“I see. You have made a place to let it accumulate. Thank you.” (Makoto)

When I check, I could see that there’s a bowl-shaped place below.

The hot water was beginning to flow into it.

“Waka-sama was digging, so I thought that it would be good to be ready for it just in case. Fortunately, it was a soft rocky area, so it only needed a few pokes.” (Serwhale)

Did he use his fists, or maybe his head?

He spoke in a way that didn’t feel as if he used his spear, but it scared me to confirm it.

As I thought, Serwhale-san has no need for a spear.

It is quite a few distance away from the town, but I have obtained the hot spring.

The construction related work for this can be done later, so in the future, this can be dubbed as hot spring number 1 of Kaleneon.

And so now, about the town...

Within the blizzard that continues as always, I call the Mist Gate to teleport to the town while I thought of a way to melt the snow of the town with the warm water.



Outskirts of Kaleneon.

In the snow field that at a glance looks like there’s nothing, there’s Serwhale-san, a number of Eldwas, Eva, and me.

Ruria caught a cold huh.

How to say this, I lately have been having bad timings and have not been able to meet with Ruria that much.

Shiki and Mio have been talking quite a bit about her though.

This time there's no real need to force her to come, so I just entrusted the medicine to Eva-san.

"Uhm, what did you say just now?"

"Like I said, I have obtained a prospect hot spring. The construction work can't be done immediately, but for now I have dug it up, so there's boiling water gushing out from the mountain." (Makoto)

"Uhm, you climbed a mountain that has nonstop blizzards and dug up a hole?"

"That's right. Eva, you were the one who said it was fine to do whatever I wanted in that place since there's no one living there yet and it is far from the town too, right?" (Makoto)

"That's true, but to go digging holes in a place where the mamonos have not been dealt with at all, and finish the job at that same day. That's just..." (Eva)

"The mamonos are not stupid, Eva-dono. Most of the fellows there understood their lack of ability and curled their tails. There were a few who attacked us, maybe because they were hungry or because they were stupid, but there were no problems." (Serwhale)

Serwhale-san responded to Eva.

The two of them have already introduced themselves.

Eva-san is already okay with whatever comes out from the Kuzunoha Company, so she simply accepted Serwhale-san with sunken eyes.

As expected, you would imagine whales to be bigger than this, right?

"That's... Serwhale-san did it?" (Eva)

“It was something that even I was plenty enough to deal with.” (Serwhale)

Serwhale-san nods and affirms it.

The dwarfs that were at the side seem to be in admiration as well.

“That’s impressive-ja. In that blizzard, the field of view is bad and the mamonos are in an advantage after all. From what I have heard, there’s a Snow Lion that melds in the snow and nullifies physical attacks; Icicle Flams that attack you with precision; and there’s also the Cyclop Serpent that swims in the snow without creating any sound. Those are dangerous mamonos that live in the mountains of this area. It seems like you were able to proceed without encountering them, but in the volcano that is filled with difficulties, that’s quite impressive.”

“If you encounter those for the first time, it just ends up in checkmate after all. But well, you are truly worthy of being at the side of Waka-sama.”

“I am grateful. It must be thanks to this spear that I have received from your comrades. It was a fortune that we didn’t encounter such terrifying enemies.” (Serwhale)

...I think we literally encountered those three.

This is just a supposition, but I think that those guys didn’t have worthy opponents, so they felt like they were the kings around these parts and attacked us who were in their territory.

I did catch their figures with Sakai and they fit the description.

Ah, so the one that was turned to minces first was the lion that attacked us in the demon race territory?

It is certainly true that at that time its body seemed to be made out of snow and it felt like it was nullifying the attacks of the weapons.

Even when it looked like it was defeated, it soon stood back up and attacked again after all.

In front of Serwhale-san, it was instant death huh.

I give out a prayer to the three kings(maybe) of that mountain.

The dwarfs and Serwhale-san were talking about topics of weapons and fighting, and were getting fired up.

“And so, I will try to draw the hot spring to the town by this winter. And in the meantime...” (Makoto)

“Yes.”

“This place is a reservoir that has been frozen and can’t be used, right?” (Makoto)

I point out at the snow field that is in front of me.

Eva nods.

“Since it is slightly distanced from the town, the maintenance has been delayed too. It is currently unavailable for us.” (Eva)

“Then that’s perfect. For now, I will be melting it.” (Makoto)

I create a number of fireballs and throw them.

Obviously, the snow and ice melts and the snow field returned to being a pond.

Hmph~, its size is around this much huh.

It is appropriate to use as experiment.

“If Waka-sama were to come here everyday, the snow problem would be resolved though. If you were to come five to six times a day to melt the snow in the surroundings, it would be perfect.”

That would be harsh.

Wouldn’t it take around 30 minutes each time?

“If not for Raidou-sensei, we would need several magicians and adventurers and it would take around half a day; something that you have accomplished in just a couple seconds. Fuh~.” (Eva)

That last sigh was heartrending, Eva.

Now then, let's try the second step.

The hot spring digging went well, so I hope this one goes well too.

I take out one crimson ring from my pocket.

A scrapped Draupnir that is being managed by the Elder Dwarfs.

Lately, the amount of times it turns completely red in a day's time has increased so much that they have accumulated quite a bit.

It seems like Ema has thought of an incredible way to dispose of them, but if this matter goes as I want it to, I plan on utilizing it as one of the methods to dispose of them.

"That is... a Draupnir."

The dwarf looks in surprise at the ring with his brows furrowed.

It would be a different case if it were white, but a red one is not something that one would normally walk around with.

Eva-san was watching over the situation with hard to understand feelings, and Serwhale-san was looking with interest.

I have the Draupnir in my hand float slightly upwards, and on top of that, I add my magic power into the stored up magic power inside of it to set it up.

I make it so that the ring itself has a simple magic constantly activated.

The outward appearance of the ring that looks as if it was made by the iron of smelting furnaces, was clad in a vivid red.

Yup yup.

With this, it probably can be used as a heat generating tool.

"Well then, just in case, prepare something to defend yourselves with. I think it will be fine though. I will cover Eva; Serwhale-san, I leave the dwarfs to you." (Makoto)

“...Understood.” (Serwhale)

For some reason, Serwhale-san makes a serious expression as he has the dwarfs step back and takes a formation where he is at the front of them.

I guard Eva-san by enclosing her in the arm of my Magic Armor.

Now then...

“Here I go~~~” (Makoto)

“?!!!”

The tension of Serwhale-san increases in an instant.

Why?

While thinking it was strange, I release the magma colored ring to the pond which I thought needed at least this much heat since it is in a place of constant cold.

?!

The ring that left my hand, for some reason, had increased in output by a lot and shone in an instant?!

The moment that ring touched the water surface, it made an incredible sound.

I don't know what was happening, but anyways, it was an incredible sound.

My vision had turned pure white, and I couldn't tell right from left.

This is strange.

I estimated the water to boil.

I even thought that maybe it would splash around as well.

But the result was clearly different from what I imagined.

“Just what is...” (Makoto)

After a while, silence returns to the surroundings.

Checking that Eva-san, the dwarfs, and Serwhale-san were okay, I slowly look at the pond.

Because of the vapour that coursed through the surroundings like a hot gale, the snow had completely melted and the light brown ground was exposed.

Speaking of the reservoir... the outer circumference had been shaved off in a pretty forceful manner, and the water inside was gone.

And the ground at that place was dyed in deep red.

It felt like lava.

Oh?

That ring, did I enhance it way too much?

Leaving aside the joking, did I go too far even when it was going to be used for winter?

I don't know the reason for the explosion, but because of it, the water was all blown up and the ring was fallen there.

It seems like it wasn't blown into pieces even when it exploded.

And so, the heat that it emitted has melted the ground huh.

I can tell that the ring is floating at the surface of the lava, but...

When taking into account the sudden change in state, it feels kind of unstable.

“ ... ”

I was worried about Eva who's the one with the lowest fighting power here, and I once again look at her.

As expected of the person that is in charge of a country, she is a firm one.

Her mouth was a straight line, and her face didn't show surprise.

“It wasn’t an experiment that was supposed to explode though~ Hahaha.” (Makoto)

“...”

I tried to laugh away this complicated atmosphere, but there was no reaction.

This is bad. Did I anger her?

“At any rate, what was that just now?” (Makoto)

“...It is a pretty natural occurrence when throwing a mass of high heated metal to a water surface, Waka-sama.” (Serwhale)

I was attacked by common sense again huh.

There was also the vegetable that emitted heat, that’s just unreasonable.

Serwhale-san answers my question that wasn’t directed at anyone in particular, with a slightly tense expression.

...So he was able to predict it would end this way, and that’s why he was nervous huh.

“I-Is that so? So you were able to predict it.” (Makoto)

“In the middle of it, it was controlled to a certain extent, so I thought it would be okay, but... it was good that I was mentally prepared for it.” (Serwhale)

So when it was in my hands, it was still in a state where it could go well?

Tentatively speaking, I wanted that ring to emit heat moderately until its magic power ran out, and change the water that flows in this pond into hot water.

And with the already existing waterways, it would provide warm water in this winter, but... it has ended in a splendid failure.

It actually created great damage by destroying one reservoir.

Let’s fix this as we work on the hot spring project.

“Eva, I’m sorry. As you can see, it was a failure. I will find a way to fix it, and I will ask

about countermeasures for the cold and the snow, so..." (Makoto)

"..."

"...Eva?" (Makoto)

Her state is strange.

Or more like, her eyes have not moved for a while now.

"Excuse me."

A dwarf approaches Eva and rudely pokes her face with the tip of his hammer.

Even if your height is lacking, doing that to a woman is just rude.

Eva would get angry as well.

But not only did she not get angry, she didn't show any sort of reaction.

Eh?

"It seems she lost consciousness from that explosion just now. It was an explosion that astonished even us, so it can't be helped."

Let's do something about Kaleneon.

Bringing her all the way here and making her faint from an explosion, only to deteriorate the situation; that just makes me feel way too bad.

It would be good to ask Zef how to manage a northern land when I meet with him.

It seems like the demon race didn't develop Kaleneon properly, but they were at least able to maintain it as a fortress.

Looking at the fainted Eva who was looking straight to the front, I seriously thought of this.

Chapter 216

I heard from a whale

I was able to get the meeting with Zef at the night of this same day.

I apologized to Eva who had regained consciousness, and since I had the chance, I also visited Ruria.

Before heading back to Asora, I contacted Zef via Rona, and it turned into meeting him tonight.

What a flexible schedule this king has.

Since it was sudden and they have a variety of matters at hand, they couldn't throw a warm reception, but I don't wish for something like that in the first place.

I am the one who requested it, so I fully intended to go to their capital myself.

But they said something about the preparations of welcoming blah-blah-blah, and I felt like they dodged the topic when they refused. In the end, we are going to be meeting at the place where I met with Rona and Io the time when I went to visit the demon race territory.

Why is it. Even though I said that I would arrive at the promised time if they just wait. Maybe they didn't trust me?

Is that the reason why they went through the trouble of designating a meeting point that is close to our location?

Zef is the Demon Lord, and yet, the moment I asked him to make a moment where I can meet with him, not only did say he would come meet me in person, it was even in the same day I asked him, which makes me think I am not being treated badly.

I think that way, but...

Oh well, worrying about it won't progress anything.

Anyways, if there's useful information for Kaleneon, I want to know, and it is also true that I want to try throwing him the question that I had in Limia.

"Waka, I heard of it!"

"Tomoe huh. I heard that you have been shut in with Shiki when you find the time. Just what are you doing?" (Makoto)

Lately, I have only seen Tomoe in meal times, but she has now come to where I am.

Right now, I am in the Elder Dwarf workshop to tell them about the remodelling of the drill spear.

That she has come all the way here to talk to me must mean that the two have reached some sort of result, or maybe they have thought of something that is not concrete yet?

I don't want to think it is the case, but there's the chance that something bad has happened.

The chances of it being a good happening is... none.

"Oh, I have gratefully read the memories of the archives of Waterfall. Later, please give me a report... wait, right now that doesn't matter, Waka!" (Tomoe)

"Yeah..." (Makoto)

It doesn't matter?

Even though you were browsing it pretty happily...

"That Serwhale said that Waka had gone to the snow mountains of Kaleneon and dug up a hot spring!" (Tomoe)

"Y-Yeah, I did. It can be used as a countermeasure for the winter, and I thought that it can be used as a selling point as well." (Makoto)

"Hot springs, taking a bath, restorative properties! HOT SPRINGS!" (Tomoe)

"You are rebounding Tomoe." (Makoto)

“I want to take my time and soak in it.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe suddenly falls into a tranquil tone.

But something was still welling up from her whole body.

“I understand how you feel. But first we have to confirm the components of it to see if it is a hot spring that we can enter just like that, and that’s after we finish the construction work of it. Well, I think we can manage something by spring. When it is currently in its source, it has too high of a temperature to bathe in, so there’s the need to dilute it as well. In that case, it might be easier to draw the water all the way to the river. At any rate, it is impossible to use it currently.” (Makoto)

“If it’s fresh water, it is fine if it’s warm. It is not on the point of boiling. I can manage.” (Tomoe)

“Won’t do. Also, even if we make a hot spring like that in a hurry, the only ones who would be able to use it are people like you.” (Makoto)

“Uh~, is that a no?” (Tomoe)

“I’m telling you to wait. If you want one that much, why don’t you go find one in the volcanoes of Asora. If you do that, it would be easy to gather the people and work on it.” (Makoto)

“...I have already searched the volcanoes, but I just can’t find a good one, Waka. When I open a hole in a place that looks like it might work, the most that comes out is ores.” (Tomoe)

To think that she has already tried looking for one.

As expected of Tomoe.

It is impressive that she already had a grasp of the existence of hot springs, but that she went into action is also impressive.

But is it that difficult?

I did it on the first try though.

Maybe there's no hot springs in Asora?

Just in case, I should try asking the surroundings.

Serwhale-san and the Neptunes seem to know of the real deal, so there might be something similar to it in the bottom of the ocean.

If we find one, we can just remove the water from the surroundings and create a hot spring-like place at the bottom of the ocean.

...The problem is if Tomoe can accept that though.

I can also try asking the bears and the wolves to see what they have to say.

Can't throw the possibility that one has already come out.

In my original world, there were animals like deers and monkeys entering the hot springs after all.

"You wanted to enter a hot spring so much that you came all the way here?" (Makoto)

"Please! And then, I will bring a warmed sake and gaze at the snow as I drink! That kind of first experience in a hot spring would be extreme bliss for me! Knowing that Kaleneon is currently covered in snow, and there's already a hot spring on top of that, I... I am already...!!" (Tomoe)

Tomoe writhes as if suffering from withdrawal symptoms.

Lately, Tomoe has been in a serious and languid mood, but... Tomoe is still Tomoe huh.

These days she has been hooked on *Certain kill monk*, so it must have made her have even more interested in hot springs.

In those times when I read all that stuff about the healing properties of hot springs, I was the same. Looking at Tomoe, I am beginning to crave entering one as well.

Postponing the plan of putting the hot spring to practical use, we should first investigate if it has the components of a hot spring and learn if it's okay to bathe in it. If that's the case, let's make a bathtub for it.

“Well then Tomoe, go check if the properties of the hot spring are ideal. If it can be used, gather the people that can be mobilized and create a bathtub of stones or something to begin with. However! The people that participate in it will have to participate in the public works related to the hot springs of Kaleneon as well, no questions asked. Also, make sure not to force yourself.” (Makoto)

“!! Of course! We have been in a stalemate on our side, so this is a convenient happening!” (Tomoe)

“...Is that related to what you said a moment ago about a report?” (Makoto)

“Yes. I spoke with Shiki as well, but it has reached a point where we will need the permission and cooperation of Waka in order to proceed. Well then, wait for me, hot springs!” (Tomoe)

Just like how Tomoe entered, she ran towards the door.

She is boisterous, but when Tomoe has those eyes, she is reliable, so it helps me out a lot.

But that report related thing seems to be troublesome enough to leave for later huh...

“Oh, Waka.” (Tomoe)

Is what I was thinking when Tomoe places a hand on the doorknob and turned to look back.

“What?” (Makoto)

“Is this Waka’s permission, order, or request?” (Tomoe)

“...Well, I don’t intend to push you guys, so a request.” (Makoto)

“It’s been awhile since we have received a request from Waka. The goal is: finish in two days-ja!” (Tomoe)

This time Tomoe actually left.

When she said the goal is two days, did she mean making the hot spring?

That's not it, right?

Because I asked her to check it out just now, and it is not like Asora has so much free time.

The first town that is close to my house is still continuing its construction, and the port town is still in the middle of soil preparation.

That mountain has bad visibility as well, so the work will be rough.

She probably really said that with the intentions of finishing in two days.

“Waka-sama! I have heard of it!!”

What's this feeling of deja vu?

There's a slight difference in the voice and words, but it is practically a replay of just now.

“Ema?” (Makoto)

This is again an unexpected one.

When I meet with her, it is mostly in moments when we have already planned beforehand.

From my part, I normally just go talk to her when I find the time to, but when she comes to me, she properly makes an appointment first.

It is extremely rare of her to come rushing so suddenly in this manner.

Moreover, all the way to the workshop of the dwarfs.

...Is it an incident this time around?

“Ema, what's wrong?” (Makoto)

“I heard from Serwhale-san!” (Ema)

...Even Ema with the hot springs?

Hot springs are super popular huh.

There should be one in Asora somewhere, so maybe I should try searching seriously for one?

“About the hot springs? If it’s about that, I have already given permission to Tomoe, so you can just cooperate with her and...” (Makoto)

“I heard you used a Draupnir?!” (Ema)

“Eh? Dra...?” (Makoto)

Upnir?

Ah, I was mistaken, it wasn’t about the hot springs.

“I heard that you threw it into a reservoir.” (Ema)

Ema has a serious face.

It seems it was the wrong topic.

“Ah, about that. It is true that I did throw it. It splendidly blew up and it was a big failure. I messed up that one.” (Makoto)

“I heard you tried to use that ring to heat the water of the pond?” (Ema)

“Yeah. I tried it thinking that it could be used to automatically heat things up in the winter.” (Makoto)

To think that it would turn out that way.

The pond was gone and maybe because of the waves of the explosion, a mass of hot gale collided onto us.

Thanks to that, the snow on the surroundings melted and the ground was a mess.

When that freezes over, it will be a problem again. I truly did something bad.

“I reported it before, but me and a number of others have been thinking about a way

to utilize the scrapped Draupnirs that have Waka-sama's magic power stored. But the utilization of the ring is hard and just trying to dispose of them is a chore, and there's also danger to it." (Ema)

Right right, I remember now.

Ema was thinking of a method to utilize them aside from simply disposing of them.

If there's a mistake in the disposal process, there's times when it might turn dangerous, so the disposal of Draupnirs is difficult.

From what she has thought, it seems like she plans on using them for things like the town's lighting, to power the workshops, and to maintain the barriers in the several points.

"I should have asked for confirmation before using it. I tested it with one just in case and it didn't go out of control, so I got overconfident. I should have tested it not only in my hand, but by throwing it inside of water as well." (Makoto)

"We are talking of Waka-sama, so I don't think you were hurt, but I did get slightly worried there. The Draupnirs are troublesome rings that are incredibly hard to deal with. Please be careful." (Ema)

"As I thought, even the way of dealing with it is special. It is certainly true that it was strangely unstable." (Makoto)

"It goes well until the point of giving it a function. The problem is that when it surpasses a certain point in power, the moment it leaves the hand of the person doing the process..." (Ema)

"It goes out of control in an instant." (Makoto)

Seriously, what a ring, even if I do say so myself.

"If it's on the level of having it in hand and utilizing when it is still there, it's incredibly useful. But once it reaches the dangerous point, the element and function it is given is transformed into output power in an instant, and just like that, after repeating the process of increasing its own power, it surpasses the limit it can take and explodes." (Ema)

H-How picky.

I see.

When I made it a heating tool, the moment it left my hand, it turned unstable and increased in power instantly.

It feels like a baby that begins to cry the moment it leaves your arms.

Hm?

Hm hm?

Something is bothering me here.

“Wait Ema, wait for a moment please. When I did it, the ring didn’t break, you know?”
(Makoto)

Right.

“That’s it! That’s why I rushed all the way here!” (Ema)

Ah, so that’s the reason of the strange action of Ema.

What I did was bad, but it was also an irregular result.

“Please tell me about that moment in detail!” (Ema)

“Is it okay if I am present for this as well, Waka-sama?”

“Elder-san?” (Makoto)

“Currently, we have been cooperating with Ema-dono and finally found one way to utilize the ring of Waka-sama. But if we can hear in detail about what Waka-sama has experienced, we might be able to find a future for the utilization of it. Well, it is simply the instinct of an old craftsman though.” (Elder)

“...By the way, what is this use you found?” (Makoto)

“It would be best to demonstrate it. Hey.” (Elder)

Taking the opportunity when Ema makes her request, the Elder joins the conversation.

It is in the matter of the uses for my rings, so I was interested in what they have accomplished and when I asked the Elder, he called someone at the deep parts of the workshop.

The voice of the Elder wasn't that high, and yet, a response with good energy soon came.

Then, one dwarf showed up.

When he notices me and Ema, he lowers his head deeply.

"Bring that." (Elder)

"Understood!"

The dwarf who went inside again, returned to where we were with some sort of package.

"Show it." (Elder)

"Yes!"

He takes the cloth off the package, and what came out of it was a spear.

But even if I say spear, it is not the drill spear.

It is a strange spear.

The bladed part looks like the lances that are used in horseback, a cone-shaped one.

Even so, the handle is long.

The lower part of the cone is shaped like a bowl, and as if protecting it, there's transparent crystal-looking spherical part attached to it, and from there, the handle is adhered to it.

The edge is thin, and if it were a normal spear, it would be like the throwing type, a javelin, but... what is this?

“I have named it *Bakusou*. I plan on distributing it to the Winged-kin.” (Elder)

“Bakusou...” (Makoto)

“I think you can see the transparent spherical part.” (Elder)

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

“There, we will set the Draupnir that was planned to be disposed.” (Elder)

“I see.”

“And after that, you simply throw it. When the lance part detects impact of a certain degree, the ring will activate and create an explosion.”

So that’s why it is called Bakusou. *<Because bakuhatsu equals explosion.>*

I see, if it is for the use of weapons, explosions are welcomed.

It is also the most simple of directions.

I think that reaching the level of practical use was quite difficult though.

“When Waka-sama said that you used the rings to increase the power of Brid, this is something that was worked on by the dwarfs as an armament to put this principle into use.” (Ema)

Ema gives a supplemental explanation.

It is certainly true that I combined it with Brid and increased its destructive power.

It is difficult to use as a weapon, but if we use it by throwing the unstable ring, it is pretty simple to understand.

“If there’s no battle, it can’t be used, but in a battlefield, one attack can dispose of one ring.” (Ema)

We were planning on disposing them from the beginning, so it is fine to just use it with the intentions of throwing it away as well.

It kinda sounds... reasonable.

If Ema says it this way, it must mean that from the beginning, she saw worth in them and was thinking about a way to utilize them.

“But...” (Ema)

Ema continues.

“The Draupnir that Waka-sama threw into the pond seems to be stable even within the lava. I want to see the real thing in person. If a method to restrain the ring from going out of control is born with the information of the circumstances and what Waka-sama did...” (Ema)

“It would be possible to utilize it for the livelihood that we were originally planning to use it for. If that happens, the Draupnir will turn from a troublesome article into an incredible resource. It would be a dream come true.” (Elder)

And then, progress will be made for the tool that will be able to deal with them.

I am the main culprit for the production of these rings, so this is quite the pleasant talk.

There’s no way I won’t cooperate.

“It would be nice if I am of help though...” (Makoto)

Saying so, I spoke to the two about my big failure in a truly detailed manner.

Chapter 217

A clandestine meeting with just the two

Below the starry sky that had the strong presence of the moon and the stars, Zef and I had met alone.

‘Let’s meet with just the two of us’, was the proposition of Zef.

Thinking about the contents of what I wanted to ask this time, I felt like there was no problem, so I accepted the proposal.

“How many years has it been since this one has been alone with an outsider -no, how many decades has it been? It feels like this one has returned to my long past self, how nostalgic, and also fresh. What a mysterious feeling.” (Zef)

“I would have been fine with going to the capital though.” (Makoto)

“Sorry about that. When inviting someone to our place, there’s a lot of matters involved. Raidou-dono is an important guest of ours, and you are also a benefactor of ours. There’s no way we wouldn’t meet you. It took us to our limit just rearranging so this one could meet you as soon as possible.” (Zef)

Zef laughs with his usual smile that I can’t see through.

But his atmosphere is slightly different from when I met him because of the matters of the demon race.

We are outside after all.

“...And so, you had something to ask of this one, right? What do you want to hear? The secret weapon of the demon race? Or maybe, the time of our next invasion? Is it an objective like that?” (Zef)

“I have no interest in things like that. Please don’t make fun of me.” (Makoto)

Seriously.

In the first place, there's no way there's a person who would ask the Demon Lord himself about that.

Saying such a joke with a face as obvious as that, seriously, what a troublesome person.

"Hahaha! No interest huh. If you were to obtain a bit of information, you would be able to use it for trades you know, being a merchant and all. There should be a good amount of people that would believe it if it were to come out from the mouth of Raidou-dono, right? It is not like the humans are filled with only idiots after all." (Zef)

"Please spare me already. I am not going to undertake complicated business like selling information." (Makoto)

"So you won't ride on it huh. What a shame. This one was going to mix truth and lies to throw them off though." (Zef)

Zef laughs with a 'Kukuku'.

Please don't use me to sell your poisonous apples...

"If I were to do that, I would totally turn into the enemy of humans. It is not like I am in the side of the humans, but I am not in the side of the demon race either. Neither me nor the Kuzunoha Company." (Makoto)

"This one knows. This one was just trying to see if you would yield a bit to our side, that's all. Forgive me. By the way Raidou-dono, how's Sari?" (Zef)

"Fuh~, Sari huh. Well, it seems like she is getting somewhat used to it now." (Makoto)

"Hoh, so you are already in a relationship where you call her without honorifics. This one's relieved... Have you done it?" (Zef)

"What do you mean by 'done'?" (Makoto)

"Umu, is she pregnant already?" (Zef)

"Buh!" (Makoto)

"What's wrong?" (Zef)

“What are you saying? You are the father of Sari, right?!” (Makoto)

“Yeah, and Raidou-dono is the master of Sari. This one thinks it is a natural question.” (Zef)

The face of Zef was frankly saying ‘what are you getting all flustered about?’.

Why is it that when it comes to slaves, there’s so many people that think in that way?

There’s also slaves that simply work.

“She is not pregnant. There’s no reason for her to be in the first place.” (Makoto)

“This one didn’t think she was a girl that would be against it just because it is her first time though.” (Zef)

“I’m saying this just in case but, I haven’t sought for her.” (Makoto)

“What? Raidou-dono, as a young man, holding back your sexual desires won’t bring anything good, you know?” (Zef)

“That’s truly not your business.” (Makoto)

Why does the Demon Lord have to worry about that?

Moreover, the person he is telling me to put my hands on is his very daughter.

What a troublesome king.

“Even though this one was secretly expecting a grandchild around summer. Wouldn’t it just end up as this one jumping to conclusions?” (Zef)

“That’s the case.” (Makoto)

Zef looks as if he is really disappointed about it.

If he is just acting, then that sad sigh is in an incredible level.

“Anyways, Sari is doing fine.” (Makoto)

“Understood. Then...” (Zef)

“I have not placed a single hand on her, and I haven’t kissed her either!” (Makoto)

“No, I was just going to ask you what business you had today. Also, if she presses you, at least grant her a kiss.” (Zef)

“...Ah, geez.” (Makoto)

Why is it that I feel his face on the latter half had become even more serious.

“You went through the trouble of making an appointment with a Lord, so a part of me is looking forward to what kind of conversation you had in mind.” (Zef)

“Well then, there’s two things I want to ask you. The first is related to Kaleneon, and the other, how to say it... let’s just say it is related to the demon race.” (Makoto)

“It seems like it would be best to begin with the talk about Kaleneon.” (Zef)

“Right now, the town creation is progressing in the aforementioned land.” (Makoto)

“Umu.” (Zef)

“But the current state is that the people are not used to the climate and it is not progressing as expected. And so, I have come to ask of a demon that has survived through the harsh cold about the management of the land, development of it, and about the maintenance.” (Makoto)

“I see. But, Kaleneon huh. It is a land that has half-baked cold and snow if I remember correctly. I don’t think it would serve as much of a reference you know.” (Zef)

“But even in an ice field like this, the demon race was able to build a metropolis like that. Won’t you guys have some sort of knowledge about it? I am fine with only a bit, can you tell me about a solution?” (Makoto)

“Fufufu. Raidou-dono, even if we were to tell you the method itself and learn of the result it has brought, it doesn’t mean that you would be able to apply it in a sufficient manner. If you don’t know of its roots as well, you will end up in a dead end.” (Zef)

“I see...” (Makoto)

I want to do something about the strong blizzards that will be coming in the near future, so even if we can't put it to practical use, it is fine for now.

"From what I know, Kaleneon is in a region we don't have much experience in managing either. If it were in a harsher environment, we would cover it with a dome-shaped barrier, and would live in a lifestyle centered on hunting. But just as I said, that place is half-baked. The difference between summer and winter is so extreme that it actually makes it hard for us to live in." (Zef)

It is certainly true that in Kaleneon, in the place where the town is located, the snow is gone by the time it is summer.

It is true that it is half-baked, but even so, as long as there's land where cultivation is possible, I feel like there would be significance for the demon race in having people live in it.

If it were Limia, there would be a lot of land to talk about; why is it that they are expressly staying in a harsh land?

Also...

"In Kaleneon there was a fortress of the demon race and an army. Then wouldn't you also know about the way they lived?" (Makoto)

"If it's only on the level of gathering and hunting, yeah. If you are in need of that information, I will present it to you. But if you have taken a look around, I think you should already know; in Kaleneon, aside from the fortress, there were no proper towns, right? Also, in terms of inhabitants and common people, the numbers should have been quite low." (Zef)

"Yeah. I heard that there were mostly people related to the army. Also, there was nothing resembling a town, and what was given maintenance was mostly the main road." (Makoto)

"That's right. This one felt like the Kaleneon fortress would one day be necessary as a relay location, so this one had people stationed there, but this one didn't have any intentions of having a settlement in the impending future. It was mostly goods and troops using it as a teleportation spot to mobilize. It is sad that it can't be used again though." (Zef)

Uh.

I am the one who seized the place, so I know that I am not in a standing where I can complain.

I feel like he had gotten me there.

...Just like how Zef said, the only place that seemed to be useable as a town in Kaleneon was the fortress.

There were a number of remains from villages and towns, but they were all from humans. They were destroyed pretty thoroughly, and it didn't feel like it could be used in that state.

And the remains of the fortress are being used as the capital city of Kaleneon because of our own circumstances regarding the climate of Asora, so it is in the middle of being remade as a town.

The reason why the demon race was not treating Kaleneon as a country was probably because of what Zef said.

"...I see. So that place didn't have enough appeal to go through the trouble of creating a dome barrier." (Makoto)

I have seen it in the demon race towns. Those things require quite the amount of magic power.

It is not realistic to do it in Kaleneon as well.

If I don't find some sort of closing countermeasure for the people living in that town, there's no point.

"Sadly to say, that's exactly right. With its location and climate, we didn't find the worth of fighting again to reclaim it. The snow is a troublesome thing you see. If ignored, it will bury the paths, and crush the houses. Even so, just going by the simple method of melting it with heat will instead freeze it and become a new hindrance. If we are to go through the trouble of doing such maintenance, there's the need of a merit that's equally worth its demerits." (Zef)

"Understood." (Makoto)

“The decision this one arrived to was to leave a few facilities there and leave it is it is.”
(Zef)

“I see. Just in case, can I receive the information about the gathering and hunting?”
(Makoto)

“Okay. It is already unneeded for us after all. Right, it would make this one happy if you were to put some flavor and hasten the time you commence the peddling in our towns.” (Zef)

“I will arrange for that.” (Makoto)

I don't think there will be a problem in hastening the process.

To begin with, I have already hastened the preparations, so there's no need for me to arrange anything anyways.

No, that's not it.

They are already in a haste, so I simply don't need to worry about it.

“Then let's hear the other thing you had to talk about. It seems like that's your real motive after all.” (Zef)

“...”

“You had the time for it. You should already have the contents of your topic arranged, right?” (Zef)

“...Let me ask your Majesty. If the reason for the demon race to fight the humans disappears, will the demon race stop doing war?” (Makoto)

“...”

“Can I have an answer?” (Makoto)

“...Of course, we would stop it. But Raidou-dono, that question is boundlessly pointless.” (Zef)

Zef who had broken the silence, let out a voice that was low and heavy.

He affirmed my question, but he also said it was pointless.

“What do you mean?” (Makoto)

“It is certainly true that if the reason the demon race does war against the humans disappears, the war will be stopped. But for that reason to disappear, it would also mean that the battle between humans and demons has reached some sort of conclusion. That’s why this one said it is pointless.” (Zef)

The reason disappearing... is equal to reaching a conclusion?

The demon race is oppressed by the Goddess and is being oppressed by the humans too, and because of that, they were driven to the poor lands of the north.

The rebellion that came from that should be because the demon race wanted to topple over the situation the Goddess had driven them into.

In that case, if the demon race obtains a wealthy land, the reason of the war should disappear.

Isn’t that right?

For example; a place in Kaleneon that has been improved, the demon race territory that is progressing with the domestic affairs, and also... maybe Asora.

It is not because I want to do this for the sake of the Goddess, but if those kind of things can stop the war, cooperating would be okay.

Honestly speaking, the current Hibiki is dangerous.

If the war continues, I think Senpai will probably lose her life at some point in time.

Then, I thought that it would be fine to give a part of Asora to the demon race.

Also, the moment the demon race enters Asora, they would have to agree and be involved with us no matter what.

Putting it badly, we can isolate them.

“I heard that the demon race began the war because they sought for a wealthy land. A

rebellion because of the position they were in. Then, couldn't it be said that the demon race has obtained a land with plenty enough wealth? In the current state, I think you can have a truce with the hyumans. The demon race has been able to proceed the war in an advantageous position after all." (Makoto)

If needed, I can help in encouraging them to accept it.

The negotiation will be hard with the heroes of Limia and Gritonia fighting in the frontlines, but if it's with the good-for-nothing country Aion that only has spies and Lorel Union which is an eccentric country that accepts Wise, I feel like the negotiations might be possible.

If there's a country that nods even if a bit, I think there can be ways to tackle the situation.

"Regarding the land, it is just as Raidou-dono says. We were able to obtain a wealthy land. But... the Goddess and the hyumans still have power left. If we were to enter negotiations in the current state, it would be like asking them to gather up their strength and counterattack." (Zef)

"Even so, the demon race has plenty enough power, right?" (Makoto)

"If you are saying that by looking at the current progress of the war, that's a big mistake, Raidou-dono. Listen well, even if you stand in an advantageous position in tactics and technique at the beginning, even if not all, a part of it will flow into the opponent as the battle progresses. Right now when they are obtaining proper divine protection from the Goddess, the hyumans who surpass us in numbers will absorb the advantage. Our positions would take a reversal." (Zef)

"No way." (Makoto)

"The power of a God and the overwhelming difference in numbers; those two are not components that are as light as Raidou-dono thinks. Our current situation can be said to be its summit. Restraining the power of the Goddess and seeing through them to a certain limit, we do war with the hyumans. Doing this in the same way as we have until now is just..." (Zef)

The latter half of his words were as if he were squeezing them out. Zef's eyes were giving off a sad light.

“You are saying that’s why you won’t stop the war?”(Makoto)

“We thought about killing our hateful sibling while the parent wasn’t present, but in the end, we didn’t make it in time, and the parent came out.” (Zef)

“ ... ”

“That’s why we have no choice but to be cautious about the eyes of the parent as we have a moderated sibling fight. Now then, Raidou-dono, what do you think we should do in order to somehow kill that sibling?” (Zef)

“Ehm... In the first place, should you kill each other in a sibling fight? I just can’t imagine it.” (Makoto)

“That’s right. It is a sibling fight where the siblings hate each other to the point of killing. By the way, the parent is the ally of the other side.” (Zef)

“Sorry, I can’t bring myself to imagine it.” (Makoto)

“I see. Even if we were to kill the other side in an ingenious manner, that’s a death that the parent didn’t wish for; and even if we both were to shake hands with fake smiles plastered on our faces, the hatred between those two siblings won’t disappear. Well, in the end, no matter how many reasons we look for to do war, the main point would be that, is what this one thinks. And in reality, it has become a big reason of why us demon race continue to do war. The reason regarding the environment was simply the last push, but the thoughts in the depths of our hearts probably hasn’t changed at all since the beginning.” (Zef)

The Goddess is the parent, and the humans and demons are the siblings.

“Hate huh. As I thought, the Goddess is the root of it all.” (Makoto)

“That’s true, but no matter what the Goddess does this late in the game, the gap that has formed between the humans and the demons won’t disappear. For the demons, and for the humans as well; and of course, this one who told Raidou-dono about the disadvantages of the truce, is the same as well. Because this one thinks that that gap can only be filled with the blood of our opponents.” (Zef)

“...Are you saying you haven’t killed enough?” (Makoto)

“That’s right. Of course, there’s also the transition of the war’s state just like this one explained, but stating it in an extreme manner, that’s simply a front. We have already pushed aside the restraints of our parent the Goddess and swung our fists, so until we have spat out all our hate and flooded the ground with the blood of the humans, the demon race won’t stop.” (Zef)

...

“As a ruler, the thought of Raidou-dono can be considered as one choice. There’s probably rulers who would choose it. If it’s a kind ruler, they would definitely. But there’s also rulers that won’t choose that... rulers who can’t choose to do that. Just like this one... this one’s current self... if many of my people wish for it, this one won’t stop the war.” (Zef)

“...What do you think... I was thinking?” (Makoto)

Even though it was calm, the light inside the eyes of Zef felt like they could see through me.

There’s no way he would be able to know.

Because no one knows about the existence of Asora.

“Raidou-dono can prepare a new land for us demons, right? Maybe in the extremities of the wasteland, or it might be a place we don’t know of that is located somewhere at the other side of the north or west sea. This one doesn’t know that far, but you plan on having the demon race migrate from this continent, and you were wondering if it can end the war in this way, isn’t that what you were thinking?” (Zef)

“...”

You gotta be kidding, right?

Even to the point of readying a land, how?

I did think he would be able to guess till the point of helping out in the negotiations of the truce, but...

“Bull’s-eye huh. How scary. The Raidou-dono that said he didn’t have any interest in the war, seemed to have investigated about the reason of the war in detail after all, so

this one just intended to probe a bit. Good grief, the eyes of Sari are impressive. A self-sufficient company huh. I see. If it's only that, it can't be called a country just yet, but... it can be said that it is already an organization that has surpassed the boundary of a company." (Zef)

A self-sufficient company?

No, right now the important point is why he can't accept the migration.

"...Why... wouldn't you choose that?" (Makoto)

"Just as you said before, hate. Even if we were to receive that proposal, only a few would accept. Ah, there's no doubt that the bunch who were involved in that incident will be mixed in the group. If Raidou-dono wants to propose it no matter what, this one can notify the people. Having our people chipped off will result in a pretty big disadvantage in the war, but when this one thinks of turning Kuzunoha Company into our enemy, this is for the best." (Zef)

That incident... the one where Root did a mess?

In that case, he must be talking about the people that wholeheartedly believe in the Goddess even in that environment and situation.

That's honestly rough.

Frankly speaking, I feel like their train of thoughts is different in a fundamental level.

"The believers of the Goddess, is it. How to say it, they are people with quite the assertion for peace huh. The type of people that think the opponent won't attack as long as they hold their hands up high in surrender. It was also strange that they were so zealously trying to make the demon race -they are a part of- into the bad guys." (Makoto)

"If the humans were like that, it would be easier to win though. Even this one doesn't understand how their brain works. Do they even know what would happen if we were to declare ourselves as slaves to the humans that have been treating the demi-humans as a lower class for thousands of years and consider it common sense?" (Zef)

Ah, in that part, I am completely of the same opinion.

“Right. Well, regarding the land, it is not all advantages, so if it handicaps the demon race because of it, please just forget about it. I didn’t have those intentions.” (Makoto)

“Hahaha, that scare about them being mixed in there was just a joke. Of course, there are people within the demon race that are purely against the war. It is true that they are low in numbers, but it is people that have been tired out by this air of war that has lasted for decades. People that have grown tired of fighting, people that have grown tired of losing any more, people that have grown tired of taking away lives... many types of people.” (Zef)

“I see.” (Makoto)

Well, there’s obviously people like that.

It is certainly true that being within a group where the majority agree to the war, it would just be suffocating for people like that.

“Not believers of the Goddess, simply tired of the war and wishing for peace. This one doesn’t want to just cast them away. If it won’t be a source of evil in the system of the demon race, this one doesn’t mind having them saved at this one’s discretion. Currently, there are around 10 or so people that have a decent amount of authority, how about it?” (Zef)

“Even if you ask me that... what do you mean by having authority?” (Makoto)

“Giving the demon race land. In other words, Sari has been of decent help, so this time, you want to directly take in people to the company; that’s the real motive of Raidou-dono, right? Something like that, even this one is able to guess it. There’s no need to hide it. This one is genuinely happy about having the abilities of my race approved. The part about authority, it refers to the people that this one has to deal with in a near future. Well, it simply means that if you are thinking about saving them, it is best to hurry.” (Zef)

...

A few moments ago I thought he was incredibly keen, but now he has gone and done a wild pitch.

I am not really looking for the demon race’s techniques and knowledge, you know?

I did understand the point about authority though.

‘Their voices are big and conspicuous, so they have to be dealt with’, is probably what he meant. People that in the surface are obedient, but hold opposing feelings. If it is people that don’t have the ability to oppose the methods of the Demon Lord, there’s no need to hurry and deal with them, is what I think he means.

“No. I wouldn’t mind having more hands to work with, but... I simply thought that if this was enough to end the war, it wouldn’t be so bad.” (Makoto)

“...Half of it was just a front, right?” (Zef)

“Uhm, those were my whole real intentions.” (Makoto)

“...”

“Your Majesty?” (Makoto)

Zef turned silent.

“...You got me there. It seems like Raidou-dono has a thought pattern that this one can’t grasp. This one is ashamed. Placing everything under the basis of advantages and disadvantages as well as calculations, might be considered the influence of these times.” (Zef)

It felt like he was having a monologue. He muttered in a weak and grazed voice.

“Ahahaha, I am often told that I do things in ways that lack common sense. Especially lately.” (Makoto)

“There’s no need to be ashamed of lacking common sense. We are basically fighting the humans because of that. But this one understands now. Then, if that’s the case... won’t you please take those guys in?” (Zef)

“The 10 or so demons?” (Makoto)

If it’s only around that much, I don’t really mind. Moreover, if they are not believers of the Goddess and are simply tired of war, I feel like it is okay.

“Umu. From this one’s point of view, it is like this one is having you take care of the

trouble for me, so it hurts a bit to ask you of this though. If the precedent of Raidou-dono and Sari didn't exist, it wouldn't have been a choice to begin with after all. If there's work over there, you can have them work as colleagues of Sari, or if you want, you can have them in house arrest or confine them, this one doesn't mind. If you wish to, this one can also limit it to only women." (Zef)

"Please stop taking all subjects to that tangent." (Makoto)

"So as long as they can work, the gender doesn't matter huh. This was a verbal slip then." (Zef)

"Regarding that matter, I will go back and discuss about it. Just that... even if I am to accept them all, I will have them go through the same contract as Sari." (Makoto)

I obviously don't think that because they are demons I can trust them.

"They are technically being exiled, so this one doesn't mind. If they stay within the demons, their future would be even worse after all. But to go through that contract, we will require a part of Raidou-dono's body. Is it okay if we are to receive cooperation in that?" (Zef)

"...The master won't be me. If it is demons, I will have Sari take care of them, so it is fine if she is the master. Of course, it still hasn't been decided yet." (Makoto)

"...Raidou-dono, you are truly someone this one can't grasp the depth of." (Zef)

"Reading too deeply into things, reading my mind, and while at it, using the Kuzunoha Company to deal with troublesome people; I think that the depth of your Majesty is the one that is hard to grasp. Seriously." (Makoto)

"...In the first place, Raidou-dono and this one can't be compared. My depth is limited after all." (Zef)

"Eh?"

"No, nothing. This one is expecting a good response. But to act as a Lord with someone that is leagues higher and whimsical, my nerves can't take it, seriously." (Zef)

"Your Majesty?" (Makoto)

The only thing I could hear was ‘No, nothing’, but it seems like Zef found something funny and was laughing.

