Prologue

The Golden Melancholy

It was a pure white mansion. There were blossoming flowers of all kinds in the garden. A young girl smiled as a young boy observed her.

That was a happy time in the past, and the memory of it hadn’t faded one bit. His one goal in life had been to retrieve such happiness. Yet, it was a task harder than traveling to the moon.

The mansion—the golden city that he had built. There was also a beautiful garden, like a paradise in heaven. It was far more luxurious and grandiose than the one in his memory. Yet the most important aspect, the key to his memory just somehow couldn’t be found.

Even after he had become a force to be reckoned with in this world, he was unable to find his beloved young girl. And without her, he could never find his smile.

All of this had been prepared for his beloved young girl.

His name was Leon Cromwell. One of the demon lords, known as the “Platinum Saber.” And the girl that Demon Lord Leon was seeking was—

This was the kingdom that Leon ruled—the Golden Valley El Dorado. The royal castle, in the shape of a spiral, towered at the center of the kingdom. The location was the meeting hall of the royal castle.

Leon exuded an air of majesty on his throne as three suspicious individuals kneeled before him. They were garbed in all black and adorned with rain hats, a rather bizarre look. Their outfit looked the same as that of the weapon merchant Damrada. It went without saying that this was Laplace’s party.

“—You again. Isn’t this the second time?”

“Yes. To have the honor of being recognized by His Majesty Demon Lord Leon, we are most grateful. However, we regret to inform you that we will be suspending the transaction of the confidential merchandise this time.”

It was Teare who answered Leon in a rather serious tone. It was an attempt to make them seem more appealing by letting the female Teare do the negotiating.

This was also going to be their last engagement. They had decided to follow Yuuki’s plan and pause all activities in the Western Nations.

Misha of the ‘Cerberus’ organization would continue to act as a correspondent to the Rosso family. While they proceeded with their prior transactions, Yuuki’s party would move their headquarters to the Eastern Empire.

In addition, losing Mariabell also greatly reduced the Rosso’s strength.

In truth, the supplier of their top-secret merchandise was the kingdom of Siltrosso, and right now the Rosso family didn’t possess enough power to conduct any more summonings.

Moreover, now that Tempest had joined the Western States Council, the Western Nations would be under the influence of Demon Lord Rimuru. Their surveillance would be tighter than ever.

Laplace and the others all agreed that it was time to leave.

“Ho, that’s quite bold of you. Unlike Damrada, you wish to raise the price with me so soon?”

“No no no, you have misunderstood. As His Majesty Leon is probably aware, Demon Lord Rimuru has cemented his place in the Western Nations. He’s rather displeased with the summoning of otherworlders and strictly forbids it. We believe that it wouldn’t be easy to continue the trade under these circumstances,” Teare answered smoothly.

Hearing this, Leon thought to himself—as I suspected.

He had sent some of his men to blend in within the Western Nations, and they reported the same things. Leon himself thought that things would develop in that direction sooner or later.

Honestly, there was too much uncertainty with this method. The rate of success was astronomically low. It was an approach that was unlikely to work from the start.

After all, this was about summoning a specific individual to this world—

He had ordered his subordinates to do the summoning countless times. It took more than thirty summoners working together in the span of seven days of rituals with detailed procedures to do the summoning to Leon’s specific criteria.

Yet the rate of success was less than one percent. Moreover, it would take some time for the same person to conduct the summoning ritual again, and the number of times a person could attempt the ritual was also limited.

From the start, the rate of success was close to zero.

Even Leon himself had conducted many summons, yet they all ended in failure. His last summon called upon Shizue Izawa, and tomorrow, it would be sixty-six years since she was summoned. If he wanted to narrow down the conditions into the summoning rituals, the interval between summons would be even longer.

The next summon was not worth looking forward to, either. That was why he devised the ‘Incomplete Summoning’ rituals. It was a young girl that Leon was looking for. That was why the incomplete summon, which had a higher chance of summoning children, should raise his rate of success, even though it would be barely noticeable in the grand scheme of things.

He planned to spread the method among the Western Nations, thereby increasing the chance of success by raising the number of summons attempted and thus gathering more children…

—Yet to this day, it had been a complete failure.

There was no other way, and he could not think of any other alternatives.

That anxious uneasiness weighed heavily on his heart. Regardless, Leon spoke in his usual cold monotone: “—Rimuru you say? We have not signed an agreement nor asked for any aid. But in the end, he became the hindrance. Still, that’s something that can’t be helped. However, what did you mean by our trade will be suspended? Even if the West has fallen, wouldn’t the East still be operating?”

