

Chapter 2

Outcomes and Preparation

Several months passed since the meeting with Guy and the other demon lords. Time quickly flew by; it’d already been one year since I became a demon lord, attended the Walpurgis, had the fight with Hinata, celebrated the Founding Festival, and dealt with the confrontation concerning Mariabell and the Rosso family. Maybe it was because so much had happened, but the past year really went by in a flash.

We had concluded the Tempest Resurrection Festival in private and the Empire had yet to make a move. However, according to the information gathered by Souei and Moss, supplies were being delivered one after another to major cities along the border. Now that their actions went this far, it didn’t take a genius to figure out what was happening—a war was brewing on the horizon.

Since armed conflict was all but certain, the screening of humans and monsters alike entering Tempest began to be strictly enforced. We wouldn’t be able to welcome anyone willy nilly; only authorized adventurers, merchants, and those with referrals or other credentials would have the right to enter. It was a precaution to safeguard against spies, but there was another reason as well: To sort out the entrants.

Not all visitors to our country were human, and the abilities of individuals ranged widely. Many of the strangers were uncivilized, and if we accepted them in large numbers, we wouldn’t be able to keep up with them. After all, there was no way to stop idiots from running amok, despite strictly forbidding fighting in the city. We had barriers in place for that exact reason, but it was still difficult to completely prevent the usage of magic. These were the drastic differences between a human-populated city and a city with monsters.

Thus, we consulted with Gazel and decided to follow the example of the Dwarven Kingdom. We had decided to educate the entrants a little about the rules of our country at the time of their entry. That was what the entry inspection was all about, as for those who wished to migrate to our country, a more formal preparation was a priority. We set up a separate, dedicated place that they could attend. It was only after they finished learning how things worked in our country that they were ultimately admitted.

Shion’s men were best suited for this job, since they could deal with even the most violent of people and put them in their place.

This system would be continued in the future since it also helped to detect spies from the Empire. At the time of inspection, visitors were screened and asked why they were visiting. Preventing the influx of people who didn’t have money was one way to prevent unnecessary trouble.

There were a lot of normal inns near the Colosseum, but the people that used those weren’t very wealthy. The accommodations for the upper class had become very luxurious in the capital city Rimuru. Hence, rich merchants and nobles, as well as people arriving for a vacation, were guided to high-class hotels.

While one might argue that memories were priceless, I don’t tolerate such sophistry. My goal was for tourists to enjoy their vacation in the spirit of “you get what you pay for.”

Prices ranged from as low as thirty silver coins per night for ordinary guests to a gold coin or more for wealthy merchants and lower-class noblemen. But there was essentially no upper limit, as we even had rooms prepared that cost ten gold coins and more—wait, why am I advertising…? Well, this was how we segmented things.

I wanted to make Tempest a tourist hotspot, so we’d been trying our best to advertise our city by gifting vouchers for high-class inns to merchants who made large deals with us, and to those who beat Floor 10 of the labyrinth.

Our strategy was well-received by the challengers of the labyrinth. The widely known exquisite quality of our food was a tremendous motivator. The meals alone cost more than ten silver coins. Considering that you could stay at a cheap inn for just three silver coins, you might feel that this was absurdly expensive. However, one might wish to indulge in luxury once in a blue moon, and some people certainly had that kind of cash from challenging the labyrinth. As hosts, it was our job to offer places for those types of people to spend money on, too.

Speaking of which, clearing Floor 10 of the labyrinth was equivalent to a group defeating a black spider, a B-ranked monster—in other words, a team of rank C-plus adventurers or higher. If a person could beat a black spider alone, they would have to be rank B or higher. Therefore, I had no qualms about granting these adventurers corresponding privileges.

Furthermore, if you viewed it through the lens of a small country, they would be strong enough to be hired as knights. If you were rank B in the Freedom Association, then you could be recruited in any country. By acknowledging their position this way, they would naturally pay more attention to their own conduct.

Additionally, if they were B-ranked adventurers, then they most likely possessed a decent amount of money. The same logic applied to labyrinth challengers. Elen’s group in particular seemed poor, but exceptions prove the rule.

In any case, there were no second chances for troublemakers. The high-class area was surrounded by a moat and heavily guarded. It was explained to everybody that they would be prohibited from re-entering once they were chased out.

Since no one became upset upon hearing that, it appeared our public image-building strategy was a success.

Merchants, being merchants, came in droves to barter for weapons and artifacts manufactured in Tempest. There were also those who performed high-value transactions, so there were quite a lot of rich individuals.

The number of customers gradually increased over time, even without us giving away accommodation vouchers.

The weapons and armor Kurobee’s disciples forged and the craftsmanship of Dold’s disciples were of great renown among the merchants who purchased them due to their unparalleled quality.

However, something I didn’t expect was merchants secretly buying equipment discovered from the treasure chests inside the labyrinth. I had mixed feelings about this, but we were being careful not to let anything dangerous slip through our fingers, so we decided to monitor the situation for now.

Every time any of our items were sold in other places, it spread our reputation ever further. Perhaps as a result of that, the number of regular customers had recently been on the rise. Word of mouth was truly impressive.

You might wonder why we were doing all this with the threat of war looming, but the war was a whole separate issue to itself, and this was another.

I’m aware that I’m doing whatever I want. I am on guard against an imminent danger, but I won’t let that fear rule me. I refuse to surrender my daily life and will keep moving forward.

Just as the capital city was steadily progressing, so too was the transportation network to other countries. With Benimaru’s persuasion, we were able to secure Momiji and the tengu’s cooperation. The tunnel was now open as well, and almost all of it was paved, save for certain parts.

The handover to the civil engineers brought by Duke Elalude had been completed, and a direct road would soon be opened between Tempest and the Sorcerer’s Dynasty of Sarion.

Moreover, construction of the railroad linking the Kingdom of Farmenas had also begun and was rapidly heading towards completion. The tracks to the Kingdom of Ingracia were operating as planned. The same applied to the Dwarven Kingdom, where an inn town developed around the train station on their side.

The point where the road passed through the Great Jura Forest and met with the Great Ameld River was an ideal resting place and thus it served as the location for a base during construction. In addition, since the railroad tracks were laid along the river, using this site as an intermediate outpost killed two birds with one stone.

Even monsters that lived in the surrounding area gathered there and formed a small settlement. It would’ve been a waste to leave it as is, so we expanded that town further into an inn town. In the future, this modest inn town would likely grow to become a major city with a terminal, so its importance couldn’t be underestimated.