“Then Raidou-dono, this one will be waiting for your call in a near future. It is okay to call whenever you feel like it.” (Zef)

“Ah, yes. Thanks for going through the trouble of coming all the way here.” (Makoto)

“Please give my regards to Sari.” (Zef)

Zef was enveloped in a sphere he created with magic, and just like that, he floated up and flew away.

When I checked the surroundings, I could see that there’s a large mamono in standby not too far from here, so he will probably be flying until that point.

From there, he will mount the mamono and move to where the teleport formation is, and in that way, he will return.

Even so, Asora wasn’t exposed, but the offer of land was exposed huh.

Are rulers the kind of people that can tell those kind of things?

I didn’t feel that way in Limia, so maybe it doesn’t apply to all.

I don’t know what it is, but I feel like Zef is different.

“A war where they kill and are killed is not going to end that easily. Senpai said this as well, but Zef thinks in the same manner huh. If one were to endure or forget about it without killing, the chain of hatred would end. Migrating and ending the war in that way; a part of me probably wanted that to happen. Saying it with my own mouth right now makes it feel unrealistic. I am glad I didn’t tell Zef. I was about to amaze him by doing that.” (Makoto)

In the time when I heard the talk of the Neptunes, even I thought that if we were to kill all the Neptunes that were on the brother’s side, the hatred wouldn’t remain, and Serwhale-san wouldn’t have to worry about it in Asora. That’s how I thought.

To have an outsider telling him about a different way of calming down the hatred aside from killing, moreover, asking their very Lord to persuade them, that would be stupid.

‘Here, take this new land, now let’s stop war’, there’s no way it would go so smoothly.

As expected, it is not good to try thinking about stopping the war with such light thoughts.

For now, I will do our activities as the Kuzunoha Company, and drag down the Goddess at a point in time. It is fine to only think about that for now.

Even in my life as a merchant, I have now become able to safely participate in the meetings of the Guild in Tsige and Rotsgard.

Not only between customers, I have begun to understand the importance of having connections between merchants as well. Not by pushing them away when offered money, or when offered something and making implicit promises.

Lately, I have been learning how to deal with the nobles with this foreign country visits.

I am far away from being competent enough, but if I just continue working steadily, I can gather experience no matter the case.

My essentials are bad, and the wider I open my arms, the amount of choices I have to decide will increase in proportion, so I just can’t move forward the way I want.

That’s why it can’t be helped that I go by it slowly.

I will simply go forward in my own pace.

It may be this late in the game, but that’s how I thought.

Chapter 218

Scaled Hot Springs

“For example; what would happen if we were to splash water into high temperature oil?”

“...That would be crazy dangerous. The people that have done that probably received heavy burns, and maybe even create a fire. What’s with that example, Shiki?” (Makoto)

“Why is that?” (Shiki)

“Water and oil don’t get along. If you were to do that, the hot oil would fly around and might become a big disaster. That’s why when cooking deep-fried food, there’s the need to be careful of not letting water in. Even if it’s only a small amount, it would be dangerous.” (Makoto)

“That... would I be able to understand it with this textbook, with the so called phenomenons that are written here?” (Shiki)

“The physics textbook? Shiki, if you are to bring something out, it has to be a cooking book.” (Makoto)

Seriously.

That Shiki, what does he intend to do by suddenly bringing out several physic books?

Something like ‘what would happen if water is poured onto hot oil’ should be written in books that teach how to make deep-fried food.

—Outskirts of Kaleneon.

In the place that was once a reservoir, there’s me, Shiki, Ema, and the Eldwas’ Elder, moreover, there’s also Ruria who had gotten better now.

The Draupnir was slowly swaying inside the magma as per usual and emitting heat.

It isn't showing any signs of going out of control.

Even though it did go out of control when it left my hand. Just what's going on? I don't understand at all.

If Ema, the Elder, and Shiki, are able to understand something, it would be great.

Shiki threw me a strange conversation and was derailing a bit though.

I separate from the three who were gazing inside the hole that was once a pond, and sit on a bench that we made with a tree.

“Waka-sama, there's a lot of points that differ, but the explosion that Serwhale spoke about, probably happens in Waka-sama's world as well.” (Shiki)

“Eh?”

“I think it is close to the phenomenon called vapor explosion. Do you know about it?” (Shiki)

Vapor explosion.

It is a word I feel I have heard before.

Though, I feel like it was from a novel or a manga.

Did I learn that in physics?

I do remember about dust explosion though.

It was famous because an explosion incident of this type occurred in a mine and caused deaths.

Vapor explosion huh.

Could it be...

“Ah, could it be you were referring to that when you were talking about the oil and water just now?” (Makoto)

“Yes. As a phenomenon, I think it is a befitting comparison. The basic explanation of a vapor explosion is that when water makes contact with a high temperature material it will vaporize precipitously.” (Shiki)

“ ... ”

Radical vaporization.

Meaning it vaporizes all at once huh.

It is true that the Draupnir fell into the reservoir with a temperature that was a lot higher than I anticipated.

And, that explosion occurred.

As a result, the water was gone and had become like muddy lava.

There’s no doubt that the water in that pond had all evaporated in a short amount of time.

So that was the steam that robbed me of my vision at that time huh.

...I didn’t think Shiki was studying in physics already.

Moreover, he is in the position of teaching me.

In physics, I liked the calculations quite a bit, but as a subject, it was one of my weakest points. I feel slightly miserable.

“Even if a small ring were to become a high heat source, I don’t know yet if that could create an explosion of that scale though. There was no explosion energy formula written in the books after all. In the first place, the ring should have been blown away somewhere by the explosion, and yet, the Draupnir is right there, so I am just saying that the phenomenon is close to that of a vapor explosion though. What Serwhale called a natural result is probably referring to this phenomenon.” (Shiki)

That’s true.

If the water evaporated and created an explosion after the ring touched the water surface, the impact of it should have made the ring fly out somewhere.

It is not such a heavy object after all.

It is a phenomenon that can be explained by science, but there's no doubt that the explosion had fantasy elements in several points as well.

"It shouldn't have emitted such high temperature to begin with, so as expected, it is an unfortunate accident. I was able to properly control it when it was in my hands though. How complicated. A vapor explosion huh. Let's remember that." (Makoto)

"When the water vaporizes, the volume increases by more than a thousand times, and there's the chance that the heat of the ring contributed in adding fire into the explosion. The hydrogen probably also suffered an outbreak, so it is a possibility... but with the estimated power it should have had, it is still..." (Shiki)

...

What Shiki was saying was about to leave the limits of what I understand.

I have studied a decent amount, but my life was basically using the bow.

If we were to do a test now, I would probably get lower scores than Shiki.

But how is it that he is able to get so much practical knowledge when there's no teacher and only has books as reference?

As I thought, Shiki is impressive.

"I understand now what happened at that time. And so, now we have to think about what to do about it. Eva and the others can't do anything about it, so maybe it should be better to remove it from here and take it back to Asora." (Makoto)

"It is pretty stable, so I think it is possible to put it to practical use just like this." (Shiki)

"Wouldn't it be dangerous for the town if there's a magma pond at their vicinities?" (Makoto)

"It will most likely be a big blessing along with the hot springs that were excavated in the mountains of Kaleneon. Also, even if it is close to the town, it is not a distance where children would be able to get close to. If there's an idiotic adult that falls into this place, that person wouldn't have lived long anyways, so it is not something we

need to mind.” (Shiki)

“I see...” (Makoto)

“This heat can be used. The snow in the surroundings of the pond has melted and the temperature is high. For Kaleneon, it can currently be used as a place to throw away the snow. The current state is that hills of snow have been piled up around all the place after all. With that, it will probably affect the functions of the town as well.” (Shiki)

“But it is far for a disposal, right? It is true that there’s the need for a place to dispose of the snow though. Narrow alleys are buried after all.” (Makoto)

Even in the parts of Japan that were faced with tremendous snowfalls, there were aqueducts made for the melted snow, did they have some sort of vacant land to temporarily gather the snow?

...But I haven’t lived in a part like that, so I don’t know.

In Nakatsuhara, the snow would pile up a few centimeters once every few years, so there was obviously no countermeasure for the snow, I think.

And in truth, when that happened, I remember the trains and busses were in great disorder.

When I was young, the snow was simply something to be happy about, but when snow fell in the senior high school exam, it was rough.

I felt like I was being confined inside the bus.

“If it’s only a distance like this, we can use the dwarfs and adventurers to perform the maintenance. If they stayed shut in the town, their skills will simply grow duller. The hot spring that Tomoe-dono is working on will most likely have the piping underground, so it will take some time before it can be brought to the town.” (Shiki)

Using the hot spring to deal with the melted snow was a proposal that was done to deal with the snow in the next years, so there’s no problem in that.

“Waka-sama.”

“Ema, and the Elder-san. Did you guys grasp something?” (Makoto)

While I was thinking about whether to speak about the proposal of Shiki to Eva, Ema and the Elder approached us.

When I checked, I could see Ruria was also walking towards us.

“Yes. Thank you very much for bringing us with you. The internal magic power stored up in that Draupnir has changed into heat and working stably as a heating device. I estimate that it will be able to maintain its current state for around 5 years.” (Ema)

5 years.

It really lasts.

“But the process in which was used to reach that state, bluntly speaking, I don’t understand it. I discussed with Ema-dono, but can we have Waka-sama do several trial runs of what you did and create Draupnirs similar to that?” (Elder)

“I see. If we make trial runs of the same circumstances, there’s the chance that a similar Draupnir might come out.” (Makoto)

Then that’s a plan.

Shiki also said that it would be okay for Kaleneon to use it, so it seems like it is better if that magma and ring are not retrieved.

I was thinking about scooping it out with the arms that I haven’t used once since the incident in the demon race territory, but it seems like there will be no turn for it.

“Looking at the moment it is created, we can research it from zero. I think that by doing that, we will surely be able to utilize the Draupnir in a near future.” (Ema)

I nod at the petition of Ema and the Elder.

“Understood. When you have prepared a place to test it, tell me. I will do what I can.” (Makoto)

“Thank you very much!”

“Regarding this place, just like Shiki said, we are thinking of having Eva and the others think about the method to utilize it. Regarding the mountains, Kuzunoha will be

dealing with it, so you will be able to use the help of adventurers.” (Makoto)

“Yes. Thank you for hearing our plight.” (Eva)

I am the one that wants to lower his head, but Shiki lowered his head deeply before I did.

The hot spring was a success and the reservoir was a failure, but it is great to see that there’s a way to somehow utilize the reservoir one.

“Raidou-sensei! That pond of bright red fire, it seems like it will stay like that for 5 years!”

“Ruria, for a person that has recently recovered from a cold, you are pretty energetic.” (Makoto)

“Well, of course! Looking at something like this, makes my motivation spring forth!” (Ruria)

“Motivation huh.” (Makoto)

“This is something I thought since the time you were a customer of ours but, the things that you do and the things you accomplish are all things that can’t be imitated by others, Sensei.” (Ruria)

Ruria was in an excited state.

She had taken off her winter clothes and was holding it between her arms.

It is certainly true that those clothes are not necessary around here since it is hot and it would just make you drenched in sweat.

“In regards to that, I think that Shiki was the one who was the strangest one of the two though.” (Makoto)

“The cream Nabe, right? It is true that that was a product with a mysterious popularity and only a limited amount of people ordered it. By the way, I don’t understand what’s good about it at all.” (Ruria)

“That’s how it should be.” (Makoto)

“I have tried using ingredients from these areas to make such cream, like a soup with thickness, but it is not sweet.” (Ruria)

“Yeah yeah. If it were something like stew, I would understand.” (Makoto)

“In a forest slightly further away from here, there’s a delicious bird that’s used for those kind of dishes. When this place is given proper maintenance and it is made as a base or a resting point, we will be able to secure a good amount of those as ingredients. I am happy!” (Ruria)

Forest.

Ah, the one that Ruria is pointing at huh.

If there’s one base point along the way to the town, it would be in a distance that’s good enough to make it possible.

It doesn’t feel like the forest would be able to provide much in a deep winter though. At the very least, it seems like there’s an edible bird there, so there might be worth in going.

“A bird huh. Now that you mention it, does the bird called Snow Bird taste any good?” (Makoto)

I remember the bird that Serwhale defeated.

If it tastes good, I don’t mind bringing it here next time.

“...Sensei, to get that you would need to go to those mountains over there, so I haven’t prepared one of those before.” (Ruria)

“Ah, I see.” (Makoto)

“The Ares Bird that appears in that forest is troublesome, but not to the point of being impossible to hunt.” (Ruria)

“Ares Bird. It has a more troublesome sounding name than Snow Bird though.” (Makoto)

It sounds like a God of war.

“Compared to them, not at all. In summertime they have a bright red body and move in flocks, so it is difficult to defeat them, but their individual strength is not worth of mention. In winter, their bodies turn pure white and slip into the snow as they slowly move in it, so it is hard to find them, but it is easier to hunt them than in summer. By the way, the taste changes depending if it’s summer or winter, but no matter which it is, both taste good.” (Ruria)

Turns completely white in winter, wait, is that a *ptarmigan* or something? *<northern grouse in Arctic regions with plumage that turns white in winter.>*

In summer they are easier to find, but you have to deal with them in flocks.

In winter they are easier to hunt, but are harder to find.

A bird that is somewhat troublesome.

“At first, the meat was hard and stinky, so I thought it was impossible to eat though. The only things I can do are related to food, right? That’s why I find things that can be made into food like crops, animals; and try to make ways to prepare them. The Ares Bird is high grade and can be obtained in great numbers, so I did my best.” (Ruria)

“You researched and found a way to eat it?” (Makoto)

“Yes. It is no good to always rely on the food of Sensei’s place after all. The people of Kaleneon have to find a way to fill the stomach of the people living in Kaleneon. Right now I am in the middle of researching a method to process the surplus of summer to preserve it.” (Ruria)

“That’s impressive.” (Makoto)

Seriously.

I have never tried to research the way to eat in a delicious manner a crop that I have seen for the first time or a meat.

Japan was abundant in recipes after all.

The preparation method of the ingredients that I obtained could be found in the internet or books.

Even if it is possible to check with magic if it is poisonous, this is pretty impressive.

“That’s not true. Sensei is the impressive one for being able to create a pond like this. Having a place as warm as this even though it is winter, I have begun to think that it will be possible to somehow overcome this year’s winter. There’s many ways to utilize it after all!” (Ruria)

Melt snow.

Get warmth.

.....

...

What more? Apply magic to it and do a lot of things.

Yeah, a lot of things.

True, there’s a lot of things huh.

“...Yeah, you are right. I am happy to know that it will prove useful.” (Makoto)

“This is no time for me to be catching a cold! Even though I only did something I was not used to, how embarrassing.” (Ruria)

““Something you are not used to’?” (Makoto)

“I accompanied the adventurers to try better preparation methods of mamonos in the actual spot. The wounds and exhaustion of that time left me in bed for a while.” (Ruria)

“When you say ‘preparation methods’ are you talking about ways to beat them?” (Makoto)

“No way! Things like draining the blood, and how to divide the cuts of the meat. Leaving aside the raw materials, when it comes to ingredients, the cases where the adventurers just grab a random portion of it are many. And many of those cases, they bring portions that are not suitable as food.” (Ruria)

“ ... ”

...There's so much to it.

It is certainly true that depending on the type of fish, the way of fishing and breeding changes.

If they are not treated as materials but ingredients, the way that the adventurers deal with it can certainly be considered sloppy.

Even if Ruria teaches them the appropriate process, the problem is if whether they will actually put them into practical use.

"In the end, the ingredients that are processed with the correct method will increase in worth, so we would be able to buy it at a higher price. So there's advantages for the adventurers as well. Even if there are times when they can't do it, when they have the leeway to, they have the option to, so it helps us out." (Ruria)

It feels like she saw through me.

"Like a fated relationship between the workers and the strong?" (Makoto)

"...Onee-chan and I want to be of help after all. There's not much I can help in regards to politics, so it is just the least I can do though." (Ruria)

Ruria makes a strained laugh.

The government is a den of thieves.

I think that Ruria is doing the right choice.

There's strong and weak points for everyone.

If Ruria does what Ruria can do and she is able to contribute to Kaleneon in that way, I think that's fine.

But saying you can't in anything is most likely self-deprecating you way too much.

Even I understand just how important is food for a country.

The many techniques that Ruria will create in the future will become a strength for Eva, no doubt about it.

No matter how they say it, they are properly helping each other out.

...Ah, I see.

“Eva is having it hard as well, but we will help out too. When spring comes, the snow will melt, and the cultivation of new land will progress. The lack of workers can be obtained by soliciting the Adventurer Guild. It is fine to support Eva, but try not to burden too much of it by yourself.” (Makoto)

Zef said that Kuzunoha is beginning to deviate as a company.

One of the reasons why is because we don't really depend much on anyone else, maybe?

If there's things a company lacks, the company will obtain it from another place.

Just like how craftsmen obtain their materials; an obvious thing to do.

But if the Kuzunoha Company wanted to, we would be able to resolve everything with just Asora.

When taking that into account... it is certainly true that we are different.

When you are lacking something, depending on other companies is the obvious thing to do, but there's no harm in not doing it.

Even if the company changes into a country, that basis won't change.

Then if a country requires an important supply from another country in order to maintain itself and ends up depending on it, it will become a certain weakness.

Is the thought I reached to when thinking about Kaleneon.

In that case... won't it be pretty hard to destroy Kuzunoha Company from the outside?

It seems like it wasn't only me who had a high defensive power, Kuzunoha Company does too.

Yeah.

The way of dealing with companies that Zara-san and Rembrandt-san told me about, there are quite a lot of those that can't be used against Kuzunoha.

The employees are a force to be reckoned with, and there's also Asora that holds us like a family.

The stocking that we do in public is a simple front, so there's no problem if we were to lose that.

In the first place, if they were to interfere in transportation related stuff, we can just teleport.

We have enough support from our customers that we are already on the point that even if we were to gain enemies in Tsige or Rotsgard, we would be able to laugh it away.

Our balance is enlarging every month, so there's no issues with money for the time being.

It has only been a few years since we began, but... at some point in time, we have become quite the troublesome company.

Meeting Rembrandt-san at an early stage had a big effect in it as well, but the number one reason of it was because everyone is doing their best. I am truly grateful.

"Yes, I will do my best!" (Ruria)

"Shiki! We are returning soon. What about you two?" (Makoto)

After looking at Kuzunoha Company again and getting a better opinion of it, I was strangely moved.

I call out Ema and the Elder that were at my side.

Whether they will be going back to Asora, or go to the town.

The two have comrades and subordinates in the town, so I have to ask them first what they will be doing.

"I will be accompanying everyone to the town. We will have to revise the plans of this

and the hot springs. There's a number of Highland Orcs that can be placed for the snow disposal, so I have to talk about those topics with Eva." (Ema)

Ema is strict with Eva.

But it is not like she is just whipping her.

I secretly think that she is actually expecting things from her.

"I will also go check out the work and state of the young ones. I also have an interest in the hot springs, so after that, I was thinking about helping out Tomoe-sama. Is that okay?" (Elder)

"Got it." (Makoto)

Eh? There's no reaction from Shiki.

He is facing the pond with his eyes closed, his right hand on his mouth and muttering.

"But even if it were to reach the limit amount of Waka-sama's magic power that it can store... the efficiency of the heat conversion has... activated as a result... no matter how I think about it, the price of both formulas are not equivalent..." (Shiki)

"Shiki!" (Makoto)

"But if that's the case, that's practically..." (Shiki)

"Shiki!" (Makoto)

"!!! Yes, what is it?!" (Shiki)

"...We are returning. Is something the matter?" (Makoto)

"Ah, understood. I am sorry. I ended up falling in deep thought about something trivial. It seems like the subject called physics is more interesting than I thought." (Shiki)

"...Well, keep it in moderation, okay? And so, Tomoe was going to be shut in the mountains for the whole day, right?" (Makoto)

Shiki walks at my side as I began to walk.

The topics like magic and agriculture are already plenty difficult to study, but on top of that, he is trying his hand on physics as well. It can't be helped that I am worrying if he will be okay.

If he is stuffing himself too much with things, I should have him rest sometime.

At this rate, I feel like he is shaving off his sleeping time to read books.

"...Yes. She was pumped up saying that she will make it take form in two days. Mio-dono is also together with her." (Shiki)

"Mio too? That's rare. Does she have an interest in hot springs?" (Makoto)

"It seems like her interest is not in the hot spring itself though." (Shiki)

While holding his forehead, Shiki speaks as if having difficulty in saying it.

So it isn't a direct interest?

"Is it related to the beautifying elements, or the health side?" (Makoto)

"No, I think Mio-dono is interested in the custom of mixed bathing." (Shiki)

"Mixed... bathing?" (Makoto)

What the hell?

Mixed baths in hot springs?

No well, there were mixed baths in Japan as well, but... they are not common.

Most of the hot springs are divided in men and women.

When there are cases where there is only one, they normally divide the times of usage.

The times when mixed bathing in hot springs was normal should be around the Edo period...

Edo?

Don't tell me... so that's what it is?!

"Yes. Tomoe-dono thinks that it is a standard that hot springs are mixed and she has explained that to Mio-dono. As commemoration for safely finishing the maintenance of it, she said it is the norm to have four people entering the bath first." (Shiki)

"F-Four..." (Makoto)

"Of course, counting Waka-sama, we all make four." (Shiki)

Shiki says this straight.

What a pitfall...

We are talking about Tomoe who employed the *Ryo* in the currency of Asora even though it is slightly irregular. *<an obsolete currency in Japan>*

It is certainly true that it was possible.

I should have thought about it in an Edo manner.

"About us four entering... were those two looking forward to it?" (Makoto)

"Of course. Even I am interested in this thing called hot springs. I am looking forward to it." (Shiki)

"Is that so..." (Makoto)

Well... I will just prepare myself.

In any case, having a mixed bath inside that white-out mountain, it is obvious that there will only be steam and snowstorms, so the only thing that will be coming out of it is a wry smile.

I feel sorry for Tomoe though.

From the beginning, it was a hot spring that I dug for the sake of the town, so it can't be helped that the location of it is a popular dangerous mountain.

I hope she is not trying to make it a high quality hot spring district.

As long as they don't get glued to me, I will be able to make it through.

It is the same as entering the hot spring with your family.

Even so... I should have told them to divide it in male and female beforehand.

What a blunder.

"There's baths for: Scaled, hairy, aquatic, and big sized people. It seems Tomoe-dono was planning on making quite a lot of different types of outdoor baths and seemed to be truly having fun." (Shiki)

"Eh?" (Makoto)

Why aren't you dividing those between men and women?!

Why did it become mixed baths?!

I didn't voice it out. I have already resolved myself.

I felt the irrationality.



"Levi, I am sorry."

"It is fine if you understand, as long as you understand." (Levi)

In the demonic mountain of Kaleneon where powerful mamonos live in.

It will soon stop being called a demonic mountain and be called a hot spring mount, but leaving that future aside...

The Scylla, Levi, came to this mountain with Makoto the other day, but returned to Asora before encountering any mamonos. And now, she is shouldering a stone that is bigger than her and talking to a Lorelai young man that is staggering beside her.

He was currently using magic to make the construction tools float as he transports them.

The two of them were participating in the creation of the hot spring.

But the two were currently in a location slightly further away from the other members.

“I am surprised by how Serwhale-dono and Waka-sama were able to walk through this kind of mountain.”

“Those two are weird. It is also true that it is crazy cold, but this place not only messes up with your sense of distance, your sense of balance is also gone, right?” (Levi)

“Yeah, I couldn’t even tell where I was at all. It is a scary place.”

“It is certainly true that I underestimated the cold, so when I heard the talk of Tomoe-sama, I volunteered myself with the intentions of conquering this, but I still don’t have the courage to leave the barrier of Tomoe-sama. Waka-sama and Serwhale-san were doing casual talk as they walked straight to this place, you know?!” (Levi)

“Umu... when I heard that Levi had lost to the cold and ran back, I thought that it would be good material to tease you, but... this is the real deal. Even when I stretched my own hand, I could only see it slightly. Not being able to move at all is no joke. Actually the likelihood of dying is high.”

In order to teach the young Lorelai man, who laughed at her, about how cruel of an environment this mountain that made her give up was, Levi brought him to a place slightly separated from the group.

And then, the man that slightly left the boundaries of the barrier, had apologized to Levi after a few minutes.

This mountain that takes three days to reach from Kaleneon to there in all seasons except winter. It isn’t a place with an environment that people can step into in that cold season.

Strong mamonos, constantly raging blizzards, the snow flies around in different directions as if crazy, even the snow piled up on the ground is blown up by the strong winds and it is practically as if your vision has been taken out completely.

Obviously, the only thing that reaches the ears is the roaring sound of the wind. The higher you advance, the lower the temperature. In time, it will change to ice and even in mornings, the light will be completely blocked out.

Not only fighting, it is a mountain where you can't even stop your steps.

It is definitely not a situation where one would do casual talk and drill their way underground.

Currently, they are able to work thanks to the barrier of Tomoe that is covering the areas where the hot springs are.

It is that kind of situation.

Inside the barrier the snow won't be able to enter, and the strong wind is mostly cut off.

The temperature is around zero degrees, but compared to the outside, the temperature is relatively higher and stable. And for the Asora residents that are doing work, it is a state where they can do their work without any problems.

The only reason why Levi and the young man can be there is because of the barrier of Tomoe.

In any case, the two who had finished their business, returned in a hurried pace to the working place where everyone gathers, and went to work on what they were assigned.

"The set up is going well-ja na. Mio is also motivated, so the work is progressing~." (Tomoe)

"Rock baths, cypress baths, footbaths, stream baths... And also, this... you are making so many different types, Tomoe-sama."

"Umu, I am counting on you. In the country of Waka, bathing was a type of leisure they had. The hot spring facilities of Waka's country that I used as reference had a variety of styles like that. At times, the hot springs could be used as travelling locations. We can't slacken in this-ja. It will be difficult, but since we have the chance, I want to satisfy Waka. I am counting on you." (Tomoe)

In a sense, this could be considered the derivation of a super bath-house. A hot spring resort.

If Makoto were to hear of this, he would probably be wondering what point in the Edo period he has fallen into.

They are planning on reproducing the traditional bath-house design, so in Tomoe's words, it would be: small things form a big one.

Footbaths, boiling baths, even saunas were planned on being integrated.

"That's true. Well, there's worth for us too in doing this. Leave it to us. Also, the plan of drawing the hot springs to Kaleneon is interesting. Hm? Sorry, excuse me. What is it?"

The older dwarf that noticed the young craftsman approaching, asked for the consent of Tomoe and puts a pause to the conversation.

"Master, regarding the composition of the hot spring we were tasked to by Tomoe-sama, it seems like there's a slight problem."

"What is it?"

"We found sediment from the hot springs. From what we have confirmed, it might be an insoluble component that when hardened, it can make it precipitate."

"...Meaning that it might block the plumbing we were going to use for heating?"

"Yes."

"...Fumu. Leave the ones experienced in carpentry just where they are, the others remaining, make one team and investigate it. If it is a plumbing that is underground and doesn't touch the air, there might not be any problems, but there's the need to confirm it. If it can block it, we might need to do trial runs with the material properties of the plumbing and with the permanent enchant magic. Also, try asking for the opinion of the other races. They might tell us something that we don't know about."

"Yes!"

The dwarf that was talking with Tomoe, received a report of a problem from one of his subordinates, and worked out a plan to deal with it.

Looking at this, Tomoe nods with a satisfied expression.

The works that require brute force are dealt mostly by Mio. The grounds have been secured and the soil preparation is already progressing.

The important hot spring also has no issues when bathing in it, and it was practically the same as the hot springs she knows of.

The craftsmen dwarfs are also moving well.

And so, the hot spring plan is progressing smoothly.

Tomoe had a wide smile as she supervised the work.

But suddenly the eyes of Tomoe turned cold and sharp.

It was only for a mere second.

“Well then, I am sorry, but I will be leaving it to you for a while. I will return by evening. Make sure to deal with the things only after you have gotten a grasp of it. If there’s any problems with the barrier, you can ask Mio.” (Tomoe)

“...Understood. Have a safe trip!”

“Umu.”

Tomoe disappears within the Mist Gate.

The destination was related to the cold eyes just now.

She was concentrated in making reality the hot springs she is so expectant of, but she intended to take care of something before that.

“...”

At that place, there’s a silent lake.

A lake that Tomoe and also her master had visited before.

Name is the Meiris Lake.

Without any joy in her expression, Tomoe unsheathed her katana and waves it.

A truly mysterious spectacle appeared.

From the tracks of Tomoe's katana, an island in the middle of Meiris Lake was visible, and no matter what part one looked at, there was no other place aside from there where the island could be seen.

The katana of Tomoe was swung again.

The flash that shone, faintly spread out like a rift, and Tomoe entered it.

She disappeared inside it, and after a while, the rift disappeared and the Meiris Lake returned to silence.

"You would obviously be on guard when your domain has been invaded, huh. But in the first place, there's no way something that didn't even work on weaklings like Sofia and Lancer, would work on me. Now then..." (Tomoe)

While checking the surroundings, Tomoe mutters this and swallows one big breath.

"WATERFALL!! COME OUT!!!" (Tomoe)

With a hand on her katana, Tomoe calls for the master of this domain.

"Muh? A familiar? I wanted to skip the unnecessary stuff, so I went through the trouble of shouting out loud though." (Tomoe)

Tomoe turns her eyes towards the presence that appeared from the water surface, and in that place stood the Gel mamono that guided Makoto and Hibiki to that world.

"Bring out Waterfall. As it is a business between Superior Dragons, there's no room for you to appear, familiar." (Tomoe)

"..."

The Gel trembles in a disorderly manner.

But it didn't seem like it was intending to call for Waterfall.

"Good grief... It is a pain, but can't helped." (Tomoe)

Tomoe sighs.

She holds the katana's handle, and her eyes narrowed slightly.

"What's your business, Shen? No, Tomoe."

"If you are coming out to stop me, then come out from the very beginning. Don't go doing something as pointless as waiting-and-seeing. Such a pain." (Tomoe)

Floating lightly on the air, a small dragon advances through the lake surface.

The recently reincarnated Waterfall.

It doesn't seem like she is using her wings; she is using magic to fly.

When Tomoe places Waterfall in her field of vision, she immediately complained about not coming out right away, with her hand still on the handle of the katana.

"What's your business in this rude visit?', is what I asked though." (Waterfall)

"As serious as always." (Tomoe)

"It seems like you have changed quite a lot. Laziness and fickleness; I can't believe you are the same Mist Dragon that was considered the symbol of indolence." (Waterfall)

"A lot happened." (Tomoe)

"That's intriguing." (Waterfall)

"..."

"..."

A turbulent atmosphere flows between Tomoe and Waterfall.

"Now then, about that business. Waterfall, I don't know what's the reason of it, but you still have your memories from before, right?" (Tomoe)

"...I don't know what's your basis of this, but the only one who is able to do that within the Superior Dragons is Grount, Tomoe." (Waterfall)

"Umu. That's why Root and I were relieved. You guys were defeated by a weakling like

Sofia, but as long as you were to reincarnate and return to life, there should be no problems. We didn't put it much mind." (Tomoe)

"Then there's no problems, right? I have heard from my familiars, but it is certainly true that it was a blunder of mine for being defeated by them. I will accept that critic of yours." (Waterfall)

"...But Waterfall, when I tried to read the memories of the egg of that guy Night Clad, Doma, the memory of Sofia killing him remained." (Tomoe)

"...That's something that has never happened before. He didn't have a power like that in the past, and yet, he reincarnated with those memories remaining. That's just..." (Waterfall)

"Crimson Red, Azuma, was recently born, but from what I confirmed, he retained his memories. In that case, it is strange that you are the only one that reincarnated as always, Waterfall." (Tomoe)

"Tomoe, please cut it out. Even if I had my previous memories, what does it have to do with you invading here?" (Waterfall)

"If that weren't the case... there wouldn't be any other explanation of why you are so cautious of Waka-ja yo. That would also serve as the reason why you are defending your memories and not letting me see them." (Tomoe)

"Cautious of Raidou? Just what in the world are you saying?" (Waterfall)

"In the memories of Waka, you were clearly overly cautious of him. Don't you understand? That served as 'the trigger for me to investigate the memories of Doma and Azuma'-ja. This was a doubt that was born from your behaviour." (Tomoe)

Tomoe continues her words in a quiet manner.

The words of Tomoe mentioning the 'memories within Waka', had clearly made Waterfall show surprise.

But the surprise soon disappeared and confidence returns to her expression.

"Fufu, the memories of Waka? You who are under control of Raidou? There's no way you would be able to see the memories of your master. Please stop playing bluffs."

(Waterfall)

“...Our relationship is slightly special you see. Waka shows me his memories without any frugality. Well, after saying all of this, there should be no need to confirm it though.” (Tomoe)

The atmosphere flowing between the two changes slightly.

Tomoe changed it.

“Showing memories to others without being frugal about it? There’s no way there’s someone as stupid as that. And Raidou is not the type of person who would let others see his memories.” (Waterfall)

“Fuh, what do you understand about Waka? Looking at those two, and still expecting something from Hibiki; there’s no way someone like that would understand him.” (Tomoe)

“...No way, to think that there was actually a master who would show his memories to his subordinates. An existence as crazy as that is just...” (Waterfall)

“You miscalculated. You intended to move in the shadows, but it was easily exposed. Waterfall, you should understand as well, right? My objective is your life-ja.” (Tomoe)

“A fight to the death between Superior Dragons? Has Raidou driven you to such a point of insanity, Tomoe?” (Waterfall)

The words of Waterfall made Tomoe laugh hard.

“Might be the case. That person seriously possesses a drug-filled appeal-ja.” (Tomoe)

“No matter how you think about it, those words should be denoting the heroes though.” (Waterfall)

“Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. There’s also the way of thinking that even when the person is admired by the general public, there’s actually not a single one that’s truly into it. There’s people that simply gather upon the greatest common divisor. Our side might be the opposite of that though. Our Waka isn’t popular in the millions, but is truly admired by a small amount of people. That’s the kind of person he is-ja yo.” (Tomoe)

“I couldn’t see that charm at all though.” (Waterfall)

“As expected. That’s why you joined hands with Hibiki, right? You let Waka into your treasured library, and introduced him to some dubious recall ritual because of your caution and fear towards him. You wanted to erase Waka from this world as soon as possible.” (Tomoe)

“The recall ritual was something I thought he wished for though.” (Waterfall)

“I won’t deny that. But that ritual has quite the peculiarity. The analysis has not been completed yet, but it is definitely not a proper ritual.” (Tomoe)

“I also don’t know the details of it. The only thing I know is that the summoned one will be send back to his original world.” (Waterfall)

“...Hmph. Well, I don’t need to ask you about it. I feel sorry for you guys since you just reincarnated, but... I will have you reincarnate once more. It would be annoying to have more people doing sneaky stuff on our backs.” (Tomoe)

“That you have come to my domain alone and have said this, makes me doubt your real intentions, Tomoe. You and I, when we are in our own domains, it is practically impossible to lo—wait, did you say ‘you guys’? Don’t tell me, you...” (Waterfall)

“I took care of Azuma; Doma by Root though. For now, it seems they haven’t retained their memories. Their deaths were irregular, so we are looking after them.” (Tomoe)

“...Raidou is a bigger danger to this world than the Goddess. Why is it that you and Root don’t understand something so simple?” (Waterfall)

Tomoe unsheathed her katana without saying any words.

The air got tense in an instant.

“I won’t let you activate Asora in my domain. I won’t repeat the mistake I did with Sofia.” (Waterfall)

“How pitiful-ja na. I didn’t have the intentions of using Asora in the first place. Sorry to say this but, with you and I, it won’t even be considered a fight.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe swings her katana in a direction that differed from the magic clad Waterfall.

Like a clionidae in the moment of devouring its prey, the Gel had commenced an attack on Tomoe, but was cut in half.

Even though it was a quick and silent motion, Tomoe didn't take her eyes off Waterfall as she cut it.

The past figure of Tomoe leaving it all to brute strength when swinging a katana, was not there anymore.

It was the start of the battle.

"You!!"

Reacting to the voice of Waterfall, several shining water pillars rouse from the lake.

In this space she has configured herself, moreover, with a spell she is specialized in, there was no need for Waterfall to utilize arias in order to activate spells.

The countless whirling water pillars that were freely twisting and drawing a trajectory, attacked Tomoe.

However, Tomoe was looking at that situation without a single trace of agitation. Waterfall had no idea what she was thinking.

And then, Tomoe sheathed her katana back.

"Do you think you can endure it just because you have resistance to it?!" (Waterfall)

"..."

Without even moving, the whirling water pillars passed through Tomoe one after the other.

Being raised in midair, she was being attacked by the raging water inside it.

"?!!"

Waterfall who was looking at that spectacle, gulped her breath.

It's a natural response.

Because everything had disappeared.

It was as if time had rewinded to the moment before Waterfall had activated that big spell.

Just one thing was different. Tomoe's figure was not in the place where she should be, and Waterfall who had noticed that instantly, follows her figure.

"You are slow." (Tomoe)

"Im... possible." (Waterfall)

Hearing the voice that came from the skies, Waterfall unconsciously groaned.

But she can't do an appropriate counter.

She noticed Tomoe after she had already swung her katana.

"..."

A high-speed slash that can't be followed with the eyes.

It is the Iai stance that Tomoe was zealously practicing.

Tomoe passed by Waterfall who was floating in a slightly high position, and Waterfall felt that time unpleasantly slow.

And then, she loses sight of Tomoe again.

She didn't understand what in the world Tomoe did to her, and in the middle of her confusion, Waterfall decided to launch an attack from all directions and have Tomoe step back.

Even though it is a fight where both sides know each other's abilities, she couldn't understand the movements of Tomoe and was falling into confusion.

"Azuma was too, but as expected, you guys are weak." (Tomoe)

"Shen, over there?!!" (Waterfall)

Waterfall reflexively called Tomoe's old name, and at that time, she understood what happened to her own body.

Her field of vision slowly changes.

By the time she noticed that her head was cut off, it was obviously too late.

The head of Waterfall silently falls into the lake.

"Is it over already?" (Tomoe)

"...By no means."

The head of Waterfall speaks out.

The lake surface freezes in an instant, and slightly after, the body stands on top of the frozen surface and grabs her head.

"You are like an undead-ja na." (Tomoe)

Without getting surprised, Tomoe looked at Waterfall placing her own head back to its original place and made a sarcastic laugh.

"You should have predicted something like this when you decided to fight me in this space." (Waterfall)

"Of course-ja. But it seems like you can't read my movements at all." (Tomoe)

"...That's true. I thought you would fight as a warrior, but you use spells. And then, that action where you didn't evade nor guard... an illusion, wasn't it?" (Waterfall)

"Correct." (Tomoe)

"Knowing it is an illusion, it is easy to deal with it. There's no point in illusions when you know it is one, you know?" (Waterfall)

"Now then, I wonder about that." (Tomoe)

Tomoe lowers her waist, and releases an Iai in that very place.

It was an overwhelming speed where one could only barely tell it was an overarm stroke.

The expression of Waterfall stiffens.

“What are you playing at?” (Waterfall)

“You will know soon.” (Tomoe)

“...How unpleasa—ah?” (Waterfall)

From the top of her shoulders, Waterfall felt a sharp heat.

Her vision is dyed completely red.

She was cut.

Several seconds passed before she was able to notice this reality.

“In the katana I gave to a subordinate of mine, there’s an ability called [Marking]. When the requirements are fulfilled, you can ignore the distance and freely cut your target. Of course, the consumption of magic power is not to be underestimated, but even so, if it is a fight using only a katana, there’s enough to spare. It seemed fun, so I had it enchanted in mine as well.” (Tomoe)

“It was like an acrobatic.” (Waterfall)

The wound of Waterfall recovered in the blink of an eye.

Even when her head is cut off, or receives an obvious fatal wound, she is not affected by the damage.

Not even letting out a scream was abnormal.

“In terms of healing, there’s no Superior Dragon comparable to you, huh. Your reputation and skills have not dulled, it seems.” (Tomoe)

“Do you think you can defeat me with an attack like this?” (Waterfall)

“I was only trying out my new sword, and confirming the results of my training-ja.

Let's end it already." (Tomoe)

As she finishes speaking, the figure of Tomoe multiplies like mirror images.

And all the Tomoes that were lined up horizontally had begun an aria.

"An illusion again?! I don't know what you intend to do, but I won't let you!" (Waterfall)

Waterfall erases the increased Tomoes with magic one after the other.

But as she erases them, more Tomoes keep popping up, and the situation showed practically no change.

"An illusion of this scale... why are you able to do it here?! Could it be that I have been dragged into Asora without noticing?" (Waterfall)

"I won't do something so unnecessary." (Tomoe)

"So you are there!" (Waterfall)

Facing the direction of Tomoe's voice, she increased her power in an instant and presents Tomoe with a blaze containing all her power.

Compared to the power of Root that Makoto witnessed, it would be considered an elementary level, but it was a blaze that had quite the power in contrast to that small body.

It looked like the blaze of Waterfall had caught Tomoe, but it quickly dimmed and disappeared.

Of course, Tomoe was okay.

"Just what in the world are you preparing?" (Waterfall)

"Even if you were to remember it, you still wouldn't be able to do anything against it though... [Pure Illusory Reality], that is the spell that killed you, you know." (Tomoe)

"Killed? What are you saying?" (Waterfall)

"Maybe with this you will notice." (Tomoe)

When Tomoe points her arm at Waterfall, wind blew.

No magic power was used, it was genuine wind.

“Wind? What does this have to do with anyth—ing?!!” (Waterfall)

“...”

“My body has turned to mist?!” (Waterfall)

“Eternal dreams, illusions and reality; I wonder where is the boundary between those two.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe mutters as if monologuing.

The body of Waterfall begins to dim away from her legs and wings first, as if being drifted away by the wind.

Just like how Waterfall felt, it was as if wind was washing away mist; a strange spectacle that felt illusory.

“Do you think an illusion will—!” (Waterfall)

Waterfall immediately judged that what was happening was an illusion.

Even when she tried to wave it away or activate a spell, it was useless. She couldn’t understand the situation at all.

“It is pointless-ja. As long as you doubt it for a single instant, your very body will turn into an illusion itself. There’s no path but disappearing-ja.” (Tomoe)

“A spell that can turn others into illusions, something like that... a power like that...” (Waterfall)

“Then, are you going to accept attacks turning into illusions? Well, interpret it in whichever way you want. It is admirable that even when you are only a head, you still didn’t show fear.” (Tomoe)

“Wait! Where are you going?!” (Waterfall)

“I am finished here. There’s hot springs waiting for me. Also, if I were to arrive late for dinner, I will cause unnecessary worries to Waka. The matters of you and the other Superior Dragons, won’t disarray the heart of that person.” (Tomoe)

“Shen... Tomoe! Wa-it...” (Waterfall)

“Well then, cya later, Waterfall.” (Tomoe)

The figure of Waterfall disappeared.

And then, at that place, there was nothing moving anymore.

Even the familiars that should have had a relative amount of numbers.

Not a single one was breathing anymore.

Without turning around once, Tomoe left Meiris Lake.

Returning to Kaleneon, Tomoe burned her passion at the hot springs, had dinner with everyone like always, and passed the day as if nothing happened.

She didn’t even let out a burp about killing Waterfall.

The unexpected present that Sofia left didn’t bring out any new sparks, and silently became a solved incident without Makoto knowing.

Chapter 219

Hot Springs, an article of supreme bliss

One large hot spring resort.

This is a demonic mountain, try visiting it once~.

No wait, that's not it.

I accidentally escaped reality.

"This is way too amazing. What's with this hyper compilation of outdoor hot springs?"
(Makoto)

I arrived at the demonic mountain via Asora's Mist gate.

And what I saw there, was a giant hot spring resort like the ones unfolding at towns in development.

A big gate demarcated the inside and the outside, and at that other side, there's a rampaging blizzard that whites-out the landscape.

What an unrealistic place.

Even if I were to walk around lightly dressed, the temperature is adjusted to one similar to an open air bath which is not a problem.

There was no wind, and snow was falling quiet and moderately, giving it a sense of elegance.

"This is impressive. As expected of Tomoe-dono."

Shiki is also moved.

The spectacle of this many baths of different varieties lined up was kind of... worth seeing, so it is the obvious reaction.

There were things like rock based baths, footbaths, *Goemon baths*.

I feel like it is on a level I haven't seen even in Japan.

The most I have seen of a view like this, is in TV.

"Right, right?! This is a prided work of mine you know! I name it Oedo hot sprin—" (Tomoe)

"Well, the name is rejected, so... how about leaving it as Demonic Mountain's hot-spring village for now? Yeah." (Makoto)

"There's no mention of Edo in it, Waka!" (Tomoe)

"If it's hot springs with names related to Edo, you can leave that to when they are created in Asora. The experience of creating something like this will definitely prove useful at that time after all." (Makoto)

"Mu-muuu. Since it is our long-awaited hot springs, it is certainly true that there's nothing better than having Waka name it himself, but... Fumu, let's leave the Edo name for the Asora hot spring. That's an option as well." (Tomoe)

The characteristic smell of sulfur drifts about in the whole hot spring.