Leon’s sonorous voice echoed in the meeting hall. There was an intense pressure in his voice. Teare couldn’t help but feel numb after being hit by his voice head-on.

They were on different levels.

A half-baked majin would have problems just standing still in front of a demon lord. Even for someone as strong as Teare, it was difficult to deal with Leon.

She was not alone here, however.

“Allow me to explain,” Laplace interjected. “Things are heating up in the East, actually. They seem to be secretly preparing for war, so their mages are quite occupied. That’s why it’s not as easy to gather people needed for conducting rituals.”

Leon squinted at Laplace after listening to what he had to say.

How annoying, he thought to himself.

He didn’t care about what happened between the Western Nations and the Eastern Empire; but if the war were to be lengthy, it would impact Leon’s goals. If this were to be the case, he would need to re-examine his plans.

With that being said, these thoughts were all in Leon’s head. He was still sitting on his throne with a cold expression, silently glaring at Laplace.

His gaze made Laplace rather uncomfortable.

This guy is definitely a pain in the ass to deal with. He’s nothing like the fake demon lord I killed. The real deal really is different, no? Just like Boss said, it’s not gonna be easy to seek revenge against this guy directly…

Due to Yuuki’s orders, they had been keeping a low profile. So even with the person who killed Kazalim standing in front of him, Laplace didn’t have the slightest intention to take on Demon Lord Leon. He was doing so to live up to Yuuki’s trust. He wanted to do his job well.

But, even if that were to be the case—with their archnemesis in front him, he could still try to measure his strength and find his weaknesses. Even in Laplace’s eyes, Demon Lord Leon was a monster. If he were to battle against him seriously… There was no telling who would come out on top. Perhaps he would win, perhaps he would lose. Even if the trio of Teare, Footman, and Laplace were to cooperate in challenging him, the winner would still be up for debate.

That was why Laplace had been entrusted with the job this time to try and negotiate with Leon. He had also guessed Yuuki’s intentions for letting them handle this task.

Boss wanted us to take a look at this man. It’s important to learn about our enemies. Like with that Mariabell, Boss would’ve had a hard time fighting her straight on. Demon Lord Rimuru is a monster beyond belief, that’s why Mariabell failed. That being said, it’s impossible to see how strong Demon Lord Rimuru is.

Mariabell failed because she misjudged Rimuru’s strength. In the first place, it was a miscalculation of Mariabell, who was better at scheming, to have attacked directly. This was not just Laplace’s analysis, but Yuuki and Kagali’s as well.

What Mariabell was thinking—what she was afraid of—was that the longer she waited, the more disadvantageous the situation would have been for her. That was why she decided to place her bets on a high-stake gamble. It was something an outsider such as Yuuki could not have predicted.

Moreover—

The culprit that led Mariabell’s thoughts in that direction, now that there’s no need to hide the truth, was Yuuki himself. Indeed, Mariabell believed too much in her power, but it was Yuuki who intentionally designed it so that Mariabell believed she could defeat Demon Lord Rimuru. In addition, he had mixed in false information to disrupt Mariabell’s plan.

Yuuki wasn’t sure that Mariabell would have lost, either. His goal was to let the strong fight among themselves so that he may observe and confirm their strengths. In the end, Demon Lord Rimuru emerged victorious.

Mariabell, who even Yuuki thought was difficult to deal with, was dead. And her source of power—Unique Skill ‘The Greedy One’—also recognized Yuuki as its new master.

That had been Yuuki’s true goal. Laplace was shocked after hearing about this. You couldn’t just rob someone else’s Skill; but according to Yuuki, he had thought that he might be able to.

How reckless. Mariabell sure was unlucky. Her opponent was our Boss, after all. She was too naive and too confident in her skills. The power of information definitely is amazing. This goes with Leon as well. That’s why even though I’m furious, I shouldn’t take this guy on when I don’t have a good shot at winning. That’s the smart thing to do, Laplace concluded.

Suspension of all engagement and focusing on expanding their influence as well as gathering intel—this plan remained the same. Now that Yuuki had achieved his goal, there was no reason for them to stay in the Western Nations.

This was the reason why they wished to avoid provoking Leon and instead proposed to suspend their trade.

It was no use yielding before Leon’s intimidation. Laplace decided to finish his sentence.