The road widening project was finished on Eurazania’s side, too. There was still some paving to be done in some sections, but traffic could pass through without any issues.

Merchants had been constantly pleading, “It would be nice if you could finish it soon,” because riding a high-speed carriage on a bumpy road was enough to make anyone sick. Regardless, compared to what they had before, safety and convenience had improved significantly.

We had installed streetlamps for travelers who moved at night and automatic magic generators at fixed distances, so the barriers that stopped monsters from approaching the road operated without any gaps in coverage.

Thus, in less than a year, the development of the transportation network was more or less completed.

We had begun preliminary operation of the commercialized magitrain by running it all the way to Dwargon, as well as the Kingdom of Ingracia. Here, we would be able to gather raw data and iron out problems that arose. The various experimental trials had already been performed, so in other words, this was a real-world test.

The magitrain made it possible to move an overwhelming amount of goods while maintaining an average speed of 50 kilometers per hour. And so, the history of logistics would forever be rewritten. It had opened the door to transporting fresh produce from faraway lands without it ever going bad. This allowed access to a richer diet, and I believed it would also contribute a lot in the fight against famine.

Indeed, logistics was indispensable in increasing a nation’s power—I reaffirmed this belief once again.

In parallel with the data collection, a detailed operational cycle was also being considered. A trial-and-error method was underway to create a timetable.

The distance between the Dwarven Kingdom and the Tempest Federation was around 1,000 kilometers. If we travelled at a speed of 50 kilometers per hour, we could arrive in 20 hours—less than a day.

Ingracia, on the other hand, was approximately 300 kilometers away, so it could be reached within six hours by train.

We worked these figures out after accounting for a considerable amount of safety margin. Theoretically, the magitrain could quadruple its current speed, and the cargo capacity was calculated to exceed 1,000 tons. However, I thought that it would be difficult to handle unexpected problems if we started running it at full capacity, out of the blue, without any previous experience.

First, we needed to observe the situation. It was bound to experience issues during its service, and we had to take breaks into account as well. Since there were limitations to the continuous operation of the magitrain, nighttime service was currently suspended. Besides, it was unfeasible to keep our engineers and drivers working around the clock unless maintenance, such as replacing broken or worn parts, was performed at night, for uninterrupted service all day.

So far, we had twenty locomotives that were ready to go. Each train formation would consist of six-cars: one locomotive, two freight cars, and three passenger cars. The passenger cars contained 80 seats but could accommodate a maximum of 150 people. However, the downside was that they would have to spend hours standing up, so it was better to prohibit this.

If we set at least 200 passengers per operation as our goal, we could achieve an occupancy rate of over 80 percent. Then, how high would we need to set the fare price per person—no, wait, why do I have to think about these kinds of problems! I just have to leave it all up to Myourmiles-kun, he’ll handle it just fine.

It was only a matter of time before the train became fully operational, and as we gradually got more experience, I felt that we could cram in just a few more people, to make the most out of each train.

Our goal was to run the train at a speed of at least 100 kilometers per hour and to increase its length to about ten cars. This wasn’t a dream, but a fact that would soon be made a reality.

Well, the results of the past year had been truly tremendous.

I believe that the announcement of these results would be met with surprise and excitement around the world. A bright future would come into light, and our efforts, our country’s resourcefulness, would surely be known in every land.

Improved standards of living, delicious food, and a variety of entertainment gathered from countries around the world—it all promised a fun and interesting life, something that was unthinkable when I had just reincarnated as a slime. I could freely devote myself to my hobbies if only we didn’t have a problem with the Eastern Empire…

It suddenly occurred to me that Veldora and I, along with volunteers, could declare war and immediately invade the Empire.

I’ve heard that if we developed civilization too quickly, an army of angels would rain down and attack, but we didn’t even know where they came from. Therefore, it’d be hard for us to launch a preemptive strike, but the Empire was a different story.

Since they’re openly preparing to attack us, they can’t complain if we barge in first—that was what I’d thought. Waiting wasn’t in my nature, and no matter how you looked at it, attacking would be easier for us than defending.

If what the Empire sought after was the annexation of the Western Nations, then there was no reason for them to invade the Great Jura Forest. They could always choose to ignore us. Veldora’s resurrection was already well known, and a little research would reveal that antagonizing me meant making an enemy out of Veldora as well. The ball was in the Empire’s court.

Yet, this situation was giving us a considerable amount of stress.

How about we consider the possible routes for invading the Western Nations:

First off, a sea invasion was implausible. Considering the attacks of the great sea creatures, even if they prepared a large number of dreadnought-class battleships, safety wasn’t guaranteed. Fighting in the domain of gigantic aquatic monsters was too risky to be an option. It wasn’t even clear if they could safely navigate the ocean. The conditions would be miserable for knights if they were forced to battle on the sea, as they’d have to deal with the rocking of the waves.

Furthermore, another question arose: Just how many ships would they need to amass if they wished to transport a large number of soldiers? If they planned to send soldiers in the tens of thousands to the Kingdom of Famenas, Youm’s side wouldn’t be standing idly by. They were prepared to defend themselves and meet the enemy in battle.

As long as they couldn’t establish a beachhead in the first wave, it’d be impossible for the Empire to send reinforcements. Imposing sea beasts behind them and the Kingdom of Farmenas in front—if that happened, the morale of the Empire’s troops would plummet, and it’d be as good as a tactical victory for our side.

Thus, another question arose: Ignoring Farmenas, could they use a different approach by invading northern Ingracia? The conclusion was that it would also be challenging. Ingracia’s northern border was the playground of demons. Guy didn’t seem too keen on keeping his subordinates in check, and Testarossa’s men were now in charge of its defense. It was a constant battleground for belligerents, and if the Empire were to invade, then they could expect to become a target of opportunity.

Therefore, an attack via the sea was unfeasible.

Next, you had to consider a land invasion. They needed to take a route through the Dwarven Kingdom or cross the Dragon Roost in the Canaat Mountains. The latter possessed too great a risk, so it’d be discarded as an option. After all, marching at an altitude higher than Mount Everest would be suicidal, regardless of how well prepared you were.

It would be impractical for them to train ordinary soldiers into mountain climbing experts, and even if they did, a group of dragons, who were A-ranked monsters, would be waiting for them.

Common sense dictated that no one would be stupid enough to choose this route.

Then, what about going through the Dwarven Kingdom? When this possibility was pointed out by Wisdom King Raphael-san, Hinata investigated it in my stead, and she confirmed that it was theoretically possible for a large army to pass through. However, Gazel wasn’t someone who would ever permit this, and if the Empire forced their way through, then they would need to battle the Dwarven Kingdom before they could face the Western Nations.