And within that, there's also a nice scent of Hinoki cypress.

I heard that aside from rock baths, there's also baths made from things like cypress and wood, so I am actually looking forward to it.

Tomoe who had joined the conversation between Shiki and I, was already wearing a yukata.

There was no need to say it, but it was clear from her smiling face that she felt proud of how it turned out.

"Now then... let's enter. It seems like if we don't enter first, the others can't join." (Makoto)

It seems like it is necessary for me to be the first one in using it, so no one has used this place yet.

The plan was to finish it in two days, and in that time, Tomoe and Mio realized most of the functions of the hot springs and made it possible to bathe in it, but in the end, the motivation of Tomoe and the Dwarfs involved in this exploded, and the plan of improving the hot springs began. A work that took three more days had taken place.

And so, it has come to this day.

The plan of drawing the hot springs to Kaleneon is also progressing smoothly, but in those three days, the only thing that sped up was the hot springs, and the plumbing part had advanced at a regular pace.

I heard that the work will take from 3 weeks to a month, and the work will advance by shifts.

In the rotation of the security, there were unexpectedly a lot of shifts with Neptunes and Levi.

Maybe it was quite a shock for Levi that she was unable to come with me and Serwhale-san.

“Well then, the changing room is over there.” (Tomoe)

At the place that Tomoe pointed out, there’s a building for changing.

Mixed bath huh.

Well, Shiki is also coming along, so no choice but to prepare myself huh.

“Understood. Then Shiki, let’s go!” (Makoto)

“Waka-sama?!”

“Buh!! Mio?!!” (Makoto)

For some reason, in the changing room, there’s Mio who only has a towel equipped!

Yukata!

What happened to her yukata?!

“You haven’t changed yet? Shiki neither? You can just undress here.” (Mio)

“No well, that’s a bit... I will change quickly so...” (Shiki)

“M-Mio, you had a y-yukata, right? Where is it?” (Makoto)

“Don’t need it. It is troublesome to put it on since I will be taking it off anyways, so I settled it by only using the towel.” (Mio)

Don’t need it? Wait a sec there lady.

There’s a limit to being straight.

“A-At least wrap it around. You are only covering it with your arm.” (Makoto)

I could see exposed parts from the glimpses I could get.

It was truly an excuse of a towel.

What a high destructive power -no, what a lack of defensive stat.

“...But isn’t it manners to not bring towels and hand towels inside the hot springs? I heard that from Tomoe-san.” (Mio)

“Umu! Mio, that’s the right way.” (Tomoe)

What a thing.

It has become a top priority to eliminate this troublesome misunderstanding.

If this continues, it might turn into a situation where the men came in with only a leaf covering them.

In a place like this, and a mixed bath on top of that, I feel like it would be better if men and women were to enter in swimsuits.

“Right? I have learned from the hot springs. Now then, Waka-sama. Let’s hurry.” (Mio)

“Ah, yeah...” (Makoto)

This is bad.

I felt like Tomoe with a yukata was pretty defenseless, but Mio has already surpassed the terrain of defenselessness.

Doing something like this with that figure and looks, I honestly am troubled in where to place my eyes.

Maybe I should just go blindfolded.

It wouldn't trouble me since I have [Sakai] after all.

Things like chilling after taking a bath or getting dizzy for overstaying in it, honestly, I don't have the confidence of avoiding those.

While thinking that, I enter the pretty big changing room with Shiki.

"This is also... quite wide." (Makoto)

"I heard that it was made like this so that even the Highland Orcs and the Neptunes don't find it inconvenient. But it is indeed wide." (Shiki)

The ceiling is also incredibly high. So spacious.

Right as I entered, there was a bucket that was letting out cold at my left side for some reason. When I peek to see what it is, there were a lot of bottles with yellow liquid inside.

...Fruit milk!

I don't understand.

I seriously don't understand what period of time Tomoe was aiming for when she made these facilities.

At the very least, it is certain that it is not only aimed at the Edo hot springs.

Aside from it being a mixed bath, where else is it Edo-like?

No well, with only this wideness, I can feel it is old-style though.

“Well, let’s find a free place anywhere.” (Makoto)

A place around the entrance would be easier.

“No, Waka-sama. That.” (Shiki)

“Hm?” (Makoto)

I use my eyes to follow the place where Shiki points at.

...

Hey hey.

“There a sign that says Waka and Shiki... Are they telling us to use those?” (Makoto)

“Must be. Let’s go.” (Shiki)

Why do they have to divide the changing rooms too?

While having a wry smile, I approach the place with the sign and take off my coat.

When I loosen my belt and enter inside...

“So when inside, it is divided again between Shiki and I huh. Seriously, what a strange set up. With how things are here, could it be that Tomoe and Mio also have their own private rooms in the changing room?” (Makoto)

“Anyways, let’s change fast. It is heartrending to have those two wait in that appearance after all.” (Shiki)

“Got it.” (Makoto)

Shiki and I separate.

Even so, I was amazed while my lower half was nude.

Instead of calling it a changing room, it was literally a room.

The air conditioning was managed in a better way than the outside, and it was luxury

itself.

There's even a table, bed, and sofa.

There's several types of drinks placed there.

This is kind of impressive.

With this much space, forget about changing room, I could even live here.

Men don't take much time in changing, so I obviously finished preparing without taking much time.

The only thing I needed to do was take off my clothes and wrap a towel around after all.

I place an extra towel on my shoulder and exit the room.

"Shiki, you okay there?" (Makoto)

I tried calling Shiki who was still not here.

"Yes, I am back." (Shiki)

"...Shiki, what is that?" (Makoto)

"What do you mean? Is there anything strange?" (Shiki)

The towel that was supposed to be wrapped around his waist, was being used to wrap his long hair up.

It was like a model in a shampoo commercial.

And his lower half was completely exposed.

How shameless.

"...Bring another towel and wrap it around your waist." (Makoto)

"Oh~, I thought the towels were to avoid having the hair inside the hot springs. So

wrapping it around your waist is also the hot spring style huh. Well then..." (Shiki)

I see.

I didn't need to worry about letting my hair inside the bath since I have never had my hair so long, so I didn't notice.

I think that the consideration of Shiki was not wrong.

And since we are within family, there's not really any need to hide the bottom...

But there's no problem in having it on, right?

No matter the case, embarrassing things will stay embarrassing.

I leave outside with Shiki who had returned.

We regrouped with Tomoe and Mio who were waiting in the same place.

"Sorry for the wait." (Makoto)

"Waka-sama, the first one should be the cypress bath, right? Waka-sama, you said before that you liked baths with the smell of cypress after all." (Mio)

"Right. If there's a cypress bath, I would like to try it first." (Makoto)

"Then it is over here!" (Tomoe)

It still hasn't begun, and yet, I was already having troubles with where to look.

My first experience of a hot spring in a parallel world has begun.



"This is splendid. It feels like the exhaustion in my body and mind are melting inside the hot water; and in exchange, a gentle sensation enters to replace it~. It is truly~~ nice." (Shiki)

Shiki was submerged to his neck in the water and was enjoying the hot spring.

His eyes were relaxed and his mouth was bringing out a natural smile.

He was stretching his body and looked like he was truly feeling good.

Not too hot, and not too lukewarm.

Maybe it is around 40°?

“Healing exhaustion, works for stiff shoulders, and it also blows away stress. It is truly the bath that promotes good health-ja na!” (Tomoe)

“I thought that it was simply bathing in hot water, but to think it was like this. I tip my hat, Tomoe-dono. This tree, it is called a hinoki cypress, right? This is also nice. A truly relaxing scent.” (Shiki)

“Umu! I heard about this from Waka, but after actually placing it at a hot spring and entering it, I can really tell the good in it. The flaw is that it slips easy when wet, but I also dealt with it properly.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe responds to Shiki with full confidence as she enjoys the bath.

It is certainly true that the Hinoki bath is nice.

It was such a nice thing huh. Once again I feel this way.

I was actually worried about the footing being slippery, but it seems that was unnecessary worry.

Maybe the inside of the hot spring has something done to it as well, there's practically no rough sensation at all and was simply comfortable.

“ ... ”

Just that...

Having Tomoe and Mio at both of my sides is pretty uncomfortable.

What's personal space? That's how close those two are.

Shiki is right in front of me in true bliss.

And Tomoe and Mio were laid-back at both of my sides.

Honestly, even trying to move is making me nervous.

There's a lot of things I want to say, but it doesn't turn into words properly.

"...The hot spring here is truly transparent." (Makoto)

When speaking of hot springs, there's quite a lot of them that have color.

When I dug it up, I didn't confirm it that much, but this one seems to be transparent and colorless.

"No, it is slightly milky white, but it is a weak color that only shows a bit. In the other places with standing hot springs, there's some with a bit more color you know." (Tomoe)

Tomoe answered me.

I have not heard of standing hot springs though... it is probably a bath you have to enter while standing.

Maybe it is like a deep pool?

"I see." (Makoto)

"Waka, a lot has happened in these two years, but times like this where we just pass it in a relaxed manner... are truly blissful huh." (Tomoe)

With a gentle smile and kind eyes that are normally not seen on her, Tomoe says this.

When I hear other people say two years, it feels like a long time, but when I look back at it, it feels incredibly short.

"Yeah. These kind of days are not bad every once in awhile. Thanks for everything, Tomoe, Shiki, Mio." (Makoto)

"What are you saying? I stated that I was happy. That's why there's no need to say thanks, Waka." (Tomoe)

Being looked straight into my face is, as expected, embarrassing.

It is a distance where our skin touches after all.

Also... it is floating.

I obviously have not entered with my older and younger sister after they matured, so I didn't know but...

Breasts float when they are big huh...

I could feel blood rushing up my head. <Hm... isn't the direction reversed?>

It is no use trying to move, so it is probably a sealed deal that I will end up dizzy.

"That's right. We are the ones who want to tell you our gratitude all the time. Since the time I met Waka-sama, I have come across many hard to get experiences. Delicious things, fun moments; everything. That's why, please let me be the one saying: thank you very much, Waka-sama." (Mio)

The head of Mio was placed on my shoulder.

By the way, I thought that I would get dizzy quicker if I were to submerge till my neck, so I wasn't that deep in.

The shoulder that was outside the hot spring water had Mio's head on.

Ooooh.

At this rate, it will be terrible in a lot of ways!

"Y-Yeah. Well then, I will go wash my hair. I forgot to wash it after all. Take your time you two..." (Makoto)

"Then maybe I should wash your back again. As a follower of yours, please let me do so." (Tomoe)

"T-Then! I will clean your front!" (Mio)

Using my last card I left to escape, I somehow manage to stand up.

But Tomoe and Mio didn't spare any room for me.

Tomoe played the card of washing my back.

Nothing worked on Mio to begin with.

What are you talking about the front?

"Ah."

The figure of Mio holding her towel as she leaves the hot spring was projected in my eyes.

I unconsciously let out a dumbfounded voice.

Because I was hit directly by it, it can't be helped.

The body of Mio that was wet by the hot spring water...

There's no day where I have cursed my eyesight -that had recovered when I arrived in this parallel world- as much as today.

Thinking this was bad, my retreating back felt a soft sensation.

"Are you okay, Waka?"

It was Tomoe.

Ah, I can't anymore...

"...Fuh..."

A mysterious weak voice that even I haven't let out before, was now released.

Strength left my whole body, and at the same time, my consciousness flew somewhere far away.

Shiki, why are you able to enjoy the bath normally?



“It seems we went too far messing around with him huh. Fufu, what an innocent one-ja.” (Tomoe)

“...I was not messing around at all though. I really had a lot of fun-desu.” (Mio)

“Right. I also had fun-ja. Everything I told Waka was the truth after all. The messing around was only on the part about washing his back-ja. But Mio, it is slightly surprising that there was no wickedness when you said you would be cleaning his front-ja zo.” (Tomoe)

“Uh... that’s because...” (Mio)

“However, I didn’t think Waka-sama was so conscious about the mixed bath. Isn’t it the normal custom in that other world?” (Shiki)

Shiki shifts for Mio who was stuck in her words, and asked Tomoe.

“...In an era long before Waka was born, that is. It seems like men and women don’t really bath together much in hot springs-ja.” (Tomoe)

“I see... But even so, it was unexpected for me. Seeing Waka-sama in such a state.” (Shiki)

In a room called private changing room, there were three followers surrounding Makoto who is sleeping on a bed with a red face.

But it was not really surrounding, as Mio was sitting on a seat beside the bed and fanning Makoto.

Tomoe and Shiki were standing at the sides of Mio and talking.

“Hoh~, why do you think that, Shiki?” (Tomoe)

“...If Waka-sama really sees us as comrades and family like he always says, he wouldn’t get so agitated, and wouldn’t get dizzy in this manner.” (Shiki)

“...Fumu.” (Tomoe)

“Of course, there’s no lies in Waka-sama’s words. Just that, regarding Tomoe-dono and Mio-dono, Waka-sama is...” (Shiki)

Shiki stopped his words there.

He was troubled in whether he should say it or not.

“What is it, Shiki? If you are going to say something, say it till the end. That would just leave a bad aftertaste-desu wa.” (Mio)

“Yeah, you are right.” (Shiki)

Maybe he resolved himself with Mio’s words, Shiki nods.

“Waka-sama is probably properly looking at Tomoe-dono and Mio-dono as members of the opposite sex. That’s how I thought.” (Shiki)

“...Hoh.” (Tomoe)

“...Eh?” (Mio)

“The view of being a family is deep, but at the same time, the fact that you are from the opposite sex as well. Waka-sama was probably pretty bewildered there.” (Shiki)

Shiki makes a wry smile.

A perception that shouldn’t be able to coexist existed in him. Just imagining it was troublesome, and when thinking of Makoto, Shiki could only make a wry smile.

“If that’s true, that’s something to be happy about-ja na.” (Tomoe)

“Waka-sama is... at me?” (Mio)

On the other hand, the two who heard of the hypothesis of Shiki, showed a reaction of their own.

Tomoe was aloof, Mio was bright red and muttering.

“Now then, when Waka wakes up, please tell him this, Mio. ‘I will go open the hot springs for the other people to use’. There’s a lot of people that are waiting expectantly

for it after all. If it is a popular one, a free pass for a year will cost two Ryo -no, I am feeling good, so maybe I should leave it at one Ryo~." (Tomoe)

Ryo is a currency that is circulated only in Asora. While speaking about the Ryo, Tomoe began moving.

"Ah, Tomoe-dono. Aren't you going to tell Waka-sama about the matter found in the books of Waterfall?" (Shiki)

"I will after dinner. In the first place, it wouldn't be good to do something that might dirty you, right after leaving a bath, right?" (Tomoe)

"...Right. Then, later." (Shiki)

"Umu." (Tomoe)

"Waka-sama is? ... Really.....?" (Mio)

Tomoe left, but even with that, Mio was still in her own world and hadn't returned.

In the same fanning position, she was happily looking at Makoto.

In this day, the residents of Asora learned of hot springs, and it gained high popularity.

But the ones who tasted the most happiness were probably Mio... and Tomoe.

Chapter 220

The summoned one

“It is not a recalling one, but a summoning one?” (Makoto)

“Yes.”

“No doubt about it.”

Shiki and Tomoe nod at my question.

What’s going on?

After I had gotten heavily dizzy in the giant bath-house -I mean, at the demonic mountain’s hot-spring village, everyone had shouted *cheers of joy as they enjoyed the completed* hot springs, and we returned to Asora.

Ah, it became a play of words.

Leaving that aside, I received an explanation from Tomoe and the others, and I understood it in my own way, and on top of that, thought about it.

“That book said that it was a ritual to return a summoned one to their original world though...” (Makoto)

It is one of the books that I was shown a few days ago in the dwelling of the Superior Dragon, Waterfall, living in the Meiris Lake.

Within it, there was information of a ritual that had pretty important details for me.

The requirements were surprisingly severe, and it seemed to be a technique that seemed to only work on me and no one else, so I decided not to use it and show it to Tomoe and the others.

And the report I received from them was something I didn’t understand well.

It seems like it is not a recalling spell but a summoning one.

Truly, what the hell is going on?

“There’s no mistake in that description. We have confirmed it as well. Just that, the description was strangely ornated, and the result after investigating about this ritual and aria that felt like it was disguised, we learned that it was a summoning spell for a different realm.” (Tomoe)

“Moreover, it was a formula that didn’t require the aria, the necessary tools, catalysts, and the sacrifices. It was a spell formation that was quite different from its description, so we thought we should report it to Waka-sama.” (Shiki)

I see.

The first possibility I can think of is a misprint, but it seems like it is not the case this time.

It was in the library of a Superior Dragon after all.

In the first place, Waterfall seemed to be the diligent type, and she did give off the feeling like she was trying to avoid me, but I don’t think there’s merits for her in deceiving me.

If this were Root, he would pop a cracker and say: ‘you got it right!’ and bring out a second problem.

The other possibility I can think of is...

“...So it means... that this is a summoning to call someone that can return the summoner to their world?” (Makoto)

Why is it that I don’t feel that good about this?

“I think it is appropriate to conclude that.” (Tomoe)

“That’s how we think as well.” (Shiki)

So this is the right answer huh.

It is also something expected.

Of course, I did suspect that there was the chance the explanation of the ritual was a lie.

We don't have a precedent that has tried out this, so it can't be helped.

Is the ritual itself a lie, or is something coming out from it?

At the very least, there's the chance that something could come out, so Tomoe and Shiki are on guard about that.

If it is something that these two can handle themselves, they would have already summoned it and continued with their investigation after all.

"And so, there's the chance that something bad might come out, so you decided to report it to me first, right?" (Makoto)

"That's right." (Tomoe)

"Yes." (Shiki)

By the way, the only ones here are Tomoe, Shiki, and I.

It seems like Mio went to prepare savory egg custards for me since I supposedly muttered about that in my sleep.

She seemed to be pretty hyped about it.

I just muttered it, so I don't think she would become like that just because of it. I probably did something else aside from that.

I like savory egg custards, so if she is going to prepare them, I am happy though.

"Yeah. Let me say this first but, if we are to do it, I think something incredibly troublesome will be coming." (Makoto)

"Right." (Tomoe)

"It is Waka-sama after all." (Shiki)

What an instant answer.

“...No wait, at that part, shouldn't you at least make it less straight?” (Makoto)

“Waka has been picking up trouble as if you have been aiming at them from the beginning after all.” (Tomoe)

“There are times when you even surpass the expected worst case scenario. If that was the luck of the world, it wouldn't be a laughing matter.” (Shiki)

“C-Calling it the epitome of worst is not a laughing matter either though.” (Makoto)

“Fortunately, Waka possesses toughness that can narrowly brush away those problems laughing.” (Tomoe)

They are truly saying whatever they want.

Even so, I have a strange luck to draw out the lowest of rates.

I feels like these rates are biased.

There's definitely going to be a moment when something good happens, so I am not hung up on those things every time it happens.

“Well, since you guys say it is a summoning spell, wanna try calling it to see? We could ask about how to return and stuff like that.” (Makoto)

“What should we do about the cost?” (Tomoe)

“The cost huh. Hm... It would be hard to gather one thousand people unless we pick some in a battlefield somewhere.” (Makoto)

The easiest way would be to kidnap people from a place where they are killing each other.

The sacrifices will be dying, so buying slaves for that would not leave a good taste.

Different from soldiers and mercenaries, there are a lot of slaves that don't have the resolve to throw away their lives.

“If it is someone that words can get through, there might not be the need to prepare the sacrifices, but it is practically as if the person itself is requesting it beforehand, so it is possible that we would be angering that person if we don’t.” (Shiki)

That’s true.

It is written that there’s the need to prepare it in this way in order to return to your former world, so if there’s plans on doing the ritual, there’s the need to prepare for it.

“Also, the place to do the ritual is also a problem. Should we do it in Asora, or would it be better to do it outside?” (Shiki)

Ah, there’s also that.

Since we are doing something big, it might catch the eye of the Goddess.

She has been strangely docile lately, but that doesn’t mean she is harmless.

She has a danger level and pain level of a first-class noxious bug.

Just that, it all depends on the indulgence of the other side and if the sacrifices have to be taken, so it would be better to do it in a suitable place.

Or more like, I can’t do something like this in Asora.

“If we want to avoid the eyes of third parties, it would be Asora. This place hasn’t been found by the Goddess yet. But the sacrifices are the problem.” (Shiki)

“Right. But why the need of sacrifices? I want to confirm if other things can be used, so it is the truth that it would give more peace of mind if it is in Asora rather than the outside where there’s the chance of someone seeing it.” (Makoto)

Because if the matter is related to magic power, I have plenty to throw.

If there’s no need for them to be people, then... I can just go to the wasteland and Kaleneon to mass capture mamonos.

If what’s clear is that the aria is a simple summoning spell, we can call it and confirm if it is actually a requirement in order to call it to this world.

“...It is not possible to call an existence higher than the Goddess, so if Waka prepares himself, the safest bet would be to try in Asora.” (Tomoe)

Eh?

Tomoe said something important as if nothing.

My resolve of trying in Asora hardened in an instant.

“An existence higher than the Goddess won’t come?” (Makoto)

Repeating her words, I confirm it with Tomoe once more.

I was internally scared that something like that trio of Gods might come out from this.

“The aria itself completes the process of the ritual composition. If someone in this world were to call an existence that surpasses the Goddess, there will definitely be a mechanism in the aria where it would ask for the permission of the Goddess first.” (Tomoe)

...I see.

In that case, there’s no need to worry about it so much huh.

Since the upper limit is something that’s lower than the Goddess.

“Then let’s do it in Asora. Just in case, at a place far from the town. We can have Tomoe and Mio protect the two towns.” (Makoto)

The two of them possess abilities fit for defense, so they are suitable for the job.

“We can have Serwhale protect the sea. Mio can protect the first town, and I would be able to accompany you.” (Tomoe)

That’s unexpected.

Does that mean she is worried about me?

Serwhale and the other sea races have pretty high defensive ability when they have the sea as their backing.

Even if their defensive power is not on the level of Mio, it is certainly true that they can be trusted.

If we were to classify Tomoe in defensive or offensive, it would be more of the defensive type though.

“That’s unexpected. Is it because you have investigated it, so you want to witness it until the end?” (Makoto)

“...Something like that.” (Tomoe)

“Understood. It seems like my help will be needed if anything happens, so you being there will make things easier.” (Makoto)

“Yeah, leave it to me.” (Tomoe)

“Shiki, how much can you prepare?” (Makoto)

“We have already done the necessary preparations, so the only thing that’s left is to do the aria. We have done the preparations in a place far away from the town, so it will take us time to move there though.” (Shiki)

“As expected of you guys. There wasn’t the need of me asking.” (Makoto)

They have already done the preparations.

With how things went, they probably prepared one outside as well just in case.

My respects.



There’s an ominous gate right in front of me that I would agree if it were called the Hell’s Gate.

I don’t know about the material it is made of, but it looks bony.

It is a double door, and at the top of the gate, an expressionless face is placed there.

The height is that of a 2 story building.

In other words, it is pretty big.

“In a sense, this is pretty easy to understand. I can see it as a gate to move between worlds.” (Makoto)

“That’s exactly what it looks like.” (Tomoe)

I got the agreement of Tomoe.

But well, it is not like anything will change with that.

There’s no followers of mine that would say this is of good taste, or that this is a fresh look for a gate, so I know that nothing will change much even if I got the response of someone.

We are currently at a wide grass-covered plain no race is living in.

This kind of place can be found in many parts of Asora.

We can even make explosion SFX scenes here.

“But since it has responded to the call, this is most likely a gate with a will. We can’t let our guards down.” (Shiki)

Shiki is serious.

Even without being told, with a gate like this, even I wouldn’t let my guard down.

“...This is the first time I have come to this place. It is a world that’s different from any of the worlds that have spread my spell formation. But...” (???)

Okay. I can clearly understand what he is saying.

Let’s question him.

“Nice to meet you. I am the one that called you here.” (Makoto)

“A mortal huh. Also... an undead, and a dragon. No, it is vaguely different. Mutated ones? Doesn’t seem to be the case. I see, you have received the ruling pact huh.”

As I thought, the face at the top is speaking.

It is slightly tiring on my neck, but well, that's fine.

It seems like he is thinking, so maybe I should wait for a bit?

Ah, now that I think about it, I haven't introduced myself.

Raidou -no, it is fine to use my real name.

"My name is Misumi Makoto. The ones here are my followers: Tomoe and Shiki. If it's okay with you, can I hear your name?" (Makoto)

"...Samal. But in the first place, for us, there's no point in names. By the way, where are the offerings?" (Samal)

Offerings. The thousand lives huh.

It came immediately huh.

"Samal-san, regarding that, why do you require the lives of a thousand?" (Makoto)

"It should have been written that it is necessary in the spell, right? Since we are here face-to-face, your side should have consented to that." (Samal)

"We were told that this was a ritual to return a person, that has been summoned, to their original world. But when we investigated it, the ritual composition was a simple summoning spell, and so, for the sake of learning about it in more detail, we decided to call you here." (Makoto)

He didn't answer my question, but let's go in a patient manner here.

At the very least, the presence this fellow gives is less than the one I felt from that Goddess and Athena-sama.

Instead of saying the pressure is weak, it is more like the wave it is giving off is calm. Well, it is something extremely subjective anyways.

"...If I didn't hear you wrong, it sounded like you said: you called me as a *test*." (Salma)

“The outline is correct. I thought that it would be an existence we could talk in this way, so I thought negotiations would be possible.” (Makoto)

“It seems like I have been heavily underestimated here. But, it seems like there’s enough lives here for one thousand. The quality is pretty good too. It can be covered plenty enough huh.” (Samal)

It was able to grasp the numbers of the Asora residents?

If it turns into a fight so soon, I honestly won’t be able to ask him anything.

From what I see, it is probably a special ability.

In that case, it is pointless to ask?

No, it is not like we can’t create a good relationship here.

“I first want to hear if you actually need the sacrifice of a thousand though.” (Makoto)

“Why do I need to tell a rascal like you?” (Samal)

Uh, it is the natural haughtiness that’s pretty popular between God-like existences.

I was thinking about suppressing him if he were to rampage, so I might be considered haughty as well though.

I feel a bad atmosphere from my front.

“You...”

“What did you...”

Both of my sides were dyed in a turbulent atmosphere as well.

“I was wondering if it can be resolved with magic power or something like that.” (Makoto)

“Magic power? Are you an idiot? What good would come from taking the magic power of others? There’s no way it would serve as a substitute for life, for the souls. A fool that doesn’t understand the machinations of magic power, how was it possible for

someone like that to get his hands on the magic formation to call me?" (Samal)

"Idiot..."

"Fool..."

I thought that magic power was almighty or something like that, but it seems like it is not.

Sacrifices are already on the realm of the occult, so I thought that magic power which is practically on that same line would work in a lot of things though.

Like the magma pond in Kaleneon.

"Then, are the life of mamonos and plants counted as well?" (Makoto)

"...You have no saving. If it is not souls with strong desires, there's no point. In other words, it has to be *mortals*, or a life that is closely related to mortals. Barely scraping would be until beast races." (Samal)

"..."

In that case, it would be troublesome to gather them.

Even though Waterfall went through the trouble of showing me this knowledge, it might become a fruitless effort.

If there's the need of sacrifices in order for Samal-san to show his power, I would need a thousand lives in order to go back and fro.

It is not a realistic thing to do.

"From what I see, you are quite the novelty. And it is not the first time I have met this presence." (Samal)

He is someone I know?

I haven't had any experiences with speaking gates in my whole life.

I have gotten used to speaking with a lot of things, but if it were in my time in Japan, it

would be at a level to leave a trauma.

It is a matter of course since an eerie gate that can speak would come out from who knows where after all.

“No, I think this is our first time meeting.” (Makoto)

“Well then, I am not so free you see. I will overlook the deficiency of sacrifices. I will gather them from the vicinity and end it there. But Misumi Makoto, I won’t be cooperating with you. You didn’t compel with the contract after all. Be grateful that I didn’t punish you at the very least.” (Samal)

“That would trouble me. I can’t overlook that.” (Makoto)

“...You bastard, even after carefreely calling a deity like me, you will obstruct my actions that came from your own inadequacy? Ritual, contract, agreement; get that into your head.” (Samal)

It was a God?

It is my first time hearing the name Samal.

No idea what myth this God is from.

If it is a myth that’s not from Earth, I wouldn’t know in the first place.

“I just thought about negotiating the goods that we would be contributing from both sides.” (Makoto)

“Recall in exchange for sacrifices. Isn’t that pretty clear?” (Samal)

“The information about the recall is practically shrouded in darkness. Then wouldn’t it be obvious that we would want to ask about the thousand sacrifices as well?” (Makoto)

“Then don’t perform the ritual in the first place. ‘Ask and you will be answered’, a naive thinking like that doesn’t even work in the society of mankind either.” (Samal)

Uh.

Well, I do think it is the responsibility of both sides to read the agreements of the contract.

But a part of the utilization in the goods is completely dark, so it can't be helped you know.

If it were the export of a top-secret military weapon, it would be one thing. Maybe teleporting between worlds... is a pretty incredible technique?

Even so, having a thousand gulped in a black box is just...

Yeah.

The sound-looking argument of the gate is harsh.

"Waka, doesn't seem like the other party wants to talk. I think it would be better to have him fix his attitude first." (Tomoe)

Tomoe, is that something you say while unsheathing your katana?

"Waka-sama, it is unproductive to keep company to something like a speaking gate. Don't worry, I will show you that we can get the information Waka-sama wants even if he is wreck." (Shiki)

Shiki, you are talking as if destroying it is already settled.

"So you can't even discipline your retainers huh. Makoto, truly a foolish... hm? I see, it is you." (Samal)

The gaze of Samal-san was in Tomoe and Shiki, and then returns to me.

What is it?

"I remember now. It was at the time when I was summoned before. It was a request from a certain Goddess, if I remember correctly, it was... right, a hyuman. She asked me to help out in bringing two failures of humans called 'hyuman' to the original world." (Samal)

?

Two humans?

“You are the child of those two, right? So that’s why you had a presence I found familiar. Hmph, I see. That Goddess really likes playing around with dolls, but...” (Samal)

...

A despising gaze incomparable to any he gave before was poured down on me.

The child of those two?

Is he referring to my mom and dad?

Hey, does that mean...

“Even the peasant disposition is inherited huh. Trying to bend the vow in a ritual after the deal, that’s truly the thought of a failure.” (Samal)

“...”

He knows about the moment when mom and dad transferred worlds.

Also, did he say peasant?

It didn’t feel like it was a word directed only at me.

That means...

“If you have inherited the blood of the residents of that distorted world, it is a given that your brain is lacking huh. That Goddess, in the end, she send those two to the most harshest of worlds with the lowest survival rate -the Origin world. I didn’t care about who and where I send them, so I didn’t say anything though. A God is a guest of honor that’s better than souls after all. Umu, those two abandoned the world they were born in, went against God, and were single-mindedly pushing their own way of thinking. Truly human-like.” (Samal)

“...”

I could tell that Samal -this gate- is talking trash about my parents.

Of course, it felt like he was also insulting the Goddess as well... but even so, this guy, speaking whatever it wants about mom and dad...

"I see, I see. So you are the one the Goddess said? That matter about taking away something important of them one day. Meaning, you were the pawn that was being raised by those parents in order to throw away?!" (Samal)

"...Shut up." (Makoto)

My words leaked out.

"That's funny. A person that is running an errand for that Goddess, in a place like this, has tried to haggle regarding the sacrifices and is trying to cling onto me? After being thrown away by your blood parents, you still want to meet them? How effeminate." (Samal)

...Shut up.

Shut up Shut upShut up Shut upShut up Shut up!!

Who clung onto you?!

I only had some questions.

Someone like you that insults my mom and dad, I would definitely not rely on someone like that!!

I could tell that my body was being wrapped up by a peculiar sensation I have felt a number of times before, along with an intense anger.

My face was burning, and I could feel my head and body growing rapidly colder.

Ah, I see.

I am someone that can't take abusive remarks towards my family huh.

My boiling point might have gotten even lower since I haven't been able to meet them.

But this is already... This guy is just...

"I told you to shut up." (Makoto)

"Do you wish to be counted in those thousand, you foolish son of mortals?" (Samal)

"You have a big mouth for a fake God that only talks about wanting thousand lives without even saying the reason." (Makoto)

I have already stopped looking at his face, and spat those words facing the ground.

This guy is unforgivable in a Goddess-class.

I will crush him.

Shiki said that it is okay to wreck him.

"...Fine. Become the first sacrifice along with your retainers. Consider it an honor that you are able to become the stairs of mine." (Samal)

"Tomoe, barrier." (Makoto)

"Already done." (Tomoe)

"No. The one already out is fine. Put enough spirit so that this guy won't be able to escape. Understood?" (Makoto)

"...Y-Yes." (Tomoe)

Tomoe stuttered in her words a bit, but she complied.

Okay.

I definitely won't let him escape.

"Shiki." (Makoto)

"Yes?!" (Shiki)

Why are you scared?

"You can go wild as a test for the rings. Try not to get dragged in it as well though."

(Makoto)

He told me before that there are still rings he can't use properly.

““Try not to get dragged”? Don't you mean 'try not getting *me* dragged'?” (Shiki)

“It is exactly as I said.” (Makoto)

“U-Understood!” (Shiki)

I don't think he will get a turn though.

I will be crushing this Omaru. Or was it Samal?

Who cares whichever it is.

It is a mere gate with an occult design.

It would be one thing if he called me an errand boy of the Goddess, but to go and insult mom and dad.

Don't go dying until I kill you a thousand times over.

Chapter 221

The small details don't matter

The gate opened.

A richly colored marbled pattern that was not kind to the eyes and a strange space was in sight.

And so what?

Without caring about it, I held up my left hand.

I create arrows with magic power in a manner that it surrounds the gate, and shoot them.

The target is big, so there's no need to aim.

Obviously, the arrows hit both the strange space and the gate.

"Not only are you big, you can't move either? For someone that was talking all high-and-mighty, you are—Otto." (Makoto)

My arrows were returned.

The ones that hit the marble pattern huh.

Hmph~, so it has that kind of power.

A number of the arrows that hit that strange space had their trajectory deviated.

It is a gate, so it has specialties that even I expected.

It is probably not an individual that can fight much himself.

While brushing away the arrows that were deflected towards me, I observe its form.

I don't need to worry about Tomoe and Shiki.

The two shouldn't have problems in their self-defence.

And at this moment, those kind of things are of no matter.

"You are quite the sturdy gate." (Makoto)

"This makes me question your sanity, Misumi Makoto. You, do you really intend to fight me?" (Samal)

The gate didn't have a single wound.

"Fight? No way." (Makoto)

"Then what was that preemptive strike just now." (Samal)

"Ah, that wasn't what I meant. It will probably not even be counted as a fight. That's how I thought." (Makoto)

My thoughts sinking into deeper cold was pleasant.

The confusion I felt in the past fight with Io was not present here and was all disappearing in this occasion.

I look at my enemy, do my next action, and then defeat it.

"Insolence, arrogance; you are the very representation of that. Truly foolish." (Samal)

Hm?

Something came out from Samal.

A mamono?

"You can't even fight yourself? Who's the foolish one here?" (Makoto)

Strange-looking things came out in succession from the gate.

But... every single one was weak.

It is on the level of the weakest top in the wasteland.

If it's a number of them, Toa's party would be able to deal with them without any problems.

Well, there's already tens of them coming out from the gate, so a normal town would be destroyed.

But this is Asora, and the ones here are not adventurers but us.

We are not in a normal town at all, so this supposition is totally pointless.

I will shoot them all to death.

For some mysterious reason, I knew where to shoot them in order to kill them.

When I thought this was easy game...

"...Shiki huh." (Makoto)

"I do think I have stepped in unnecessarily." (Shiki)

"...No." (Makoto)

I was planning on headshotting every one of them, but those guys suddenly began falling on their own.

I soon understood the reason why.

Shiki's ring.

The activation of Niflheim that can be used in a wide scale.

If used while holding back, it can be restrained to only weakening, but if there's no holding back, it can dry up life itself.

There's differences between individuals, but the mamonos that were trying to attack us were being wiped out without exception.

"So you at least possess the power to summon me huh." (Samal)

There was still composure in the words of Samal.

Well, they are coming out without any signs of stopping, so he is probably trying to push through with numbers.

From within the group, there were humanoid shaped ones, Elf and Dwarf-looking people, and armed human-like ones too.

Humans are a pretty rare race to begin with, so I think it is something resembling them, but that doesn't matter either way.

If they are coming at us, they can just die within Shiki's mist -Niflheim.

If they pass the boundaries of Niflheim, I can just shoot them with arrows.

It is truly a simple method with no need to worry about anything.

That's nice.

Well then, let's aim well this time.

"Bow? What an unfitting thing to use from the many choices you had for a weapon."
(Samal)

"...You are really good at irritating me. Almost like the Goddess." (Makoto)

Taking my stance with Azusa, I heard the words of Samal.

Seriously, I feel like I am doing a rehearsal for the time when I actually fight the Goddess.

Thinking about silencing him a bit, I aim at the masked part and concentrate.

And just like that, I shot.

"!!"

My arrows, that have become progressively faster since coming to this world, hit his mask and pierced through it.

It is not as if the strength was proportional to the speed, but it is not a problem even if it is fast.

It is actually welcoming.

A big hole was made right in the center of the mask and broke.

“Like I said, be a bit more quiet.” (Makoto)

I speak to the mask that was regenerating at high speed as if trying to cover up the damage.

While at it, I shoot several shots at the frames.

Every single one was able to gouge out Samal, but all were healed.

Does he have better stats in other points to compensate for not being able to move?

Then I have to find the vital points.

I lower Azusa for now and activate [Sakai], at the same time, I concentrate and observe Samal.

“...Oh. You have one interesting hidden card.” (Makoto)

“Perish.” (Samal)

While I was doing that, I felt honest surprise at what came out from the opened gate.

This is kind of... interesting.

“Well, you move from world to world, so it is a given that you will pick up a lot of things from various places huh. You seem to be specialized in that after all.” (Makoto)

The mamonos and the other random things that are coming out don't seem to have uniformity.

I strangely don't feel scared.

That's because I could tell it wasn't a threat for me.

I think it is a missile.

I don't know the specific warhead though.

For some reason, I was sure of it: this isn't something that can kill me.

At the same time as Samal spoke, a gigantic and blue something that can only be called a weapon came out at a close range of several tens of metres and was directed at me.

Of course, I already had a number of methods to stop it.

"...This time it is Tomoe huh." (Makoto)

"It may be of no concern, but this isn't something that I can just spectate. Sorry for intruding." (Tomoe)

"It is fine." (Makoto)

Noticing the tactic of Tomoe and confirming it, she readily admitted about intruding.

The several missiles, that were heading directly at us, passed through us, and after advancing for a while, they disappeared like mist.

I was thinking about stopping it with an arm of the Magic Armor though.

"You rascals... Could you be divinities?" (Samal)

Samal was spitting out mamonos continuously, but he has finally noticed the stupidly big mountain of corpses.

Even when they tried to climb over it, they died, and even if they were able to get pass it, they fell and died.

Well, it has become a pseudo-mountain now.

"Divinity? I don't know about that." (Makoto)

Shiki's Niflheim and Tomoe's Pure Illusory Reality.

Hah...

So this is all it takes?

I don't know about this divinity he is talking about, but honestly, I don't have any interest aside from crushing him.

"Fuh... there's no way. They are all interesting techniques, but if it is just one talent, there's plenty of people that have gained a technique that has reached the level of divinity." (Samal)

"...Waka, there's an interference in the surrounding space." (Tomoe)

Before the notification of Tomoe, I had already noticed it.

It wasn't only from the gate; it seems like he is able to put some tricks in his summonings as well.

So he does have a main method of attack huh.

It wouldn't do much if the opponent were to notice before the activation though.

"Well done noticing. It is normally hard to even see it; the notorious frenzied dance of weapons. But it is too late even if you notice it now." (Samal)

"I see. The missiles were a lot better than this. So this time it is just an imitation of Sofia?" (Makoto)

With one of them appearing behind me as the onset, western and orient weapons of ancient and modern times were appearing in succession at the surroundings.

This spectacle was pretty similar to what the Dragon Slayer Sofia, who had a contract with the Blade Dragon Lancer, showed me once.

The power behind it might be different.

Actually, it might be a different spell altogether.

But there's no way for me to know the details of it.

"Even if you rascals can erase missiles, you won't be able to deal with these swords that have the understanding of experts—?!" (Samal)

“A weapon that doesn’t have a user; no matter how many there are, there’s no point in it. I don’t know about this ‘understanding’ you talk about, but an expert that exists is a lot more scary than this. No matter how much performance, no matter what legend these masterpieces come from... their real worth doesn’t come out unless it comes in a set with their masters.” (Makoto)

And if it’s a rehash, that’s more the case.

There’s 108 -no, 112 huh.

So it wasn’t the same number as the worldly desires huh.

So close.

The numbers are not many. I locked them all in my sniping image.

I lift Azusa and take a stance.

The swarm of weapons that are moving simultaneously...

“Disappear.” (Makoto)

“...”

I could tell that Tomoe and Shiki gulped their breath. This is something that happened after I destroyed the hundred or so weapons.

I shot only once.

With my aim on the targets, the light streaks that branched from my hand had pierced them all.

The end.

“...I am a God, you know.” (Samal)

“That’s a bluff, right? I know a number of others that are not Gods and are still stronger than you.” (Makoto)

“I wouldn’t tell lies.” (Samal)

“Then, there are also weak Gods huh.” (Makoto)

I found several candidates for vital spots.

I tried shooting through one of them, located at the lower part.

“?!!”

Haha, the regeneration is clearly slower.

So it really is one huh.

Then, the *next* one.

“I have lived for long, obtained volition, and obtained the status of God. Just a bit more, and I would have been able to reach further beyond...” (Samal)

Outside frame, from my location, at the left shoulder, 7 centimeters and 2 millimeters in the inner part.

“Too bad then.” (Makoto)

I could feel that Samal was in pain.

There’s definitely damage.

The regeneration is clearly slower than in all the other parts.

The appearance rate of the mamonos and other things has grown slower too.

We have been intercepting them with Shiki’s Niflheim and my sniping, so even if it hadn’t grown slower, there wouldn’t have been any problems at all.

From my point of view, I can’t see the full picture of Samal with all the wreckage and corpses, but there’s no meaning in it.

As long as I know he is there, that’s fine.

“...Something’s strange—?!!” (Samal)

The protuberance at the upper part's right side of the mask.

That place as well huh.

Maybe all the candidates I found are all correct?

So they are not the type that bring instant death huh. It is a pain that he seems to still be fine.

I shot when he was in the middle of talking, so his words were cut off.

'Something's strange?'

Nothing's strange.

Just what is this guy saying?

"Not really. There's nothing strange. You are simply unsightly. I wondered about what you would do -being huge and all- but the only thing you did was bring stuff out like the gate you are. Moreover, they were all weak." (Makoto)

Left gate door, top metal fixtures of the handle.

Right gate door, two points at the frame.

I continued piercing them.

"?!!!! Then!! Why are you smiling faintly?! In the middle of a fight!!" (Samal)

"So you were still misunderstanding something? Didn't I say it in the beginning? This is not a fight; this is just trampling." (Makoto)

So I was smiling huh.

There wasn't anything amusing though.

"...Tomoe, Shiki. Was I smiling?" (Makoto)

"Yeah. This is the first time I saw you like this though." (Tomoe)

“This is also... the first time I see Waka-sama have a faint smile while preparing your bow.” (Shiki)

“I see. I wasn’t amused but angry though. I will be careful.” (Makoto)

Being conscious of my mouth and my eyes, I bear in mind to keep it emotionless.

If it was unconsciously, it was probably a habit of mine, but it is a strange habit.

Let’s be careful.

This might have been the reason that made Tomoe and Shiki draw back.

“You are saying I am unsightly and weak? I was born as an excelling magic tool! After several hundreds of years, I gained will! Collected souls as an existence that connects worlds! And I was finally able to obtain the status of God! And you are calling someone like me unsightly and weak?!” (Samal)

The status of God.

Divinity.

Hah...

So that’s what he meant by ‘divinities’ huh.

I don’t know what’s the difference between that and a God, but well, that’s fine.

In that case, this guy is in short...

“...Heh. Even if you say you are a God, you are just an object that gained will?” (Makoto)

“What was that laugh for? You rascal are a simple mortal yourself.” (Samal)

“And you are about to lose to that mortal. Sorry but, in my perspective, you are not a God, but more of a *Youkai*. If I had to choose, I would classify you as a mamono.” (Makoto)

“What insolence.” (Samal)

Because you know, when you talk about an object that gained a will, wouldn't that be a Youkai?

In my perspective, he doesn't feel that much of a God.

However, I like the basic idea of a tool obtaining a will after being treasured for a long time or being treated roughly.

That's why I treat my tools with care.