“We are not saying that there will be no more dealings from now on. When we can conduct summoning rituals once more, we shall contact you, but please be patient until then. Furthermore, our information network spans the whole world. If there were to be any stray otherworlder children, could you permit us to take care of them first?”

“—That can’t be helped then. I’ll let you handle that. But I have one question.”

“What’s that?”

“Why is your tongue so loose?”

“Eh?” Laplace replied with confusion, confronted by Leon’s question.

He was calling him loose-tongued, yet Laplace didn’t even know what he said wrong.

What did I let slip? Never mind that—if he wants to pick a fight, we’ll give him a fight all right.

Laplace wasn’t nervous in the slightest. You gotta enjoy every situation you were in, or else you’d be a sore loser. Even if he failed, it was fine. He would just see what to do later on.

He hid his killing intent and quickly made his resolve. Yet Leon followed up, ignoring Laplace’s conundrum: “Is it really fine for merchants who are sensitive to profits to reveal something as important as war so casually? If this were the previous handler Damrada, surely he wouldn’t have done something so foolish.”

“T-that’s…”

Now that he pointed it out, even Laplace thought he had a point; but Yuuki had ordered him to say this to decline Leon. Moreover, Yuuki had revealed other information to him. Now that Laplace recalled it, he began to connect the dots.

What Leon would probably say next was—

“Are you trying to hide something? You seemed to want to keep my focus on the war. In case you haven’t noticed, that’s a foolishly naive thought,” he threw his doubt at Laplace.

We’ve seen through everything. Laplace finally regained his cool, but also felt annoyed at the same time.

Seriously, Boss has got me totally beat. He’s even foreseen how things would develop here.

Leon overanalyzed Laplace’s words and twisted his meaning, thinking that he was hiding something. It was because the demon lord knew the great value of information that he misunderstood, thinking this was all Laplace’s tactic to distract Leon from other goals.

That wasn’t the case at all in reality.

Laplace and his companions were merely following Yuuki’s orders. They didn’t put much thought to it, but it wouldn’t be helpful to tell the truth now. Leon would probably think that he was just making up excuses. This was all part of Yuuki’s cleverly crafted plans. In other words, there were great schemes behind what he had done.

Naturally, Laplace needed to give a hint regarding their ace in the hole.

“How impressive, as expected from Demon Lord Leon-sama. Actually, this would be the last of the top-secret merchandise. There were five more. The children who were taken in by Shizue Izawa, to be more specific.”

“—Umm.”

Yuuki wanted to leak the information about the children under Rimuru’s protection from the start. However, it would have raised Leon’s suspicion about their devious intent if they told him directly. Therefore, Yuuki had reminded Laplace time and time again that he should only bring up the children at the end.

Depending on how the negotiation went, there was no telling how things would develop. Yet Yuuki saw through all of this with ease, which was why he was so terrifying.

Apart from feeling terrified, Laplace continued to say the words he had been ordered to relay to Leon.

“There were three boys and two girls. They were all otherworlders as ya’d ordered. But therein lies the problem: We can’t get them out.”

“Shizue Izawa… Shizu, huh? In that case, they are in Tempest?”

“Yes. It’s a real pity. We’re merchants too, so we don’t want to get ourselves in trouble. By the way, the children’s names were—”

“Ken Misuru, Ryozeki, Gale Gibbs, Alison, Kroba Hale.”

The one who spoke in Laplace’s place while he was trying to recall the names was Footman, who had stayed quiet until now. The others figured that Footman wasn’t the best communicator, so they only let him memorize the names of the children.

“Right, right. But since the merchandise can’t be obtained, surely Demon Lord Leon wouldn’t have any interest either,” Laplace uttered with a smile.

Yet Leon still scowled.

“Your pronunciation made it really hard to tell. Are you sure it is Kroba and not Chloe?”

Footman remained silent even though Leon asked in a rather annoyed tone. If he were to respond without thinking, Leon would probably be so infuriated as to pick a fight with him. Footman, by virtue of being here with his group, was putting everyone else in danger. It was the right choice to have had him remain silent; otherwise, Footman would, no doubt, have only further aggravated Leon.

Teare apologized in his place.

“Please forgive us, His Majesty Demon Lord Leon. The names of the otherworlders don’t translate well in our tongue. As a result, our pronunciations are not very accurate. Also, we heard that you didn’t particularly care about the names of the travelers. We truly apologize.” Teare bowed after apologizing. Laplace and Footman also bowed dramatically to apologize.