The invasion of the Dwarven Kingdom was as reckless as it sounded. The Armed Nation of Dwargon, who declared neutrality, had a highly-trained standing army to guarantee their security. Their armaments, which made full use of their technological prowess, were simply exceptional, and it was said that the dwarves had no weak soldiers among them.

To begin with, based on its topography, the Dwarven Kingdom was built like a fortress. If they just protected their entrances, they could stave off any attack, even one by an enormous army. Eastern, Western, and Central—among these three entrances, if the Empire were to invade, they would choose either Eastern or Central. Western was connected to the Kingdom of Farmenas, so they wouldn’t have to worry about that. Eastern was the most dangerous and at risk, since it shared a border with the Empire, but as expected, Gazel was nothing but prepared. He’d been concentrating the bulk of his forces in this area in order to keep an eye on the Empire’s movements.

If something were to happen, I planned on quickly responding to their call for aid, and the Dwarven Kingdom was also safe in Gazel’s hands.

This was the current situation surrounding our country.

In the end, I felt that the Empire’s only option was to go through the Great Jura Forest. Before my meeting with Benimaru, which had become a daily routine, I went through these same plans once more.

In case they chose the Great Jura Forest route, which we defended, it was obvious that the greatest obstacle, from the Empire’s perspective, was Veldora’s existence. They wouldn’t attempt a frontal assault, so they’d probably try to trick Veldora by preparing a decoy unit. With that in mind, I had to consider our country’s defensive setup.

There were three possible routes for initiating military operations within the Great Jura Forest. However, one of them was adjacent to Dwargon’s territory. If the Empire ignored our warning and came to invade, the Dwarven Kingdom and our army could catch them in a pincer attack. The Empire would definitely be aware of how dangerous this option was, so I think it’s fine to set a lower alert level. It was more likely that the Empire would strike by using one of the two remaining routes.

But is it really that straightforward? It was a bad idea to split your forces when facing a large enemy, so we could deploy Veldora on one side and our full army on the other. If we employed this tactic, then we should be able to handle the Empire, even if they prepared a diversionary force.

Even I, who was by no means an expert in military affairs, could formulate something like this. Thus, I had my doubts that professional soldiers would set out to war with such a simple strategy.

There was also the possibility that the Empire was looking down on us—thinking that with an overwhelmingly massive army, they could trample over us, regardless of Veldora or our monster army. On the other hand, perhaps they would utilize an underhanded strategy instead of facing us head on.

For instance, they could use the regular army as bait and initiate guerrilla warfare with elite troops in small groups. What if they split into platoon-sized units in order to infiltrate the forest and then regrouped somewhere else?

In these cases, it’d be impossible to monitor all of the minor trails throughout the woods. If we carelessly deployed a reconnaissance force, depending on the scale of the enemy, it might come back to haunt us. Just like what Hinata had done before if a platoon of Holy Knight-level troops were dispatched…

If we took that prospect into account, there wouldn’t be enough troops to cover all possible incursions. It was risky if we moved to intercept the Empire after determining their objective, so I wanted to avoid that as much as possible. And if we lost the initiative, there was the chance that we’d fall into an unrecoverable position.

Although we were trying to be vigilant for that exact reason, the crux of the matter was that we couldn’t read the Empire’s movements. In war, the more unpredictable you were, the bigger the advantage you held over your opponent. Oftentimes, making an unexpected move would be enough to clinch a victory. As a result, we had to consider every single possible scenario…

It’s no use; my mind’s going in circles. I became irritated when those thoughts bubbled up. Wouldn’t it really be better for me to attack first? Or rather, wouldn’t attempting a Blitzkrieg, the moment the Empire declared war be the correct answer?

Since we couldn’t guarantee that the Empire would move according to our predictions, it was pointless to dwell further on this subject. No matter how many times I thought it over, I felt that launching a preemptive strike was the rational thing to do, rather than waiting for an opponent to make their move. We wouldn’t be overwhelmed with worries and could seize the initiative.

…Well, I won’t do it.

No matter how long I mulled it over, the perfect answer wouldn’t drop from the sky. It was smart to be flexible about these things. In other words, playing it by ear. Somehow, it sounded cool and gave the impression of a capable man.

Right, let’s do that.

Having reached my usual conclusion, I grabbed the cream puffs that Shuna had prepared. All this hard thinking gave me a craving for sweets. Although some claim you would get sick of having too much of the same thing, that’d never happen to me. Well, if that ever did happen to me, I might reconsider.

“Hey, eating them alone is so unfair.”

While I was in the middle of enjoying my cream puffs with Shion’s black tea, Benimaru finally arrived. We were in my office. He was a little late to our meeting, which somehow had become a routine. He must’ve been extremely busy, given that he was in charge of war preparations against the Empire. Complaining about tardiness would’ve been quite petty of me.

What? Help him? I have no idea what you’re saying. If you aren’t an expert, you’re better off leaving it alone—I know, awfully convenient of me to say.

“Shion, pour Benimaru some black tea, too.”

“Understood!”

Benimaru seemed to have been traumatized by Shion’s cooking, and as a result, always wore a wary expression. It was okay if it was just black tea, but still, his cautious attitude never faded—very typical of him.

“Thank you. Nothing like a couple sweets to get you going again.”

“Well, good thing we’ve got sugar to spare. It’d be nice if this peace continues.”

“Right. I guess if a decisive battle were to come, we could just beat them and call it a day.”

Benimaru’s confidence was as strong as ever. Although reliable, I hope he didn’t forget to make an effort to avoid war as the first option.

“Enjoy!”

Shion placed the cup of black tea in front of Benimaru. She poured some more for me too. It had a wonderfully relaxing scent.

“What about Diablo?” Benimaru asked.

“Ahh, he has another day of arbitration.”

“Again?”

“Yeah, again.”

Yep, Diablo was out mediating. Ultima and Carrera got into a spat every single day. It wasn’t that they didn’t get along, but rather they tried to compete with each other in any way, shape, or form.



Yesterday, it was about the extradition of criminals, and before that was the treatment of suspects in custody. Sometimes they’d fight over the food menu, and other times they’d argue about who should buy the latest fashion clothes first. Everything would be fine if it were just a verbal debate, but when those two fought, their ferocity could surprise even the yakuza.

Only Diablo could stop those ruthless perpetrators. Venom, who was Diablo’s subordinate, was already a victim, having been abused both verbally and physically by Ultima and Carrera.