This guy called Samal might have been born from the result of one of those.

I wouldn't think about treasuring this guy at all though.

I would rather break it.

"You are demanding a thousand lives, so classifying you as a monster is plenty enough. You know, after being called a monster a lot of times, you actually get used to it. It isn't as suffocating as being called a God, and in the first place, it suits you." (Makoto)

"Unforgivable. I definitely won't forgive you." (Samal)

"Hahaha, what a coincidence. I feel the same way." (Makoto)

From below the mask, 3 millimeters at the contours of the chin region.

"...Fool." (Samal)

Even though he has been shot to the point of being unable to properly speak, he is still energetic enough to continue his impudent talk.

He is already broken here and there, and he still has the nerves.

"...Could it be... there's no way." (Tomoe)

"What's wrong, Tomoe?" (Makoto)

I heard words of surprise from an unexpected direction.

"This is the space of Waka and I. Even though neither of us has given the permission...

there's no way he would be able to retreat. Is that a special characteristic of this guy?" (Tomoe)

"So you intend to run away. So that wasn't impudent talk but retreating words." (Makoto)

To have him stay here, Tomoe and I had prohibited the exit and entrance of anything.

And yet, from what Tomoe said, it seems like this guy intends to run away.

"There's no way I will let myself be defeated by a rascal like you. The day I obtain a position worthy for me, I will celebrate it by slaughtering this world along with you all." (Samal)

"Waka, this guy will escape. I can't stop his interference with the space!" (Tomoe)

Is it because he is a God-like existence that's specialized in space manipulation?

Is there a position higher than that of a God?

It seems like Samal thinks that that position is what's truly worthy for him, so there's probably one.

If that's the case, then maybe there's some sort of difference between obtaining a spot as a God and actually becoming one?

Just like how he said himself: 'if it's only in one talent, there's already people that can imitate God-class', so it is not strange for Samal himself to be able to achieve this kind of feats in terms of teleportation.

It would be hard to keep him inside Asora by force or block him from entering.

But hearing Tomoe's agitated and nervous voice is kind of rare.

She cooled me down a bit.

Unnecessary noise has mixed in my mind.

Emotions are an hindrance for my objective of crushing Samal.

Hah...

“I have stored this place in my memories. You, your slaves, your world, and your family that lives in the Origin world; one day, I will definitely—” (Samal)

“I definitely won’t let you escape. That’s what I have decided.” (Makoto)

“?!”

The red colored coat is truly fast and useful as expected.

I was able to cross over the mountain of corpses and arrive at a distance that’s close enough to touch Samal.

There’s no need to hide it, so I activate the Magic Armor in a visible state and give him a punch as a greeting.

There was a normal response from it.

It wasn’t a vital point, so the recovery is fast, but it is not like there’s no damage at all.

“That power... you are calling me a monster, but you are the monster.” (Samal)

“You called yourself a God, you shouldn’t run away from a mere mortal.” (Makoto)

“Don’t speak any further with that unpleasant expression of yours, monster.” (Samal)

“Was I smiling again? It seems like it is indeed a habit. Sorry about that. Hm?” (Makoto)

The feeling of holding Samal was fading quickly.

So he really plans on escaping.

I thought he would be using that weird space to escape, but when I think about it, that would be strange.

He is a gate that’s opened to other places, and for Samal himself to enter those doors would be contrary to its function.

Because Samal himself is the gate after all.

The whole gate was slowly turning transparent.

At the same time, Samal's presence grows thinner.

"Not only me, you are even planning on putting your hands on my family and comrades; do you think I will let someone like that escape?" (Makoto)

If that's so, he is an incredible idiot.

I have already taken away the lives of many.

I am prepared for the retribution this might bring to me and my surroundings.

But I definitely am not going to shut my eyes and wait for it to happen.

Of course, this moment enters that category.

"Even if you won't allow me to leave, there's nothing you can do. In the space I live where distance and time don't exist, you think you would be able to catch me? You would need at least deep knowledge in space manipulation. You don't have what's required to call me to begin with. Farewell." (Samal)

Samal, who was practically transparent already, said his parting words.

The Magic Armor can't hold Samal's body anymore.

Then I will use Sakai.

Attacks won't come from Samal anymore.

Or more like, he is practically gone already.

I search for the traces of Samal's being... and find it.

"I told you... I won't let you escape." (Makoto)

I found a space opening in the place where Samal was.

I could see that it was closing in an unshapely manner like when one stitches a wound.

It was returning to its former state, and the space was already mending itself.

I call the arms that I was thinking about utilizing to transporting the magma.

Just like I imagined, the two arms appeared at both of my sides.

I didn't really ask anyone to give them maintenance, but they are giving off a dazzling shine with no blemish.

"Waka, he is already..." (Tomoe)

"I don't think it is too late. That's why, just stay there and watch." (Makoto)

Tomoe brings out words notifying that Samal has left Asora already.

But I didn't think like that at all.

'It is still fine', me and my power were thinking that.

I thrust the silver arms into the wound in the space.

The arms that had thrust into the rift were fighting against the space that was trying to return to its former self, and they tremble as they forcefully try to tear it apart.

"Could it be, you found the traces of where he escaped..." (Tomoe)

"And you are going to chase after him?" (Shiki)

Tomoe and Shiki predict my next move from the spectacle they are viewing.

Wrong.

I don't have the intention of chasing him no matter where he goes.

I am simply going to drag him back here -to Asora.

The space opening is slowly tearing up.

"...Now then, you can do it, right? Crush any kind of attacks; that's what I envisioned in you when I created you. If you are truly my Creation, you should be able to rip up

this closed space.” (Makoto)

As if being influenced by my will, the arms grow much stronger and the space is cracked in an unnatural manner.

The silver arms’ power to open up the wound of the space was stronger than the space’s healing power.

“It opened.” (Shiki)

Shiki dumbfoundedly voices out the reality.

The silver arms steadily increase in power and have overwhelmed the resistance of a different space.

In the place that has been teared up, there was a marble space similar to the one inside of Samal’s gate.

Is the space between worlds something like this?

If the words of Samal are true, the humans that fall in here would be transported to a world somewhere, or die just like that.

I haven’t seen a place like this even when I use the mist as an intermediary to go back and forth between Asora and the Goddess’ world.

“...Waka, will you chase after that fellow, and... return to your homeland? If you make that fellow abide to your will, it is possible.” (Tomoe)

“...Have Samal abide to my will? Hell no. I don’t want to breath the same air as him. Also, if I were to make him abide to my will, that would mean I would have to do a pact like the time with Tomoe and the others, right? Even if I were to put a difference in treatment... Something like that, I refuse.” (Makoto)

“But... you have lingering feelings for your homeland, right?” (Tomoe)

“What’s wrong, Tomoe? It is true that I want to return to Japan. However... I currently have you guys with me. Even if I were able to return to Japan, if I am unable to return to this place, there’s no point in choosing that. It would be irritating to get meddled by Bug, and there’s a mountain of things I want to tell her.” (Makoto)

“Waka...” (Tomoe)

“After I finish all of my business with the Goddess, and all those requirements are fulfilled, I will return to Japan. However, I will be together with you guys, forever. At least as long as you guys wish for my company, I will forever be there. That’s why, even if it’s possible at this moment, I still won’t return.” (Makoto)

“...”

Even though I feel like I said something pretty cool there, the two didn’t give me any reactions and that makes me feel a bit embarrassed.

This Tomoe is throwing cold water in my adrenaline; a while ago she did it and now she does it again.

Even though Samal pissed me off, I am unable to return to that pleasant sensation from before.

I am simply pissed off right now.

What a waste.

I will crush, destroy, kill Samal.

Because of these clear objectives, I was able to brush away all the things inside my head. A simple and pleasant state of mind has gone far away now.

This exhilarating mood inside my body that allowed me to move for those objectives, for some reason, is no longer there.

How to say it, I am closer to my normal self.

...Eh?

Or more like, why did I want to crush Samal?

Hm... right.

He insulted my mom and dad.

That's why I was angry.

To think I forgot the reason. What's wrong with me?

"...Well then, what are you going to do now?" (Shiki)

Shiki.

The first one to recover from this frozen atmosphere was Shiki.

"Simple. I will drag Samal here." (Makoto)

What I am about to do doesn't change much from before.

"H-How?!" (Shiki)

I thrust my arm into the marble space that was opened widely.

"W-Waka! What are you doing?!" (Tomoe)

"Putting your arm into the space rift?!" (Shiki)

Is that something to be so surprised about?

It was an opponent that I shot a lot a few moments ago, and I thought that this is the way I should do it though.

See?

"There he is. As I thought, I can really do it, see?" (Makoto)

"There, you say?" (Shiki)

"Waka, what you are plunging your arm into... is totally the domain of your opponent, and an unknown domain to top it off." (Tomoe)

"When he said he wouldn't let Samal escape, did he mean..." (Shiki)

Found a response.

A fission.

I only thrust my right arm, but I thrust my left arm as well and grab the handle of the door with both of them.

And then, since I am going to drag him here, I pulled with all my power.

“Didn’t I tell you?!!!” (Makoto)

A tattered gate was coming out from the marble space, and maybe because I did it with brute force, the moment I let go my hands, he flew into the sky.

“Eh!! A hand suddenly... what is going on? You... Misumi Makoto!!” (Samal)

“Welcome back, Samal.” (Makoto)

The space opening that was no longer needed, closed up in an instant.

In other words, the silver arms are free for use again.

Arms that I can move at will.

Samal is doing a trip in the sky, so me and my Magic Armor can’t reach that far.

But if it’s these arms... it is possible.

“You rascal!!!” (Samal)

The gate of Samal opened completely.

From there, several thick lights that reminded me of the blaze of Root were shot.

Even in his suffering state, he still comes out with an imitation, moreover, even in the end, it is still another inferior version.

I receive all those lights with my Magic Armor.

Not only did I not receive any injuries, there wasn’t even the need to reform my Magic Armor.

“The power was in its perfect state and it was practically with no aria!! All of these attacks should have been a first for you; they were all techniques and spells from a world that’s no more!!” (Samal)

“I am already used to spells with no arias, and I have already experienced practically all of this before. Not only are you a Youkai, you are even a copycat.” (Makoto)

“Dragging back someone that has already transferred into its space. That’s just... impossible!! Impossible!!” (Samal)

“Now then, just punching you would be pitiful, so... A rush attack with the silver arms -no, I name it: [Silver Rush].” (Makoto)

“Waka’s naming sense is just...” (Tomoe)

“Waka-sama, I think it would be less pitiful if you were to just punch him.” (Shiki)

“Then Silver Rush is the best choice. Go! Punch him! And while at it, gouge him out!” (Makoto)

Even when I try to lift up my spirits, I am still unable to enter the pleasant mood I had before the cooling down of Tomoe.

The arms flew into the air and chased after Samal.

And then, the moment they caught their target, they immediately began to punch.

Without caring much about the vitals, I simply punch him single-mindedly.

With how he is regenerating, the end will probably be very far.

Well, I will make the process a bit faster.

“While at it... here” (Makoto)

“...What is it this time?” (Shiki)

Shiki, who for some reason really drawn back, asked me.

Tomoe looked at the sky with a stiffened expression.

“Eh, it would be lukewarm if I just beat him to death, so I thought about shooting him to death too.” (Makoto)

“...What you have in your hand is a Draupnir, right? The one that was going to be disposed and was given to you by Ema and the Elder.” (Shiki)

“Yeah. You know, a Brid with a ring mixed in it, I actually haven’t seen its power with my own eyes. Isn’t this a good chance?” (Makoto)

“That’s true. He seems to be a sturdy opponent after all.” (Shiki)

“Right. Shiki, go to Ema and bring back more rings that are planned to be disposed.” (Makoto)

“Y-Yes.” (Shiki)

For now, I place the ten rings that I had in my possession, on top of my palm.

I deploy the same number of Brides in my surroundings, which have been improved to have their power and precision as their highest priority.

This is a pitiful spell that everyone said is no longer a Brid, but I like it.

At first, they appear in a spherical shape, and as if being pulled from behind, they slowly take the form of arrows.

And when the Brides get sharp enough, they become spiral shaped.

Yeah.

Confirming that they are now in standby state, I correct the aim to Samal as I place one ring inside all of them.

“First, let’s go with the one’s that only have one inside. Ready... Shoot!(lol)” (Makoto)

All Brides were fired.

They impacted on Samal, who was still being punched, and exploded.

Oooh.

The power increases by quite a lot.

Ah, by the way, even when that happened, the arms were still punching him without sparing a single moment.

He still maintains his form, so his sturdiness and recovery power is quite the thing.

“Waka-sama, I have brought them.” (Shiki)

What Shiki carried in his arms was a big and stylish jewel box.

It was completely filled with bright red rings.

“The projectiles are all in place.” (Makoto)

While pouring Samal with a gatling of Brids without any interval to spare him...

“Now then, let’s try mixing two this time.” (Makoto)

I deliberately avoided the vital points, and let him use his regenerative powers to his full extent... as I continue to trample him.



“I have begun thinking from the bottom of my heart that I should keep my teasing of Waka in moderation. Honestly, what happened just now has cooled down my spirits.” (Tomoe)

“It is impressive that you still think about moderately teasing him, Tomoe-dono.” (Shiki)

“Punching him nonstop from above, and shooting him nonstop from below. Well, he said that Azusa would be dirtied, so he didn’t use his bow anymore though.” (Tomoe)

“In the end, Samal wasn’t even allowed to fall at all.” (Shiki)

“There were several moments when he tried to summon something. I don’t know if he was successful or not, but it is certain that it didn’t change the situation one bit-ja. Regarding the altitude, not only was he not falling, I think it was actually increasing.” (Tomoe)

“Leaving aside this trivial talk, I certainly did feel that Samal possessed an enormous power that surpassed the High Spirits and Root-dono, but was that my misunderstanding?” (Shiki)

“I also felt that way. If you and I were to fight him, we definitely wouldn’t have been able to win.” (Tomoe)

“If he can return even when in Asora and in the presence of Tomoe-dono, there’s no way to chase him down. If what he brought out were only at that level, we wouldn’t have lost, is how I thought though.” (Shiki)

Shiki looks back at Makoto’s fight -no, at his trampling.

The attacking method of Samal by summoning, in the eyes of Shiki, that was something that had plenty of ways to deal with.

Shiki has begun to master the 13th steps, so he felt like there was plenty room to win.

“The missiles did give me a fright though. If we didn’t erase them and received them directly... Waka estimated that he would be able to take them on, but for you and me, it would be a bit rough.” (Tomoe)

“Missiles. The ones that Tomoe-dono changed to illusions? I could see that Waka-sama was feeling slightly happy when that happened.” (Shiki)

“Because they were similar to the weapons that are in Waka’s world after all. He probably felt familiarity in that shape.” (Tomoe)

“They have enough power to make Tomoe-dono wary?” (Shiki)

“It is a troublesome warhead. Samal didn’t have to hold back against us, so that much is a given though.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe glances at a part of the floor.

At that place, there was a normal house door lying down.

What was once Samal.

“There’s already no former shadow of him.” (Shiki)

“An object that has gained a will. A tool that has been utilized for a long time, gained a will, and transformed huh. It is second-hand knowledge from the legends in Waka’s world though. What a mysterious existence-ja no. I didn’t know about this either.” (Tomoe)

“It is most likely something that doesn’t exist in this world. I have never heard of it either.” (Shiki)

After Makoto’s trampling was over, Samal returned to the ground by the hands of the Silver Arm.

Being escorted to the ground by a pound, Samal had already lost his form as a door.

Tomoe and Shiki who thought that it would be destroyed at that rate, thought it strange that Makoto stopped his attacks and approached Samal.

And then, they saw a part of Makoto that they haven’t seen before.

Makoto told Samal: ‘Killing you would be the end of it, and that would only bring you peace’.

That’s why he stopped.

“‘You have worked hard and gotten this far, isn’t that fine already?’, is what he said huh.” (Shiki)

“Yeah. Obtaining souls by using contracts, he strengthened his own self; to be able to gouge out that power by the root, Waka was skilfull beyond expectations.” (Tomoe)

“In the end, he returned to being a magic tool -no, since he already has a will, the time he regains his consciousness will probably be shorter.” (Shiki)

“Probably, or probably not. Whichever it is, he is a pitiful one-ja. Not being able to bring out your will is practically torture. My condolences.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe faces the door and presses her hands together in prayer.

Maybe she felt the need to give her condolences. Shiki follows her lead.

A short silence fell unto the meadows.

“I will bring it to my research room tomorrow. We will have to clean up the corpses as well.” (Shiki)

The magic tool, Samal, was still capable of thinking, but was unable to voice out, moreover, it has been decided that he will be staying here for a night.

On top of that, from tomorrow on, his days as a guinea pig will start.

He is probably the very definition of: being too pitiful to watch.

“There might be something here that could be useful. There’s an extensive amount of races in this place, so let’s call for assistance.” (Tomoe)

“Yes.” (Shiki)

There’s corpses of people, mamonos, and weapons.

Within the darkness of the night, the eyes of the two that were directed at those corpses lying down, were cold.

“Well then, let’s return as well. The savory egg custard of Mio will cool down.” (Tomoe)

“Right... Tomoe-dono.” (Shiki)

After a span of time, Shiki calls Tomoe from the back.

“What-ja?” (Tomoe)

“Isn’t that great? Waka-sama wants to stay in Asora together with us, till the bitter end.” (Shiki)

“...Umu.” (Tomoe)

“Honestly speaking, depending on the moves of Samal, I thought that Waka-sama might decide to go back to his world, and...” (Shiki)

“‘Never return’?” (Tomoe)

“...Yeah.” (Shiki)

“Idiot.” (Tomoe)

“Sorry.” (Shiki)

Shiki lowers his head slightly.

“Ah~, truly an idiot-ja. Let’s return.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe opens a mist gate.

“But, I am also one-ja...” (Tomoe)

The faint voice of Tomoe reached the ears of Shiki.

By the time he raised his head, his Senpai follower was not there anymore.

Shiki didn’t think of confirming those words of hers.

He simply had a gentle smile on his face as he chases after her.

Tomoe and Shiki return to their residence in relief.

Makoto doesn’t plan on going back to Japan right now.

His smile when angered is dangerous.

The two, who learned something more important than the recall spell formation, felt like this day had big worth.

Chapter 222

Shrine of Gods

I overdid it there, but I don't regret it.

It is a phrase that is normally seen in newspapers and weekly magazines.

But I didn't think that the day I thought this would be when I am in a parallel world.

Now that I think back on the day Samal was summoned, there were other ways to deal with the situation that would have been more beneficial.

Thinking about it in advantages and disadvantages, I chose a disadvantageous one.

Samal returned to his original tool form, and is now in the laboratory of Shiki.

There's the need to research a lot in order to be able to utilize the powers of that tool, and it will take time and personnel.

In essence, I have thrown away my chance to obtain a fast way to return to Japan.

"...But well..." (Makoto)

Looking outside from within my work room, a monologue comes out from my mouth.

As I thought, I don't regret it.

If possible, I want to return to Japan. That's the truth.

But if that means I will have to leave Asora and everyone, my answer is no. I haven't reached any conclusions with the Goddess.

And to endure the insults thrown to my parents in order to return? That would be a no.

I want to return home, but I am probably not that hurried about it.

“Also, I am already learning the customs and the way of acting in this world. A shitty world huh...” (Makoto)

Even so, there are comfortable places similar to Asora and Tsige.

This room that was completely empty, is now decorated by a lot of things that the people of Asora gave me. I also received books recommended by Rembrandt-san and representative Zara, and also from my teacher colleagues. Right now, it even feels like this room is a bit cramped.

Even if it's a world that's ruled by that Goddess, it doesn't mean I have to hate everything.

As a whole... I like about 5% of it.

Not 50%, but 5%, so it doesn't change my opinion that I hate almost everything.

“Fuh~. Now that I think about it, in Japan, it is almost the season for plums. When that passes, it will be the season for the cherry blossoms. I think cherry blossom viewing is an event that Tomoe would be happy about.” (Makoto)

Rapum blossoms, plum blossoms, and then, cherry blossoms.

When I was in Japan, I always went around every year in March.

I think cherry blossom viewing is the main event in spring.

But in the famous places for cherry blossoms, there's normally food carts lined up and it becomes more of a festival.

That's why, even if my sight remembers the fully bloomed cherry blossoms, in terms of my sense of smell, it wasn't the scent of cherry blossoms, but the floured food and skewered food as well as the scent of alcohol.

Especially in holidays and in the night.

Cherry blossom viewing huh.

If it's cherry blossoms, there are in Asora as well.

When I looked around, I could see that there were a lot of mountain cherries, Kawazu cherry blossoms, and morning cherries.

I am used to seeing weeping cherries and Yoshino cherry trees.

Things like fruits and vegetables that are clearly not the type that grow in the wild, are growing naturally in Asora, but regarding the cherry blossoms, I haven't seen if they are the horticulture type.

The possibility is not zero. The one that has the highest worth in seeing is the Yoshino cherry tree, so it wouldn't be a bad idea to look for it.

I personally would like to see the mountain cherries and the weeping cherries, but for a cherry blossom viewing event, it would be best if the ones we first see are the pink and fully blossomed ones.

But it is not like we are growing any cherry blossoms for the sake of viewing.

A place where we can appreciate the cherry blossoms and are growing in numbers huh.

Is there one?

If it's the mountains, I can ask the animals in the mountains if they know.

Okay.

The faster the better. Let's try looking now.

"It would be nice if it's in a nice place in the mountains... eh?" (Makoto)

Asora has... expanded.

I haven't done anything.

There's been many cases when Asora expands by reacting to my magic power.

They happen mostly when I am sleeping.

In that case, this time is because... I defeated Samal?

I did use quite a lot of magic power and I tried summoning the arms.

I was a bit angered there, but... in terms of magic power, there are a number of possibilities I can think of.

“But this is a bit strange. I feel like the scale is pretty big.” (Makoto)

The expansion was bigger compared to the others.

The land that we are using in Asora is comparable to how much land a base takes in the wasteland.

In other words, most of the land here is not used.

Even if the residents here have surpassed the thousands in total, there’s also the races that live in the sea.

This is just an approximate feeling, but the current vastness of Asora might be the same as the part of the Goddess’ world that is currently known.

But we don’t even have a country. The most we have are two towns and a few villages.

We totally have too much to manage.

At first, it was as if we were creating a town in a miniature garden, and yet, by the time I noticed, the miniature garden had transformed into a savannah. That’s how it felt.

The expansion this time feels slightly different from before.

I use [Sakai] and investigate the land that has expanded.

The new land was obviously created at the edges of Asora, so I am looking at Asora as a whole.

When [Sakai] is too wide, it is impossible to use it to check details.

Right now, it is fine if I can tell if it’s mountains, valleys, plains, lakes, or a sea.

With my previous experiences as reference, it has probably expanded 100 kilometers in every direction.

If that's the case, this is quite the large scale.

"...Hey, you are kidding, right?" (Makoto)

As soon as I began investigating, I found something unbelievable.

I could tell my face had stiffened.

Asora itself is an outrageous place, but as expected, this is something I can't believe immediately.

In a sense, it was the same as when I learned about the sea, or maybe I am feeling even more surprise than that time.

Ah, the same as with the sea...

That means...

One possibility came to mind.

"Waka!!!"

Right at that moment, Tomoe rushed into my room without knocking.

...From the window.

Well, you wouldn't be able to knock if you enter from there huh.

Anyways, there's no doubt she is incredibly agitated.

"Tomoe, please enter properly from the entrance. This is bad for my heart." (Makoto)

"Running through the corridors is a waste of time! Right now, Asora is... right now it is...!!" (Tomoe)

"Calm down. I understand... probably." (Makoto)

"W-Waka, why are you so calm?! This is of utmost importance you know?!" (Tomoe)

"How to say it, I was surprised, but someone who was even more agitated than me

came to my room. Came in with a ‘Bam’ you see. Well, when the sea appeared, it was pretty surprising too.” (Makoto)

It is also because I have an idea of what’s going on.

Tomoe is agitated to the point that it is amusing.

It is probably because she knows Asora the most, and since she knows a lot about space magic to begin with, she ended up like this.

“When the sea appeared, I was at least able to narrowly understand! But this time, this is definitely impossible! If the formation of Asora is made possible by Waka and I, this is definitely impossible!!” (Tomoe)

“Well, you are right. Hey Tomoe, leaving aside if it’s a phenomenon we can understand or not, you understand that there are times when Asora changes completely even without us being involved in it, right? Like the time with the sea.” (Makoto)

“Regarding the miracle from that God of another world, well, yeah.” (Tomoe)

“Isn’t this time the same? He did say there would be more after all.” (Makoto)

“Waka... but...” (Tomoe)

“Let’s go investigate immediately. We shouldn’t agitate ourselves thinking about the possibilities of what happened, and simply accept them as something that has already happened. You see, lately, I have been feeling that there are things in society that are just pointless to think about.” (Makoto)

In the first place, I feel like living your life thinking in probabilities and rationale would be tiring.

In my case, the chances of me being transferred to another world has several zeros lined up, and yet, here I am.

“...Is that an enlightenment?” (Tomoe)

Tomoe seemed like she was impressed, and at the same time, seemed to be worried as well; she had a complicated expression as she looked at me seriously.

That's definitely not the case.

"Nope, it is an 'I don't care anymore'. I have learned that a lot can happen in life. So I decided to give up and accept the unreasonable and irrational points. In a positive way, that is." (Makoto)

"To give up... Giving up in a positive way is a splendid conduct. Fumu." (Tomoe)

"I won't question what you have comprehended, but, you are going to the investigation too, right Tomoe?" (Makoto)

"Of course, I will accompany you. After all, in that place, there is..." (Tomoe)

"Yeah..." (Makoto)

"A manmade object after all." (Tomoe)

"A manmade object." (Makoto)

The voice of Tomoe and I overlapped.



In the end, aside from me and Tomoe, Mio and Shiki joined us in the investigation.

All the followers.

I was thinking about searching for cherry blossoms, but it has been substituted by a long journey of repeating teleportations for around 30 minutes.

Because it was in a direction that has expanded and hasn't been explored, we matched the pace of Shiki who's the one that's the least skilled in teleportation, and it ended up taking 30 minutes.

There's no doubt that this is more like going out to a picnic for us, but for Shiki, it seemed to be pretty rough.

Well, we have arrived close to the location and the manmade object is in sight, so taking into account his recovery, we walk towards the objective.

“You really are unskilled in teleportation as always-ja na.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe makes an amazed expression at Shiki who has a dead pale face as he walks and breathes roughly.

“Even though we were teleporting so slowly, you still end up like this.” (Mio)

Mio didn’t make things easier for him.

Not only that, she went and comboed him.

The breathing of these two is still normal, and they don’t seem like they are in any pain.

I am also the same. Only Shiki is incredibly tired.

Even when I am sending him magic power and accelerating his recovery, he still looks like he is in pain.

“My apologies. It has been a while since I have done long distance teleportation repeatedly, so my negligence has gotten the better of me.” (Shiki)

Since the time Shiki grew able to go back and forth between Asora and the outside, he hasn’t used long distance teleportation that much.

He is using Asora as an intermediary to jump to a teleportation point.

I am basically doing the same thing as him.

Because that way is easier after all.

There’s also the fact that Shiki has not been that good at teleportation to begin with, and the moment he reached a level where he didn’t feel any inconvenience, he didn’t do much practice in long distance teleportation anymore.

I asked if he could endow a power like that to the rings, but it seems like the power of the rings isn’t something he created, but something that was already there. There are no rings that are blank, moreover, there’s no rings with teleportation powers.

The power of Shiki that is able to display a variety of abilities had an unexpected pitfall

to it.

“If walking is rough, it is fine to take a rest for a bit, you know.” (Makoto)

“No, I am... fine. I am receiving your magic power, so... I will recover... in time...” (Shiki)

“I see. This is just for reference but, just how tired are you feeling right now?” (Makoto)

He looks like he is in pain, and yet, his walking seemed to be fine, so I tried asking out of curiosity.

Well, the eyes of Shiki are blazing with curiosity at the thing that we are heading to, so he will probably forgive me for asking this.

Curiosity is greatness.

Because even though we told Shiki that it was far, he was adamant in going.

“For example... I feel like, I have... run for... 30 minutes... at full-throttle.” (Shiki)

“Ah, I see.” (Makoto)

You would die from that.

I can't imagine doing a 30 minute run in full-throttle.

In the first place, is space teleportation something that comes with physical exhaustion?

My breathing has not been disarrayed in any of the instances I used teleportation though.

“Why are you boasting about your exhaustion to Waka? Are you an idiot?” (Mio)

“No, Mio. I was the one who asked.” (Makoto)

“No Waka-sama. We matched the pace of Shiki and moved slowly, and yet, the person himself is breathing roughly as he boasts? That's the very definition of an idiot-desu wa.” (Mio)

Shiki is not even boasting to begin with.

His breathing is simply disarrayed and the color of his face is bad, that's all.

"R-Right, now that I think about it, Mio, is there any sort of physical exhaustion when using the space teleportation spell? It is my first time hearing about that." (Makoto)

Changing the subject, I move the direction away from Shiki.

"Ehm... I have not really felt that. It is on the level that if used correctly, it is okay, I think?" (Mio)

You think?

Mio uses magic in an instinctive manner, so it is hard to use her as a reference huh.

At the very least, it seems like she hasn't felt much exhaustion.

Also, in Mio's case, her stamina is overwhelming, so it makes it even harder to tell.

"...Don't go teaching something so half-baked to Waka. Waka, space teleportation magic normally consumes a fit amount of stamina and magic power depending on the distance. Teleporting to and from Asora is a different case though." (Tomoe)

"I see. I haven't really felt it." (Makoto)

"Eh... EEEH?!" (Shiki)

Ah, Shiki is looking at me with a face full of despair.

Your 'eh' is long.

Oh, I kind of feel like he is drawn back.

"Waka has stamina to begin with, and you always have your crazy body strengthening activated, so there wouldn't be much point in taking others as reference." (Tomoe)

"Crazy, you say." (Makoto)

"Sadly, that's the reality. I don't think there will be a day when you teach space

teleportation magic to others, but if that chance does come, I recommend you to first read some books regarding the subject so you can learn the common sense behind it.” (Tomoe)

“...I will. Thanks.” (Makoto)

Why is it?

I tried to do a follow-up for Shiki and change the subject, but now I am the one that ended up depressed.

“The teleport formations reduce the consumption of stamina and magic power, so it is in a range for practical use. ‘Using it skilfull and it will be okay’ like what Mio said is out of question, but it is possible to reduce the stamina consumption by enhancing your body.” (Tomoe)

“What, then Shiki can do just that.” (Makoto)

“Waka, Shiki used 4 rings and still ended up like this. That Shiki.” (Tomoe)

“...” (Makoto)

Shiki didn’t show any signs of responding to Tomoe’s words and simply continued hanging down his head and walking dejectedly.

Now that I look carefully, he does have the strengthening rings he uses for battle.

Just when did he...

He actually went through all that and still felt like running at full-throttle for 30 minutes.

“Well, with this as a lesson, I don’t know what’s the deal with you not being good at teleportation, but you should train-ja na. What’s the point of a follower if he ends up troubling his master-ja.” (Tomoe)

...

No Tomoe, try saying those words right back at you a few times.

Just a few days ago, you asked things like: ‘Where is the Asuka metropolis?’ and began

asking questions of history and archeology that had no relation to samurais and had already surpassed the boundaries of what a high school student would know.

Like hell I would know.

I wanted to say: 'Isn't it somewhere in Nara?'

It seems like the old Nara had a lot of battles, so in that period, it wouldn't have been strange for several Asuka metropolis to have existed in those times of war.

Just how far are you planning on turning back in the history of Japan?

What a fearsome love for Edo.

Even I haven't gone so back, and am not that knowledgeable about it.

If it's events before the Edo period, I probably have a bit more knowledge than normal.

And yet, Tomoe had to get an interest in the troublesome minor warring eras.

At those times, they used to set things on fire a lot, and the loss of historical documents was incredible. Meaning, it is most likely a period shrouded in darkness even for the Japanese.

My knowledge is so small that it can be laughed at.

"Waka?" (Tomoe)

"Hm? Sorry, I was thinking." (Makoto)

"Ah, sorry for interrupting. Was it regarding that building there?" (Tomoe)

Even with all that, Tomoe is always in a good mood.

Especially after this manmade object suddenly appeared in Asora.

There were several buildings.

I have confirmed their appearance with my eyes already.

I have also finished grasping the details of them with [Sakai].

When I try to use magic power for perception, it feels as if that place is an empty space with nothing there.

But when I look at it with the naked eye, or when I use [Sakai] to look at it, it is certainly there.

There might be a special type of barrier placed in it.

It is a place that wouldn't be strange if that were the case.

“Yeah, there's that too.” (Makoto)

“Waka-sama, is it okay-desu ka? It has been bothering since a while but, what is that?” (Mio)

Mio points straight.

What she is pointing at isn't the buildings that are several kilometers away.

It was a 'gate' that I am used to seeing.

I don't think it is related to Samal though.

It looks like a giant Shinto shrine archway.

There's no way I would mistake that shape, it is certainly a Shinto shrine archway.



From there, it leads to a forest path.

“That’s a Shinto shrine archway, Mio.” (Makoto)

“Archway?” (Mio)

“As I suspected! That’s an archway, Waka?! Wuuh, this is the first time I have seen the real deal-ja! Listen well Mio, that’s a gate leading to the residence of a God. You *can’t* cross right in the middle, got it? And after that, you...” (Tomoe)

Tomoe is excitedly telling Mio about a variety of manners.

Mio made a face saying: ‘I messed up’, but it was already too late.

She was splendidly caught by Tomoe.

She was taught things like: the way to cross the archway, how to clean your hands, and the way to pay homage.

For some reason, she even began explaining the methods that are not the common ones, like the Izumo Grand Shrine one.

It is normally only 2 bows, 2 claps, 1 bow. With all that information, you will only make her confused.

If you are going so far in explaining, rather than the 4 claps, it would be better to teach her the 8 claps method that works even in grand festivals.

Most Japanese people know about it, but there’s no way that Mio who lives in a parallel world would know, and even if she knows of it, I don’t think she would be able to tell that there’s a meaning behind it.

When we arrive at the archway, let’s teach Mio and Shiki the simple way of paying homage.

“As expected, is there no doubt that it is what Waka-sama said?” (Shiki)

I nod at Shiki who has finally recovered.

“Seems so. It is still far, but there being an archway must mean that there’s a road to a shrine.” (Makoto)

“Road to a shrine?” (Shiki)

“Ah, sorry. Saying it in a simple manner...” (Makoto)

It doesn't seem like we will need to wait before the gate, so it should be fine to give them a rough explanation about it.

If they want to learn in more detail about it, they can be the sacrifices of Tomoe- I mean, their students.

“Meaning that we will be entering the residence of someone with influence in the Shinto shrine. Well, just consider it a path leading to a temple in order to pray.” (Makoto)

“Temple... So a Shinto shrine is really a building with that kind of objective. The image of Gods in Asora isn't that good though...” (Shiki)

“There's exceptions, but just think of them as incredibly old temples. We will just have to look forward to what we will be seeing there. But I don't think there's the need to get so tense about it.” (Makoto)

“An old temple, I feel like those words in itself are already contradicting themselves though. An old temple is it. They are unintelligible words like when trying to describe Waka-sama.” (Shiki)

It seems like the image I provided to Shiki has made him even more confused.

Was it really that hard to understand?

I thought it went well though.

Well, let's just leave Shiki alone.

That's right. The manmade object that appeared in Asora is... a Shinto shrine.

This is just a possibility but, I think there's no doubt that this is the other gift of the Gods.

A Shinto shrine as a gift from God... just saying it feels surreal.

Moreover, several buildings have appeared as well in this vast plot, so it makes it quite the present.

The full view is being obstructed by the forest, so not everything is in sight.

Honestly speaking, even when I have grasped everything with [Sakai], I still don't know what this is unless I go around checking it out myself.

We advance towards the giant archway that is not coated in vermilion and seems to be made of stone.

Chapter 223

Shinto Shrine.....

“As I thought, it seems to be only one person.” (Makoto)

“If even Waka feels that way too, then there’s no mistake. It is hard to believe that there’s only one person here in this vast grounds-ja...” (Tomoe)

Tomoe seems to be pondering something.

Having entered the grounds of the Shinto Shrine, there hasn’t been anything strange happening yet.

Just that, it seems like in this excessively spacious grounds, we learned that there’s only one person.

Doesn’t seem like it is moving.

Must mean that it is waiting for us.

“For a Shinto shrine precinct, it feels strange.” (Mio)

Mio is looking curiously around as she follows us.

Shiki is doing pretty much the same.

“It is completely different from the temple of the Goddess. If this is the precincts of a shrine, just who’s the God?” (Shiki)

It seems like he is stuck in a question that he won’t be getting an answer by himself, so maybe he is actually doing something a bit different from Mio.

Even so, I check the surroundings like Mio.

Tall trees were lined in a row.

Every single one of them were so tall that I had to look up.

The atmosphere they create is calm, dignified, and yet, it was comfortable.

Maybe because the one who made it was an actual God.

It is a place that would be fit to call: a legendary forest, or an ancient forest.

“Truly fitting for a Shinto shrine. If it has this much space, it could even be called a Grand Shrine.” (Makoto)

“That much? If that’s the case, we can expect much from the actual place huh.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe’s eyes were sparkling.

Maybe she is unaware of it, her breathing is also rough.

What I am most interested about is in “how long” the person in this place has been here.

Thinking about the place, maybe it is a Shinto priest?

But this is supposed to be a present from Daikokuten-sama.

In that case, I feel like a Japanese-style Buddhist temple would be more fitting.

We climb one by one the stairs that have no fallen leaves.

It seems like the cleaning is being properly done.

Thinking of the cleaning a single person would have to do in a place as big as this, I would feel like it would be more of a punishment than anything, but there’s probably magic involved in this.

“I thought it would be a more troublesome forest filled with traps.” (Mio)

Mio, this is no dungeon.

You can’t do something like that in a Shinto shrine... probably.

Well, it is certainly true that I am a bit disappointed in this atmosphere that doesn't have a speck of hostility.

Now that I think about it, when I received the sea, they didn't set up anything worth mentioning.

They probably gifted me a person to take care of the Shinto shrine or something like that.

There's no Shinto shrines and temples in Asora after all.

"Oh, I can see it now. Is that the Shinto shrine that can be seen in Waka-sama's world?"
(Shiki)

Just like Shiki said, a Shinto shrine building that I am used to seeing appeared in our field of vision.

Now that look at it in person, it is pretty big.

Surprisingly big.

"Ooooh!!" (Tomoe)

Tomoe is trembling.

She is incredibly moved.

A wry smile appears in my face.

But my smile soon froze.

That's because of the other buildings that I suddenly saw at the sides.

What... is this?

"Uhm, Waka-sama? In my eyes, the buildings at the front and the right don't look like they have much similarity. Well, they have a few similarities though. But the one at the left, isn't the atmosphere completely different from the rest?" (Mio)

"Y-Yeah." (Makoto)

I could only nod at the question of Mio.

It was certainly as Mio said.

“It instead feels like only the one at the left has traces of a Goddess’ temple, or how to say it, in my eyes, it is close to the temples I am used to seeing. The ones at the front and the right are completely unknown to me though.” (Shiki)

“...Yeah.” (Makoto)

I also nod at the words of Shiki.

The building at the left felt more like a temple of the Goddess.

It doesn’t match this place.

I do know that there are separate shrines in the Shinto shrine grounds.

Even in the common knowledge inside me, there’s information about this.

The ones called Jingu-ji.

Also called the Protectors of the Shrines, or Palace Guards; the materialization of Shinto and Buddhist syncretism.

They are shrines that protect the Shinto shrine, or so I think.

That’s as far as I know as a hobby.

Leaving aside the modern era, the Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines obviously had times when they were at odds, so I think that the Jingu-jis vary depending on if it is a Buddhist temple or a Shinto shrine.

“...Waka, I am incredibly moved by this, but I see something at my left that is throwing cold water in my mood though. Is that a Shinto shrine too?” (Tomoe)

“That’s not. Or more like, the one at the front is certainly a Shinto shrine, but the one at the right is a Buddhist temple. And the one at the left is a foreign country’s temple.” (Makoto)

“As I suspected, the one at the right is a Buddhist temple! Then it is the so called Jingu-ji, right?! Like the one at the Toshogu shrine. I see, I see, so that’s what this is huh.”
(Tomoe)

So she even knows of a place that has them.

As expected of Tomoe.

Gongen-sama are supposed to be the temporal forms of Buddha-sama after all.
<Gongens were believed to be the manifestation of a buddha in the form of an indigenous kami, an entity who had come to guide the people to salvation.>

Even so...

“That thing... it is so out of place. Even if a Shinto shrine has a lot of depth to it, I feel like this is a bit too deep...” (Makoto)

“A foreign country’s temple. Now that I think about it, in Waka-sama’s world, there were indeed a variety of religions.” (Shiki)

“Well, yeah. Taking that as the context, the religions we have here would be 3.”
(Makoto)

“3, is it. That’s quite the confusion.” (Shiki)

What Shiki said is completely right.

“Well then, the one on the front would be the Shinto shrine; Shintoism.” (Makoto)

Pointing out the one at the front, I tell Shiki.

“The temple at the right, Buddhism.” (Makoto)

“Fumu, fumu.” (Shiki)

“And the one at the left is a Parthenon temple... I think. If I had to put a classification on it, it would be Christianity?” (Makoto)

“Why do you say it as a question?” (Shiki)

“The design has remained, but it has been engulfed in history and repeatedly received changes, in the end, it is a place that has been taken by many different religions.” (Makoto)

“In other words, there’s no remainings of its teachings?” (Shiki)

“Well, that would be the case I guess. From what I know, that is.” (Makoto)

The Greece mythology isn’t something that has been named as a religion and remained in the current times.

Greece was taken by Rome, and the Gods of Olympus have received name changes, and after being influenced by the Israel religion, it settled down as the next worship target of the Roman Empire.

But the Christian religion that was born from that Israel religion had received the official recognition of the Roman Empire, and it exterminated the other religions, or something like that.

There have been myths from other races flowing into Rome, and at first, the Christian religion had a mixture of those, is how I remember it.

Looking back at Christmas, there have been theories that say that it was a festival for the Gods in Rome.

Hmm, if I remember correctly... Saturn...

I kind of feel something is wrong.

But I remember I laughed at the name of that old game console with the same name, so there’s no doubt the name was Saturn.

Was it some sort of festival because of the winter solstice?

I just researched a bit deeper from what I learned in school and it isn’t knowledge that one can teach to someone else, but I still did my best there.

There are times when I want to show off a bit.

“Speaking of Christianity, it is one of the worldwide religions, right? If I remember

correctly, Buddhism is also one of those.” (Shiki)

“Yeah, that’s right. By the way, christianity is monotheist, but in the myths, there’s a lot of Gods appearing. So it would be better to not force yourself classifying it in one of those religions. Sorry for the confusion.” (Makoto)

“Don’t mind it.” (Shiki)

“I think it would be fine to just place a name like Greece myth religion, or Hellenism religion though. But the religion has not remained in the current times after all. The myths are famous worldwide though.” (Makoto)

“There’s some mysterious teachings in the world of Waka-sama.” (Shiki)

“Ahaha...” (Makoto)

“Even so, in the beginning, there were a lot more Gods, and yet, right now there’s only one. Did the Gods do a battle royale or something?” (Shiki)

B-Battle Royale.

In a sense, that might be correct.

The ones that actually fought were the humans, and it was more of a fight between representatives.

“Shiki, if you are to call it something, it should be *Kodoku*, right? The strongest God devours the rest, and had its name resound for the posterity-ja.” (Tomoe) *<Kodoku: mixing several insects in a jar and have them kill one another until only one survives.>*

Tomoe, describing it as Kodoku is a bit...

Well, a battle royale and Kodoku are both a battle till the death though.

It is true that the history of religion is dyed in blood, and there’s probably something wrong with me, because I think that there’s no mistake that the strongest survived.

“W-Well, leaving aside that stuff, the Buddhist temple isn’t that strange since there’s Jingu-jis just like Tomoe said, but the temple at the left, I haven’t seen it before. I think it is a Parthenon temple, so maybe it is fine to call it a Jingu Parthenon?” (Makoto)

It is completely white and it is made of stone after all.

It is clearly giving a different atmosphere.

The trees at its surroundings are a type I don't have any recollection of as well.

"Doesn't sound good. Why is something like this here?" (Shiki)

"I do have a slight idea of why. Do you remember the Gods that came here before?" (Makoto)

"Yeah, that group of three, right?" (Shiki)

"These are probably the temples that pertain to those three. The one at the front would be Susanoo-sama, or maybe Tsukuyomi-sama; the one at the right, Daikokuten-sama; the one at the left is most likely Athena-sama." (Makoto)

"Hohoh~. In that case, that means that Gods from different organizations went through the trouble to come to Asora? That's interesting." (Shiki)

Ah.