“Indeed, names do not matter. It is your miscalculation that the merchandise was taken, but it didn’t violate our contracts. The information about the upcoming war would suffice as your apology, I shall accept it.”

Leon swallowed his emotions and announced with his usual attitude.

And with that, the meeting concluded.

Laplace and the others took the payment for the merchandise and safely left El Dorado.

“All right, what to do next…” Leon muttered to himself after Laplace’s party had departed.

The long hair by Leon’s nape gathered neatly together as if it had woven itself into a single brilliant strand of golden light. In sharp contrast to the radiance, his long and slanted eyes were a shade of melancholy.

A knight stood ramrod straight next to Leon. He was the silver knight Alrose, one of Leon’s top lieutenants, as well as the person he would often confide in.

“Should I eliminate those people just now? How dare they displease Leon-sama like that. I think there is no value in having them live.”

Umm—that was the sound that Leon made as he was pondering Alrose’s words.

Compared to their predecessor Damrada, those three were more than just suspicious. It was questionable whether they were really merchants at all. Frankly, Leon never trusted merchants from the start. He simply wanted to avoid antagonizing the secret organization ‘Cerberus.’

Leon’s subordinates had integrated into human society as well, but they were nowhere near this enormous organization based in the ‘East’ that had even exerted influence on the ‘West.’

We should use them while they are still exploitable—Leon judged calmly.

Especially with the ordeal of finding ‘Otherworlders,’ as opposed to having monsters searching for them, it was more appropriate to have humans handle the work. In order to achieve his goal, assistance from humans was necessary.

“Let them be. More importantly, the problem lies with the information those guys just leaked. If the Eastern Empire really were on the move, it would lead to a real world war. I’m not sure what the other demon lords would do, but if the world went to chaos, there is no way that we would not be affected.”

“It is as you say,” Alrose affirmed in agreement. “El Dorado is under Leon-sama’s protection, but other places may be subjected to the massive scale of war. We must arrange preparations for it.”

Leon’s ruled territory, El Dorado, lay on a different continent across the sea. This continent was larger than the country of Australia on Earth. All of it was under Leon’s rule.

There was a large active volcano in the center that erupted all year round. Yet the volcanic dust was blown away by magic-controlled wind and never once fell over the beautiful capital city. There were also all sorts of ore deposits near the volcano that could be processed into valuable magical metals. In addition, the high yield of gold made it possible for Leon to conduct secret trade with humans.

The city was extremely prosperous. The kingdom was protected by magic. This was the golden valley of El Dorado under Leon’s rule.

There was no way that this prosperous kingdom would be affected and subjected to the ugly wars of humans—this probably was not just Alrose’s wish, but the wishes of all of Leon’s subjects.

“Then we should cast defensive magic for emergency use; enter a high alert state.”

“Very well, we should do just that. But it is beyond my control.”

“—? What is?”

“The war. If many were to die, it may bring those troublesome creatures to the world. I recall that the Yellow Primordial slumbers within this land. But it probably wouldn’t be enough to grant it a new body…”

Leon was truly annoyed by the idiocy that was being committed. He had no idea what the Eastern Empire was planning, but death always accompanied war. If large amounts of blood were spilled, the seas of blood would awaken monsters. It may just cause those dangerous demons to be awakened and rain catastrophe upon mankind.

Leon had a very special standing in all this as an ex-Hero. To him, such a move was extremely foolish.

However—

Now that he had become a demon lord, he simply felt that it was rather saddening. Even though he pitied the humans outside, it wouldn’t really hurt him, regardless of what would happen to these outsiders.

Leon had only one thing on his mind. He feared about the possibility that the girl he was finding might be harmed by this whole ordeal.

“We shall let them witness our strength by that time!”

“Very well. I look forward to your performance. In addition—”

“Allow me to send members of the Blue Knight Order to his kingdom.”

Leon nodded steadily to Alrose.

There was no need to give orders in detail, Alrose knew what he meant and had put it into action.

“I’ll leave it to you,” Leon declared, then calmly closed his eyes—

As his subordinate left, the meeting hall fell back into silence.

Leon’s slanted eyes opened and gazed into the empty space.

—Speaking of which, did he just say Kroba Hale? I shouldn’t expect much, but is it seriously that similar? Perhaps it’s a trap.

No, it didn’t matter if it was a trap or not.

Demon Lord Leon’s primary goal was to find her, after all, that girl. His playmate when Leon was a kid, the girl that he was supposed to protect—

—Her name was Chloe Aubert.