No damage had thankfully been inflicted upon the town’s residents, and in fact, it had actually become famous enough to lead people to make bets, but it was still a problem that we couldn’t turn a blind eye to. That was the reason why I had Diablo sort things out, but it might be time to think of a permanent solution. Otherwise, the situation might change for the worst—I could already feel that Diablo was going to snap sooner or later.

Speaking of which, Diablo took Ultima and Carrera to the labyrinth a few days ago. He was brimming with enthusiasm not because of something fun and sweet such as a date, but about the thought that he was going to give them a thorough scolding.

He took advantage of the fact that you couldn’t die in the labyrinth and beat them up without mercy, yet it appeared that they hadn’t learned their lesson at all. On the contrary, they were rather eager to fight Diablo.

Ahh, why are the demons so bellicose…

Personally, I couldn’t keep up with them.

While I was having a brief chat with Benimaru, Diablo suddenly came in, looking utterly exhausted. “I’m sorry to keep you waiting.”

“Oh, thanks for the hard work,” I replied.

“No, no, it’s barely enough to warrant calling it ‘hard work,’ it’s just that my time with Rimuru-sama has—”

“You don’t seem tired, so let’s get down to business.”

“All right.”

Well, if you can spare the energy to talk nonsense, then I suppose you’re okay.

Diablo wanted to say something, but it’d just wind up being his usual soliloquy anyway. Putting that aside, Benimaru and I decided to start today’s meeting.

As I had mentioned before, the number of immigrants to our country had grown. And when that happened, the problem of work allocation to those newly immigrated naturally arose. The employment rate was very important, just like with any other country. This was because if we wished to increase the nation’s productivity, then each and every citizen needed to work diligently.

If the employment rate was good, then consumer spending would naturally rise, and the economy would improve as well. On the other hand, if it was bad, then the economy would deteriorate, and crime would naturally increase.

It was the role of the national leadership to properly manage the task, but obviously, this was exceedingly difficult.

There were individual differences in the abilities of the immigrants we accepted, and there was a limit to the amount of unskilled labor that could be assigned to anyone. Our country was still in development, and the onrush of construction work in various locations had kept us afloat. But even that was drawing to a close, and now the question of “What do we do from here?” was in the air.

Skilled laborers had no problems. If you were an experienced craftsman or someone with enough personal talent to earn a living, then it was an easy question to answer. The problem was those who lacked the knowledge and means to make money.

If you were a farmer, then we could grant you farmland. If you were a craftsman, then we could introduce you to a workshop. If you were an adventurer, then the labyrinth was the perfect place, and if you were an actor, then you could be hired by theaters.

Still, what about people who did not possess any such talents? The solution I came up with was to establish an education center. At the time of immigration, they’d be asked what they could do and based on their answer, they would be taught accordingly. The education center would serve that purpose, and it was going to be operated by the military under Benimaru.

“The number of immigrants continues to grow, and there are a lot of people applying for the military. Whether or not they’d be useful is another issue, but at the very least, I believe they could manage being assigned to domestic security.”

We’d been trying to solve the immigration problem, yet it seemed that there were even more people coming in.

If you join the army, you can earn a living. You can also learn skills for free and even get a job—this was the rumor being spread around.

As a result, the number of people joining the military gradually increased, which not only included ordinary immigrants but adventurers and mercenaries alike. Well, as long as our country was responsible for the defense of the Western Nations, building up our armed forces was a crucial task. For that reason, there were no difficulties for now. While minor complications did arise, those had been at a level that could be resolved within the military.

The bigger problem was that war with the Empire was becoming a reality. Obviously, there was no way we could send people who had just been enlisted the day before into combat, so we were forced to reorganize our forces. And so, I had ordered Benimaru to submit a proposal for consolidating our military.

He brought forth a single sheet of paper and placed it on the table.

“This is the new organizational structure that I’ve come up with. Some of the personnel changes are a little bold, but I think this will work.”

Benimaru held military command authority, whereas supreme command authority, which included the right to appoint individuals into positions, rested with me. It was a little complicated; originally, military command authority was included in supreme command authority. Now, military command was separated and given to Benimaru. This was due to my belief that an amateur like myself shouldn’t interfere with the command of the military. Therefore, Benimaru was entrusted with all matters related to the military. With this setup, Benimaru’s orders took precedence over mine within the army.

However, strategic command was a different story. I had the power to designate the upper echelon of the military, or to make the decision to end any war we were currently engaged in. Benimaru was free to nominate anyone below the rank of general, but the establishment of corps or the appointment of generals was left to my discretion. He still needed a confirmation from me on whether or not the organization chart that he drew up was acceptable.

“Hmm. If you’re okay with it, then I don’t have any objections—”

Even if I didn’t plan on complaining, there might be some things I wanted to say. After all, I would be the one responsible if something went wrong as long as I had the authority to make appointments. Nonetheless, we had already debated numerous times regarding the new organizational structure. I wasn’t going to complain or anything; it was already too late for that. And the personnel I kept pushing for until the very end was “First Corps Commander Gobta.”

“I wasn’t too convinced when I first heard about the idea of designating Gobta as a general, but now I think he’ll be a good fit.”

As you can see from Benimaru’s reply, there were pros and cons to having Gobta become a general. Indeed, the thought of giving that idiot, Gobta, responsibilities of a leader was worrisome. It was only natural that Benimaru and his staff were anxious, since the lives of Gobta’s subordinates would be entrusted to his judgment. Given that he was someone who often slept during meetings, it wasn’t like I didn’t have any reservations, either. That said, I also knew very well of the fact that Gobta had been secretly undergoing special training, and that he was trying his best because he wanted to protect this country.

“Right?! He’s a man that pulls through when it counts,” I said.

Although, when it doesn’t, he does absolutely nothing. But, well, Gobta’s men trusted him a lot, and he was also quite good at looking out for them. I had faith in Gobta.

“He’s one of the Four Heavenly Kings, so he will never betray your expectations!” Shion declared.

“That’s right. And we will send Testarossa as an inspector so she can make up for any shortcomings, just in case,” Diablo added.

The two of them both supported Gobta as their co-member in the Four Heavenly Kings.

“When you put it that way, even I can’t say no as the head of the Four Heavenly Kings,” Benimaru added with a bitter smile.

He must have acknowledged Gobta.

“Diablo is certainly correct,” he then added. “If anything happens, we can support him. Let’s give him the job.”

“It’ll be okay. He may not look it, but his heart is in the right place.”

Thus, Benimaru and I decided to make Gobta a general.

I took a closer look at the organizational structure in order to review the other corps leaders beside Gobta. There was a total of three new corps to be established under Benimaru’s direct command.