That's right.

If we are talking about Athena-sama, then that tree might be an Olive tree.

If I remember correctly, the Olive tree and Athena-sama have a deep connection.

If it were the Roman Minerva-sama, it would probably be a different tree.

But I can't differentiate Greek temples and Roman temples. The person herself said she was Athena, so I think I am correct though.

I haven't seen Olive trees before after all.

The most I have seen would be the matured fruit turned completely black.

"And so, the presence comes from the temple at the front. It seems like the other party doesn't have any intentions of coming out itself. Since we have come all the way here, we should do a shrine visit. I do think that's the manner when coming to places like

this after all.” (Makoto)

“What’s the correct etiquette in this place, Waka?” (Tomoe)

“Let’s go for the normal 2 bows, 2 claps, and 1 bow. If that’s not the correct one, the person inside will probably tell us. See there, there’s a water place. Tomoe, teach Mio and Shiki the way to use it.” (Makoto)

“Understood! Mio, Shiki, follow me!” (Tomoe)

There’s a pretty big and splendid water place.

As if waiting for the moment for me to suggest her to, Tomoe takes Mio and Shiki along, and she teaches them how to use the water place while doing it herself.

A wide space with gravel laid all over.

The Buddhist temple at the right and the Parthenon at the left.

It is certainly a familiar spectacle.

To the point that I unconsciously forgot about Asora for a moment.

It really brings me back.

Is ‘water place’ the common way to call it, or is it ‘hand water’?

Both are correct, so it is hard to decide for one.

By the way, I call it ‘water place’, but it differs completely between people.

But from what I have heard, ‘hand water’ is the one that most people use. <<*Hand water= Te Mizu, water place=Chozu*>

Okay, let’s call it water place in Asora.

Because I would have to teach them about the other ways of calling it as well.

Kukuku.

While I was thinking that, it seems like the three have finished using the water place.

I also go and cleanse my hands and mouth quickly.

There was no snake or dragon gushing water from their mouth, instead, there's a flower basin that was made out of stone and had water coming out naturally.

Maybe the bottom of the flower basin had water coming out, the water surface had ripples.

Well then, let's do the shrine visit.

I stand in front of the offering box that's probably empty inside.

Since it is a shrine in Asora, I place in the currency of Asora that Tomoe made.

1 ryo per person, so it would be 4 ryo.

Next, I grab the robe that has a bell connected above it, and rang it loudly.

"You can do the same as I did. This may be obvious, but don't show hostility." (Makoto)

The three nod.

First, they make a light bow.

Two deep bows, two claps, and then, one bow.

At the end, one light bow.

The beginning and the end are probably a greeting of sorts.

This feels really nostalgic.

Tsukuyomi-sama, I am somehow still alive.

One of my objectives is to return to Japan which you told me was impossible, but since I have other things left to do, I am thinking about prioritizing those first.

No matter what I become in the future, the words you told me: 'Live freely and do as

you please', have become a support for me.

Please take care of your body, and recover with a tranquil heart.

My last bow became a bit long.

I lift my head and take a deep breath.

"Okay, we are done. Good job." (Makoto)

I face the three.

The presence moved.

At our left, from inside the main shrine.

As always, no hostility.

There has been no contact yet, but it has moved to a pretty close distance from us.

This is bad. I have no experience in entering a shrine.

If it's for a prayer, I have probably done it when I was a kid, but I don't remember now.

I look at the direction of the presence.

Hm?

Is that an Omamori reception counter?

There are *charms* there after all.

...Eh?

"It seems like it is telling us to go there." (Tomoe)

"It feels like that person is belittling Waka-sama, and that isn't pleasing-desu wa."
(Mio)

"Tomoe-dono said a while ago that ringing the bell signifies a greeting to the God. That

person must have moved because of that.” (Shiki)

“Well, let’s go and see. At least let’s be grateful that that person is not telling us to go to the Buddhist temple and the Parthenon temple first.” (Makoto)

I honestly don’t know how to pray in a Parthenon.

—-

When we went to the Omamori stand, there were a number of charms, votive pictures, and ceremonial arrows lined up there.

The difference between this and my previous world would be that these items clearly have magic power tinged in them.

When talking about charms, they are something like amulets which provide a passive effect.

But the ones here are more like talismans and feel like they give off an active effect.

They are probably charms that have quite the effectivity.

—-

The inside of the main shrine is being delimited by the the sliding doors.

But that person is certainly there.

“Isn’t it okay to meet each other face to face already?” (Makoto)

I make up my mind and called that person.

As if responding to my words, the curtains opened quietly, and then, the door opened.

...

There’s one shrine maiden-san with three fingers pressed on the floor.

She didn’t use her hands but a spell to open the door huh.

The person herself has her head lowered deeply.

Why is it, I don't feel any fear and I don't feel that much power from her, and yet, it is strangely suffocating.

I don't know if to call it mental pressure, but I could feel something from that girl.

I unconsciously gulp down my breath.

Then, the girl slowly lifted her head.

White, her skin was so white it was unbelievable.

Black hair, slightly bright light brown eyes, and her shrine maiden clothes made me think that she was Japanese for a second.

But I felt as if her skin itself was negating that she was a person.

I don't think it is make-up. It was a white that was more like paint.

But it wasn't pure white, I could feel a tinge of blue in it.

In my eyes, it looked like the color was not natural.

"Nice to meet you, Goshujin-sama. I was working as the shrine maiden of Tsukuyomi-sama, but I have been ordered to serve Makoto-sama. Please take care of me for the many years to come."

With a beautiful gentle smile, she called me her Goshujin-sama.

Chapter 224

A dangerous custom

“Tea.”

“Thanks.” (Makoto)

“I appreciate the long journey you made to come here. I... have longed for this day to come since long ago.”

Being invited inside the shrine, we were led to a place that seems to be the guest room, and the white skinned shrine maiden-san poured tea for us.

Now that I think about it, there's not much opportunities to enter a shrine.

Moreover, it is not to the place where we give prayers, but in a space where the shrine maiden-san is living in.

In modern days, the people in that line of work normally lived in other places, and most of them had to go back and forth between their home and the shrine.

I have obtained an experience I didn't expect I would get.

“I want to confirm this first but, did someone tell you to serve me?” (Makoto)

“Shiva -Daikuten-sama. This Shinto shrine, the Buddhist temple inside this grounds, and the temple; all of those three are joint presents from Daikokuten-sama, Susanoo-sama, and Athena-sama respectively.”

The shrine maiden-san speaks out the same names of the Gods of my previous world.

Only a restricted few know of my contact with those personages.

Then there's low chances that this is a trap huh.

...How to say it, the vigilance that Tomoe, Mio and Shiki are showing towards the

shrine maiden-san is quite the thing, so even I end up getting nervous and cautious.

There has been no instance where the Goddess has made contact with Asora, and she has been surprisingly docile lately.

This may be what they call: 'the calm before the storm', so I can't be relieved though. Trying to set me up by using the names of the Gods that were one of the reasons she has turned docile would be too big of a risk for her.

That thing is not an impressive God that would be able to intervene in Asora without us being able to notice.

I exchange glances with Tomoe and the others and tell them with my eyes to calm down the slight hostility they are showing.

However, Tomoe looks like she is actually interested in the shrine maiden-san and wants to ask her a lot of things though, and yet, she is showing hostility as well.

I currently don't see this person as someone that dangerous.

It is certainly true that I am feeling something by being face to face with her, but even I myself don't know what that 'something' is.

I had a truly small lingering discomfort inside my heart.

That's how I felt.

I don't feel danger from her, and I don't see her as a threat either, so being stubborn because of a vague feeling based on my instincts would just be wrong.

"Athena-sama, is it. So that's why there's also a white Parthenon-looking temple as well." (Makoto)

The shrine maiden-san made a slight sad expression.

"Goshujin-sama, please stop with the formal speech. I am a servant of yours. Please, treat me... like those three personages there."

"Hah..." (Makoto)

Even if you tell me that... treating you the same way as Tomoe and the others that have been living with me for a considerable amount of time would be a hard request for me.

Because of that, I ended up giving a vague response.

I am still not used to this sudden master and servant relationship.

I did have a similar experience with Sari, but I think I won't be treating her in the same way as Tomoe and the others in my lifetime.

If I had bought slaves in moderation and had gotten used to their treatment, would it have been any different?

...Those things are not in my nature though.

"That's quite the demand even though you suddenly popped up-desu wa ne." (Mio)

"Exactly-ja. In the first place, to treat you in the same way as us when you haven't even introduced yourself, isn't that way too lacking in manners?" (Tomoe)

"..."

Slightly after my vague response, Tomoe and Mio gave complains to the shrine maiden-san.

Shiki didn't really say anything.

But he doesn't seem to be in a good mood.

It is different from exhaustion, he is giving off a dangerous atmosphere.

"Asking for equal treatment? I wouldn't dare. Tomoe-san, I simply want to be added to the lowest seat of your group, that's all. Regarding my name... I was about to talk about that. There's some slight circumstances you see."

Tomoe?

Why does this shrine maiden-san know the name of Tomoe?

Leaving aside my name, did I even tell the Gods about the name of Tomoe?

“...This doesn’t feel that good. I don’t remember telling you my name.” (Tomoe)

“I have been informed of the minimum required information beforehand. Also, I apologize for my discourtesy. Sorry for that.”

“Hmph.”

“Ah then, can you please tell me the circumstances of your name?” (Makoto)

It would be troublesome if this becomes too stormy.

I somehow cut into it and asked for an explanation from the shrine maiden-san.

That Tomoe, she was angered by the fact that the shrine maiden-san didn’t introduce herself?

“It seems like Goshujin-sama is knowledgeable about Shinto shrines, so you probably already know. There’s a few sides to being a shrine maiden.”

She send me a meaningful gaze.

Well, I do have a bit of knowledge.

“The shrine maidens of modern times do things like Shinto ritual service and priesthood assistance, but if we go back a little, there were a lot of shrine maidens that did things like: divinations, prayers, and spiritualism.” (Makoto)

“In my case, I am an existence that is higher than the latter, but I currently also do the former ones as well.”

“Is it like the *Itako* and the *Azusa shrine maidens* that are not that many compared to the past?” (Makoto)

“That’s how it is. Goshujin-sama doesn’t seem to be in need of any of those, so I will leave the complementary explanation for a later time, and will prioritize the main issue. I had several names in the past. But they were all directed at me by the being I was related with.”

“ .. ”

Is she saying that she has been a spirit medium since forever?

Does that mean she is specialized in spiritualism?

“I am a shrine maiden that serves the Gods, and am also one of them. That’s why I have abandoned those names, and since I have gotten a new master, I don’t have a name to give. If I had to put an example, it would be like a relationship between the sun and moon, the puppet of the God I am employed with.”

“...I don’t really understand it well.” (Makoto)

It was my honest impression.

It seems like she is trying to say that she is an existence that changes names frequently and her existence resets every time she does it, but...

Can that be called living?

“It isn’t something that Goshujin-sama who has been living a mortal life would be able to understand immediately. Think of me as a tool that has a life, please.”

The shrine maiden calls herself a tool with a smile on her face.

That appearance of hers looked somewhat like Sari... or not.

Sari did that by her own volition.

But this shrine maiden-san gives me the impression that she is here because she was told to.

“So you are literally a gift huh.” (Makoto)

They send a person as a gift.

As expected of Gods, they are incredible in a lot of meanings.

No, if I think of her as a manager of these buildings, it is probably more normal than a sea huh.

Because no matter what kind of celebrity they are, someone wouldn’t normally be able

to create a sea.

“Yes, that’s why Makoto-sama who will be my master from now on, and the followers that are already serving under Goshujin-sama: Tomoe-sama, Mio-sama, and...”

The shrine maiden-san shifts her gaze towards Shiki.

As if matching the movements of her eyes, Shiki, who was slightly further at my back, fell.

For a second, I thought that the shrine maiden-san did something, but once I looked at the posture of Shiki, I could tell the reason.

He has fallen to the side while still in his seiza position.

There’s no need to force yourself into doing seiza you know.

Tomoe and Mio are also doing seiza.

When I entered the room, I sat down in seiza by nature, and seeing that, it seems like the three of them did the same.

From the glimpse I caught, I could tell that the other two are still okay.

“I-I am sorry.” (Shiki)

“Don’t go showing openings.” (Mio)

pang

Along with those words, Mio brings out her folding fan from her bosom and hit the back of Shiki’s legs.

Uwaa.

That’s harsh.

“Ugh~~”

Without saying any comprehensible words, Shiki gives a reaction that was akin to

fainting in agony.

His hands were wriggling in pain.

I can understand that feeling.

But opening, she says.

It is not enemy territory.

“Fufu, I don’t mind you taking a posture that’s more comfortable for you.”

“Sorry, thank you.” (Makoto)

I apologize and thank her in place of the agonizing Shiki.

“There’s no need to say that. It seems like the conversation has dragged on. I am the one that should be apologizing. Please just have in mind that I have already heard a considerable amount of things about all of you beforehand.”

After she finished saying that, she takes a sip of her tea.

The shrine maiden-san doesn’t change that gentle smile.

There’s no awkwardness in it, she is skilfull.

...

Ah, so that’s what it was.

She resembles people like: Rembrandt-san, Sairitz-san, and Zef.

People that are difficult to read their true feelings.

Rembrandt-san gets incredibly friendly when it concerns his family, so he doesn’t fall completely in that category.

The type that even when laughing, you can’t feel relieved, and even if they are angry, you can’t tell if they are serious.

There's currently a lot of people like that in my surroundings, but that doesn't mean I am good at handling them.

Honestly speaking, leaving aside a distanced relationship, if I get involved with them directly, I get tired.

...Gods tend to like things like trials, so is this a personnel selection by those three after seeing through that weak side of me?

I am beginning to feel this is an incredible harassment.

With that alignment, I feel like this person is an incredibly capable person.

"I understand that you know about us. But I feel like the problem of not having a name has not been resolved yet." (Makoto)

"I have heard that Goshujin-sama gives a name to the people that you have formed a ruling pact with. It would be a blessing if I were to receive a name from you after the pact. If there's no other shrine maiden, I don't mind if you call me shrine maiden though."

It is true that there's no shrine maidens in Asora aside from her.

But to have her go with no name would be cruel.

I have to think of a name again.

Well, she was a referral from the Gods, so I don't mind making a pact with this person.

In the first place, there's no demerits for me in doing a ruling pact.

That's only if the pact is possible, that is.

The only thing I am bothered about is that she seems to give the air of being secretive, but with a pact made, that won't be much of a problem.

...Probably.

"Is it possible to do a pact with me now?" (Makoto)

“There’s probably no problem. If Goshujin-sama holds his power back a bit and makes a pact with me, I think I will be able to somehow manage.”

It is like in the time with Shiki huh.

After that, Shiki got a pretty special ability he called the 13th steps.

That’s probably... not a demerit.

“Then I will have to return to my home and prepare for it. Or is it necessary for the pact to be here? Do you have any sort of circumstances?” (Makoto)

The distribution of work is currently heavily leaned towards Shiki.

I think she at least can do work better than me, so I don’t think it is bad to have more followers.

It is fine to accept—

“Wait.” (Tomoe)

“...Tomoe? What?” (Makoto)

“Even if it’s the gift of those Gods from a different world, I think it is a problem to accept this woman so fast.” (Tomoe)

It is a gift from the Gods in Tsukuyomi-sama’s side, so there shouldn’t be any problems.

It would be one thing if she were a gift of the humans or the Goddess, but it is from the Gods of that side, you know?

I don’t think there’s the need to get your breathing rough.

“But Tomoe, isn’t that fine? She doesn’t seem to have infiltrated from the outside, and we already know that she suddenly appeared in Asora. There’s no chance it is a trap from the humans or the Goddess.” (Makoto)

The only ones that have been able to invade Asora without my or Tomoe’s permission are this shrine maiden, and the Gods that gave us this imposing Shinto shrine and the many other things.

“From what I hear, this shrine maiden has been serving the Gods until now. Is that right?” (Tomoe)

“Yes. I have been serving Tsukuyomi-sama until the modern times, and have been doing routine tasks.”

Tomoe directs her questions at the shrine maiden-san, and she responded with her unchanging smile.

She doesn't seem to be agitated.

“How are you going to proof that?” (Tomoe)

“Sadly to say, I don't have the evidence to proof that claim.”

“Then that means we can't erase the possibility that you were send by someone with a hidden agenda in mind-ja na?” (Tomoe)

“Yes. But if it is something that I can do, I will cooperate in any manner to earn your trust.”

“Then let me read your memories. You say that you want to become a member of ours-ja. You won't mind, right? Of course, I will protect your secrets and will not reveal them.” (Tomoe)

“Ah right, Tomoe-san has the power of reading memories. But to read the memories of an *object* like me... are you able to read the memories of a thing like that?”

An object huh.

Why is it I am feeling slightly pissed by that?

It is close to what I felt with Sari.

“I don't really find it pleasant to have Waka-sama get a follower that calls herself an object though.” (Mio)

Mio also gave an objection towards having the shrine maiden-san as a follower.

If it is the instinct of Mio, there's a pretty high chance that it is dangerous.

No no.

If it's those Gods, there's no way.

"I am simply telling you to show that you don't have any evil intent or are a threat first, you know? I am telling you to expose all the memories you are hiding there." (Tomoe)

"That's a problem. I have not been hiding them to begin with. Excuse me for saying this but, maybe Tomoe-san's power doesn't work on objects?"

"Hoh... you are saying that you are not hiding them? That's what you claim?" (Tomoe)

"And in reality, there's nothing I need to hide from my senpai and the personage that I will be serving with my life on the line. Mio-san, regarding my behavior, I will fix that as fast as possible as I serve Goshujin-sama, so please, give me a bit of time for that."

"..."

"..."

I feel like there's invisible sparks flying around.

No, there's no doubt there are sparks.

If Tomoe and Mio are against it, it is fine to just let her manage the Shinto shrine with no pact involved.

It is not like she has told me we must have a ruling pact anyways.

"...I heard that Goshujin-sama is thinking about clashing blades with a God one day. Leaving aside the present time, it depends on the degree of the opponent, but when it comes to an existence in the plane of Gods, I would only be an hindrance with my current power. Forming a ruling pact would be useful for me, and on top of that, I think it is of importance. Goshujin-sama, please."

Right.

It is not like I have forgotten about it, but if I am thinking about fighting the Goddess once, the more the better.

There's no resident in Asora that can participate directly in the fight with the Goddess.

The most would be Tomoe, Mio and Shiki.

If one more were to join those numbers, it would definitely reduce the burden of Tomoe and the others.

How stupid of me.

There's still time. That means there's time for the shrine maiden-san to get along with everyone.

If this will increase the safety of everyone, not only will this strange worry be useless, it would actually become detrimental.

This is just like the shrine maiden-san said.

"It is certainly true that having more fighting power wouldn't be a problem. If possible, I want to make that Goddess -that Bug- yield without having to lose anyone." (Makoto)

As if confirming my own wish, I voice it out.

"Oh my, what a sturdy spirit. Fighting a God, and not killing but making it yield, moreover, without a single casualty. Being able to say something like that when possessing the body of a mortal, as expected of the person that the Gods have taken an interest in."

Hearing another person explain it, I am beginning to feel that what I said is completely crazy.

Well, it doesn't simply *feel* crazy, it is *actually* crazy huh.

Now that I think about it, the world that I was thrown into was weird in the first place, so I didn't think that my own thoughts were strange.

"Shrine maiden-san, if I were to say that I will be fighting the Goddess, you will obviously follow us, right?" (Makoto)

"Of course. To begin with, as long as I am in a ruling pact, it is impossible to go against Goshujin-sama. I promise that something like that will not happen, but if there's a time

when you are not able to believe in me and you won't allow me to join the fight, the ruling pact will become an assurance that I won't turn a traitor."

To tell the truth, I am currently slightly troubled in how I should be treating her.

But having a ruling pact will eliminate the danger of being stabbed in the back, and in the first place, there's the possibility this person will move around as she wishes in Asora and create trouble.

As I thought, it would be best to make a pact.

Okay, I have decided!!

"Yeah, I will do a pact with shrine maid—" (Makoto)

"Waka-sama, can I speak as well?" (Shiki)

Again?

This time it is Shiki huh.

What to do. I said I have already decided, but if even he were against it, my feelings will waver.

"What is it, Shiki?" (Makoto)

"Since the time we began our conversation in this room, I feel like that shrine maiden-dono there has been directing gazes at me for some reason." (Shiki)

"...Hah?"

I involuntarily let out a dumbfounded voice.

"Of course, I am not acquainted with her. Shrine maiden-dono, can I please hear why?" (Shiki)

"Shiki, the continuous teleportation must have gotten you hard-ja na. Sorry, forgive us." (Tomoe)

"...Hah..." (Mio)

Tomoe and Mio were looking at Shiki with strange eyes.

That's what I thought when Tomoe suddenly spoke out rare words of worry towards Shiki, and Mio placed a hand on her forehead and sighed.

I actually wanted to say something as well, you know?

But Shiki is pretty popular in Asora, at the Academy, and in the villages as well.

It is not like he is being overly self-conscious.

I didn't notice it, but maybe the shrine maiden-san has actually been sending gazes to Shiki.

"I tried not to make it conspicuous though. To think that you actually noticed, I have shown a shameful sight."

Eh?!

"What a woman of bad taste-ja na. To think that this is what you like." (Tomoe)

"Tomoe-san, likes differ between people-desu wa. There will obviously be women that like even a pitiful person like Shiki." (Mio)

"Intellectual types attract me. And it seems like he has cute sides like having his legs go numb. He is truly likeable. Ah of course, I feel the same amount of cuteness from Goshujin-sama."

"...Hmph."

"I retract my statement. I can't just overlook this as having bad taste in food." (Mio)

What's with this?

I wanted to retort by telling Mio that she is the last person that should be saying that.

In the first place, her first statement was supposed to be a supportive one towards the shrine maiden-san.

I remember that there have been a lot of people that have mistaken the name of Shiki

with mine in the academy.

By a lot of people too.

“...Being told that, I can’t pursue the topic much. I don’t know your taste in men after all. Just that... I don’t feel like having a close relationship with a woman like you.”
(Shiki)

Shiki firmly rejects her.

Impressive.

If it were me, I wouldn’t be able to know if she is a woman I don’t want to be close with in such a short amount of time.

“That’s a pity. Then I at least hope we will be able to have a good relationship as colleagues and as friends.”

This one is impressive too.

The two of them are laughing.

Now that I look again, Tomoe and Mio are also smiling coldly.

Shrine maiden-san has a gentle smile, Shiki had a confrontational smile.

I have a bitter smile.

I did the best I could and somehow managed to bring out a bitter smile.

“...Ah, uhm... in my case, I would like more fighting force. As long as we don’t know how strong is the other side, I would like to do the most I can to face her. That’s why I think I want to make a pact with this shrine maiden-san. I am also thinking this with the safety of Asora in mind.” (Makoto)

“...”

I was somehow able to put in words in this atmosphere.

The three and the shrine maiden-san were silent.

“...How about it?” (Makoto)

No one was saying their approval or their opposition, so I got slightly uneasy and requested for a reaction.

“Even if you ask us what we think, if Waka has decided it, we will just obey.” (Tomoe)

“Yes, I will obey your decision-desu wa.” (Mio)

“I as well, if it is something that Waka-sama has decided, I have no objections.” (Shiki)

Hoh, that’s great.

“Just that...” (Tomoe)

Uh, it is Tomoe.

She intends to bring out some sort of condition?

“What?” (Makoto)

“If possible, I want Waka to ask questions about Waka’s world... questions that are related to the modern times. I can’t read the memories of this woman at all. Maybe because of this power of mine, I have grown unable to easily believe in people I can’t read. I might be laughed at for being a cowardly follower, but please.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe looks at me with a stiff expression.

Well, if that will let the three have peace of mind, I don’t mind.

If this girl has knowledge of modern Japan, I would be able to trust her more than now.

Right.

What should I ask?

“Shrine maiden-san obviously knows about modern Japan, right?” (Makoto)

I will confirm just in case.

“Yes. I seldom move around, but if it’s a bit, I do.”

She truly has an expression I can’t read emotions from.

If I just take it simply as a smile, it would look good willed.

This is also simple, but when a beauty does it in such a natural manner, the effectiveness is also high.

If it were in my time in Japan, I would have definitely been frivolous with no trace of doubts.

“Then it is fine if I question you now, right?” (Makoto)

“If this will reduce your doubts towards me, it is welcoming. Please go ahead.”

“Understood.” (Makoto)

“Since we have the chance, if you are to ask me anything related to Goshujin-sama, I think I will be able to answer most of it. It is impossible for someone like me to hold all the knowledge of one world, but if it is Japan, moreover, related to Goshujin-sama, I have studied.”

Is she leading me?

But... if she has knowledge of my past as well as my surroundings, it is certainly true that the suspicions will decrease a lot.

I don’t think the Goddess would be that knowledgeable after all.

But on the contrary, if it were Tsukuyomi-sama, he seems like the type that would be knowledgeable about those things.

In that case, first...

“Then what’s the day of the sale for the magazine, Dusk, that I buy monthly?” (Makoto)

It is a question that’s closely related to my livelihood.

Probably even Tomoe and the others don’t know this one.

Dusk has a concentration of maestros in period dramas and rising stars. It is probably one of the most thickest and heaviest monthly publications in Japan.

At times, there would be diorama designs and castle designs, and that makes it even bigger.

Even so, the price is low and it is such a sublime service that wouldn't be strange if they were to suspend publication anytime.

They have been doing something so reckless since the times before I was born, and their rise and fall has not been affected at all. Its other name is the Immortal Magazine.

And yet, the popularity it has with the people is low for some reason.

"Dusk magazine huh. At the 22nd."

I-Instant answer.

"...Correct." (Makoto)

"As expected of a huge company that does this magazine as a hobby, it is a magazine that has tremendous stability."

Actually, she even knows things I don't.

That's something a huge company was publishing?

Where's that splendid company?

"Tomoe, I think this person is fine." (Makoto)

"Waka, please don't grin over a single question. Try other random questions as well."
(Tomoe)

She knows Dusk, you know.

The magazine that I love reading and only few in my class knew about.

She even gave an instant answer for the date it comes out for sale, you know?

She is a good person.

At the very least, I am beginning to think she is not a bad person.

After that, I continued the questions without a choice, but the shrine maiden-san answered them all almost instantly.

There's just no space for doubt, she knows modern Japan.

I tried in areas that have low connection with me just in case, but the result didn't change.

"Tomoe, there's no doubt that this person is from my previous world." (Makoto)

"On the contrary, I don't like that she has answered practically all of them correctly, but I at least have accepted it now." (Tomoe)

"Mio, it seems like this shrine maiden-san is good at cooking. Won't it help you in increasing your menu?" (Makoto)

"I will decide if I will let her inside the kitchen, but I have understood that she does have knowledge about your world-desu wa." (Mio)

"Shiki, wouldn't it help you in your research if you had someone with the magic knowledge of Gods?" (Makoto)

"If it's just purely listening to opinions, I think it will be beneficial. I didn't find any space for doubts in those clear answers of hers." (Shiki)

"Thank you very much, everyone. I may be a newcomer, but please, take care of me."

...Why is it... my stomach is feeling slightly itchy.

"You are jumping the gun a bit there." (Tomoe)

"Eh?"

Tomoe?

"To become the follower of Waka, there's a customary event that has to be done. Of

course, I will have you do it as well.” (Tomoe)

Even I don’t know about that custom though?

Yeah, I have no memories of deciding something like that.

And yet, Mio and Shiki seem to have an idea about it, they show joy in their face as they nod at the words of Tomoe.

Seriously?

Why is there an unknown custom in making a pact with me?

A custom is something that is established after repeatedly doing it and becomes a settled thing to do, right?

The only thing that I have definitely done with Tomoe and the others when making a pact, is only that, a pact—ah.

Don’t tell me...

“I didn’t know about that. I will happily do it. What would that custom entail?”

Wait, could it be...

“Don’t worry, it is nothing complicated. We will only have you fight Waka with all you have-ja.” (Tomoe)

“...Hah?”

So it really was that!!!

“And with the intend to kill.” (Tomoe)

The shrine maiden-san now has her eyes wide opened!!

“Like hell there’s such a dangerous custom!” (Makoto)

“Now now Waka. The result is obvious, but it is a form of welcoming you know? Mio, Shiki and I; all of us have fought with our all against Waka before making a pact.”

(Tomoe)

“Well, that’s true but...” (Makoto)

“It is logical that we would want the new follower to show us her power at the very least. Because you can mix falsehood in your words as much as you want after all.”

(Tomoe)

It is certainly true that I don’t know the strength and type of power this shrine maiden-san has.

I simply felt like she wouldn’t fall behind Tomoe and the others, so I thought that she was definitely strong.

Also, that she doesn’t have the required amount of strength to accompany me.

Mio and Shiki were nodding over and over again as if it is a matter of course, and were riding on the words of Tomoe.

“But to go with the intend to kill is just...” (Makoto)

“Everyone did that too. Also, if you are to form a pact, you won’t be able to fight seriously against each other. It is something you can only do now.” (Tomoe)

“Hm...” (Makoto)

“What a blunder. To think that I would ask to be a member of your group without even showing my power. It is certainly true that I have done something discourteous. If Goshujin-sama consents, I will happily do it.”

Uh, the shrine maiden-san is quite the fighting type huh.

Not only did she not flinch, she was positive about it.

Tomoe and the others have narrowed their eyes slightly and accepted her words.

Well, if I don’t go with the intend to kill, I don’t think it will turn into anything serious.

In terms of killing intent, I didn’t have any of those with Tomoe and the others either after all.

Well, in the case of Mio, that might be questionable though.

“Then, let’s move to a more spacious place. I wouldn’t want to fight within Shinto shrine grounds after all.” (Makoto)

Even if the shrine maiden-san doesn’t mind, I don’t want to do it.

I press the others to go outside.

“Right.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe doesn’t seem to mind that and consented in leaving.

Leaving aside the shrine maiden-san, Tomoe likes the Shinto shrine itself, so it is probably the obvious response huh.

“Thanks for the consideration, Goshujin-sama. The only ability I can be proud of compared to the others is probably only my speed, but I will do my best. Please do take care of me.”

“Ah, same here.” (Makoto)

Speed.

That’s the weapon of this shrine maiden-san huh.

I thought she would do things like using yin-yang spells or use a naginata.

No well, speed can coexist with both possibilities.

Actually, isn’t it strange to reveal that herself?

...Hah... I can’t help but feel like I am already falling in the trap of my opponent by thinking about this.

As I thought, there’s no doubt she is the type I have difficulty in dealing with.

I can’t let her stir up my mind and lose.

That would be way too pathetic.

I will fight with my own fighting style.

On top of that, I will make her show the cards she has so that the three have a peace of mind, and I will win.

The things that I have to do, and the things that Tomoe expects me to do; if it's my current self, I can somewhat grasp what those are.

We temporarily leave the grounds of the Shinto shrine and head to a plain we saw while we were on our way here.

"This is a good place."

"Will you be able to show your power to your heart's content?" (Tomoe)

"Yes."

"Waka, are you prepared too?" (Tomoe)

"Anytime you want." (Makoto)

"Then I will be stepping back." (Tomoe)

Tomoe bows towards me and heads to where Mio and Shiki are.

That place doesn't have anything delineating the area, but if it's those three, they will be able to defend against the attacks that come flying and the waves, so there's no need to worry.

I just have to concentrate on the white-skinned shrine maiden-san in front of me.

"I am completely prepared. Goshujin-sama, when you have finished your preparations, please let me know."

"..."

At her waist, she has a matching pair of long and short swords, and in her hands, a naginata huh.

Also, she has something hidden in her bosom.

So she is completely prepared.

Being equipped with weapons is quite the human-like way of fighting.

“Goshujin-sama?”

Towards a person that I will be forming a pact with, moreover, someone that I will be fight with the intend to kill even if it's for argument's sake; it would be strange for me to always be speaking formally to someone like that huh.

She did ask me to stop the formal speech.

“Anytime you want. Just like I told you before, they did tell you to fight with the intend to kill, so there's no need for you to be considerate.” (Makoto)

“Ara.”

...An extreme bloodlust was suddenly emitted.

This isn't something that can be immediately aimed at someone that she had been calling Goshujin-sama not that long ago.

That smile and her gaze that had been gentle from beginning to end, for the first time, I felt like emotions had been lit in them.

.....

Even though I hadn't taken my eyes off the shrine maiden-san, her figure disappeared.

If this is something caused by speed, this is an incredible degree.

Immediately following that, I felt an impact from the Magic Armor that I had expanded narrowly and concentrated.

The grass sparsely growing in the area shook with a slight delay.

There's unreasonable spells like teleportation, and I have already gotten used to this parallel world, so I won't get surprised just because she disappeared though.

So this is truly the speed she can bring out without any visible motion?

“Even if it was just in place of a greeting, it is surprising that you are unscathed. As expected. By the way... I am only a shrine maiden with no name yet, but it wouldn’t be suitable to call me No Name or shrine maiden here.”

Her voice was coming from a place I don’t know.

I can’t see her, and her presence is here and there and I am unable to catch it at all.

Like a strong flickering light, she is clearly lowering and increasing her presence and bloodlust in order to confuse me.

I take one deep breath and let it out.

There’s no need to get agitated.

It will be a long fight anyways.

It is fine to just converse.

“And?” (Makoto)

“That’s why, I will be telling you an alias of mine. A name I have been called with a long time ago.”

“That would help a lot. Honestly speaking, I didn’t felt good calling you shrine maiden-san all the time.” (Makoto)

In the middle of the conversation, I could feel attacks being dealt several times.

And there were also impacts from magic.

I couldn’t see either of those.

I honestly think that this is impressive.

I can understand why she is proud of it.

From the front, sides, back; they are not reaching me, but I am one-sidedly receiving attacks.

“Fufu. Touda, there was a time in the past when I was called that way. It was truly a short time though.” (Touda)

“Touda huh. Understood.” (Makoto)

I feel I have heard it before.

Even so, from what I heard in the conversation before, there’s no assurance it will be of help right now.

Instead of trying to remember, it would be better to concentrate on the girl I am fighting with.

She said she had many names, and that she has been associated with many existences; if I were to be bothered by every single thing like that, there would be no end.

That’s fine.

Because in terms of her power... I will make her show it from now on after all.

Chapter 225

The shrine maiden dances

The earth is gouged out and blown around.

It is the result of kicking the ground powerfully.

This spectacle was unfolding here and there in my field of vision.

“Even Tomoe and the others are surprised. That’s impressive.” (Makoto)

And as it happens, my Magic Armor continues to receive the attacks as usual.

The power and type is changed constantly, and I could feel that she was trying to sound out my defense.

It even felt like she was telling me she was doing that.

She is probably also sounding out my reaction.

Touda.

I thought she was a doll-like shrine maiden, but her current state is pretty forward.

When a fight unfolds, her atmosphere changes.

She is a woman that resembles me.

The attacks I can’t see don’t stop.

With a speed I can’t perceive, she continues her attacks and her endless turn.

What an irrational power.

But...

“...Fuh... well, time to do it then.” (Makoto)

Even if I can't see her with my eyes, there's still a lot of ways to deal with this.

I was uneasy doing this with an opponent that seems to be able to increase her power even more, but I changed [Sakai] from strengthening to perception.

I can feel her.

She doesn't stop in one spot, her movements are marked.

Even so, no matter where she is, she is able to send killing intent without hesitation.

Of course, I can't narrow the aim like this.

Seriously.

Frankly speaking, there's no way to aim at a target like this.

That's why I won't aim.

I could tell that her marked movements are all centered in me.

I search for the distance.

The limit distance that Touda separates from me.

“You just introduced yourself and I haven't seen your figure again. This is hard to deal with.” (Makoto)

I set on fire all the area that I have seen through.

A strong light and fitting heat had filled up the area till where Tomoe and the others are.

There was no aria.

I released it, doing my best not to show any signs of my action.

“Fufufu, to think that you would attack me with fire after I introduced myself as

Touda.” (Touda)

“I feel like it has been a long time since I have seen that figure of yours, Touda. Was fire a bad idea?” (Makoto)

“Wicked Fire General... that’s an alias that Touda has as well, Goshujin-sama.” (Touda)

Is that so.

Well, since she called herself Touda, I was wondering if it was Enda-san, but maybe it was the name of a God?

Touda is pouring me with bloodthirst as always, and yet, she is showing the same smile she had in the shrine.

“Even so, you seem to be quite used to killing.” (Makoto)

I personally don’t remember doing anything to be hated for.

Does that mean she is the type of person that can go with the intent to kill just because she was told to do it? This shrine maiden-san, Touda.

“Goshujin-sama also seems to be used to being attacked. You don’t look agitated at all. And it seems like you can use a giant barrier I have never seen before. I didn’t know about that.” (Touda)

Looks like she received no damage.

So I only managed to heat her up huh.

That’s perfect.

“For some reason, these few years, I am prompt to being attacked. More importantly...” (Makoto)

“What is it?” (Touda)

“Have you heard about my bow from the Gods as well?” (Makoto)

Seeing the movements of Touda, that’s the only conclusion I can arrive at.

It looks like she knows of my accuracy beforehand.

Did she receive that much information in advance?

If that's the case, why doesn't she know about Sakai and the Magic Armor?

It is not to the point of bringing about suspicion, but it does bother me.

"I have been told that you possess a rare talent. But the details of it..." (Touda)

"Ah, I see." (Makoto)

So she can't answer me huh.

She knows of my bow, but not about Sakai.

Currently, from my experience, her fighting style resembles that of Hibiki-senpai.

Well, instead of calling it similar, their core style being speed is technically the same.

The only difference would be that Senpai didn't move around this much, and she wasn't as cautious against my mid and long ranged attacks as Touda is.

The part about not being able to see Touda even when she attacks makes her even more troublesome though.

"Now then..." (Touda)

"Yes?"

"Let's continue the killing." (Touda)

Touda's figure disappeared again—or not.

She had stopped in place, and from her hands, something string-like that had the color of molten metal began appearing one after the other.

The shrine maiden had stopped disappearing, but in her place, the string-like things had disappeared.

Those were no strings, they are whips!

I could feel a different kind of impact transmitted to the Magic Armor.

I see. The reason why she is doing this without erasing her figure from sight is because I am being tested here.

Heh~.

I am kinda beginning to feel like I am actually fighting now.



“ .. ”

The three were silently spectating the progress of the fight between Makoto and the shrine maiden that called herself Touda.

It is not like they didn't feel anything from the fight.

The three followers of Makoto had their own thoughts surfacing in their minds.

(She is good. If she is evenly matched to us even before the pact, she is certainly higher than Mio and I-ja. She is able to maintain her bloodthirst even in the face of Waka, and on top of that, she is trying to test him. A temperament that is still unreadable, but she is definitely not a coward. There's no doubt that she would become a great help in the battle between the Goddess if she were to become the follower of Waka.) (Tomoe)

Tomoe was observing with narrowed eyes the figure of the shrine maiden as she attacks Makoto with the wild flame whips.

Small throwing weapons, spears, daggers; it felt like a fair of weapons.

She is obviously able to control her magic, moreover, she is able to use a variety of weapons in the intervals of the fight.

It is something that a normal individual would definitely be unable to do.

(What she is showing is different from that of Root, it is not enjoyment. But I can't feel pure hostility or hatred either. The moment I first saw her, I felt some sort of presence

for an instant. Just what was that? I don't think it was my imagination-ja ga.) (Tomoe)

Her speech and conduct, and her behavior as well; all of them didn't match with the first instant that she had felt from her.

The presence that Tomoe felt from the shrine maiden in that instant made her hold doubts.

On the other hand, at the battlefield, wind was gathering with Makoto as its focus, and a tornado that reached till the skies had been formed.

Moreover, the fire whips touched the tornado and melted together, changing into a ferocious red pillar.

(Not only Waka-sama, she looked like she was trying to sound us out as well. In the first place, not having a name doesn't serve as an excuse for not introducing herself. Because she could just tell Waka-sama she had no name from the very beginning. Also, she suddenly gave out a name at this point in time. Right now as well, it feels like every move of hers is trying to test Waka-sama and us, and I don't like that at all.) (Mio)

Mio felt displeasure at the shrine maiden that was directing surveying eyes at Makoto and his followers, and also, the actions of the shrine maiden that were as if she were testing them.

All her words sounded honest, however, Mio felt like there was some sort of faint trace of a different impression, which was also one of the reasons of her displeasure.

(It is also strange that she was specially interested in Shiki. She didn't look like she was directing love at him after all. Those weren't the eyes you direct at someone you like. Those were truly the eyes of someone surveying. Even now, she is trying to test out the power of Waka-sama. She is truly a disgusting woman-desu wa. Just what is she thinking?) (Mio)

Looking at the fight, Mio didn't have much of an impression towards the power of the shrine maiden.

Because there was no meaning for her in who is stronger anyways.

She already knows that she is not an existence that surpasses Makoto.

That's why she is only feeling displeased at the fact that the shrine maiden is testing Makoto. She wasn't interested in her power.

The red pillar was torn up from the inside, and the figure of Makoto's Magic Armor was exposed.

There were no signs of the Magic Armor being broken at all from the magic of the shrine maiden.

But Touda didn't falter from that. She held down her agitation in an instant and proceeded to her next action.

Closing the distance, she swings the katana at her waist once.

The Magic Armor obstructed its path, but that attack froze the area it hit.

With a flurry of slashes, the Magic Armor was hardened in ice.

(Not only is it hard to catch her with the eye, she possesses a speed that makes it hard to even catch her presence, and yet, she has shifted her fighting style to one where she personally goes to attack Waka-sama with her figure in sight. Is she testing him? How foolish. But... she didn't show much interest in Tomoe-dono and Mio-dono, and yet, she seemed to have a strange interest in me and Waka-sama. What was the reason of that? The first fighting style was a choice made because of her knowledge of Waka-sama's specialty, but it seemed like she hadn't accounted for Waka-sama's Magic Armor. I can't understand. I can't understand, but... at the very least, I can tell that she is strong. If Waka-sama desires more fighting power, she possesses power that is acceptable.) (Shiki)

Shiki probably understood the gaze the shrine maiden directed at him more than anyone else.

Because it wasn't something strange for people like Shiki.

Surveying.

The eyes of someone that wants to smell out even the slightest amount of information.

It was an interest that was totally different from that of love.

It is exactly because he saw through the intentions of the shrine maiden, that he could so easily reject that stupid act of hers.

Looking at the fight of Makoto with the shrine maiden, he could certainly see that she is strong.

She says that she is an envoy of the Gods from the other world, but in essence, she is a woman 'that doesn't have a single proof of her origins' and he could only try thinking of her identity and her thoughts, with no result.

He bit his lips.

The reason why Makoto wanted fighting power.

Shiki could easily tell that this was because Makoto was looking out for their and Asora's safety.

Makoto is trying to fight the Goddess.

However, he also doesn't want to sacrifice the people close to him.

Then it would be better to have strong people and comrades cooperating.

Shiki doesn't know how Tomoe and Mio would answer, but if he were asked if he himself has the confidence of coming back safely from the fight of Makoto with the Goddess, he wouldn't be able to nod yet.

That's why he was mortified.

If only Shiki had the sufficient strength to declare firmly that Tomoe, Mio, and him could go together with Makoto, fight alongside him against the Goddess, and return; maybe Makoto wouldn't have thought about accepting this shrine maiden. That's how Shiki felt.

(If I could at least master the 13th steps...) (Shiki)

Shiki had a self-depreciating smile surfacing on his face.

From the place where Makoto is, intense waves often reached towards Shiki and the other two followers, shaking their hair and clothes.

The reason why they were let off with only that much was because there's a barrier enveloping their surroundings.

The fight, which is the origin point, was increasing in intensity at high speed.

Makoto shoots a Rocket Punch with the arm of the Magic Armor that was frozen.

With a short aria, a white light gathers at the hand of Touda and shoots it at the frozen fist.

The light breaks the fist and continued its straight trajectory towards Makoto, and just as it was right before him, it turns into darkness, and dyes his field of vision in pitch black.

Shiki turns his gaze from the fight to his side.

At that place, there's Tomoe.

"Tomoe-dono, shouldn't it be okay to break it up now?" (Shiki)

"Hm, yeah, you are right-ja na. It seems like she has the power to make a pact with Waka. Let's finish it while Waka is still able to hold back." (Tomoe)

"Yeah, if this continues, Waka-sama will..." (Shiki)

"What are you saying, Shiki? Tomoe-san too. Waka-sama is having fun here, so it is fine to just watch silently until it reaches a conclusion." (Mio)

"Mio, are you saying that you won't mind if Waka is soaked in the joy of killing? No, it is certainly true that you wouldn't have any problems with that though." (Tomoe)

Tomoe's expression distorts.

On the other hand, Mio had a surprised expression.

Tomoe and Shiki had an understanding of what happened when Makoto summoned the Gate, and they were worried that he would once again reach that state of mind here.