The aforementioned First Corps, with Gobta assigned as commander and Hakurou as the military advisor, would have the following soldiers:

• 100 Goblin Riders: Each member had grown to the level of rank A-minus and possessed the competence to be a centurion.

• 12,000 Green Numbers: The 4,000 initial men became senior soldiers and would take command of the 8,000 newly hired junior soldiers. They would work in teams of three.

The number of troops had increased significantly over the past year, but most of them were monsters from the Great Jura Forest. As a result, they were able to operate without any major problems.

Although the junior soldiers were only rank C to D, the senior soldiers had grown to the equivalent of rank B. It seemed like we could expect them to be a considerable force.

Following that was the Second Corps. Geld became the commander for this one. This Second Corps, however, was currently active in various places as a construction unit. In wartime, it would be recalled and become Tempest’s main force. The soldiers under Geld’s command were:

• 2,000 Yellow Numbers: They were High Orc warriors who followed Geld from the start. Their individual strength was considerably high at rank B-plus, allowing them to create an iron wall defense by uniting with Geld. Furthermore, they also took the role of platoon leaders that commanded the new troops.

• 35,000 Orange Numbers: The newer high orcs that had joined as enlisted soldiers. They were a unit around C-rank in strength, but only 15,000 veterans would be involved in combat. The remaining 20,000 would serve as logistical support or military engineers.

And lastly, we had the Third Corps. The aerial cavalry unit was finally being put into action as a secret weapon. The commander of this particular corps was Gabil, its original founder. The soldiers under his command were:

• 100 Hiryuu: They were the most powerful unit within Tempest. Each individual bore the strength of rank A-minus, was capable of flying, and had a high command ability. Some were able to reach rank A and had the Skill ‘Dragon Body’ that could be used as their trump card.

• 3,000 Blue Numbers: These were Lizardmen warriors who volunteered to participate because they wanted to be Gabil’s subordinates. The unit was established with them as its members, and their combat prowess was equivalent to rank C-plus. But they weren’t just ordinary foot soldiers; their distinguishing feature was that they fought while riding wyverns. Their unit had the best striking power, coupled with air superiority.

Be that as it may, the current number of wyverns we had at our disposal was only 300, so we couldn’t assign one to everybody. Most were relegated to raising and supporting wyverns, and it looked like it would be a while before they could participate in combat. Even then, you shouldn’t underestimate them. Wyverns were a subspecies of lesser dragons, a B-plus-ranked monster. While Gabil had succeeded in capturing and nurturing them, their goal for now was to increase the population. If they could assign a wyvern to everyone, then the Blue Numbers could display their true value.

These were the three corps under Benimaru’s direct control.

“So, the Second Corps is under Geld and the Third Corps is under Gabil. Looks like there aren’t any problems,” I said.

“Well, I’ve considered a lot of various options, but I think this is the safest bet,” Benimaru assured me.

Geld was, needless to say, a reliable general. I also didn’t see any issues with Gabil either. He definitely tended to get easily carried away, but even then, he was good in a fight. His performance in mock battles was excellent, and he was at the point where Benimaru recognized him as a rival. His strategic thinking was a bit on the weaker side, but his tactical decisions more than made up for that shortcoming. He treated his subordinates well and knew when to retreat. He was, without a doubt, a talented person that could be trusted as a general.

“As for these, they’re the same as before.”

Benimaru brought out a different piece of paper. Three units were listed there:

Benimaru’s personal bodyguards, Kurenai, was composed of 300 men. Led by rank A Gobua, it was an elite unit full of fierce fighters, all ranked A-minus and above. They also currently served as the general staff.

It was only after I saw them in combat training, but I thought that Gobua and the others were evenly matched with someone like Gelmud, who had once been a high-level majin, if not stronger. If we took proficiency into consideration, there were some members of the squad that were equal to rank A. Some of them could even defeat a Holy Knight one-on-one, so calculating the overall strength of this unit was complicated.

The criteria for a monster’s strength were almost always decided by the amount of magicules. Since monsters were born strong, they had no concept of proficiency. However, in addition to their innate physical power, our country’s monsters had undergone military training. It seemed that this training helped them acquire even more combat strength.

I didn’t think I was overestimating them, even if you considered them out of place or above the normal criteria. In the first place, if we just looked at the anomaly Hakurou, it was enough to prove that I was right.

The people of this unit were fierce soldiers who had all endured Hakurou’s hellish training. They were extraordinarily well trained.

Second on that list was the intelligence unit, Dark Shadow, that Souei ran—it consisted of at least 100 men. There were many mysteries surrounding this group, and as they were under Souei’s complete control, few knew of its existence. But as far as I know, they were considerably strong.

Souka and her four subordinates, who were the commanding officers, were ranked A. Several of them were even more dangerous. Glenda was part of this corps, but there were a couple of Special A rank fighters as well. In fact, Testarossa managed to recruit a few talented individuals via plea bargains, and they were taken in by Souei. They were Girard, the leader of the mercenary group Apostles of Verte, and Ayn, a spirit wielder who had apparently served under him. Both of them were over A rank and were now active as excellent intelligence agents.

I had once joked that it was like a special agency for troublemakers but now it was looking exactly like that.

Souei claimed that we couldn’t expect much combat ability from this team, but I didn’t believe it. I felt that they would be perfect at assassinations. I mean, the group possessed numerous people that were over rank A, so I wanted to ask him what nonsense he was talking about. I wondered what Souei wished to achieve.

—Rumors that they were a frightening unit was, in a way, unavoidable.

Finally, there was the Yomigaeri, who were under Shion—they totaled 100 men. The quirk of this group was that they weren’t easy to kill, stubbornly so. They reportedly received incredibly severe training that utilized their terrifying regeneration abilities and became as strong as rank B-plus. Considering the fact that they were originally ranked C, their growth was the highest. They performed well in the battle against the Holy Knight Order, and some of them might even break through their ceiling and reach rank A.

While I thought the strongest unit right now was Hiryuu, if there was a team that could turn it around and claim that title, it was definitely Shion’s Yomigaeri. And this unit, according to Benimaru’s organization chart, was supposed to be my bodyguards.

I didn’t like it, but the idea of abusing their near immortality—stalling for time by acting as bait—was the main reason why they were delegated this role. Essentially, if anything ever happened, I could use the Yomigaeri as a decoy and escape. Shion explained it rather proudly.