Shiki also nodded at what Tomoe said.

“Joy of killing? What are you talking about?” (Mio)

“About the Gate that was summoned a few days ago-ja. The one that brought about the wrath of Waka.” (Tomoe)

“Ah, you said he was smiling, right?” (Mio)

“That’s right-ja. Waka himself didn’t seem like he was conscious of it though. If that’s an omen that he is awakening his joy in killing and destroying...” (Tomoe)

“Are you saying the current Waka-sama is showing those signs, you two?” (Mio)

Tomoe and Shiki meekly nod at Mio’s words.

Makoto’s figure was still enveloped in darkness.

However, Brides were attacking Touda at high speed and precision.

“Pu... ufu... ufufufufufu.” (Mio)

Looking at the faces of the two, Mio laughs.

“What’s that, so suddenly.” (Tomoe)

“What’s wrong?” (Shiki)

“You were worrying about something so out of mark that it is amusing.” (Mio)

“...Out of mark?” (Tomoe)

After a slight pause, Tomoe asks Mio back.

“Yeah. Waka-sama is not the type of person that would find joy in killing. The reason why he is having fun right now is because he is wondering about what he should do next, what he should try doing next. He is most likely purely having fun in thinking about the next step he should take-desu wa.” (Mio)

“Why can you tell?” (Shiki)

Even though Mio said ‘most likely’, her tone didn’t hold any signs of being a simple

guess.

It felt like she was talking while being completely sure.

Shiki was bothered by the basis of her confidence, so he questioned Mio.

“Why are you asking something like that so late in the game. In the first place, the ones that feel joy in destroying and killing, are people that have some sort of strong attachment to life and objects, you know?” (Mio)

“...”

“Waka-sama doesn’t have either of them. That’s why it is definitely impossible that he would get drunk in the action of killing. That’s the reason why-desu wa ne. You two, you were at the side of Waka-sama and didn’t notice that?” (Mio)

“...”

“Look look. That shrine maiden has used all of her weapons, and her magic power has been consumed quite a lot. Using magic power like that in Asora is a bad move-desu wa. There’s a difference between utilizing the power in this surroundings and fighting in a place where magic power is overflowing. She probably doesn’t know how to fight here.” (Mio)

“Mio, you... why did you think that Waka has no attachment to life?” (Tomoe)

“...Tomoe-san?” (Mio)

“Can you please tell me?” (Tomoe)

“Why do you have that scary expression? If I had to say it simply, when Waka-sama talks about the importance of life and those kind of things, his words sound so~~ much as if he had borrowed them from somewhere else. As if he had just taken those words from someone else or from a book he read. It didn’t sound like Waka-sama truly thought that way. Ah, of course, there are exceptions you know. Waka-sama is the type of person that really treasures his family. That’s—ah!” (Mio)

“Borrowed... huh.” (Tomoe)

“Tomoe-san, looks like it is ending.” (Mio)

Mio casually answered the question she was asked, and stopped in the middle of her words.

Makoto had come out from the darkness still clad in his Magic Armor and charged at Touda.

The charge and the arm of the Magic Armor that was swung at Touda, neither of them had touched her.

Makoto looks up.

The figure of Touda was there, with her shrine maiden outfit damaged here and there.

“...Hm. That ability to utilize fire, water, earth, wind, light, and darkness so freely. What was that she said about only being proud of her speed-ja? She has a mastery in everything but her specialties in close combat are with the sword and spear, fire and wind in magic, and her quality is, needless to say, speed. If that’s supposed to be a jack-of-all-trades, that’s a total show off-ja na.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe had a face as if she wanted to say something, but after the words of Mio, she looked at the state of the shrine maiden and evaluated her power.

An existence that could do anything to the point that it felt like showing off.

Tomoe suddenly recalled Root as she thought of this.

“Ah, Waka-sama is planning on using Azusa.” (Shiki)

Shiki’s mutter.

Just like he said, Makoto had finally taken out his bow as he released Brides.

Touda blocked the Brides that came at her, creating a fire whip that was longer than before, she destroyed the Brides just before they are released by Makoto in a skillful manner as usual, but her state showed agitation.

Even if she tried to make the best use of her speed, she couldn’t find the correct timing with the accurate gatling sniping that was raining at her.

The concentration of the three followers and Touda was gathered on the arrow that

Makoto was preparing.

And then...

“He is even using that?” (Tomoe)

As if wrapping up the place where Touda and Makoto are from both sides, what Tomoe referred to, were the silver arms that were opening their inorganic palms.

The space that was being wrapped, distorted in a strange manner.

The expression of Touda had distorted as well.

The blocking of the Brides had stopped, and the shrine maiden changed her defense into a concentrated barrier.

Of course, she wouldn't be able to defend against everything with only that, and wounds were slowly piling up.

The pair of arms steadily grew closer, and as the wrapped space became smaller, the distortion of the landscape in that space grew denser as if looking at it through lens.

The Brides of Makoto stop.

The shrine maiden was being smothered by something invisible, that's what her body showed was occurring.

It was clear that the arms were placing some sort of constraint in the space where Makoto and Touda are, but Makoto still maintained his stance holding his bow.

In time, the arms stopped in the place where the shrine maiden had been caught mid-air.

“He had her concentrate on the Brides and the bow, and then, sealed the movements of both sides huh. Splendidly done.” (Shiki)

“We might be in a territory advantage, but it makes it even more interesting that Waka is able to maintain that refreshing face against an opponent of that level.” (Tomoe)

“This was the obvious result-desu wa.” (Mio)

The shrine maiden has technically been deprived of her legs.

Looking at Makoto who had taken aim at her from the ground, Tomoe and the others had judged that this fight was over.



“It is over then.”

Looking at Touda who was caught in mid-air, I spoke to her.

I have already finished targeting her.

“...Uuugh. Not yet.” (Touda)

“That was an impressive display of physical strength and skill. You said you were the Wicked Fire General, and yet, you used things like ice and wind, and a variety of other stuff. I was truly nervous.” (Makoto)

“Even if I am told this by Goshujin-sama who was able to handle all of it, it doesn’t sound convincing... It is true that I was once called Touda. Also... the fight is still in progress.” (Touda)

“You still intend to continue? Leaving aside your stamina, your magic power seems to be practically empty already.” (Makoto)

It is not completely exhausted, but the magic power that’s left in Touda is faint.

She had used quite a lot of big moves in succession.

She also threw in counters against my Brides.

If it were me, it would be another story, but using arias of big magic attacks like that in Asora and in succession, that’s not good.

The general spell arias, when they surpass a certain point, they borrow the magic power of their surroundings and from the spirits in order to form them.

Because it is not realistic to cover for the whole cost of magic power after all.

Using magic that drops you to the floor with only one use is way too impractical.

But Asora doesn't have overflowing magic power in its air to begin with.

The grass, trees and animals already have a dense amount inside them, so thinking that this place has thick magic power is a misconception.

If you are careful and pay attention to your magic power, you would be able to tell.

That's why, to fight in this place normally with magic, there's the need for a peculiar method.

It seems like Touda didn't know that.

"I can still move, and I still have weapons remaining. I have not lost them all. I still intent to kill Goshujin-sama." (Touda)

Words I could only feel bloodthirst from, were thrown at me.

Hah...

I was only planning on using it as a decoy, but it seems like I have no choice but to shoot once.

I was unable to imagine it piercing her, so I could only picture hitting her.

At the time with Senpai, it was strangely hard to do, but it seems like it isn't only my image that affects, there's probably another condition I still don't know of.

Yeah.

Hm...

"Then, sorry but, I will be hitting you." (Makoto)

"Victory can only be declared if you have, at the very least, incapacitated your opponent. Go ahead." (Touda)

For a second, I felt like her eyes turned challenging.

Maybe she is truly a battle junkie just like Sofia?

It was a referral from Susanoo-sama and Daikokuten-sama, so it is a suspicion I can't simply discard as impossible.

Anyways, the battle is over.

I move my aim slightly away from Touda's chest and shoot her shoulder.

There was no scream.

She fell down just like that.

"I will heal you immediately. Good job." (Makoto)

I call for Tomoe and the others.

"...It was my total lost. It was a splendid attack." (Touda)

"I see. Ah, about your way of calling me, I don't really like the sound of Goshujin-sama, so I want you to change it." (Makoto)

"What should I call you?" (Touda)

"Makoto, or... well, the one that everyone calls me with: Waka." (Makoto)

I am totally Waka-sama now after all.

It would be hard to change it now.

It is also true that I am getting used to being called that way.

"Understood. Then Makoto-sama, I may be inexperienced, but please take care of me." (Touda)

"Here as well. Ah Touda, there's something I want to ask you." (Makoto)

I was going to ask her in the Shinto shrine, and I have just remembered it.

"What is it?" (Touda)

“The big tree that’s on the grounds, I saw a few on the road to the shrine as well, but... those are cherry blossoms, right?” (Makoto)

“Yes. Unfortunately, there’s no Yoshino cherry blossoms, but there’s a few different types of cherry blossoms there.” (Touda)

“As I thought. Then, is it okay to go cherry blossom viewing when the cherry blossoms bloom?” (Makoto)

“Those grounds are Makoto-sama’s belonging. Please do as you please with it. It may be a bit too soon, but if you want, how about I have them bloom?” (Touda)

For a conversation between a woman that is lying on the ground with an arrow pierced in her shoulder, it felt like an everyday talk, and that created a bizarre atmosphere.

However, there were words I couldn’t just let them slip by.

“Have them bloom, you say?” (Makoto)

“If it is a small thing like that, it is possible.” (Touda)

She said she was fire element, and yet, she had a diverse fighting style and was strangely skilfull in many fields.

Touda really must be only one of the many names she has.

But that helps me out.

“Then please do. I am feeling kind of nostalgic here you see. I was thinking it would be nice to go cherry blossom viewing with everyone.” (Makoto)

Bring everyone to check out the Shinto shrine, and do a cherry blossom viewing.

That’s two birds with one stone.

As we do a conversation like that, Tomoe and the others arrive.

There was no need for me to ask, Tomoe and Shiki begin Touda’s treatment.

“Good work, Waka-sama.” (Mio)

Mio gave me a towel.

I didn’t sweat, but since she went through the trouble of bringing it, I thank her and accept it.

Shinto shrine huh.

I direct my gaze towards the grounds.

There’s a Buddhist temple and a Parthenon temple as well, but they are probably not normal buildings.

I missed the chance to ask, so I should ask if they have some kind of outrageous function at another time.

...No well, I do think normal is best, but the shrine maiden-san here is like this after all.

But I am happy.

I can’t help feeling happy.

I don’t really know how exactly Shinto shrines are made, so I am truly happy that the end product suddenly appeared.

I will do a shrine visit every now and then, and in time, I want to try doing a festival as well.

I wonder if those kind of things will take root in Asora.

How should I explain it to everyone?

An unbelievable gift that came after the sea. I could feel my face was loosening from this.

Chapter 226

Cherry blossom viewing party

And so... a few days passed after that.

Today, we are in the spacious grounds.

Right now we are literally in the middle of cherry blossom viewing.

The place was being filled with the merriness of drinking and singing.

At first, the residents were hesitant to eat and drink in a shrine that reveres Gods, but after a while into the cherry blossom viewing, they are completely enjoying it.

Explaining a variety of things probably played a big part as well.

Just that... even though this is the first cherry blossom viewing we will have, there were a number of sea races that were unable to participate.

This place isn't that far from the sea.

Even so, I can't move the shrine.

I was thinking about postponing the event because of that, but at that time, Serwhale-san requested me permission to expand the sea and reduce the land.

And said that we should do a cherry blossom viewing with everyone in the future after a few more times.

The Neptunes and Sari decided on the races that would be participating in the viewing this time, and has become a scene where the sea and land races are participating together.

Serwhale-san is currently drinking Sake, eating food, and enjoying the cherry blossom viewing with the land and sea races without exception.

...As I thought, Serwhale-san is truly worthy of being called as '-san'.

The crab people are beginning to dance, and the tuna people were earnestly looking at the cherry blossoms and the flowers as they drink the Japanese Sake of Asora in a small cup.

The other person that worked hard in this, Sari, was at my side in the beginning, but when I told her to move around the place, she obediently went to the many other races -centered mainly in women- and was enjoying herself in a calm manner.

Even now... eh? She is not there.

I search for Sari with my eyes.

...Oi.

I found Sari who is now sprawled at the top of a tree branch for some reason.

Ah, she is being brought down by the Lorelais.

This place has a large variety of drinks after all.

She probably drank a mix of things and got drunk.

It seems like there are people nursing them, so there's no need for me to go.

"An open and tolerant God, is it. It is certainly true that in Edo there were festivals at the Shinto shrines, and it had become a place where people gather and enjoy their time. It is a hard to comprehend part, but after doing it myself and seeing it with my own eyes, I am kind of beginning to understand." (Tomoe)

Tomoe is with me.

She is not the type that makes much of a racket. It seems she likes to do things in a calm manner.

Well, a cherry blossom viewing is something like that.

There are people that consider the cherry blossoms as a simple excuse to hang out, and there are people who truly enjoy looking at the cherry blossoms.

There are people that consider the drinking as the priority, and there are also people that prefer to go through the many food carts.

Sometimes people consider morning is better, some that night is.

Even so, there's no need to fight over it.

I think that people have different ways to enjoy things.

You don't need to get in the way of the enjoyment of others and just enjoy it in your own way.

"It is not like the people of the past viewed their God lightly and made a racket, okay? As long as you possess the emotion of respect as the root, I don't think the actions that come naturally from it are strange." (Makoto)

That's how I think.

There are many unconventional festivals as well, but that doesn't mean we are looking down on the Gods.

Being merry doesn't equal to insurrection.

Of course, it is not only on the basis of respecting the Gods, and there's also the motivation that they will do their best on their next festival.

All of those points together make me like the festivals and the events in the Shinto shrines.

That's why I am happy that I was able to enjoy cherry blossom viewing in Asora even if it's slightly different.

If customary grand festivals and seasonal events are born, it would be great.

It has already been decided that there will be a gate connecting this Shinto shrine from the land and the sea.

This is something that I will definitely do.

I want them to visit the shrine at ease, and even if it is a religion, I don't want them to

get lost or have people die like in the Ise pilgrimage.

“There’s someone managing the place, and since the place is so spacious, it can even be used to teach the children.” (Tomoe)

“In my opinion, it doesn’t need to turn into a learning place. I would be happy if it simply becomes one of the places where people can just enjoy their time.” (Makoto)

“Yes. Whatever the case, we have to be grateful for the Gods that have gifted us something nice.” (Tomoe)

Drinking her small cup of Sake, Tomoe looked satisfied.

Her change of mood is kind of... fast.

With the matter of the shrine maiden-san, Tomoe seemed to be kind of snappy, but right now, there’s no signs of that.

Mio, who is mostly just by my side, was also like that, but right now, she is going around the various food carts and bringing me food.

Even though I am not sure if I can finish the stacked boxes of food that we brought for the cherry blossom viewing.

She really is merciless.

I thought I had eaten quite a lot, and yet, I feel like the amount of food has increased, and I am pretty sure it is not just my imagination.

I also feel like the stacked boxes of food are not matching the numbers of before...

“Well, Mio is enjoying herself in her own way, so that’s fine huh.” (Makoto)

Looking at Mio who is easily slipping through the tumult of people and drunks, I give up on the choice of eating everything.

I will just do my best to my utmost limit.

That’s for the best, probably.

“Waka-sama, regarding the magic power that is being taken when paying visits to the shrine, it seems like it isn’t to the point of bringing any harm to someone’s health.” (Shiki)

“Shiki, I told you that it is fine to take a break from work right now. In the first place, Touda told us that already.” (Makoto)

“However, it seems like there’s differences between people and considering that it is not a set amount, I thought it would be best to investigate just in case...” (Shiki)

“Well, yeah. Thanks, Shiki. For now, come drink and eat. Also, watching the many flowers that Touda has bloomed is kind of nice, you know?” (Makoto)

Touda made the cherry blossoms bloom just like she said.

There are many varieties of cherry blossoms, and there’s also the ones that only bloom in summer and fall.

In Japan, this spectacle can only be seen after growing them in a greenhouse and setting up the appropriate environment, and yet, this view is being spread in this grounds and in the forest.

It is quite the sight.

People that like this could probably be able to stay here for several days looking at it.

“No! I have a mountain of things to do like investigate the vegetation of this land and the environment of this forest.” (Shiki)

“Rejected. You will do cherry blossom viewing. Your work is done.” (Makoto)

“B-But...” (Shiki)

“If Shiki is working, other people might begin doing it as well. That’s why, today is a holiday. You have done plenty enough with just the investigation regarding the shrine visiting.” (Makoto)

“...Understood.” (Shiki)

Yup.

Shiki has an addiction with work.

I also have a lot of work that I have to prioritize over sleep, so I do understand his feelings though.

In my case, as long as there's nothing real big, I will certainly be working everyday, but... I don't think that's the same as being an addict to work.

The words that Shiki says: 'I am okay' and 'I have free time', I am beginning to understand that taking those words of his in face value is dangerous.

How to say it, this disposition of his is contagious or should I say, birds of a feather flock together.

The subordinates of Shiki and the people that are closely related to him have the same trait.

Different from Tomoe and Mio, he was originally a hyuman, which is probably playing a big part in it.

Mio and Tomoe seem to have found sleeping as pleasant, but it looks like Shiki was not the type who liked sleep to begin with.

I remember him saying that when he became a Lich and was unable to sleep anymore, he was delighted.

Sadly to say, even when he made a pact with me and obtained a hyuman body, for some reason, he still possesses that constitution of being okay even if he doesn't sleep -no, maybe it is more fitting to call it an ability.

It does seem like his workplace is the same, so I would like him to be a bit moderate with that special constitution of his.

For now, it looks like he is obediently doing cherry blossom viewing, but I am unsure if he will be able to hold for 30 minutes. It is Shiki after all.

"Touda, about the shrine visiting, I didn't ask the detailed parts like the differences between people and the issue that it isn't a fixed amount of magic power taken. There won't be any problems occurring with that, right?" (Makoto)

After that fight on the name of a custom, we returned to the Shinto shrine with Touda, and we heard from her about the three temples counting the Shinto shrine.

From what she said, what I didn't know at all was about the part about the homage, worshipping, and praying; well, in other words, the parts that were done when praying in front of Gods.

Saying it simply, just like when someone pays homage in a shrine with money, you also consume magic power here.

"Of course. Well, there are always exceptions in everything, but regarding the difference in individuals, it is simply to consume magic power that's fitting depending on the capacity of the person. For people that have ten thousand, a hundred is taken: for people that have a hundred, one is taken. That's how it would work. So it would mean, the people would be offering around 1% of their total in normal visits." (Touda)

Touda was actively making contact with the residents.

When called, she would immediately appear close and answer, which was slightly mysterious.

The Orcs, Eldwas, Mist Lizards, Arkes, Winged-kin, Gorgons, and the fairies that are traumatized by Ema; it felt like she was going around introducing herself to everyone.

Truly a business-like attitude.

Thinking about her role here and in the Kuzunoha Company, I feel like she has the disposition for deployment.

Just that, in my opinion, if I were to go head hunting for personnel, rather than people who are outstanding, I would prefer people that have reasonable skills and will be working together until the end.

I have finally noticed that those are the requirements I am looking for.

It is also because we haven't done the pact yet, but I feel like Touda is the former type.

I feel some sort of stiffness in her that's hard to express in words.

It doesn't only apply to her. I have felt this kind of thing a lot of times while in this

world.

In the companies of the Showa era, being diligent was more important than skill when looking for personnel, but it is probably an old way of thinking in this era.

But leaving aside the seniority system, I am thinking about putting into practice the lifelong employments.

An enterprise.

Living that kind of lifestyle, we will do our very best and reward the employees for their service.

That's what I want to do.

Oops, my thoughts derailed.

"In that case, people like me would be offering quite a lot." (Makoto)

"Yes. But it shouldn't feel like a burden at all." (Touda)

"That's true. The first time we did the homage, I didn't feel anything after all." (Makoto)

"Please do think of it as expendable magic power." (Touda)

"Then what was that about the fixed amount and the exception you were talking about?" (Makoto)

"The answer would be the same. When it is a strong wish -a wholehearted wish- like for example; wishing for it every day several times, or taking years continuously wishing for it. Depending on the case, it might affect your very life." (Touda)

"When you make a wish so strong and wholeheartedly..." (Makoto)

"Yes. If you wish strongly, you will end up offering a large amount of magic power. Thinking about the belief of the people of Asora towards this Shinto shrine, I don't think it will be possible." (Touda)

Wish for it strongly, moreover, they have to do it continuously for that to happen huh.

It is certainly true that this is a case that's hard to consider in Asora.

"Right. It is true that there's currently no need to worry about it." (Makoto)

I taught everyone that when they pay homage, they have to tell the Gods of their current objective. Towards a God they can't see.

I told them that it was like a pledge to yourself.

Not the: 'please make it come true', but more like: 'I am working hard in this objective, so please watch as I show satisfactory results'.

When they show results, they will come again and give their gratitude, and make their next pledge.

Also, I wanted them to have a different sensation of a God. Instead of that Goddess, it would be more like, a God that is close but you can't touch. That kind of relationship.

"That's how I think as well. Shiki-san's worries are plausible, that's why, I told him it is fine if he investigate as much as he wanted though." (Touda)

"The magic power that is being offered will gather in a vessel, right? Is it fine to assume that the balls that you showed us are the *divine vessels* where it resides?" (Makoto)
<Divine Vessel= 神体><In this part, divine vessel refers to Shintai: an object where a deity resides.>

What Touda showed us as the divine vessels were two transparent clear balls and one ball that had a variety of colored lights inside it.

The transparent ones are the ones from the Buddhist temple and the Parthenon, and the one with light inside is from the Shinto shrine.

In other words, the light inside the ball is our magic power.

I was slightly bothered that it was all in the same ball.

Because the presence of those divine vessels should have differences between each other.

"The divine vessels, is it. Hm, there's no problems with your interpretation, but strictly

speaking, the vessels are more close to eggs. That ball will change its appearance as it accumulates magic power after all.” (Touda)

“...Heh~.” (Makoto)

As expected of a unique Shinto shrine.

So it is its form before being born.

Well, that’s fine.

In the first place, having magic power sucked as you go paying homage is not normal anymore.

“...By the way, Makoto-sama, offering magic power when praying to Gods works the same way even in Earth. Actually, this world is the strange one for not taking this system.” (Touda)

“Eh?!” (Makoto)

She read my mind?!

No, that’s not it. It is a system that’s used universally?!

No way that’s true!

“That’s way too farfetched. Even when I visited shrines in my world...” (Makoto)

“Most humans are not aware of the very concept of magic power, so it is a matter of course. They don’t use it, and they can’t detect it. Even if they were to consume a small quantity of it, there won’t be any harm for humans. It is an amount that wouldn’t even need one day to recover after all.” (Touda)

Seriously?

It is certainly true that I wasn’t aware of my magic power when I was in Japan.

So I have been offering magic power to the Gods every time I went to the shrine?

No, at the temple as well huh.

The church also?

Ah, now that I think about it, I haven't attended church once.

"For some reason, I feel like I have peeked at the dark side of the world." (Makoto)

"In a faraway future when magic power is known in Earth, there's the chance that they will learn of this reality." (Touda)

"...Yeah." (Makoto)

"But well, leaving aside that talk, regarding the divine vessel, I think it won't be long before it shows form. Just with Makoto-sama's magic power, it has already received an enormous amount after all. But when speaking of its completed form, it would still need a long time. I will report when there's some sort of change, so you can just enjoy yourselves." (Touda)

"Understood." (Makoto)

"Well then, I will go back to the residents to talk about Makoto-sama." (Touda)

"When the cherry blossom viewing is over, we will do the pact in the presence of Tomoe and the others. Remember that." (Makoto)

"Yes. I am looking forward to the name I will be receiving." (Touda)

Touda disappeared.

Oh, she appeared where the Gorgons are.

When it is with those people, talk about me just gives me a bad feeling though.

Even so, it will probably turn into a girls talk, so I don't think I want to hear it at all.

Talk between women is pretty toxic at times.

I can say for sure that it is without doubt something that's best for men to not hear.

Well, I have an older and younger sister, so in my own house, moreover, in my very room, I could hear fragments of those kind of talks.

That's why I know they are toxic.

Touda has most likely adapted to the Gorgons without any problems and enjoying a conversation with them.

There's no need to worry about that, so I decide not to mind anymore.

...The party is going at full swing huh.

Since coming here, I have gone to many countries and have met a variety of people, but as I thought, I like this place the best.

Everyone has different shapes and appearances, so in a glance, it feels like chaos itself though.

But I absolutely want to protect this place.

Asora can be considered the very tracks of my stay in this parallel world.

With that reason in mind, I felt like I had to burn this sight into my eyes.

"Waka-sama?" (Mio)

"Mio, we have enough food alrea—wait, what's that?" (Makoto)

It is Shiki.

There's no way I would mistake him.

But, why is Shiki under Mio's arm completely wasted?

"Please don't say that. I went to the place of the Orcs, and I felt quite the possibilities in this 'Surprise foiled frying'. I thought Waka-sama should definitely try it once." (Mio)

"No Mio, I will gratefully eat that, but... what happened to Shiki?" (Makoto)

"This? He had equipment prepared and was doing a secret talk with a number of people about entering the forest, so I brought him down." (Mio)

"Brou—" (Makoto)

“Even though we are having a cherry blossom viewing, this person really has no manners. I was discussing with Tomoe-san and Touda about having festivals like this every now and then -of course, it won’t be as grand as this one- and we were planning on what date they would be, and yet, this Shiki is just...” (Mio)

“Well, it is certainly true that it lacks manners. Yeah.” (Makoto)

Bringing him down is also questionable though.

Moreover, they are already talking about doing more of these festivals.

At some point in time, Tomoe was where Touda and the Gorgons are.

That must mean Mio was there not that long ago huh.

And, Mio saw that Shiki was planning on going to the forest.

“It would trouble the people if he were left on the ground, so I brought him here where there’s space. I will throw him somewhere where people can’t see.” (Mio)

You are throwing him?

That means you are going to be throwing him at some random place, right?

No wait, don’t go throwing him.

Abandoning him is also a no.

“No, I will look after him. Let’s have him lie down.” (Makoto)

“No way, to have him rest on Waka-sama’s lap is just...!” (Mio)

Who said I would have him rest on my lap?!

I won’t do that!

That would only make it hard for me to move.

I see. Mio must have drunk quite a lot already.

I believe that she won't get controlled by the alcohol, but her self-control might loosen slightly.

"No, I will just have him rest." (Makoto)

"Then I will take his place!" (Mio)

She is not listening at all.

Well, this is also an everyday occurrence here, and a part of what I have done in this world.

But the nice mood about my determination I had going a while ago has been dampened a bit though.

Chapter 227

Source of Naivety

It is already the fourth time, so honestly, there's no freshness in it anymore.

For now, the most I am is relieved that the one in front of me is not Root.

There was no assurance that it wouldn't happen even if I didn't have the intentions of doing it myself after all.

On the contrary, there are times when I intend to do things but it doesn't turn out the way I want it to.

Serwhale-san is good to the point that I want to make him a follower, but there are things both of us have to consider, and couldn't reach the point of a pact.

Becoming a follower means that, at the very least, he will be separated from his race.

That person is a Neptune, and he is currently the pillar of Asora's sea.

It would be one thing if he were to just act together with me temporarily, but to form a pact and make him 'my' follower felt slightly bad.

Instead of establishing a standing for Serwhale-san with a pact, he said that it would be fine for him to just act as the representative of the sea residents and obey orders simply as one of the residents of Asora.

In terms of strength and standing, he who is the leader of the Neptunes, can even do something like being the manager of the sea, so turning him into my follower would actually be a waste.

There's no Superior Dragon who manages the sea.

And from what I have heard, the Neptunes existed since ancient times in the sea and are strong.

The Neptunes are a race that makes me wonder if they are actually the replacement of a Superior Dragon for the sea.

“Makoto-sama, what are you thinking?”

Within the magic circle that was drawn for the sake of the pact ritual, Touda talked to me.

She noticed that I was spacing out huh.

We are enveloped by a red light and are waiting for that light to settle down.

Even if we call it a ritual, it is not as if the concerned party will be doing anything.

That’s thanks to Tomoe and the others who have advanced things promptly.

In the first time, Tomoe was the one who did the process, and in the time with Mio, I was unconscious.

At the time with Shiki, Tomoe and Mio schemed to mix Shiki with used rings, so I didn’t have anything to do with that.

I truly haven’t done anything in my pacts.

“No, I was just thinking that it has been a while since I have increased the numbers of my followers.” (Makoto)

“In order to not have Makoto-sama regret that decision, I promise to support you in private and public matters to the best of my abilities.” (Touda)

“Thanks.” (Makoto)

I feel like I am hearing a marriage pledge here.

...

Even so, every single one of Touda’s words didn’t register as sincere inside of me.

Am I growing distrustful?

If we form a ruling pact, she won't be able to do anything drastic, and I do think that it would be impossible to attempt any vicious plans, but...

I probably can't be relieved just yet.

I am simply accepting this to a certain extent.

Of course, I am also expecting her to become a fighting force in our defenses.

Doubts.

...That's right, doubts.

Since I have noticed it myself, I can't just pretend I didn't.

The red light that is enveloping me and Touda had appeared as a wall between the space where Touda and I were facing each other.

The pact is finally over.

Signs that it has finished without any problems, and proceeded as always.

Now then, what shape will Touda take?

She looks human to begin with, so I guess her appearance won't change much.

Since it is a ruling pact, I don't think her human form will change.

I am the one that doesn't need to change form, so the light at my side settled down before hers.

"..."

I silently wait for the light at Touda's side to settle down.

I am thinking about calling her *Sakura*. <*Sakura=Cherry blossoms*>

It may be simplistic, but she is in a Shinto shrine where there's cherry blossoms, and we are doing the pact in the day of the cherry blossom viewing, so I thought that name would be fine.

“Is this... my new body?” (Touda)

I was expecting it, but the naked Touda that was in a crouching position, stood up and muttered this.

What is this? Something is...

Touda casually stood up and looked at her lifted arms, and subsequently turned her gaze at her limbs.

I see, she looks young.

There's not much point in the age of their appearance, but Touda looked quite older than me.

Right, like a girl in her mid-twenties.

And yet, her body had turned into that of someone around 10 years old.

Based on the indicator that I have created from the standards of this world with beautiful outward appearances, she is without doubt around 10 years old.

How to say it, this is a familiar sight.

Even when I look at the naked Touda right from the front, I was slightly moved by the fact that I wasn't agitated.

“How are you feeling? Are there any problems?” (Makoto)

“Makoto-sama... I am feeling excellent. I didn't think my power would increase this much with a ruling pact. It is a pity that my wish of fighting Makoto-sama at full-power will never become reality though.” (Touda)

She is in a ruling pact after all.

Even if she had my permission, she wouldn't be able to fight with her full strength.

Tomoe and the others always complain about that a lot.

Saying that: ‘If I could bring out my full power, I would be able to last a little longer.’

Touda, who said this devilishly while laughing, probably feels like that too.

“Rejuvenation. There’s also the case of Shiki, so it isn’t something strange.” (Tomoe)

“He turned from bones to human after all. If it is only turning your looks into a brat, there shouldn’t be much difference.” (Mio)

Tomoe and Mio were observing Touda with composure.

Tomoe looks slightly happy.

Well, that’s understandable.

Aside from the change in Touda’s looks and age of her outward appearance... there’s her hair.

The color of her black hair had changed into a dark emerald green.

Like the color of a forest.

But her specialty is fire, and she served a God of Japan.

And yet, green.

Her black hair still looked more connected to her abilities, but this one is unexpected.

“As expected, she didn’t deviate from her human form.” (Shiki)

Shiki seems to have been thinking the same as me. He looks at Touda with serious eyes as he mutters.

Touda confirms her own look, and after nodding a few times, she mutters a chant and puts on her shrine maiden clothes.

So there’s magic to change quickly?

How convenient.

“Well then, Makoto-sama, I wish to receive my name.”

“Right. Touda’s new name will be: Sa—” (Makoto)

“?”

I was about to say Sakura, but for some reason, I stopped.

Because a different name suddenly flashed in me.

What should I do?

No.

Sakura is no good.

I was already feeling uncomfortable with it.

I feel like conferring a name like that to someone is no good.

“Waka?” (Tomoe)

“Waka-sama?” (Mio)

Tomoe and Mio looked at me, who was hesitating in speaking, with worry.

“Sorry. Your new name will be: Tamaki.” (Makoto)

“Tamaki... is it.” (Tamaki)

“Yeah. Once again, best regards.” (Makoto)

Why did the name Tamaki suddenly appear?

There wasn’t a single of my acquaintances with that name though.

“Yes. Makoto-sama, senpais, from today on, my name will be Tamaki. Please take care of me.” (Tamaki)

Touda lowers her head deeply -no, Tamaki.

My new follower.

However, she is clearly a follower with a different implication to that of Tomoe and the others.

“...Then, Tomoe. I leave the rest to you.” (Makoto)

“Yes, I will properly teach her the rules of Asora. We will be using her in the future, so I will teach her about the Mist Gate as well—” (Tomoe)

“About that, it is fine to just teach her how to move around Asora with it.” (Makoto)

“What do you mean by that, Waka?” (Tomoe)

Without answering, I just wave my hand and turn my back.

“I will leave for a bit. If the cherry blossom viewing continues till the night, please let them, okay? I will also return when it is night.” (Makoto)

Telling them this, I disappear from the place.

I teleport to my room and make some half-hearted preparations before heading to the wasteland.

Teleporting to the place where there was a base once called Zenno, I flew to a certain direction.

Maybe because there are a lot of mamonos around here that can feel to a certain extent if it is an opponent they can handle, there were no encounters, and in less than an hour, I arrived at my objective.

“If I remember correctly, it was around here.” (Makoto)

As far as one can see, there’s reddish-brown ground with no change in sight.

The place where my parallel world life began.

It truly has nothing to the point of being funny.

And, even in this border of the world, I was able to reach here in a short amount of time.

That reality felt kind of amusing and made me want to laugh.

“Thinking about it, time has passed in the blink of an eye huh.” (Makoto)

A monologue that no one would hear.

Since coming to this parallel world, I was attacked by Tomoe, obtained something called Asora, was attacked by Mio...

Thinking so many times that I should change, I have reached this point without changing my foundations.

...That's what I intended.

I have... changed.

Before I noticed, I had changed.

At the very least, I have become a completely different being from the me in Japan.

If there's hostility and are coming for my life, there's no problem in fighting back, and as a result, I have taken lives, which is something that can't be helped.

If it's thoughts of *only that extent*, it might have been normal.

But the current me is different.

I now think that battles to the death are as normal as breathing.

At first, it was only towards people that directed killing intent towards me.

A little bit in the past, all the people that had the will of fighting and were standing in the battlefield.

And now, almost all the lives that have been born.

I have ended up thinking that it is only natural to kill and be killed.

Hyumans and demi-humans have been taking away lives just by being alive after all.

Adventurers being controlled by greed and getting killed by mamonos, mamonos swarming into a village and killing everyone in it; I have begun thinking that they are the same thing.

If it were in my time at Japan as a high school student, I wonder if I thought of lives this lightly.

Since when was it?

Since the time when variants ran rampant in Rotsgard?

Or was it the time when I was unable to fight back against the Goddess and was made to fight in the capital of Limia in the end?

Was it when I was visiting a variety of countries along with the demon race country?

I don't know.

It might even be by the time when we were talking about raising animals like cows and sheeps in Asora and I had grown able to eat them like normal.

But, the time when I clearly felt this change was slightly after my conversation with Senpai in Limia.

My thoughts regarding the lives in a battle, I began feeling that my thoughts were totally different compared to many of the soldiers.

Honestly, I am beginning to feel like morals are something faint.

This is scary.

The surface of my thoughts should feel that morals and life are important, but deep inside, it feels as if it isn't resonating at all. A bizarre feeling.

Maybe that's why the times when I fall into deep thought have increased.

I have consulted with Tomoe and the others about matters of the company and Asora, but talks about me are a different matter.

Matters regarding what I should do with myself, isn't something that should be

consulted with someone else.

This is something that I should decide myself.

There's no need for the input of others, no matter who it is.

"If the cause was because I have killed too much, I can't turn back anymore. It would be something that can't be helped." (Makoto)

The result of me killing too much is that now I feel it is the same as breathing and it is something that's closely related to me. If that's the case, it is already too late.

Because it is already that way after all.

"Well, it is not like I can't act normally. It is not impossible to act within reason, so that should be fine." (Makoto)

No matter how much worth I find in life, I can still consider life as important.

Leaving aside people that I am deeply connected with, most people probably wouldn't be able to notice.

"The problem is the other point. A problem that doesn't concern only me. This one is the bad news." (Makoto)

The other problem I noticed when thinking about myself.

That is... there's something I have been purposely avoiding.

I do feel like I have been doing it unconsciously as well, and there are times when I did it purposely.

In other words, a serious illness.

I...

"I have been running away from evil." (Makoto)

The evil intent that's directed at me from others.

The evil that's distributed unfairly in society.

Even in Japan, and in this parallel world as well.

I have been running away from it.

If it came to facing it, I chose to shut down my thoughts and silence it.

Even in my future, I was simply thinking about succeeding the bow dojo of master and live a life where I taught the arts of the bow and continued training myself. That's how I thought.

In terms of marriage, I was thinking that I would simply marry someone at an adequate age.

Of course, I didn't have a specific person in mind.

If succeeding the dojo was not possible, I was thinking about possibly working as a civil servant at my hometown. Anyways, I only thought of it vaguely.

I couldn't picture myself competing against people for things like promotions, and I thought that those things didn't suit me.

There was no point in thinking about it, and I am no genius or prodigy, so I thought it wasn't something that I should aim for.

...I was fine with life by simply having my bow and my hobbies.

That's how it was.

This didn't change even when I came to a parallel world.

At first, I thought that I was simply running away from the difficult things, but I was able to absorb things like the world's history and the configuration of magic, so it is probably something different.

The evil of adventurers, the merchants' evil; in this world where greed is covering its whole surface, there have been times when those schemes were pointed at me, and there were many times when I was involved in them.

At those times, even when I made countermeasures for it, I always coped with it in a half-hearted manner and ignored the root of it.

Or at times, I would just leave it to Tomoe and the others.

At the time with Rembrandt-san and the curse disease, it was specially dreadful, but even in that time, I wasn't really that interested in the cause of it.

What I thought was that it wouldn't be funny for people to die from something like that.

Even the strange accusations of Illumgand who was like a half-psychotic person, I didn't pay him much attention.

Because he wasn't someone that posed a threat. Even so, if he were to attack with force, I would fight back, that's all.

I didn't direct my eyes to the background of the story.

Because you know, no one would want to touch a muddy business like that.

If possible, you would prefer to just live your life without knowing.

Right?

If I had decided on things faster, would things have taken a different turn?

Even to this day, I still think about those trivial things.

Just how pointless this is. I have already understood this well since coming to this world.

"The eyes of Touda... of Tamaki, were the eyes of evil." (Makoto)

I think it was a complex color of emotions.

Even if I call it evil, I think it is not only that.

There was clearly fear and good will as well.

But there was malice too.

How to say it, it was that strange atmosphere -that strong pressure. Now that I think back on it, I feel like it was similar to the sensation when the Goddess told me to do something unreasonable, and when I first met Rona and Zef.

That's right. Those were the eyes of someone suppressing something.

'The day has finally arrived where I see those kind of eyes in Asora', is what I thought at that moment.

That it was already too late.

"...That's why I won't let Tamaki out of Asora. I will have her become a follower that will defend Asora to the very end." (Makoto)

With that, her malice will not become that much of a problem.

We have formed a pact already after all.

I will have her manage the Shinto shrine and the temples normally, so it will be killing two birds with one stone.

"...Well then, let's go." (Makoto)

At the place where it all began, a resolution was made.



"Oh! Raidou-dono, it's been long."

"It's been long, Rembrandt-san. Even though I am being rented a room, I don't show up much. I apologize for that." (Makoto)

"No need to mind. We also wanted to talk to you -no, consult with you about something, so I was thinking of asking you when you were available." (Rembrandt)

Evening.

I had gone to the Rembrandt residence in Tsige.

When I tried to make an appointment in order to meet him as fast as possible, I received an answer from the receptionist saying that they would make time for this evening.

To think that I would be able to meet a busy person like him in the very same day.

“Consult? Rembrandt-san with me? Could it be something happened to your daughters?” (Makoto)

I haven’t done anything strange to Sif and Yuno, and I haven’t informed those two about anything that I would feel ashamed of.

If it is a consultation from them, there’s no real need to be so formal about it.

“No, they are living a fulfilling everyday life. Thanks to Raidou-dono.” (Rembrandt)

“I am happy that you think that way.” (Makoto)

“Of course I do. And so, Raidou-dono, what is your business? It would be great if I can be of assistance.” (Rembrandt)

If he can be of assistance huh.

From what I know, he is the most suitable for it.

Probably.

“You see...” (Makoto)

With a slight pause, I harden the resolve inside of me.

“Please teach me the evil of people.” (Makoto)

“...Hoh? Evil, is it. This is one strange request.” (Rembrandt)

“Evil, or how to say it, society, maybe? I don’t know how to describe it. I do have a clear image in my mind though...” (Makoto)

I could tell that the eyes of Rembrandt-san and Morris-san, who was beside him, had narrowed.

I think they understood the true meaning of my words.

“Until now, I have been having an idealistic view about merchanting, and... I have pushed through things with brute strength. But I am already in a phase where I can’t keep my eyes away. That’s how I felt.” (Makoto)

“But Raidou-dono has been able to bring about the best possible result in that way. There’s rarely any merchant who would be able to only look at his customers and be able to achieve as much as you walking such a path.” (Rembrandt)

“That’s right, Raidou-sama. You have expanded your business in a way that other people wouldn’t be able to and obtained the satisfaction of your customers. And even now, you are receiving direct calls from countries, and reached a level where your name has been remembered. This is something to be proud of.” (Morris)

Morris-san and Rembrandt-san gave consolation words towards my self-depreciating confession.

It is certainly true that my name has been remembered in other countries, and, I can’t say it but, I also have connections with the demon race.

Somehow, my life as a merchant is going well.

But that’s merely *somehow*.

“I am not thinking about changing the foundation of my methods. I simply want my company to become one that’s able to deal with conflicts not by coincidence, but by predicting and overcoming them. And I think I can’t continue averting my eyes from the evil of other people, even if only a bit.” (Makoto)

Look at reality, and learn more about the dirtiness of people that I have been trying not to see before but ended up seeing.

As a result, I might end up seeing not only humans but demi-humans in a dirtier manner as well.

In order to change the impression the companies, merchants, and nobles have of me, I can’t continue relying on Tomoe and the others for everything.

If I -their representative- continue like this, the company will simply be seen as a

company that can't be crushed.

In order to make people think that the very notion of touching Kuzunoha Company is a taboo, I as the representative am the bottleneck that is making it unable to realize this notion.

I have to throw away this naivety of mine.

How many times I have thought of doing this.

But finally... I have understood what I have to do to make this possible.

This time for sure, I will do it.

It was... naive of me, trying to avert my eyes.

"...And so, you wanted me to teach you about the darkness that I have been carrying inside of me as a merchant, right?" (Rembrandt)

"Yes." (Makoto)

"There are times when knowing leads to regret. I am certain that Raidou-dono is able to push away all those people that have petty emotions of defeat, and continue moving forward as you do, but... even so, you still want to learn? Even though you have fulfilled an important condition to make it possible for you to abandon thoughts and simply advance in an idealistic manner?" (Rembrandt)

"...Yes. It is not only limited in my merchant life, but also in my life in general. This isn't something I can continue running away from." (Makoto)

"If it's you, it is possible... But well, Raidou-dono has decided this himself, so it isn't something that others can just interject in huh." (Rembrandt)

Rembrandt-san does a short sigh and shuts his mouth.

I also have no choice but to wait for his answer.

Rembrandt-san was pondering with his eyes closed, and when he nods, he opens his eyes and looks at Morris-san.

Morris-san quietly nods.

“...Understood. I will teach you what I can, about the thoughts that overflow in society, and its foundation. Whether it is good luck or bad luck, there’s a mountain of teaching materials regarding that in Tsige. However, this is a personal request of mine, Raidou-dono: Please continue your approach towards your customers as always.” (Rembrandt)

“Yes. Rembrandt-san, thank you very much!” (Makoto)

“But to think that Raidou-dono would say himself that he would want to become a normal merchant, I wouldn’t have expected it.” (Rembrandt)

In an instant, Rembrandt-san returned to his gentle expression, and strength left his body as he laughs.

“I-Is that so.” (Makoto)

“Even in Rotsgard, you have gained control by brute strength after all. I was getting more and more excited about your future, Raidou-dono. I didn’t expect you to stumble.” (Rembrandt)

“In my perspective, I have been stumbling quite a lot though.” (Makoto)

My business in the Academy didn’t give me the impression that it was going better than in Tsige.

“Different from here, there’s no assurance that the Guild will take your side after all.” (Rembrandt)

“That’s true. Compared to Tsige, I felt like forming connections with the Guild and the merchants was more difficult.” (Makoto)

“Hahaha.” (Rembrandt)

Rembrandt-san let out a laugh that felt had a hidden meaning.

Morris-san also had the same expression as he nodded several times.

...

“Ah, and so, what is the business Rembrandt-san had? I still haven’t heard it.” (Makoto)

I felt slightly uncomfortable, so I changed the topic.

“Nothing big, Compared to the resolve of Raidou-dono, this is but a small matter.”
(Rembrandt)

Maintaining his pleased expression, he placed his elbows on the table and linked his arms on top of his mouth.

Those gestures of his that felt like an act, had intensity.

I silently waited for his next words.

“There will be a revolution occurring soon in this country. I was going to consult you regarding that.” (Rembrandt)

“Hah? Revolution?” (Makoto)

Eh?

Chapter 228

Studying at once

By revolution, is he referring to the one that changes society? *That* revolution?

Rembrandt-san nodded when I asked for confirmation, so there's no mistake.

When he said 'this country', did he refer to the Aion Kingdom?

In other words, people that can start a revolt against the royalty have appeared.

...Eh? Isn't that a big deal?

Why is Rembrandt-san so calm?

"That's right, a revolution. Regarding the details, I will be telling you as I teach Raidou-dono, but well, in terms of the time... I think it will start moving by summer."
(Rembrandt)

"Summer?! T-There's already less than a half a year left!" (Makoto)

Even if Aion Kingdom is not a frontline country that is fighting directly with the demon race, it is one of the four major powers.

If a big country, that's at the rear and is in an alliance with Limia and Gritonia, begins a civil war, it would be no time to do war with the demon race.

No no no.

Isn't this a lot more important than my resolve?

If this country falls into civil war, even Tsige might get enveloped in the flames of war.

I don't want to think this is true but... could it be that this is also related with the demon race?

“Hahaha, an organization that has been caught before doing their move, wouldn’t be able to do anything big like a revolution anyways. Catching them with a margin of half a year is already superb, Raidou-dono.” (Rembrandt)

“By the way, this matter was not orchestrated by the demon race. It is not like they are completely unrelated, but they are not deeply related either.” (Morris)

Morris-san read my mind.

Even so... I think that a big affair like a revolution happening in half a year is outrageous, and I think that half a year passes by quickly.

That’s what I think, but...

It seems like Rembrandt-san and Morris-san think that half a year is plenty enough time.

“And so, what did you want to consult with me regarding the revolution?” (Makoto)

“Umu. I will be direct. I want you to witness and hear your opinions about the way Tsige will move at that time.” (Rembrandt)

The way Tsige... will move?

“And I wanted to hear about Raidou-sama’s thoughts regarding this revolution. That’s what it would be.” (Rembrandt)

“My thoughts, is it.” (Makoto)

In the first place, I don’t know much of Aion Kingdom.

Frankly speaking, aside from Tsige, I don’t know of this country.

If I remember correctly, it is a country that excels in information gathering, and their cavalry unit.

That’s the most I know.

“Sorry but, I don’t know the condition of Aion Kingdom itself, so I don’t have any sort of opinion in it.” (Makoto)

Thinking about it once, I spoke my honest thoughts.

This isn't the moment to try looking good.

"That's fine." (Rembrandt)

"Hah?"

"No well, that way is better, is how I should say?" (Rembrandt)

"Uhm..."

"If you had an opinion regarding this country itself with knowledge beforehand, I would of course want to hear that as well. However, what I want to hear more than that is how Raidou-dono views 'revolution' itself. It would be strange to call this a normal revolution but, Raidou-dono, what do you think about this?" (Rembrandt)

So that means it doesn't have to be centered in Aion huh.

A revolution.

It is a vague image, but it would mean that the tops of the country would change, right?

Mainly by force or by illegal methods.

And if as a result, the revolution is successful, the government and economy will change as well.

If asked what I think about it, it would be that the allies will change depending on the times and society.

If the government was good, there wouldn't be a revolution to begin with, so if a bad government was going rampant, a revolution is a valid path for change.

There would be a lot of side-effects because of it, but... I wouldn't say it is completely wrong.

In that case, my thoughts about it would be that depending on the situation, it is a valid method.

“I don’t think it would be the correct method in all situations, but I do think that there’s times when a revolution is necessary.” (Makoto)

“Hoh!” (Rembrandt)

“That’s...” (Morris)

I thought they wouldn’t like this incredibly vague answer of mine, but the reaction of the two was of simple surprise.

“Did I say anything strange?” (Makoto)

“...No. I was just surprised that you didn’t consider revolution as evil.” (Rembrandt)

“If the government is corrupt, a revolution is bound to occur. I think there’s times when that happens. And when it is a revolution in those cases, I think it is something necessary.” (Makoto)

“You see, a king that rules over the country, is someone that has been given the right by God to do it.” (Rembrandt)

The Goddess huh.

But that’s quite the valid way of thinking.

Like, the king has the right, so he can rule the country.

How was it called?

I remember I learned it in world history.

...The divine right of kings? *<It asserts that a monarch is subject to no earthly authority, deriving the right to rule directly from the will of God.>*

Ah right, that’s the one.

In the case of this world, it actually happens, so it is not a simple expedient though.

“Meaning, the temple and the general populace think of revolution as absolute evil.” (Morris)

Morris-san supplements the explanation.

I see.

That's why my way of thinking that 'it is necessary depending on the situation' is already heresy in itself huh.

Let's be careful about that from now on.

In the first place, this is the first time I have talked about the topic of revolution, so I doubt there will be more times to come.

"In that case, I have said something bad. Sorry, I will be careful." (Makoto)

"No, I think Raidou-dono is in the right. But well, it isn't something that you can disclose in public, so you are correct in taking note of it." (Rembrandt)

"Haha, thanks." (Makoto)

"Fumu. But with this, it has made it a lot easier to say." (Rembrandt)

"So true." (Morris)

It seems like Rembrandt-san and Morris-san were saying something to each other with their eyes.

Is it my imagination? Even when we are in the reception room, it feels kind of stormy here.

"Rembrandt-san? Could it be... you are participating in that revolution?" (Makoto)

I nervously ask this.

I heard from him before that he wouldn't become a merchant that profits from war, but if he was in favor of the revolutionary forces' believes, it is plenty possible.

Because he wouldn't profit from it after all.

"I am unrelated." (Rembrandt)

“Ah, I see.” (Makoto)

“Currently, that is.” (Rembrandt)

“..”

“Later, I will give you the documents pertaining the revolution that will be occurring in Aion. Well, if I had to summarize it, I would say, they are an amusing bunch of idiots.” (Rembrandt)

“Isn’t that no good then?” (Makoto)

“Umu, that’s right. It is no good. This is something that’s felt daily in the government officials of Tsige as well, but it is truly no good at all.” (Rembrandt)

“Yeah...” (Morris)

It wasn’t me but Morris-san who nodded seriously.

Rembrandt-san emphasized that it was ‘no good’ twice, but is it that much?

I have not seen the government officials appointed in Tsige, but if they are people evaluated in this way, it is probably for the best that I didn’t meet them.

“Raidou-dono, do you know who Tsige belongs to?” (Rembrandt)

Rembrandt-san asks me while maintaining that tired expression.

Well, I at least know that much.

“If I remember correctly, a noble... I think it was the fourth prince.” (Makoto)

He is still young.

If I count the time since I heard this, he is probably 6 years old now.

“That’s right. The current king had given this land to this fourth prince he dotes on so much, soon after he was born.” (Rembrandt)

Tsige was gifted to a baby?

That's pretty sad.

In that case, the king owned this town before that.

"So until then, Tsige was owned by the king, right?" (Makoto)

Is it a territory that is in direct control of the country?

Well, since it is a gift from father to son, there's probably not going to be nobles who would take it away from him, so in a sense, it is valid.

"..."

"..."

"W-What is it?" (Makoto)

When I asked for a confirmation, the two of them simply stared at me silently.

Unable to take it anymore, I speak out, and Rembrandt-san did a small sigh and began speaking.

"This Tsige is the second most prosperous land in Aion. This is a number simply going by the payment of taxes though." (Rembrandt)

"Heh~" (Makoto)

That's impressive.

It is certainly true that it is a lively place and it is in the wasteland as well.

The transit of people is intense, and I did know that it had power as a town, but to think that it was the number two town in Aion for their payment of taxes even when they are a remote region like this.

"The primary disadvantage is the distance it has from the capital, but in terms of population, economic scale, its location of being the entrance to the wasteland, being the ending point of the Golden Highway, and the adventurers' quality; the worth of this town cannot be measured." (Rembrandt)

“Right.” (Makoto)

“And the king has given the rights of this town to a kid that literally doesn’t have the ability to do anything.” (Rembrandt)

Ah.

I see.

Now I understand the reason of why Rembrandt-san is dismayed.

Conferring the rights of Tsige to someone, means that the person who conferred it holds incredible authority.

Giving authority like that to a kid would only stir the people around into having disagreeable thoughts, and in the first place, it wouldn’t serve as anything good for that kid.

No matter how cute that kid was, this is not a correct decision for a father to his son.

To bring your fondness into governmental affairs is not good.

“And then?” (Makoto)

“A king that would do something as stupid as throwing away his own authority. Even though he is already in a complicated position where he has so many children that it is creating problems regarding the successor, he still did something as stupid as that. If he was aiming for that when he did it, then he is quite the schemer.” (Rembrandt)

“From the sound of it, he wasn’t aiming for it.” (Makoto)

“Even though he is still in good health, he easily relinquished a town that offers money to the country as if it were trivial. He did that, and yet, he didn’t place a capable and loyal subordinate as a set for this action of his. I can understand the emotions of the people that want to cause a revolution. At those times, I send people disguised as aborigines and attacked him night after night.” (Rembrandt)

...A-Attacked him.

Just how pissed were you?

It is true that it was gifted to a child, but it is not like their everyday life would change.

“...Since then, the newly appointed government officials were all nobles that have been influenced by the mother of the fourth prince and has been changing constantly in that way. This type of people are not rare in the nobles, but they were all people that only sucked off this town as much as they wanted.” (Morris)

Morris-san complemented the explanation once again.

Well, that’s something.

The worries must have piled up at mach speed.

It truly affected the daily life of the people.

No wonder he wanted to punch him.

Well, it is not like Rembrandt-san himself is punching the king. It is simply his aborigin disguised people that are secretly punching him, so Rembrandt-san probably held back quite a lot.

If those government officials don’t know about what was happening to the king, it would simply be releasing stress after all.

“Petty officials that are crazy in the head, and idiotic generals, that have muscle for brains, were coming and going. It was a crisis that remained in the history of Rembrandt company. Seriously, there’s a limit to doting on your children.” (Rembrandt)

“A crisis that would remain in the history of the company?” (Makoto)

But I feel like Rembrandt-san is also the type who doesn’t have a limit when doting his children though.

“They tried to put their hands on my wife and daughters, and after receiving strange marriage proposals, I judged it had already surpassed the limit and did a few things. Anyways, they were noisy about raising the taxes and demanding money, you see. No matter how much you try being rational with them, talking with that bunch just doesn’t work. They always say: ‘Understood. Then, when can you ready the money?’” (Rembrandt)

I have dealt with people like that from time to time. The type of people that understand words but conversation is useless huh.

Those kind of people are annoying.

In my case, I could just have Tomoe and Shiki deal with them and ignore it, and it would be resolved later, but how do you deal with people like that in reality?

Anyways, tax huh.

I know that Rembrandt-san is a merchant that possesses incredible power in this town, but he was someone that could even participate in the decision of the taxes?

I feel like that surpasses the domain of a single company.

"Taxes, is it. But in that case, wouldn't it be a lost cause if the government officials just decide for it to be that way?" (Makoto)

"If it were the usual, then it would be just as Raidou-dono says. But they are people as well. It is possible to indoctrinate our side's thoughts into them. The most simple method is to entertain them." (Rembrandt)

Entertain huh.

Entertain the government officials, hear their thoughts, request of them, and place your own side's thoughts in them.

I see.

"Entertain, is it. Then the taxes were also dealt with at that time?" (Makoto)

"Omitting the details of it, yeah, that's right." (Rembrandt)

"It is thanks to master that Tsige only has to face the current amount of tax burden, Raidou-sama." (Morris)

"By the way, what's the tax currently?" (Makoto)

"The visible rate is 30%, counting the personnel and goods, 10%. In total, it would be around 40% of our income most of the time." (Rembrandt)

40%.

Since he mentioned the other 10% is not visible, that means the residents view it as a 30%.

Even so, it is still a pretty impressive number.

If you gain 10, 4 of it would be taken and you would only be left with 6.

But from how Morris-san said it, it seems like even this is already good, so this place must be in the normal boundaries or lighter.

I wonder how much is the normal amount.

For the people paying, it would be best if it were closer to zero, but if that were the case, the community service would become worse.

“40%.” (Makoto)

“The nobles wanted to make it at least 70% though. If that happened, the town might dry to its death -even if it’s Tsige. This is simply my personal opinion based on experience, but once the tax surpasses half of the income, it only brings negative results.” (Rembrandt)

70% is just too exaggerated.

There’s no way someone would be able to live that way.

Even the desire to work would be gone with a 70%.

Moreover, what’s that about ‘at least 70%’.

Did they want to make it even higher than that?

But the topic about half being the limit, that Rembrandt-san speaks of, also sounds unreasonable.

“That’s terrible. But how were you able to turn that unreasonableness into 40%?” (Makoto)

“Simple. From the 70% that they want to take, we pay the other 30% from our own pockets as bribe money. It is not like we have become saints or anything. If the town dies, we wouldn’t leave unscathed either. And in the first place, I carry a considerable amount of responsibility for this town.” (Rembrandt)

When Rembrandt-san mentioned: ‘Carrying responsibility’, his expression turned complicated.

While showing strong determination, there was also regret, sorrow, and affection mixed in it. Something that the current me would definitely be unable to make.

He has lived in this town for a long time, experienced a lot of things, and worked on his company here, so he probably has a strong attachment to it.

Even so, the bribe is most likely an outrageous amount.

I feel like it would be best to not ask the amount of gold.

“It must have been quite the severe battle.” (Makoto)

“Yeah. Right now it has calmed down though. And so, there’s the background of it as well. The current state is that we are stuck with that crazy bribe amount, and we also have to help in gathering confidential information. Because of that, not only the Rembrandt company, all the companies in Tsige have a bad impression of the Aion Kingdom.” (Rembrandt)

“I understand that sentiment.” (Makoto)

Or more like, it would be a mystery if they were able to pledge loyalty to a kingdom like that.

That would be impossible.

Even I am beginning to think if Aion Kingdom is okay doing all this.

“And so, regarding this time’s plan for revolution, I haven’t reported it to the country yet.” (Rembrandt)

“?!”

“If I were to report it now, the revolution will probably end as a small insurrection.”
(Rembrandt)

He has no intentions of reporting it.

In other words, he plans on having the revolution occur.

“Experiencing this upheaval that has lasted for about one year, looking at this Tsige that has been changing each passing day, my way of thinking has changed quite a bit you see.” (Rembrandt)

“ ... ”

I am most likely one of the reasons why.

The change of Tsige, as well as the one who changed Rembrandt-san’s way of thinking.

I can tell that I am involved in it.

“I have been thinking this since a long time ago. I wonder, are the country and nobles really necessary for the government and management of a town?” (Rembrandt)

“ ... ”

In the case of Tsige, nobles take turns coming to this town and supervise it for several years before leaving.

Moreover, it seems like they don’t do much work.

In that case, with how the current Tsige is, even if the nobles are gone, the government and the administration would have no problems.

But if they maintain that, Tsige would be disconnecting itself from the Aion kingdom.

Looking at it in terms of security, I feel like it would turn into a minus.

No matter how you pick it, Aion Kingdom is still one of the major powers.

Rembrandt intends to turn Tsige independent.

He intends to use the revolution that will occur in Aion as the trigger.

As long as it is viewed as a town that creates a lot of wealth, even if they are in a remote region, the Aion Kingdom will most likely not accept something like independence.

That's why it has to be now.

"It is still not even at the level where we can question if there's form as a nation though. At present, we plan on forming a municipality with several representatives of households, and first have Tsige reborn into an independent land. In my perspective, this is something that has steadily become more of a realistic goal as time goes on, but Raidou-dono, what are your thoughts?" (Rembrandt)

An independent land.

As I thought.

Rembrandt-san knows the exact population of Tsige, the percentage of food supply that can be self-supported, the fighting force that can be dispatched at once, the amount of goods coming and going from the wasteland, and the connection it has with the surrounding towns.

Lately, I heard that Mio and Shiki have been staying quite a long time in the port town that has been developing, and have been exchanging things with a good amount of people.

From my view, Rembrandt-san is a merchant with plenty experience.

If a person like that has reached the point where he asks someone like me, he probably has already received implicit consent from his surroundings or obtained a promise for cooperation.

He is definitely not the type that would put his greed and wishes as the priority and do something unreasonable, and yet, he has laid bare his thoughts of independency, which means, he most likely has a proper amount of confidence and foundation for independence.

Of course, if possible, I want to help him out.

But if he is putting his confidence in my Kuzunoha Company, then that would be

slightly troublesome.

“In my eyes, Tsige is the place where I began my business for real. It is like a second homeland to me. If separating from Aion is connected to the benefit of this town, I am personally in favor of it. But I currently am not able to declare how much cooperation I will be able to provide.” (Makoto)

If it drags the Kuzunoha company as well, I can't make a prompt decision.

I will first discuss this.

That's my standard.

This time it is just deciding how much we will cooperate, so in essence, my position in this has already been mostly decided.

But to promise what I will be doing at this moment, wouldn't be good.

“You don't have any intentions of being on the kingdom's side?” (Rembrandt)

“Nope, I don't.” (Makoto)

No chance of that.

There's no reason at all for me to betray Tsige.

It is the homeland of Lime, and the people working here are being well treated.

“Fuh... Is that so. So at the very least, you will support the idea utilizing the revolution to gain independence.” (Rembrandt)

Rembrandt-san looked relieved as he smiled.

That's cruel.

Was he thinking I would become scum or something?

“I don't have any obligations for Aion kingdom to the point of betraying Tsige.” (Makoto)

“I do know that. Just that, if the very idea of utilizing the revolution in order to gain independence went against the beliefs of Raidou-dono, I was thinking about abandoning the idea of independence.” (Rembrandt)

“...To do something like that because of me is just...” (Makoto)

“That’s why Morris and my close aides had discussed for several days things like: the methods to evacuate the people that hate fighting, and the protection of people that are not fit for battle, in order to convince Raidou-dono.” (Rembrandt)

“Aha... hahahaha. There’s no need to mind me. If it’s Rembrandt-san, you should be able to do those kind of things.” (Makoto)

In order to convince me alone, the tops of Rembrandt company gathered and did meetings.

What’s that? That’s not funny.

If I remember correctly, it was Sofia, right? The one who could destroy a few countries on her own.

Being treated as that kind of existence by a part of the people. What a complicated feeling.

Even for Rembrandt-san, I probably look like a jack-in-the-box.

“It is certainly true that I thought it more thoroughly while having Raidou-dono in mind. Also... even if it’s not facing the country directly, we are still going against a major power, so we have to think about a lot of things.” (Rembrandt)

...That way of thinking about ‘a lot of things’ is something that I have abandoned as well.

Even if it’s impossible immediately, I will have to learn one step at a time.

...

“In other words, this is truly a convenient moment. Raidou-dono, since there’s the chance, use this opportunity to watch and learn.” (Rembrandt)

“Hah?! Well, it is certainly true that a real revolution and an independence will serve as incredible teaching material, but...” (Makoto)

What if I am asked for a report after all this is over?!

If I am dragged into it, it wouldn't be the time for learning!

“In the end, there's no better learning experience than mixing in the actual place of the action. Not by standing at the front and acting, but by being one step back and watching. It might become an incredible learning material.” (Rembrandt)

Uh.

Saying ‘incredible learning material’ without thinking, might have been bad.

Even if I am like this right now, compared to my past self, I don't immediately say things without thinking that much.

I am aware that my verbal slips have decreased.

“By the way, Raidou-dono, why do you think a mere merchant like me, who is planning something so outrageous like making the remote region of Tsige independent, going through such lengths to even tell you this?” (Rembrandt)

“That's probably because Rembrandt-san knows about this town the most and it is the result of you gathering information of the outside as well. Also, maybe because you have identified a big incident like that of a revolution beforehand.” (Makoto)

He said he would take advantage of the revolution after all.

How to say it, he does look like he has more confidence than before, and this is not overconfidence, but I feel it has something to do with me being in favor of it.

Of course, I won't be saying it out loud though.

“That's part of it. Putting more to it, your previous approval has given me quite a lot of confidence. But the direct impetus for this thought of independence was my contact with a certain person, and this was the result of learning that person's nature.” (Rembrandt)

“Contact with a certain person, is it. Who’s that?” (Makoto)

There’s no doubt that the ones who would benefit the most from the trouble of humans would be the demon race.

But this time, there’s no way it is the demons.

Rembrandt-san has a pretty good amount of people that sympathize with him, like: Zef and his son. But Morris-san said that there’s not much interference from the demon race.

The demons are being careful of me, and even if they did it, the most they would do would be to bring out money or lightly stir up someone.

Not only Senpai and Tomoki, every direction of Limia and Gritonia; I don’t think there’s anyone there who would be able to become the reason for why Rembrandt-san would wish for independence.

His back is probably filled with people that are against him, so those kind of people would be the very definition of people who would want to crush the revolution.

Since Lorel’s territory is adjacent to Aion, they are not directly fighting with the demon race.

...But they are a country that has deep religious believe in the Water Spirits that are subordinates of the Goddess.

In other words, it is impossible to ask the temple to accept the revolution in the first place since it is viewed as evil.

As I thought, the highest possibility is an Aion noble.

Since it would lead to the decline in national power, the chances are low, but the most possible one would be an Aion noble or someone influential.

A person that approves of the revolution, and a noble that is in a standing of influence.

Someone like that cooperating with Rembrandt-san sounds plausible.

“Is it a noble from a big household in this country?” (Makoto)

“Fufu. Thinking about it reasonably, it is one of the possibilities that you can arrive at.”
(Rembrandt)

I missed!

Even though I had quite a bit of confidence in that one!

“I was wrong huh.” (Makoto)

“For Raidou-dono who wants to learn about society, this can be considered an interesting reality. Well then, let’s have you meet with that person. But well... I don’t think this is your first time meeting that person though.” (Rembrandt)

“...Eh?” (Makoto)

With the sign of Rembrandt-san, Morris-san who was at the door, turned the knob and invited someone into the room.

She looked at me, but without changing her expression, she made a deep bow.

Why is this person...

In my surprise, I couldn’t find any proper words to speak.

Unable to open my mouth, my mind was simply in chaos.

“Raidou-dono, it’s been long. To think that you would help out in Limia, I am truly grateful for that action of yours.”

“Ah... yeah.” (Makoto)

I somehow manage to gulp.

This person is the person that I had excluded just a moment ago.

Thinking about it normally, there’s no way she would be here, and no way she would sympathise with Rembrandt-san.

Why?

Just, why?

“This might be the first time I see you so surprised.” (Rembrandt)

Rembrandt-san laughs amused.

“...Sairitz-san.” (Makoto)

“Yes. Lorel’s empress, Saritz. It makes me happy to know that the merchant-dono who’s the current talk of the time’s, remembers my name.” (Sairitz)

The empress of the Spirit temple in Lorel Union.

Why is a person like that in a place where the conversation is about using the revolution to gain independence?

Moreover, it seems like she knows the situation.

After Sairitz-san, a number of people enter the room as well.

From within them, there’s people I have seen in Tsige, and there’s also people I see for the first time.

“Now then, since we have now gathered here, let’s begin by laying bare our thoughts and positions so we can begin the talk. Don’t worry, this is just to let first timers know. No need to proceed the talk in a smooth manner. First, we will talk about our opinions. I have prepared light meals and drinks, so let’s proceed without tension.” (Rembrandt)

I-I take back what I said.

I already want to abandon my thoughts and return to Asora.

At this moment, I was not simply over my capacity, I was feeling something incredibly scary.

This is definitely not how you *begin* learning something!

Why is it that in this world, it always begins from the messed up parts?!

Chapter 229

Settling down, but jumping around

An incredibly tense time passed that was incomparable from the usual gatherings of merchants.

It wasn't a discussion with a clear answer yet, so the conversations were varied, and... to put it simply, the more I heard, the more blank I was.

Right, I felt like the time there was even more tiring than any of the battles I have experienced.

Looking at the memo I desperately wrote in a practically absent-minded state, there was the information of everyone's conversation properly written in it.

"As expected... of the people that have made a name in Tsige. That was impressive."
(Makoto)

Well, there was also Sairitz-san and a number of outsiders as well.

At the very least, I have written down their features and the contents of their self-introduction.

There were also a lot of people I met for the first time, so it is better if I get those things inside my head as soon as possible.

Even so... Aion's revolution and Tsige's independence huh.

I am impressed that so many things are happening one after the other.

Moreover, the events I have been involved with lately have been so big in scale.

"Well, it doesn't change the fact that it is something reckless, but I could understand that they do have a chance for success. For today, let's leave it at that. I am back~~."
(Makoto)

“Waka! Welcome back!”

I return to the Kuzunoha company’s first store inside Rembrandt-san’s store.

It makes me happy to see that they are doing well as always.

I receive greetings from the four clerks that are stationed in the store.

Everyone called out ‘Waka’ in a loud voice, so I was received by the intense gazes of the customers, and after showing a smile to them, I head to the counter.

When I reach the back where the office is in, I could see the Forest Oni and the Gorgon working energetically.

The scale of the store is small, but that doesn’t mean the office is small as well.

And in reality, the two of them look busy.

“Waka-sama, welcome back!”

“I am back. You don’t have to mind me. Continue with your work.” (Makoto)

Seeing me, they stopped their work to greet me, but I didn’t want to get in their way, so I had them return to their work.

Even so, when I arrived at the seat I don’t use that much, the Gorgon brought me a drink.

In the end, just by being here, I am having them mind me.

I want to make it clear there’s no need to, but I just can’t.

“Thanks.” (Makoto)

“No need to. We were also thinking about drinking tea after all.”

“Anyways, this place really is prospering. I have received reports that since the time Tsige made a sudden growth, the number of customers and the sales have increased continuously, but from the view of you guys who are in the actual place, what do you think?” (Makoto)

“Well, obviously, aside from being able to report the numbers, it is also a job that’s worth doing everyday. Other than the customers buying in the store, there’s also a lot who make appointments and orders, so we are in a situation where we have to request for the inventory to be expanded and an increase in craftsmen.”

Inventory number and increase in craftsmen huh.

It is certainly true that it is a matter that has been brought a number of times.

No matter how many times I respond to it, there would always be another request for it, so lately, I have been putting it on hold to check the situation.

It is been a long while since I walked around Tsige, and my thoughts have changed a bit.

It is not that Kuzunoha Company is the only one that has been getting an increase in sales and profiting, the whole town is growing at an unbelievable pace.

Every time I visit, the town changes -no exaggeration. The current Tsige is overflowing in liveliness.

Also... she said: ‘it is a job worth doing everyday’ huh.

From what I see in her expression, those are not words said sarcastically or with malice.

This makes me more happy than being told that they are busy.

“...Is it enough to just increase the amount of craftsmen? Is the work inside the store okay with your current numbers?” (Makoto)

“In the days where there’s a lot more customers than normal, we are also helping out in the store, so there’s not that much need to increase the personnel for now, but... could it be...”

“Yeah, I will think about it.” (Makoto)

“Thank you very much!”

At the store in Rotsgard, there’s customers frequenting it, but I have been leaving Tsige

to the others.

I have to reflect on that.

“I want to see how much I should be increasing it though. I also want to hear about the present condition and do some catching up, so... can you have someone gather the report documents and have that person come to my place after dinner?” (Makoto)

“U-Understood!”

I have consulted with Shiki and used Rotsgard’s daily reports as a reference, so it is probably best if I don’t decide on the details at this moment.

Thinking about how I have to participate in the meetings that Rembrandt-san organizes, I think it is a good time to increase the sales by one step higher.

Even though we are not a restaurant, we are receiving ordinary people and adventurers night and day which is actually rare for a store.

Kusunoha Company has been able to advance this far while maintaining that kind of position until now.

Even if we have the advantage of receiving customers that come to the Rembrandt company, this is still pretty impressive.

“Now then, please continue working hard. I just dropped in for a bit, so I will be returning now. I am counting on you regarding the report.” (Makoto)

“Have a good day!”

From what I saw in my short glimpse, there was no despising atmosphere inside the store just because the clerks were demi-humans.

But Rembrandt-san has advised me that it is already time for me to think about employing hyumans.

I thought about doing that in case any distress occurred, but if we were to employ hyumans in Tsige...

If it is simply for some sort of countermeasure, I can have Rembrandt-san transfer

someone from his place.

If it is fine as long as it is a hyuman, I can just have that person stand like a scarecrow without doing anything. Honestly speaking, that would be ideal.

There's no need for the hyuman to be capable, and there's no need for that person to become capable either.

If we go by the usual policy, we can have people from Asora trained to a reasonable level and station them in the stores, so I don't think there's the need of hiring hyumans from zero and raise them.

There's nothing similar to an employment agency in this world, so it makes it difficult in that part.

The temporary employment of students that we are doing in Rotsgard -in other words, part-time job- seems to be viewed as something pretty strange.

Their side is currently in the middle of reconstruction, and they are quite tolerant in those kind of things, so it is great that there wasn't as much opposition as I thought.

Because I used a part of the students that I actually know and am teaching, introducing them to the part-time job went smoothly.

...

As I thought. When I think of one thing, my thoughts begin to disperse here and there, and it steadily becomes more complicated in my head.

I have been told to think about it in a more simple manner, and this is a bad habit of mine.

For now, I have to sort out the information that I was given, so let's return to Asora.



Finishing dinner, the four followers of mine had gathered in my room.

"Milliono Company and Eleor Company huh. It is certainly true that they are both companies that have been gaining momentum in Tsige. Both of them were part of the

backbone of Tsige since before Kuzunoha Company was created, and I do remember them growing abruptly along with Tsige.” (Shiki)

“Hmph, I see. It was my first time meeting them, but as expected, they are incredible people huh. Both representatives were pretty amicable, so they gave a good impression. Milliono company is a wholesale store of raw materials in the wasteland, and Eleor company specializes in selling land and buildings. It is great that they are not competing in the same trade as us. I feel like we can have a genuine friendly relationship.” (Makoto)

In terms of raw materials, Tomoe and Mio are not unrelated.

And in truth, the representative-san of Milliono company had given his thanks to Tomoe, Mio, and I, regarding the circulation of raw materials in the wasteland.

But Milliono company buys from the places that buy raw materials, so there’s probably no direct connection with us.

My impression was that he is a person with integrity.

Regarding Eleor company, if I remember correctly, the lands for stores are provided with the referral of the Merchant Guild.

As expected of Shiki.

He knows about both companies.

“Hm... Eleor company. If I remember correctly...” (Tomoe)

Tomoe seems to be searching in her memories.

Ah, now that I think about it, I had Tomoe herself buy the land.

“Is it a company you know?” (Makoto)

“...Ah, yes. The landowner I bought the land from before and was being intimate with someone, was most likely from a company with that name.” (Tomoe)

“The landowner being intimate with someone, you say. That has nothing to do with us.” (Makoto)

“...Right. Well, even if they have land, no real problem has occurred, and there has been no time where we have had to aid them in anything.” (Tomoe)

“Is that all?” (Makoto)

I feel like there’s more to it, so I try asking.

“Probably. Right now I can only remember this much.” (Tomoe)

But the answer was a vague denial.

“I was advised to buy a land from Eleor company. The land that we possess is adjacent to the land I was recommended. He said that: ‘Since your company is doing so well, you will be making a store in a near future, so check the place out as reference.’” (Makoto)

He is truly good in his trade.

It is true that renting a room from Rembrandt-san all the time will just cause him trouble, and I already have land for that purpose anyways.

If the land was in a distanced place from ours, I would have refused immediately, but if it is adjacent to the land we already own, we would be able to increase the scale of our store.

Maybe he thought I didn’t make a store yet because I probably would be buying the land in the surroundings as well?

It is hard to believe that he coincidentally had a free plot of land right beside ours.

In the past, there was a store in that place, and since the time the owner was gone, the land there has been empty, which is strange.

I feel like he is aiming at my wallet.

I give Tomoe the information of the plot of land I received from the representative.

Buying land in Tsige is expensive.

I understand if it were simply expensive, but I don’t have a standard to know just how

expensive it is considered.

I just know of it vaguely.

I only know about concepts like: the spots close to the stations are expensive, and in the rural areas, it is cheap. That kind of perception.

That's why I have Tomoe and Shiki check it out first and hear their opinions before deciding.

Because, leaving aside if a percent of what has transpired today will be actually implemented, Eleor company is thinking about expanding the outer walls of the town; in other words, he is thinking about increasing the land of Tsige.

And that's why he needs the necessary amount of money to buy the land that will be increasing.

Maybe he was actually the one who provided for the cost of this movement -or so to say, bribe- and also took part in the cost for the construction work of the outer wall.

In that case, there's plenty chance that the land I am being presented with, is priced incredible high.

"This is..." (Shiki)

"Fumu." (Tomoe)

The two that had checked the paper, widened their eyes for a moment.

Surprised?

In that case... it is pretty expensive, or on the contrary, pretty cheap?

"Compared to Rotsgard and thinking about the area, I feel like the price is strangely high but, what do you two think?" (Makoto)

I know the price of one town cannot be compared with another.

But with that same price, I would be able to buy a plot of land in Rotsgard ten times the size.

It seems like Tsige has a higher price in land compared to other towns, but honestly, I wonder if the difference is really this high.

Even though the land I possess has practically the same size, it is five times more expensive than the time when we bought it.

I suspect I am being robbed here.

No matter if the first impressions were good, there's no way I would be able to trust everything the merchants say.

"This is abnormal." (Shiki)

"Umu. Looking at this, the other party isn't even doing a trade anymore." (Tomoe)

Eh?

Tomoe and Shiki returned an unexpected response.

"You mean, the price is cheap?" (Makoto)

"Yeah. To the point that it is hard to believe that this estimation was provided by the Eleor company to us." (Tomoe)

"Tsige is a town that is growing at a fast pace. It may depend on the time when Eleor company bought the land, but with this price, their side isn't gaining any profit from it. A plot of land requires managing and tax expenses as well after all." (Shiki)

"Well then... it is true that I thought it is time to have a store, so we should consider it a benefit for us?" (Makoto)

Should we buy it?

I did use a bit of money for matters regarding Kaleneon, but currently, we have more than enough.

"...But this is... Tomoe-dono." (Shiki)

"Hmm. It is true that this is slightly strange-ja na. Waka, let's not decide immediately and have a business discussion with the other party first. As soon as possible, in a day

when Shiki or I are available. There's something I want to confirm." (Tomoe)

"...Understood." (Makoto)

"Waka-sama, I have seen the place called Milliono company a good numbers of times in the requests of the Adventurer Guild. Obtaining rare raw materials, requests regarding the gathering of a fixed amount of raw materials; those kind of requests. This is a guess from the amount of requests and their rewards, but it seemed like they were quite the influential company." (Mio)

"If Mio remembers them, they most likely have placed quite a good amount of requests. The representative did send his thanks to Tomoe and Mio. He said that it was thanks to you two that the circulation of raw materials in the wasteland had increased." (Makoto)

Eleor company's representative and the Millionor company's representative are both good with their words.

They go for the praises.

It is certainly true that Tomoe and Mio have contributed with the raw materials in the wasteland, but the ones that are actually bringing the materials back are people like Toa and the others.

And yet, he said that it was thanks to those two.

Praising is free huh.

"I haven't been looking after the adventurers lately, but... if Tamaki is going to be giving her undivided attention to Asora, we will gain some spare time as well so, would you want me to show my face there again?" (Mio)

Mio doesn't look like she is kidding.

It seems like the praise actually worked.

"Spare time will be something we won't have for a while though. We can't just have her suddenly taking care of everything regarding Asora after all." (Tomoe)

Tomoe also seems to be thinking positively about taking care of the adventurers.

You too?

Well, I was also happy hearing Tomoe and Mio being praised.

The shrine maiden that has recently become my follower, Tamaki. If she were to learn her job fast, the one who will be having it easier would be Shiki, but it would also reduce a part of the burden in Tomoe and Mio, so the two will probably be looking after the adventurers in Tsige.

“In order for you two to have that spare time, I will do my best.” (Tamaki)

And Tamaki responded to our gazes with a smile.

“Right. It seems like there’s no problems with the gates that connect the Shinto shrine with the town but, how many people will you need to manage the place from now on? That place is pretty big, and there’s no people who know about Shinto shrines so...” (Makoto)

“Being able to come and go from this town to the Shinto shrine is the very definition of comfortable. We plan on beginning the discussion about the construction work with the people living in the town at the sea. Regarding the people that will be helping in the work at the Shinto shrine...” (Tamaki)

The report of Tamaki had begun.

I nod as I listen.

To begin with, even if there’s no Gods in this space, the Shinto shrine is a place that reveres Gods, so instead of workers, she wants capable people that will formally serve as Shinto priests.

I can understand.

I accept this.

Next, regarding the knowledge of Shinto shrines, it seems like she wants to use a part of the books with my memories that Tomoe has put together.

Well, this is also acceptable.

When she was guided to the book storage, she was pretty surprised. Tamaki, who has a hard to read expression, had a rare easy to read face, one that I could clearly see her interest as she spoke with Tomoe.

To obtain knowledge of my world, books are the fastest method, and just in case, Tomoe and I will be confirming the contents of the books first, so there shouldn't be any problems occurring.

Recently in Asora, there have been people that wanted to be cooks, and lately, specialized jobs that didn't exist before in the variety of races had begun appearing in Asora.

It is kind of heartwarming.

"Thanks to Makoto-sama holding the cherry blossom viewing party, the impression they have is quite good, and a religion isn't something to be forced on someone anyways." (Tamaki)

It seems like there was no negative feelings regarding the sudden appearance of temples.

I don't really plan on educating them in it.

It is great that no problems occurred.

Beginning with Shiki, she will also be relieving the work of Tomoe and Mio. We will watch the ability of Tamaki, but it seems like she plans on learning at once.

Learning how to do your job as fast as possible is great.

Of course, we will watch and see how much work she can do at the same time.

If we pile too much on her, it is natural that it would end in failure.

I have experienced it many times already.

"That's what I have to say. Also, after I grow able to properly do my job, I can help with the company by assisting in the work of Shiki-san—" (Tamaki)

"There's no need for that. Shiki is doing plenty good after all. Tamaki will be centered

in the matters of Asora. I want you to exchange opinions between the many races no matter if land or sea.” (Makoto)

Currently, in terms of my followers, I have Tomoe and Shiki checking the first town; for the town that’s being made at the seashore, I have mainly Mio and Shiki.

I will have Tamaki look after both of them and reduce the weight of Shiki.

“Understood. I got ahead of myself there. Sorry.” (Tamaki)

“No, I am happy to receive your opinion. Please continue voicing it out. And so, about the matter I told you before... Shiki. I am thinking about increasing the daily inventory of Tsige’s store. Looking at the liveliness of the current Tsige, I don’t think the quantity itself is the problem, but... how much do you think is best?” (Makoto)

Shifting my gaze from Tamaki to Shiki, I change the topic.

But then, before Shiki could speak, someone knocked the door.

“Pardon the intrusion.”

Admitting the entrance of the person, a young Eldwa that was visibly nervous entered the room as he speaks with a trembling voice.

...He is walking by moving both his left arm and left leg at the same time and vice versa.

I haven’t seen this kind of walking since my time in the primary school’s parade practice.

This might be the first time I see someone do this out of nervousness.

“Thanks for the hard work. I have a few things I want to ask you. Please stay here for a bit.” (Tomoe)

“Y-Yes!!”

Tomoe received the report documents and speaks to him.

I have already told everyone that one of the employees in the Tsige store would be coming here, so there’s no problem.

“...Don’t get so worked up. If you want to, how about moistening your throat with some Sake? It will make it easier to speak.” (Tomoe)

“I am fine!!”

But the Eldwa doesn’t seem to be fine at all.

When I checked on Tomoe and the others, I could see that everyone was thinking the same.

Was it a bad idea to tell them to bring an employee?

Did they push the job around and turned it into some sort of punishment game to decide who would come?

It seems like Beren-san shows up pretty often in the store, so maybe it would have been better if I had him nominate someone to do it.

However... is this really something to be so nervous about?

It seems like Tomoe felt doubts about being able to hear anything from him at this rate, so she chose one of the drinks that have a bit of alcohol in it.

A brilliant emerald green liquid was poured by Tomoe, and the Eldwa received it with both of his trembling arms, and drank it all at once.

By the standards of dwarfs, it is weak alcohol that has a scent at most, so even if he drinks it all at once, he won’t drop down. It wasn’t enough to calm him completely, but he was still able to relax a bit, or at least it looks that way.

“Now then... I will be e-e-e-explaining the contents of the d-d-d-documents.”

No good.

Doesn’t seem like it will work.

“No, wait. The documents are truly well made. We will be the ones asking, so you can just answer.” (Tomoe)

...Tomoe sends a lifesaver.

Oh, I can learn from that.

“It is true that it is well made. This was probably written by the Gorgon Yumemi. She does her office work well after all.” (Shiki)

“Just as you say, Shiki-sama!”

Gorgon.

Yeah, there was indeed one in the office.

Yumemi.

I was able to remember her in detail now that I heard her name.

She is the third girl that went to Tsige.

She seemed to be more lively now, but... she does resemble the Gorgon in my memories.

Women can change in any way by changing their make-up, clothes, and bearing.

I check the report documents that were passed to me.

By the way, I was the last one checking it.

Heh~, these documents are written in beautiful handwriting and is easy to read.

I can understand why they praise it.

There's a lot of number comparisons, so I can understand the current situation and see the motive of this time's request.

...This... I should save it as a role model.

“Then, regarding the current clientele of the Kuzunoha Company...” (Tomoe)

Tomoe begins the questioning, and at times, Shiki also asks. The Eldwa answers them.

By the time 15 minutes passed...

The Eldwa that had finished his task, showed fatigue he couldn't hide, and left the room.

He looked as if his very soul was exhausted.

After that, we settled on the specific numbers, and decided that the store would be going with those numbers the day after tomorrow.

With this, we can finally enter the main issue.

"Yeah, with this, I think the store in Tsige will progress. Fuh... well then, regarding the Aion kingdom's revolution and the move of Tsige..." (Makoto)

"If Rembrandt says it will occur, there's no doubt that a revolution will occur in Aion." (Tomoe)

"I agree." (Shiki)

"I think so as well." (Mio)

"..."

Aside from Tamaki, everyone else agreed with Tomoe.

Tamaki doesn't understand the situation and the circumstances, so it is natural that she would maintain silence.

"Then, what do you think of Tsige's independence? As long as we have Kuzunoha company there, there's no way we can stay unrelated after all." (Makoto)

"As long as that man, Rembrandt, is the one trying to do it, it will be stormy, but I think things will just go its course." (Tomoe)

Tomoe seems to be thinking the same as I.

Honestly, since Rembrandt-san is the one doing it, I think there's a pretty good chance of success.

"Until now, instead of being the Tsige of Aion kingdom, it was more like Tsige was the entrance of the wasteland anyways. If Aion is not of any help to the town, I think it is

not strange at all that they are thinking about independence.” (Mio)

Mio pointed out Tsige’s impression as a town.

But I think that’s how it is recognized as.

Tsige may not be considered a base, but it is a town that is filled with the spirit of a frontier.

Since the time I arrived at Tsige, the connection the residents had with the Aion kingdom was already faint.

“If they can maintain their self-defense, there’s only merits in independence. But...”
(Shiki)

“What?” (Makoto)

“Regarding the self-defense of that town, as expected, the protection provided by being related to one of the major powers plays a big role. Even so, whether it is Rotsgard or Tsige, the towns that Waka-sama places a store in really become lively.”
(Shiki)

...

T-That’s just a coincidence.

“...I think the revolution will be a good timing for independence. But Tsige is a town that produces fear. Aion Kingdom and Lorel Union; I don’t think these two major powers, would tolerate the self-government of a small sized nation in their vicinities.”
(Tamaki)

Tamaki speaks about the difficulty of independence based on the situation in their location and the economy.

In the first place, Aion kingdom wouldn’t let go of the benefits so easily.