In case you were wondering, even though they were technically my bodyguards, they didn’t need to follow any of my commands. They were a group that solely existed to protect me, so they were strictly forbidden from doing other things, regardless of my orders. Therefore, even if I shouted at them not to, they’d gladly sacrifice themselves for me. It was extremely troubling.

Although, if I asked them to do some trivial tasks, they would readily accept…

It was probably a good idea to not tell Shion any of this. At times like these, it was best to put up a facade in order to hide how I truly felt.

By the way, Shion had one more undisclosed unit that wasn’t written on the list. Although officially it was a secret, it was more so an open secret nowadays. It was a self-proclaimed unit that followed Shion. They were supposed to be her bodyguards, but in reality, it was simply a fan club. The exact number of members was unknown. I didn’t think that there were more than 1,000 people at most. Since it wasn’t an official unit, they were outside the jurisdiction of our country.

We don’t know how many of them there are, nor their abilities; is it really going to be okay? It would be nice as long as nobody died. Shion was secretly raising them, so their strength was also unknown.

It seemed that Dagruel’s sons were working hard as captains, and some adventurers with combat experience had joined the group as well. There may come a time where they would be useful in the future, but for now, I was more anxious than I’d expected. They were definitely not a unit that we could send to the front line. It was only natural that Benimaru hadn’t listed them on his organization chart.

I handed the sheet back to Benimaru.

“I don’t have a problem with this. It looks like we’ve increased our forces, but as far as I’m concerned, there are no changes for these units. I think we can safely put this behind us.”

“I agree. I take pride in the fact that the Kurenai are troops that I’ve nurtured with my own hands. Souei and Shion would certainly feel the same way, so I won’t include their units into the organization chart.”

Shion nodded in agreement after hearing what Benimaru said.

I had no objections, so I gave my permission by saying, “Please do so.”

Everyone wanted the unit that they had trained themselves close at hand. In fact, there was no need to add Gabil’s Hiryuu to the new structure. It was just something he had suggested himself.

On that note, Gobta wasn’t the one who raised the Goblin Riders, but they were his colleagues as well as brothers-in-arms, and they had all acknowledged Gobta’s abilities. So, even in the case where we had to change commanders, we decided to take their feelings into consideration.

Benimaru brought out the third sheet of paper.

“I guess this is today’s main topic. These are the corps that belong to people other than me, but I have condensed it all together here.”

It was finally here. The table I’ve seen so far only contained current units and their subsequent increases and decreases.

The only thing that caught my eye was Gobta’s appointment as the commander of the First Corps. This was something I’d suggested, so there wasn’t anything new to surprise me.

Well, I wonder what will be written here this time.

With a pounding heart, I looked down at the piece of paper.

There was a chart of the left and right wings of the army. The number of troops we possessed so far was listed on the right.

The First Corps—commanded by Gobta—had approximately 12,000 soldiers.

The Second Corps—commanded by Geld—had approximately 37,000 soldiers.

The Third Corps—commanded by Gabil—had approximately 3,000 soldiers.

In total, there were around 52,000 men. This was the entire standing army of the Tempest Federation, and in my opinion, it was quite a scary number.

Regardless, we still had plenty of room for more soldiers. The population of our nation had already surpassed one million and had been increasing at breakneck speed. Looking at it objectively, our national power had grown exponentially. It was precisely because of our nation’s strength that we were able to support such a large army. On top of that, because the Second Corps acted as military engineers, we were able to maintain this manpower.

If all of them were unproductive, then we wouldn’t have been able to get this far. I really needed to thank Geld and his team. Without him and his subordinates, the remaining number of soldiers would approximately be only 15,000. This was definitely not enough for a confrontation with the Eastern Empire.

As a result, Benimaru and I had pondered the question of what actions we should take.

“Once war breaks out, I’ll recall Geld and his men; this was the original plan. However, even that would not be enough. Although the Western Nations appear to have their own armies, mobilizing them would be a massive undertaking,” warned Benimaru.

“Indeed. We went through all that trouble to gain control of the Council’s military authority, so it’d be remiss of me not to utilize it. With that being said, doing so may cause some major backlash,” I replied.

“Moreover, if problems began to occur within the Western Nations, they’d have nothing to stop it. If that happens, things may get tough later on.”

“It wouldn’t be an issue if it was within our borders, but if the citizens of the Western Nations start to question our leadership, it’ll make it harder for us to do our job in the future.”

“Exactly.”

And so, we repeatedly went through this back-and-forth exchange. Benimaru’s response to these concerns was probably the army’s left wing that was written on the paper. Let’s take a closer look at the breakdown:

Western Reserve Force: 150,000

Mixed Majin Corps: 30,000

Volunteer Corps: 20,000

That was it.

“These numbers are huge, but what sort of army is this left wing?” I asked, confused.

“For the time being, they’re soldiers under our command. The aforementioned army that belongs to the Western States Council is the Western Reserve Force. Unlike the armies of each individual nation, this one is hired directly by the Council—or rather, largely hired through our funding.”

That was certainly the case since the Council granted us military authority, which bestowed our country the right to give orders to the Council’s forces. I knew that, but—

“Why is the number so high then?”

The army that belonged to the Council existed for formality’s sake. Moreover, it consisted mainly of knights and soldiers that were brought in from each of the council-member countries. There were only about a thousand of them, and their duties were mainly to oversee the security of the council venue in the capital of Ingracia.

In principle, each member of the Western Nations had its own army and was responsible for its own security. There was no need to maintain a full-fledged army since instances where the Council would actually need to mobilize its military were exceedingly rare. It was for this reason that they handed military command over to us without a second thought…

Although, the reason I wanted military authority had nothing to do with handling emergency situations in the first place. It was simply for laying down tracks so that each nation had access to the magitrain. It would’ve been a hassle to get approval from every single one just to dispatch Tempest’s engineers.

If there really were some emergency, our nation would dispatch troops to handle the situation. Based on this consideration, I sent the soldiers under the Council back to their own countries. This was also because we had decided to establish a security force on the condition that our nation would fund the whole operation. To achieve this, I limited recruitment only from the local population as it would probably be more reassuring if the soldiers were humans and demi-humans, rather than monsters.

“After the disbandment of the previous army, the new one surprisingly increased in numbers. According to Testarossa’s report, rumors spread like wildfire claiming that you could earn a living if you enlisted, which ended up attracting a lot of recruits.”

“But wasn’t the purpose of this force just to maintain public order? Why would we need 150,000 soldiers?”

Since all the nations still retained their own jurisdictional rights, we would be overstepping our authority if we arrested criminals. Even if the new force was meant to preserve law and order, that was mainly for disaster prevention, and to be quite frank, their real purpose was to assist the engineering unit and provide logistical support. We wouldn’t even need more than 10,000, let alone 150,000.