“It seems like the groundwork for that is already being done by Rembrandt-san and the influential people in the surroundings though.” (Makoto)

“Yeah, since the merchant called Rembrandt has skills that even Tomoe-san

recognizes, he probably won't slip up in those points. That's why I think independence is possible, but when I think about how they could maintain it, there's not much good scenarios. The humans are in the middle of fighting the demon race, and having an inside fight at such a time is evidently not something good. Who knows if Limia kingdom and Gritonia empire will silently watch this." (Tamaki)

"Yeah." (Makoto)

It is true that the demon race might utilize the confusion that the revolution in Aion and the declaration of independence of Tsige will cause.

If their opponent will show an opening on their own in the middle of a war, not doing anything would be a loss.

In that case, Tsige will be showered with criticism from every nation.

How would that work?

I feel like that would become quite the demerit.

"In the first place, even if it's in secret, why is the Lorel Union assisting in the independence of Tsige? I don't understand their reason for it. If things go wrong, wouldn't it just end in changing affiliations from Aion kingdom to Lorel Union?" (Tamaki)

"The reason Sairitz-san spoke of was that Tsige had helped them out quite a lot recently." (Makoto)

In the past, there was an incident with a purple cloud that was thought came from the wasteland, and it created heavy damage to Lorel.

This was solved with the contact of Lime and I also helped in it, or more like, I was the one who dealt with the cloud though. In public, it is known as the result of Hibiki-senpai's help, somehow managing to stop it.

At that time, the Lorel Union had requested the help of Aion which in turn ended with the assistance of Tsige. Rembrandt-san was the one who directly worked in the countermeasures, and helped out a lot, or so she said.

That's why this is their way of saying thanks.

Now that I think about it, I feel like the cooperation of Lorel in this holds more risks than benefits.

Anyways, Tamaki considered the case that Lorel was aiming for Tsige.

That's possible, but...

"Even if it's the order of the Lorel empress, I think it is an incredibly strange reason for a major power to act." (Tamaki)

"Tamaki, even though you haven't gone to the outside once, you speak as if you know the ways of the world very well-ja na." (Tomoe)

"I have not received permission to go outside, but to compensate, I have properly read the records until now. Of course, I haven't stepped into the specifics of this world, so if there's any part I am wrong about, I would be happy if you point them out." (Tamaki)

"Hoh~, you are passionate in your studies-ja no." (Tomoe)

"I want to be of help for Makoto-sama even if for a day faster." (Tamaki)

...Strange sparks are flying again.

The two of them have a dangerous smile and that's a bit scary.

But just by checking the report documents and records, she is able to speak this much. That's impressive.

Right. Tamaki is speaking without knowing about Tsige, Aion, Lorel, and Rotsgard.

Keeping that in mind, I have to point out the parts where she has strange misunderstandings.

"Okay okay. Tomoe and Tamaki, stop that. The detailed plan of the independence has not been disclosed in that meeting. I will try asking a few things and see. At the times when I want you guys to come with me, it would be great if you make enough spare time beforehand." (Makoto)

Counting the matter of how we are going to cooperate in this, this is a period where I still have to grasp more information.

Also... yeah.

Self-defense huh.

The present condition is that Aion is not providing any sort of fighting force for Tsige's defenses.

That's why I wasn't that worried about this part.

I thought it wouldn't change that much from the present condition so it should be okay.

But the name 'Aion kingdom' creates an intangible defense for Tsige that I didn't take much into account.

A prosperous town in a major power, compared to a prosperous town that is being self-governed.

If an outside force wanted to meddle, the latter one would be the easier target.

Tsige provides raw materials that are indispensable for the outside, and it possesses the most in depth information of the wasteland, but that doesn't serve as a deterrent.

Rather, it would be more natural for other influential forces to think about obtaining those benefits.

Instead of cooperating or allying, if possible, there's no doubt that taking them in would be the option that brings the most benefit.

"Please ask us whenever you want." (Tomoe)

The other three nod at the words of Tomoe.

Thanks.

I felt like straight words of gratitude were coming out of me, but because it felt embarrassing, I simply whispered in my mind.

The thoughts of Rembrandt-san, and the plans of Sairitz-san.

I wonder just how much those two are wishing for in this matter.

Thinking about those kind of things might serve as a lesson too.

The declaration of independence from Tsige. I am interested in how the Aion kingdom will deal with it.

Also, the act of a town trying to gain independence from a major power; this is without doubt a dispute between humans.

The Goddess probably won't have her turn in this matter, and even if she wanted to, thinking about her situation, I doubt she can do anything.

We won't need to worry about Bug.

I have gone around the world a lot lately, but it will probably be on hold for a while.

Right, settle down and...

Hm?

Even if I settle down from these matters about independence and revolution... I still have my work as a teacher in Rotsgard and I can't just leave the store at that place either, and I also have to go to Kaleneon every now and then.

That means... I will be jumping around as always.

"At any rate, Waka, in the end, we weren't able to visit Lorel Union. So *conquering* the four major powers will have to be postponed until the next pleasure trip huh. That's a pity. But when the time comes, please let me accompany you." (Tomoe)

"Wait! Wait Tomoe-san, what are you saying all of a sudden?! That's called skipping the line, you know?! Leaving aside the newcomer that's banned from going outside and the favoured Shiki, we should properly talk about this and let *me* go!" (Mio)

...I don't think I'm favoring him though.

Also, banned from going outside, she says. As if Tamaki were a kid.

Mio is throwing poison at me without any intentions.

"I don't mind talking about it, but the one who will be going is me-ja. I heard that Lorel

is a place where the culture of Waka has been inherited and taken form. It is obvious that Waka and I should be the ones going around that kind of place!" (Tomoe)

...Ah.

Saying that they should have a talk, but then saying that 'I will be the one going'. Isn't that strange?

There's no conversation in that.

However, Tomoe is not backing off either.

I didn't know that she had such attachment to Lorel.

Well, it is certainly true that I have gone around a number of large countries, so I won't say I didn't feel like I was in a trip.

But calling it a pleasure trip, that hurts you know.

I was relatively serious in those visits, and I was also nervous!

"Okay then. Let's have a through TALK!" (Mio)

"That's what I wanted!" (Tomoe)

Just do whatever you want.

When these two talk, the chances that sparks fly to my direction are high, but I just don't have the energy to stop them.

Shiki and Tamaki don't seem to have any intentions of joining it either and are just watching.

Even if the number of followers increase, even if the chances of Tsige gaining independence increases, Asora is still the same as always.

Chapter 230

Renewal

A noisy and packed busy time.

When one moves, the time really does go fast.

Of course in Tsige it is like this, but in Asora and also in the store in Rotsgard that are not directly related, are also moving busily.

Counting the movement of personnel, these two months have been a time of great reformation for Kuzunoha company.

“Waka, please show up at noon in the Tsige store. I will also be going around the expanded areas of Tsige, but when I finish, I will be heading there.” (Tomoe)

“Understood. Mio and Shiki are okay, right?” (Makoto)

“Of course. Mio has already done the preparations, and Shiki seems to have a meeting with Morris, but he said he will be done by morning. However, Waka, it seems like these days have become more busy than the time when you were going around the various countries.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe made an ill-natured smile.

I actually thought that things would calm down after finishing the visits, but it seems I was completely wrong.

She is probably poking at that.

“I won’t say it was perfect, but I was somehow able to overcome it, so please don’t bully me too much. I have been practically stuck with Rembrandt-san everyday with almost perfect attendance in the meetings for the preparation of the revolution. I have also worked as a teacher in Rotsgard without rest.” (Makoto)

I received the lessons of Rembrandt-san regarding merchants and the actual state of

the commerce, and also taught classes in Rotsgard with Jin and the others as well as the new juniors that were admitted in the class. I also heard the opinions of the people in Asora as I adjust the stance of Kuzunoha company regarding the Aion revolution and the independence of Tsige.

Ah... just remembering it makes me wanna puke.

My determination of two months ago about doing all the things that I have decided to do, has all come onto me like a mountain.

The first month was the hardest, and when I was alone in my room, there were times when I laughed without any reason.

I had practically no time to sleep after all.

When I was unable to take it anymore and collapsed, one of my followers would find me and reactivate me.

...I will be... sleeping as much as I can tomorrow.

No matter what anyone tells me, I will sleep a good 3 hours!

“...I admire that you have decided not to run when you have decided on doing something, but for us who are watching this, it has also become worrying. Anyways, I had no intentions of bullying you at all. I really meant to be proud when I said: ‘as expected of our master’.” (Tomoe)

“...Thanks.” (Makoto)

“Ah, right. In the afternoon greeting round, Shiki and I will be accompanying you as well. There have been a number of people who have been noisy, saying that we should go greet as well you see.” (Tomoe)

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

“Who knows. Seeing Waka lately, I don’t think there’s much need for us though. Well then, see you later.” (Tomoe)

“Yeah. Give my regards to the representative of Eleor company.” (Makoto)

With summer coming closer, Tsige had changed the location of their outer wall that hadn't been changed for a long time, and it has been rebuilt.

Slightly into the side of the wasteland, and more into the side of Aion.

Thanks to that, new land has become available in the town and the price of the land has decreased slightly as a whole.

'The price will soon increase again, so the decrease in price is only temporary', is what the Eleor representative said as he spend freely in the lands with a smile in his face.

With the plans of constructions and the actual execution, the money is moving at a terrifying speed. Of course, he is shouldering quite the burden in the expenses, and yet, he had a truly good smile.

In other words, he knows that he will be profiting more.

How fearsome is the real estate industry.

Regarding the land that the Eleor company asked if I would be buying, we had a business discussion again accompanied by Tomoe, and in the end, we bought it.

With that price, 'they are not even doing a trade'. But it doesn't match the ratio of the money that's moving in a daily basis.

Even if the materials that the adventurers obtain from the wasteland have a ridiculous price as well, they are literally risking their life to obtain them.

Thinking in that way, I do feel like it is slightly unreasonable.

After buying the land and ending the business discussion, Tomoe was occasionally involved with the Eleor company.

As I see her off, I thought of this.

"Well, even if I think it is unreasonable... I have already bought the land from him, and we are normally pretty friendly with each other. The land that's inside the outer walls is on high demand and there's also the price for security counted in it, and in the first place, there are a lot of people who would wish to buy the land in Tsige. Just because there's big transactions done inside the town doesn't mean that your life will always

be safe and stable inside it after all.” (Makoto)

Since Eleor company has achieved safety and stability, there must be something that’s balancing it.

How far they can go depends on the sense of the merchant himself. For me, the representative of Eleor company looks like he is in a dangerous position where he would fall at any moment.

I obviously don’t possess such sharp senses like him.

As I received the teachings of Rembrandt-san, I was able to clearly tell this.

That’s why I have been able to continue business while maintaining a safe line.

And I have now build a store in the land I had previously bought. I finally got the resolve to make my own store in Tsige.

After hearing the requests for an increase in inventory and personnel, I decided to take this chance to implement it, and in the end, the store we built turned out pretty big.

And so, today is the opening day of the store.

Since the morning -no, since the previous night, the employees have been moving busily.

There’s visible fatigue as expected, but seeing that their faces were mostly cheerful was a saving for me.

Tomoe, Mio, and Shiki have been working in Tsige the whole day.

Akua and Eris were brought from Rotsgard as temporary helpers, and Lime has also been brought here, so it is truly an event where the Kuzunoha company has gathered.

However...

“In this time when Aion might make a move, Kuzunoha company will be opening a big store in Tsige, huh.” (Makoto)

There's not really any hidden meaning behind the opening and date of it.

There's none, but it is a timing that can be taken as some sort of declaration.

I don't have any intentions of changing what I will be doing, so worrying about it is pointless. Be that as it may, I understand that this is bad timing.

In reality, this opening day might have been controlled by Rembrandt-san and the others, but if I begin thinking about that, there would be no end.

knock *knock*

Hm?

"Come in." (Makoto)

I respond to the knock.

"Waka."

"Eris huh. What's wrong?" (Makoto)

"To celebrate our opening, merchants and adventurers are popping all over." (Eris)

"...I see." (Makoto)

Now that I think about it, I heard from Rembrandt-san that before the opening begins, there will be a celebration where a small amount of people will come for greetings.

The people that want to have a relationship of big trades would normally come after the opening for their greetings, and there will be times when they would inquire for it, but it seems like it is a tradition to have adventurers and acquainted merchants visit you before the store opens.

The adventurers mostly wait for when the opening ends to enter as customers, so the merchants are normally the ones who would come for the greetings.

Even so, they are arriving this fast?

There's still quite a lot of time before the opening.

“Understood. I will be going soon. Are there a lot of merchants as expected?” (Makoto)

“For now, there’s more adventurers. They probably intend to line up for the store opening after they are done with their congratulations.” (Eris)

“Ah, I see.” (Makoto)

“The majority are thinking about introducing themselves to the tops of Kuzunoha company who are unreachable in normal circumstances. By the way, there’s an incredible line waiting for the opening, and we have been rearranging it many times. The street on the front is already incredibly filled. This is something that we wouldn’t be able to see in Rotsgard..... And I don’t want to see it there anyways.” (Eris)

“So the line is growing well. Understood. Please tell the people who are organizing the line to not cause any trouble for others. I have already notified the town about it so it should be fine, but the lined up customers would probably get impatient and things can happen.” (Makoto)

“Don’t worry.” (Eris)

With her eyes glittering for a moment, Eris shows me a thumbs up.

...When she is not together with Akua, I feel like her malice is way too strong, but even if Eris is like this, she is a girl that has been managing well with the customers.

Her sales are pretty high too.

I leave the office at the fourth floor together with Eris and head to the first floor.

The new Kuzunoha company has an extravagant structure of one basement and four floors.

Tsige has begun having buildings here and there with three floors, but four floors is pretty rare.

Thanks to that, the building alone stands out, which is a thankful extra.

Now then, about the people that have come to celebrate the opening...

Wow.

“Oi oi, Eris. Isn’t this an incredible number?” (Makoto)

“Since you said: ‘Oi’ twice, it must be important.” (Eris)

“...There’s even people that seem to have business cards.” (Makoto)

“Uwaa~. You ignored me. I am against killing jokes.” (Eris)

For now, I ignore Eris and once again look at the people that are gathered at the main entrance.

‘Popping out’ really does describe this.

Some of them even have business cards which I once used for fun with Rembrandt-san and had now propagated.

What the people are holding in their hands is probably presents for the celebration, but I have to question their bragging.

It seems like business cards have become established enough that even adventurers carry them.

This is really a scene that can’t be seen at Rotsgard. It feels fresh.

I was thinking about surprising the merchants by giving them business cards, but it probably won’t be much of a surprise now.

The amount of influence Rembrandt-san has is amazing.

“Well, I gotta go. They went through the trouble of coming here after all.” (Makoto)

“Waka is the only one here, so I think it will become something dreadful, you know. What should we do? Should we place a 10 second rule or something?” (Eris)

“What’s that? Are you talking about placing a limit of 10 seconds per person?” (Makoto)

“That’s right. Leaving aside the amount of seconds, I will come in at a random moment and say: ‘Thank you very much~~!’ and push their back so the next one can go.” (Eris)

“...Is this some sort of handshake event? But well, I am counting on you. Can you bring two or three more in order to cope with it?” (Makoto)

“Leave it to me~. I will properly gather up things like business cards and presents to make them identifiable, so I am counting on you to confirm them later. Now then...”
(Eris)

With a mysterious salutation, Eris trotted inside the store and left my sight.

Leaving aside her speech and conduct, it is true that she is an useful and dependable girl.

Lately, I have been thinking that way more frequently.

Now then, let's begin working as the representative of Kuzunoha company!

Opening the main entrance, my long day had begun.



-Basement.

Articles managed: mainly equipment.

Sale of equipment tailored to the requester, equipment for normal customers, repairs, and a counter for advice.

Crowded.

-First floor.

Articles managed: Mainly food, as well as food and drinks supervised by Mio.

Crowded.

-Second floor.

Articles managed: Mainly medicine. There's also consultations for compounding.

Crowded.

-Third floor.

Articles managed: Daily necessities, as well as miscellaneous goods. Ceramics made in Asora; industrial arts quality.

Crowded.

Well, it is the opening day, so it is within expectations.

It also means this is the best situation estimated.

But...

-Fourth floor.

Office.

Crowded.

What is going on?!

We safely did the opening, and customers flowed into the store, and after a bit of time, I confirmed that nothing happened and the business was operating without any problems, so together with Tomoe and Shiki, I went around greeting a part of the frequent customers.

That's what I planned on doing.

I had notified the related people beforehand that I would be greeting them, and opened the store in the meantime.

Even so, after finishing the greetings slightly hurried, I returned to the store and it was like this.

The office at the fourth floor was also filled with people.

Regarding the people that had come to celebrate in advance, I had already met with all of them before the opening day, and they said that they wouldn't be able to come in the appointed day, so they left their presents and I properly handled it, and yet!

“Ah!”

With one shout made from someone, the gazes concentrated in me.

It was an action that made me understand without doubt that these people had gathered with me as their objective.

“Most of them are probably people that felt danger from the prosperity of our store. Their decision of acting immediately can be considered good, but their insight for evaluating us lowly can’t be praised. Now then...” (Tomoe)

Tomoe muttered in a low voice.

“There’s also merchants that are not from Tsige. There’s probably people that want to make connections for transactions. Even if that’s not the case, this many people have come to our store, so it is natural for a merchant to want to greet the representative of such a company.” (Shiki)

Shiki also spoke in a low voice.

Whatever the case, Rembrandt-san will also be coming here, you know.

Geez!

“Sorry for the wait. I am the representative of this company, Raidou. I am truly grateful for your visit in this opening day. We will be inquiring your business shortly, so please wait for a bit.” (Makoto)

Making a smile that I have already grown able to make by reflex, I face everyone with a greeting.

After that, since this is not something that can be dealt with with plain fighting spirit, I had Tomoe and Shiki help out as well, and we went around speaking with everyone.

Mio is doing her best working at the first floor, so she shouldn’t be able to move from there. Even so, she still helped out by bringing simple dishes and drinks for the people that were waiting.

Mio had prepared Japanese-styled food that was not normally seen in Tsige.

When she told them: ‘This is the food that’s being served at the food store below’, they looked interested, and most of the customers had given it a try.

She helped filling the time for the waiting people, which was a grateful help.

If the time wasn’t enough, I was thinking about having the remaining people leave, but in the end, there was no need to. We were able to finish dealing with the people that came to greet or have business discussions.

But well, regarding the business discussions, we told them that today we are not receiving any appointments, so we didn’t enter any detailed talks.

The workload has increased, including the appointments of the areas each person is in charge of, but if, on top of that, we went into the details of business discussions at this moment, it would definitely end in failure, so there’s no helping that.

I don’t have the genius level business ability that people like Rembrandt-san and a number of merchants in this town have.

I also don’t have the many years of experience that can fill this gap in talent.

It is also currently impossible for me to understand the advantages and disadvantages of a negotiation in a short amount of time.

“I-I am tired. It was unexpected work...” (Makoto)

“Even so, we have finished everything before Rembrandt came. Good job.” (Tomoe)

“There were also some negotiations with good prospects, so it wasn’t wasted time. Good work.” (Shiki)

Warm gazes were directed at me.

“Now there’s only Rembrandt-san left and today’s plans are over.” (Makoto)

“Yes. After that, please rest at ease. We will arrange the documents of the sales today that have to be checked.” (Shiki)

“I will do so.” (Makoto)

Today, I don't care about what move Aion makes.

If they make a big move tonight, I will do my hardest to vent my anger on them.

"Anyways, there can be this many congratulatory presents huh. We had them all sent to Asora, so there wasn't any problem with space to place them, but if we didn't have any way to deal with it, it could even affect the business." (Makoto)

"That' just proves how much attention Kuzunoha company is gathering." (Tomoe)

While nodding at the response of Tomoe, I recall the congratulatory presents.

I accepted all presents aside from slaves and living things.

Later, I will have to give them a fitting present in return.

Even when the sun had set, the influx of people had not waned, but calm had already returned slightly in the office.

...At this rate, I think the situation in Mio's place is terrifying.

She herself said that she didn't have any intentions of coming here every day, but... I hope the opening doesn't turn into her first and last time she comes here.

"Well well, this is scary huh. To think that it would get this lively. There's no free space from top to bottom."

"Rembrandt-san." (Makoto)

"I am sorry that my greetings came so late, Raidou-dono. Congratulations in the opening of your store." (Rembrandt)

"Thanks. You are right in time, so please don't mind it. From my part as well, I am sorry that I couldn't come welcome you." (Makoto)

"Lime-kun received me. There's no need to worry about it. I heard that you politely dealt with the merchants that jumped here. That must have been tiring, right?" (Rembrandt)

Now that I see, Lime was behind Rembrandt-san.

He bowed and soon returned downstairs.

Good work.

“I still have ways to go. I should have welcomed the appointed guests with slightly more time. I did say ‘I was tired’ out of reflex, but I am not really that tired.” (Makoto)

“Fufufu. Well, even if you are still young, there’s no need to try doing everything perfectly. Those kind of people don’t last long. It is best to understand your own limits. But well, as long as you have the opinions of your dependable close-aides, there’s nothing to worry about. In your case, that is.” (Rembrandt)

“I am truly saved by them.” (Makoto)

How much I should do, and how much I should think of it huh.

Getting a sense of balance in those kind of things is truly difficult.

It seems like the body learns how to gauge that as you gain experience, but in the eyes of Rembrandt-san, I probably looked like I was trying way too hard.

There’s also the fact that this is the first day of our opening, but maybe I moved a bit too much without thinking of my own appearance.

If that’s the case, I have to reflect.

“When you rented a place in my store, you began working there without any hesitation. Raidou-dono, you probably weren’t self-aware, but... looking at your face today, you are actually feeling elated. The sensation that you have actually opened a store.” (Rembrandt)

“Yes. In order to do my best in Tsige, I will devote myself.” (Makoto)

“You are already devoted enough. I am looking forward to the time when you become big enough to cover Tsige completely.” (Rembrandt)

“Don’t exaggerate.” (Makoto)

“I can’t go losing. It’s clear that Kuzunoha company will attract even more customers as a famous sightseeing place as well, and in truth, it will turn out that way.”

(Rembrandt)

“I feel like Rembrandt company is already like that though.” (Makoto)

“I am speaking of the time when Rembrandt company becomes the second figurehead of Tsige. I can’t fall too far behind when that happens.” (Rembrandt)

“No way.” (Makoto)

A wry smile surfaced in my face.

Seeing this, the gently expression of Rembrandt-san turned into a serious one and he speaks.

“...Regarding the movements of that Kuzunoha company, the reports that have been sent from Tsige to Aion kingdom have not been good. This is something we are letting go intentionally, but from what I can interpret, the grand opening of Kuzunoha company will most likely make Aion kingdom view Kuzunoha company as a big factor of unrest for them.” (Rembrandt)

“...Yes.” (Makoto)

“It can be considered one of the many triggers, but in this late in the game, it won’t be able to change the big wave that’s going to occur in this country. Moreover, I will not let Kuzunoha company be the target. Their opponent is the town of Tsige itself. Even so, I am sorry.” (Rembrandt)

“No. I will say this straight. If they aren’t going to be making a big move today, just at this moment, I don’t feel like caring about the moves of Aion.” (Makoto)

I am tired to the point of not having any surplus, so my current real feelings are like this.

No matter how Rembrandt-san utilizes the opening of our store, I will just stay as his ally.

I don’t really mind.

“...Hahaha, I see. Then let’s not make this long. This is a present from me to congratulate your opening. Check it out later.” (Rembrandt)

Rembrandt-san stood up from his seat and was about to leave.

What was given to me was a white rolled up paper.

Ah, wait.

If I remember correctly, Rembrandt-san was guided by Lime and he came from the stairs, right?

Then let's introduce him to 'that'.

Since what he gave me is obviously something that will surprise me, I will also give him a surprise here.

"Please wait. If you are going to be leaving, go ahead and do so from here." (Makoto)

Saying that, I stop him and guide him through the corridor.

The place we arrived at was a certain door at the end of the corridor.

"A dead end -no, a room?" (Rembrandt)

"Go ahead." (Makoto)

Guiding him, I touch the door.

Without any sound, the door slides open from both sides.

Rembrandt-san enters together with me as prompted, and within that small room, I touch the wall.

The door closes.

That's right. This is a modern era device I thought of when the structure of the building was decided to have one basement and four floors.

A convenient tool of civilization, Elevator-sama.

By the way, the power source is the magic power of the people boarding it.

In this case, me.

“Uo?!!” (Rembrandt)

“It is okay. It is simply going down. There’s no sensation of falling down, right?” (Makoto)

“U-umu. Rather than falling, it is more like we are slowly descending. What a mysterious sensation.” (Rembrandt)

“With this, we can move up and down. We still haven’t decided if we will be making the scale big enough to have the customers utilize it as well, but for now, I have made it for employee use.” (Makoto)

We arrive at the first floor.

As expected, this is a lot easier than using the stairs.

“...Well well, there’s really people in Kuzunoha company that think of some incredible stuff. Truly incredible.” (Rembrandt)

“Ahaha, did it surprise you?” (Makoto)

“The views are probably going to be divided in: one, an extravagant waste of magic power; and two, a step into magic for a more comfortable living. But... I am part of the people that think new techniques and products are born from curiosity and trial and error. I have been thoroughly surprised, but more than that, I was moved, and of course, I highly value it.” (Rembrandt)

“...I didn’t expect you to say that much.” (Makoto)

“Raidou-dono, I will be counting on you for the years to come.” (Rembrandt)

“Same here.” (Makoto)

Rembrandt-san boards the carriage that was waiting for him and leaves.

Is he the type of person that’s weak for new inventions?

I haven’t seen that side of him before, but in history, millionaires become patrons of

things like inventions and arts, so it isn't something that strange.

Right now, the elevator has problems with the magic power control, size, and the expenditure of magic power, so it is still not possible to have customers use it. Let's try giving directions in order to make it possible for implementation.

Probably, no matter what form it takes, it will probably need an *elevator girl* -or more like, an elevator dwarf or an elevator orc though.

Should I increase the number of people working for the elevator?

Hm...

"Waka, looks like Rembrandt has left." (Tomoe)

"Good work on seeing him off." (Shiki)

"Ah, Tomoe and Shiki." (Makoto)

"And so, Waka, what did he give you? I was slightly bothered you see." (Tomoe)

"If that paper is a marriage proposal from his two daughters, Mio-dono might get dangerous in a lot of meanings after all." (Shiki)

"Don't say something so unpleasant, Shiki. There's no way that doting father Rembrandt-san would present his daughters like this." (Makoto)

Even if I said that, I was slightly uneasy.

I nervously untie the rolled up paper, and open it.

"Map?" (Makoto)

It was a map.

And it is a map from Tsige that shows the division where Kuzunoha company is.

A map as a congratulatory gift?

"Fumu, to think this would be given as a congratulatory gift." (Tomoe)

“...Waka-sama, Tomoe-dono.” (Shiki)

“Shiki?” (Makoto)

Maybe he noticed something? Shiki pointed at a part of the map.

Ehm...

“Hoh, I see. As expected, he is a person that does interesting things-ja no.” (Tomoe)

“Eeeeh?!” (Makoto)

That’s one of the main Streets that extends from the center of Tsige.

If I remember correctly, it is a Street called Rimeishi?

“T-This is... *that* Street, right?

I ask for confirmation just in case.

“No doubt about it. It seems like from today on, that Street is now named Kuzunoha Street, Waka.” (Tomoe)

“That man, seriously. Just how much can he do in this town? It is certainly true that this is amusing though.” (Shiki)

Tomoe and Shiki were in admiration and surprise, but at the same time, they held composure.

No wait, isn’t this normally something to be dumbfounded about?

The name of the Street that Shiki pointed... there’s certainly Kuzunoha Street written down there.

To think that he didn’t present me with an object but with a name.

Moreover, a Street in the town.

“I feel like... it has turned into something incredible.” (Makoto)

That mutter of mine was swallowed by the darkness of the night and disappears.

When the revolution in Aion kingdom occurs, Tsige will look for the chance and declare independence.

With that flow of events, there's no doubt that fights will occur, and I will also be involved in them as a related party.

Something even more incredible than a Street changing its name will be occurring soon.

Even so... looking at the bustling store at my back... hearing the people in it, made me feel that I don't want to lose the bustle and liveliness of this town.

That's how I think.

Chapter 231

Whirling banquet

Late at night.

The time when the sound of the town stopped and Tsige finally entered silence.

Even so, in this town that has lately been called as a nightless town, there's still places where the liveliness still continues.

At the very least, this room where only one man is in, is wrapped in silence.

That man is Patrick Rembrandt.

The big company that everyone recognizes in Tsige, the owner of Rembrandt company.

“ ... ”

Rembrandt was still silent. His eyes were going through the mountain of papers that were piled up on his desk.

With his left hand, he took the papers, and with his right hand, he holds a pen he uses to write sometimes.

It goes without saying that what he is currently pondering in his head is about the information of Aion kingdom and Tsige.

And this is the most recent information he has received from the eyes and ears that Rembrandt company has placed in the several areas.

Of course, there's always new information coming to his place everyday.

In this moment when they are trying to take advantage of the revolution to gain independence in Tsige, he is technically the central figure, so he has been living days where sleep is precious.

“...Fumu. There’s still rough areas but... the path has been made.” (Rembrandt)

If this were the representative of Kuzunoha company, he would have already been drowned in information a long time ago and escaped from reality with this amount of work.

It is an amount that even if a miracle happens, arranging it all would be his limit.

But Rembrandt who has his wit and experience, secures a small amount of sleep everyday by properly grasping the situation, and has already finished his insight regarding the revolution of Aion kingdom and independence of Tsige.

“You are being quite cautious.”

“...Well well, I am astonished. To think that you were someone who didn’t show any manners when entering a room, I really didn’t expect that.” (Rembrandt)

“It seems to be called a ‘surprise’. I learned this from Raidou-sama.”

The sudden visitor responded to the sarcasm of Rembrandt who was pointing out her lack of common sense.

It is certainly true that visiting late at night without any prior appointment is quite rude.

It is not something that can be forgiven by just saying it is a surprise.

“Do you think that will make me consent, Sairitz-sama? Coming late at night without even knocking, and obviously, no appointment. That’s nothing but a trespasser.” (Rembrandt)

“That’s true. I apologize for the rudeness. I am truly sorry. But, don’t you think that we should get to know each other more, Patrick-sama?” (Sairitz)

The young woman that’s called Sairitz, warded off the the sharp gaze and words of Rembrandt, and gave him a flirtatious glance with a glossy tone.

She is from the a neighboring country of Aion, Lorel Union, moreover, a person in an influential position.

Thinking about her position, she is currently taking an unbelievably dangerous action.

“I think you already understand what we both need though.” (Rembrandt)

On the other hand, Rembrandt didn't break his usual attitude.

He simply waits for the next words of Sairitz.

“Ara, even though you are going to be doing the same shrewd acts you committed in the past, you are being quiet frank. It seems like the image I knew of you is slightly different now.” (Sairitz)

“You intend to show me the power of Lorel Union's information gathering, and place pressure on me? Even if I show the ability I had in the past, it would be unnatural to maintain the same personality as that time. You have already investigated that much, so don't joke around.” (Rembrandt)

“You only have eyes for your wife and daughter huh. I can't help but view this as strange in my eyes. Matching your history and personality, it may be slight, but it feels like something is out of place. We are in a relationship where we will become comrades. I wouldn't do something like this just because of a small sense of discomfort of mine. That's one of the reasons of my invitation just now though.” (Sairitz)

“You are saying that if we were to unite our bodies, we would be able to trust each other? Well... I will admit that it is a valid method when in a complicity. But that's a delusion that only works between one individual and the other. It is not something I would expect the empress of Lorel would do at all.” (Rembrandt)

“...”

“The scale of this matter is way too big to apply. I don't know what's making you so impatient, but if you need someone to consult with, depending on the case, I might be able to help.” (Rembrandt)

“Good grief. I have been incredibly hurt as a woman, but I now understand that you truly love your wife and family. Even if I knew that my objective would be achieved no matter where the dice rolled, it still hurts. I will restrain from doing so in the future.” (Sairitz)

Sairitz speaks out words that can be taken as giving up.

It was an attitude that one can tell that the discomfort she had of Rembrandt inside her head had vanished.

“Seriously. If my wife were to have even slight suspicions about it, my daily life would become the worst. You seem to have already noticed, but I would like you to completely stop these kind of methods that only bring risks to me.” (Rembrandt)

While sighing, Rembrandt reprimanded the behaviour of Saritz.

It can't be helped.

Late at night, in the room where he is supposed to be doing work and already had his butler leave, there's a young woman.

It is clearly a situation that's unprofitable for the man.

“This matter is incredibly important for Lorel as well after all. Even if it is my personal impression, I still wanted to confirm the uncertain factor I felt. I am in a situation where I can't even touch the highest uncertain factor which is the Kuzunoha company you see.” (Sairitz)

“Kuzunoha and Raidou-dono are quite simple existences. It is not like I don't understand how you feel, but those guys return sincerity with sincerity, and fang with fang. They move with a truly simple logic.” (Rembrandt)

“There are times when it is fearsome not knowing just how far that simple logic can go. Especially for someone like me who is involved with the health of my country.” (Sairitz)

“Well, it probably can go real far. It is truly a nice sensation.” (Rembrandt)

“As a person that follows the religion of the Goddess, and serves the Spirits, this is something someone like you can't understand.” (Sairitz)

This time, Sairitz was the one who sighed, and then returned words of criticism at Rembrandt.

“Hahahaha! You can't understand huh. And yet, you have offered cooperation and are trying to make the Kuzunoha company owe you. You said before that it didn't matter where it rolled, but with that kind of principle in your actions, you still possess this

much ability in making decisions. You are truly a fearsome one.” (Rembrandt)

“Not as much as you. Even if you had to discard your everything, the common sense that you believed in, you concentrated on Raidou-dono. That’s truly the borderline of madness.” (Sairitz)

“No no. Contrary to expectations, we might actually be more similar than you think. That’s why, leaving aside trust, I am able to believe in you. I highly value that stubbornness of yours, and I can believe in your judgment as well.” (Rembrandt)

“...I also... believe in your madness... and the conviction that supports it. That conviction of never betraying Kuzunoha company no matter what happens. That’s why someone like me, who wants to avoid confronting them, is able to believe in you.” (Sairitz)

“Seriously. In other words, there’s absolutely no problems. We...” (Rembrandt)

“‘Can form a good relationship’, right?” (Sairitz)

“Yeah.” (Rembrandt)

“Understood. I am sorry for interrupting your silent night. I once again apologize, Patrick-sama.” (Sairitz)

“Don’t mind it. Next time, I ask that you make a proper appointment beforehand, but I will welcome you. Ah right. Since we have the chance, is it okay to ask you one other thing?” (Rembrandt)

“Of course. Ask me.” (Sairitz)

“I had some slight doubts regarding your actions and proposal you see. I wonder, just what kind of existence is a priestess *for you*?” (Rembrandt)

“...So you went for that.” (Sairitz)

“Being one-sidedly shown the information gathering abilities of Lorel, felt unfair you see.” (Rembrandt)

Rembrandt obviously had gathered information of Sairitz as well.

Saying: 'Regarding your actions and proposal', was only an excuse.

It is because he had gathered information of Sairitz that he felt doubts about her.

Rembrandt had questioned her about one of them.

"...For me, that personage is..." (Sairitz)

"That personage is..." (Rembrandt)

"A sister, a daughter, and also a monarch as well. No... that's not it." (Sairitz)

"..."

The words that were slowly tied together by Sairitz, Rembrandt waited for them in silence.

"She is most likely... someone that we... want to protect no matter what." (Sairitz)

And then, the revised words of hers made the eyes of Rembrandt show a light of surprise.

"Hoh~. For the empress, the priestess is obviously an important existence, but when I probed into it, I thought she was an existence that could be replaced." (Rembrandt)

"Replaced? It is certainly true that it is essentially that way. But for me, she is the only priestess. Fufu, that's an answer that would make people question my position as empress. Please keep this a secret." (Sairitz)

"Of course. Even so, I see. With this, I have also cleared a few of my doubts I held about you. I was able to make this time profitable for me as well. This is something to be happy about." (Rembrandt)

"That's great to hear. Well then, have a good night." (Sairitz)

"Dream well." (Rembrandt)

Sairitz left the same way she came in, without making a single sound.

Silence returns to the room once again.

“Fuh~. Being in the border of madness applies to both of us. If the basis for her judgment is the safety of the ‘present age’ priestess, I can understand that heavy bias of hers. This was an unexpected harvest.” (Rembrandt)

He mutters in this room where only he remains now.

“If you lack consideration for the priestess, your neck might be taken in your sleep; but if we turn it around, it also means that if you are not negligent in your consideration to the priestess, you can believe in that empress as long as it is within acceptable bounds. It is truly a grateful thing that it has become a lot more easy to grasp her true motives.” (Rembrandt)

When Rembrandt received an offer of cooperation from the empress of Lorel, he was obviously incredibly cautious.

Of course, he still hasn’t released the necessary amount of cautiousness towards Sairitz.

However, now that he was able to grasp a part of Sairitz’ principle of actions, he is able to understand her moves.

It was a big step forward.

“But, ‘no matter where it rolls’ huh. It is true that in this matter, there’s definitely not going to be any losses for Lorel. It is a truly ingenious choice of positioning. That woman would have done pretty well as a merchant too. If a bureaucrat like that existed to a certain extent in this country as well... is something I do wonder, seriously.” (Rembrandt)

Nevertheless, there’s no doubt that Sairitz is not an imprudent person at all.

She is dependable and can work as a good partner. That’s the kind of person she is, is what Rembrandt once again recognized of her.

“Anyways, I have done what I had to do. I also got my chance to brag. Now, I just have to continuously choose the thin but correct path. That’s all I can do in what’s left after all...” (Rembrandt)

In order to not regret it, he wrings out his everything.

Before the light of the room went out, the last words of Rembrandt were packed with those kind of emotions.



-The night a few days after the renewal of Kuzunoha company.

In the Rembrandt store, there's an amount of merchants gathered there that can't be compared to any time before.

For people that deal in trades at Tsige, an invitation from Rembrandt is in essence, the same as a forced summon.

Moreover, in the wording of that invitation, there's a part that says: 'if possible, make sure it is the representative coming'. That's the kind of event tonight.

In the fancy hall, there's cooking that didn't lose in splendor.

Looking at this, there were many merchants who didn't have a good color in their face.

"Oi, Raidou is also here."

"That's obvious, right? It hasn't been long since he has made his store. He can't just instantly return to Rotsgard after that. No matter if he is the favorite of Rembrandt-san."

"What. So he already intends to curry favor? He changes gears as quickly as always huh."

"You are one to say."

A number of people were sending gazes and talking in a low voice about Raidou who was having a friendly chat in the hall.

They were puzzled as to why Raidou, who didn't attend to the meetings from the Tsige merchants, was now in this place, and they were also displeased by it.

In other words, a group that didn't hold a good impression of Kuzunoha company.

In terms of percent, it is about a 20-30% of the people here.

They are also people that pursued to do business in this town, hold ambitions, are young, and have a slight amount of talent without being blessed by enough good opportunities.

“Well, even so, I am being thoroughly defeated by Milliono company lately. Can’t do anything at all, seriously.”

“Fortunately, we are being well treated by the guild and the adventurers. But the reason why there has been a good wind blowing to our side as well...”

“As expected, because we are having a good relationship with Rembrandt company?”

“Isn’t that the same for everyone? I feel like there’s a different wind blowing.”

“...Hoh.”

“I would like to get along with Raidou from now on as well. There’s no need for us to crush each other, right?”

“It would be great if you were to tell us how.”

“Of course. It is pretty easy. I will also be teaching you a rule that you must keep no matter what. Listen well. Try having a *sincere* relationship with Kuzunoha company.”

“Kuzunoha?”

The man lowered his voice and was talking with someone that was a business rival in the past.

In the hall where groups of people have been formed here and there, this is one of the conversations that continues within it.

Everyone had a trait that they shared in common.

That from the companies that have been facing a radical growth, the people here are the centre of them.

Those people had grouped with their planned people, and were speaking about things they had planned beforehand.

The name of Kusunoha company.

Normally, they would suspect the scheme of the other party.

But tonight, the circumstances are a bit different.

The person that's doing the conversation and the person that opened the conversation, knew that there's something backing the Kusunoha company.

And different from the budding younglings, they also know that Rembrandt is in essence, the one that has a hold of this town.

Kusunoha company has recently opened a store with unbelievable scale.

Of course, this can't be made possible without support from their surroundings.

It is hard to believe that this was done by a young representative that doesn't even stay in town for much. But Rembrandt even changed the name of a Street for his sake.

It was a nailed down truth.

"T-Then, are you saying that the land the Eleor company was holding onto... was in order to present it to Raidou?"

"That's right. Well, it was a gamble knowing it would be of high profit, but... he build a store of that scale. Everyone, do you understand?" (Eleor representative)

"Yeah. Honestly... that's one joke I can't laugh at."

"He is indeed someone that's been doing well in this town, but there's no way he would have enough savings to make something of that scale. That means he is gaining quite a lot in Rotsgard as well."

"I only know about selling and buying land, but Raidou-dono payed the full amount when he did the deal. It is a truly unusual way of buying." (Eleor representative)

"Seiously?"

"A plot of land of that extend? Rather than calling it unusual, it is impossible."

At a place slightly separated, the representative of Eleor company was also doing a similar conversation.

Both representatives from the Milliono and Eleor companies were told by Rembrandt to create a deep connection with Raidou for the sake of the future.

There's no doubt that their deep connection with Rembrandt company has played a big role in their recent success.

The people that are in this group right now are the merchants that serve as the backbone of Tsige, and they are people that Rembrandt has been paying a reasonable amount of attention to.

Rembrandt had judged that even if it's slightly late, they would be bringing Raidou's topic into the conversations.

Looking at it as a whole, there's around 30% of younglings here that don't think of Raidou in a good light and were invited today into this gathering.

Also, there's special companies that fulfill a low amount of demands, and private companies that don't really hold much ambition; in short, there's currently around 40% of people in this place that don't hold much interest in Kuzunoha.

There's people that differ in the type of industry and people that have different type of customers, so even if they are in the same Tsige, it is natural that there's a lot of companies that have practically no connection with Kuzunoha company.

“...Fuh.” (Raidou)

Loosening the necktie that he is not used to wearing, Raidou takes one glass from the waiter, and gets some rest in a place slightly faraway.

There were many gazes that were concerned about his movements, but they were holding back and no one tried to approach him.

In a place where there's gazes on him, Raidou couldn't show an unsightly behaviour.

He had relaxed while knowing the limits of how much.

“Around this time, Rembrandt-san is probably doing the last confirmation with the

long standing shops huh.” (Raidou)

Around 10% of the merchants in the hall are representatives that have been doing business for a long time in Tsige.

Those people have been able to cope with the town’s prosperity, and have been able to maintain their power without defaming their name.

In title and in public, they are side by side with Rembrandt. In other words, there’s a good amount of companies that are at the top.

Soon after being invited, they were led into a separate room by the Rembrandt company, and for now, they have only been able to see who are the people present.

Today, Rembrandt was planning on revealing the movements of Aion kingdom to the merchants.

That means the phase of laying the groundwork has already passed.

But well, the standing of Kuzunoha company and Lorel Union’s participation won’t be disclosed though.

“...”

Raidou held in the sigh that he was going to let out and fixes his attire.

And then, after emptying the glass he had in his hand, he returned to the hall.

It is time.

A few minutes after he returned to the place where the merchants are gathered, tonight’s host: Patrick Rembrandt, had appeared with the big shots that everyone knows of, and the atmosphere in the place made a complete change.

Seeing that the amount of people appearing here were the same as the people that entered the separate room, Raidou slightly furrowed his brows.

Because even if he had heard from Rembrandt that he has been speaking with those people to a certain extent since a while back, it was still kind of hard to believe that he was really able to convince everyone.

But well, in the eyes of Raidou, Rembrandt is a flawless human.

Rather than thinking about the details of the confidential talk they had, Raidou simply held amazement towards Rembrandt.

“...Now then.” (Rembrandt)

Saying his thanks for accepting the invitation, voicing out words that praised each merchant for the prosperity of Tsige, and finishing all of that general talk, a sharp light appeared in the eyes of Rembrandt, and he began the real talk.

“Sadly, it has become a certainty that the fire of revolution will be burning in Aion kingdom. How will you... how will *we* move?” (Rembrandt)

With a questioning tone, Rembrandt’s speech began.

The revolution in Aion.

Tsige’s independence.

“...I don’t think it will come true, but if possible... I pray that the kingdom, the empire, and the demon race don’t get involved in this matter.” (Raidou)

Feeling that the words of Rembrandt were bringing heat into the hall, Raidou muttered this.

Because he already felt that they would definitely get involved in it as well.

This mutter was not because he didn’t have the resolve, but because he had already resolved himself.

Just how many ripples will this revolution create?

This was something that not even the Goddess could predict its outcome.

TLN: This marks the ending of Arc 4!



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