“Regarding the matter, Testarossa stated that this was the result of what the nations requested,” Benimaru explained in detail.

Testarossa had seized control of the Council and pushed for a bold structural reform. I was aware of that, but it was apparently causing more of a stir than I had expected.

At the end of the day, this reform was the result of mutual consultation. The nations themselves would have the initiative, and our nation would provide the technology to do so. It was kind of like the ODA 7 —Official Development Assistance. The Council would invest official funds, and our nation would dispatch laborers as a national project to any country that needed a helping hand. We would hire local workers and give them technical guidance and fulfill the concerned country’s request. This way, we could secure job opportunities and wages for ourselves while our partners would receive our assistance. It was a win-win situation.

However, there was no such thing as a free lunch in this world. Of course, there was more to this support system than meets the eye; it demanded something in return. For example, if we built a dam, depending on how much we invested in the construction, we would acquire an equivalent value in water rights as compensation. As for laying railroad tracks, we would charge a tax on the train fare and collect the profits in perpetuity. Just like what we had accomplished with the roads, we would be responsible for maintenance, but in exchange, the benefactors would have to agree to forgo tariffs and grant all kinds of privileges.

This was definitely something a demon lord would do. While acting all nice and friendly on the surface, I was committing rather wily acts. With that being said, since those who utilized our services would ultimately enjoy its convenience, they barely lost anything in this transaction. They were only paying the toll for future profits they had yet to see.

Naturally, I expected the more powerful nations would try to take their own initiative. Even though it would take a while, they could mimic our technology after seeing it physically for themselves. Secretly stealing it for their own use—I had anticipated this as a normal response.

What I didn’t expect was—

“—On that note, many of the larger nations are also demanding the trains to be operational as soon as possible.”

“In other words, they felt like there wouldn’t be enough manpower relying on our nation’s engineering unit alone, and therefore even mobilized those they hired as logistical support?”

“Correct. And that didn’t seem like it was enough, which is why they decided to hire locals to help.”

Is this the reason why the number of troops is absurdly high…?

I gave Testarossa full authorization as the military attaché and told her to not report minor details of things to me when verifying policies. Due to my orders, it appears that this was news even to Benimaru, until very recently. The result was this mass recruitment.

“Wouldn’t that just be playing right into the hands of these nations? By making us train their engineers, they could operate more easily later on.”

In lieu of imitating technologies, this was a more efficient method. Although it was quite the forthright approach, I actually didn’t mind it. It was only natural for the leaders to come up with a plan like this under these circumstances.

Moreover, the engineers we instructed would grow to become the pillars that supported these countries in the future. While it was a shame we couldn’t keep the sole rights of this technology to ourselves, it’d be fun to witness the healthy competition of technological innovation that would surely come about in the future.

“Apparently, that’s not it. If that were the case, those nations wouldn’t merely hand their engineers over to us like this.”

He does have a point.

“—Wait…so what you’re saying is you took Testarossa’s newly trained support troops and incorporated them directly as the Western Reserves?!”

“That’s correct,” Benimaru grinned after witnessing my complete astonishment.

It’d be a shame to simply let go of all those engineers after we invest considerably in their growth. Under these circumstances, we might as well turn them into a full-fledged security force and train them in disaster response, VIP protection, and city defense—it seemed that Benimaru had quite the foresight.

“Testarossa was going to discharge them because she had no more use for them,” Benimaru continued, “but it would definitely be a waste.”

“Indeed it would.”

“I figured that we could prepare work for them, so I made the decision to organize and name them the Western Reserve Force.”

I see. Now I understand. Well, I don’t think we could expect them to be proficient at anything yet in the short span of a year. However, if they continued to train, they had the potential to become an expert unit in disaster countermeasures. This would also be a good countermeasure against any unforeseen accidents, and as Benimaru mentioned, it could be utilized in a variety of different scenarios.

“I get it now. That was a nice call, Benimaru.”

“That is not something worthy of your praise,” Benimaru answered, looking rather abashed.

The Western Reserve Force, huh? A force of 150,000 men was truly impressive, but if we dispatched them all to the Western Nations at the same time, then even this many people would be insufficient. If they could secure some concessions, they’d be able to make enough money to feed themselves. I’d never expect this to happen, but I was pleased about the good news, nonetheless.

On to the next order of business.

“Now that we got the Western Reserve Force cleared up, what’s this Mixed Majin Corps?”

There’s 30,000 in total, are we conscripting monsters from the Great Jura Forest?

“It’s a corps composed mostly of majins who were under Clayman. Geld had them working as prisoners of war, but I picked out and borrowed those who were decent at fighting. At the same time, the high orcs who had nothing to do after completing their construction work filled in the missing gaps.”

Based on what Benimaru shared, he was taking proper precautions so that the progress rate of Geld’s construction projects wasn’t negatively affected. In that case, good. It would’ve been better if the corps were made up of experienced fighters rather than a bunch of amateurs. However…

“I thought they weren’t being cooperative?”

The majority of Clayman’s men were rank B. But there were a few of them that were over rank A. They were a fairly strong group, but as a corps, they were clearly weak. Monsters who only followed orders out of fear were obviously no match for trained, professional soldiers. Gathering them now, just like that—I don’t think there was enough time to give them any military training.

“Thanks to Geld, none of them are selfish miscreants anymore. Besides, even if there were someone that stupid, I would’ve personally shut them up.”

Well, yeah. It’s easy for Benimaru to subdue people by force.

“But, you know, they just got used to the job, so forcing them to fight is kinda…”

Although I was reluctant, Benimaru quickly reassured me. “This is something they’ve been saying: ‘We want Rimuru-sama to see that we can be useful too!’”

“Huh?”

Benimaru said something unexpected. Those selfish majins had volunteered to help on their own accord.

“Good food, good friends, bosses who rely on them, and rewarding work. They kept going on and on about how their strength should be used to protect all of this.”

“Seriously…?”

This was a happy little miscalculation, and their offer was very helpful. Conscripted troops were of no use in actual warfare. Sometimes, it was unavoidable for the sake of national defense but other times, it was wiser to surrender unconditionally when weighing both costs and benefits.

I couldn’t bear the thought of being a slave to another country, but if it were only about being heavily taxed as a vassal state, temporarily bowing your head and secretly plotting your revenge was always an option. I was trying to play it cool saying it like that, but the point was that they could wait patiently for their chance at vengeance.

There was also the option of willfully accepting the slight losses so long as the invaders didn’t commit extremely atrocious acts. But that wasn’t an excuse to ignore the feelings of the citizens who originally lived in that country. Those people should be responsible for choosing their own future. As a ruler, you could only respond to those feelings. That was why I felt conscription was the worst way to go about it and that patriotism should never be forced.

Tempest was a country under my protection. I had no intention of obeying outside influences who made arrogant demands. If we didn’t intend to relinquish our rights easily, there would always be disagreements. Furthermore, if the other side refused to give in, then war was an inevitability—it would be such a pain being antagonized.

For me, if they didn’t have the will to defend their own country, then I wouldn’t mind if they simply ran away. I shouldn’t get the wrong idea about who I’m supposed to be protecting. It was only natural that my priority should be the citizens that I shared hardships with since the founding of this nation, and I had no intention of taking care of freeloaders that came later and purely insisted on their rights.

If I had nobody to protect, then I would flee as well. In that case, I’d just go off and create a new country somewhere else with like-minded friends again. For me, this land itself wasn’t something I needed to cling onto.

However, as long as everyone loved our home, Tempest, I would do everything in my power to meet their expectations. Regardless of what kind of foreign enemy they are, I will crush them with all my might. Even if the enemy were the Demon Lord Guy. I’m prepared to kill him no matter what it takes. Well, Guy was horrifying, so I hoped it wouldn’t come to that.

“I could sense their motivation, and I’m sure their feelings are genuine. Besides, people from all over the Great Jura Forest have heard rumors of the upcoming war and have offered their assistance. This Mixed Majin Corps is the unit that brought them all together.” Benimaru then added with a wry smile, “Although I have removed the weaklings.”

Yeah, that’s great. With this move, they could really do their best—the thought made me glad.

Lastly, we had the Volunteer Corps. This was a unit derived from humans residing in Tempest and neighboring countries.

In any case, if we were defeated, the nations surrounding the Great Jura Forest would also surely fall. Because of that, it was better to cooperate with us from the beginning and so a group of people had gathered to offer their full support.

Most of them were adventurers and mercenaries. It seemed that many of the immigrants we had accepted also volunteered. A lot of the idiots who risked their lives to explore the Dungeon—who fed our monster avatars every time—also joined.

The total number of these people was 20,000, and while we couldn’t expect too much from them, they were still a considerable force.

“Well, that’s everything on the left wing. The only difference between the right and the left wings is the level of loyalty to Tempest, or rather Rimuru-sama.”

“Me?”

“The right wing troops are those who are willing to risk their lives for Rimuru-sama and this country. The left, in contrast, is a hodgepodge of different people with their own agendas. Some of them may truly have noble aspirations, but we didn’t have time to conduct personal interviews, so we had to organize them like this.”

“I see…”

Behind me, Shion and Diablo were nodding their heads in agreement. I could swear I heard them talking about disturbing things, such as how the left side were merely pawns waiting to be used and thrown away, or how they planned to hold trials in order to find the cream of the crop, but I must’ve been imagining things.

“So, the last question that remains is who we should appoint as the commander of each corps.”

This was where we finally got to the heart of the matter.

Well then, let us begin with the Western Reserve Force. This corps was by far the largest. Its allegiance was with the Council and its members were scattered all across the region.

“Looking at sheer numbers alone, this wing is a large army of 200,000 strong. That said, I do not intend to move the 150,000 soldiers of the Western Reserve, so they will be deployed where they are stationed,” Benimaru revealed.

“I suppose. Technically, they’re a unit under the command of the Council so we could move them at our discretion, but I believe there’s no need to summon them here.”

Although, if they gather in one place, I could use my magic to teleport them all at the same time. If we moved 150,000 people simultaneously, just trying to manage that would already be a gargantuan task. I had my doubts whether they’d be able to take proper military action until we set up a clear chain of command. It would be smarter to have strict security measures in place to prevent the Empire’s spies from launching diversionary attacks in each country.

“I think so too,” Benimaru agreed. “Although it wouldn’t be impossible for me to organize them with my power, I’ll maintain the status quo as far as the Western Reserve Force is concerned. The corps commander is also absent but I’m thinking of having Testarossa, the military attaché, take on that role as well.”

“I think that’s for the best…but if war breaks out, Testarossa may be asked to return home as well. I’m worried about whether or not they’ll be able to keep in touch with each other when that happens.”

How would she keep in touch with the troops scattered throughout the Western Nations? By using various means of communication like ‘Magic Communication,’ correspondence-specific transmission crystals and a transmission web made of magisteel threads, a network had been successfully established between countries and their respective major cities.

However, in towns and villages located in more rural areas, the deployment of the network was going at a snail’s pace. I mean, it was the mission of our engineering unit to install them. There were wizards in each unit, so ‘Magic Communication’ would probably get through, but…

“Don’t worry,” Diablo reassured. “Moss can handle a few hundred companies.”

“Yes, I heard that from Souei too. Moss is working with him on intelligence, but he can also take care of inter-unit communication in his spare time,” said Benimaru, voicing his support.

Really?! Moss—what a handy guy.

“Then, shouldn’t Moss be the corps commander?” I suggested.

“No, that would rather be bad for Moss…”

“Indeed, given Testa’s temperament, it would be rather miserable for Moss. Not that it’s any of my business but I do feel a bit sorry for him.”

“…Okay. Let’s appoint Testarossa as the provisional corps commander then.”

Benimaru, not to mention even Diablo, felt sorry for Moss. Reading the room, I decided against giving the role to him.

The Western Reserve would concentrate on their main job of maintaining security at this time. We might need to deploy them depending on how things develop, but I ultimately decided that would be a last resort.

Testarossa would serve as the corps commander. This was a temporary appointment and I made it clear that she would be replaced when there was a suitable candidate.

That should take care of the Western Reserve for now.

Next was the Mixed Majin Corps.

How about we leave this to Benimaru?

“I recommend Rigur-dono,” Benimaru proposed.

Rigur, huh? He certainly had experience in leading the security force, and his strength was over rank A. But on the other hand, he was already Rigurd’s assistant, so I suspected that he couldn’t afford to be a corps commander.

If at all possible, I would like to win the war by relying solely on our standing army. Yet at this time, it was unknown just how many troops the Empire had assembled. We had sent people on reconnaissance missions, but we failed to obtain any information from beyond their borders. Nevertheless, based on the bits of information gleaned from their military exercises and other events, we could estimate that at least 300,000 troops would be mobilized. If we were unlucky, that number might rise to over a million. In light of this, we couldn’t afford to keep the Mixed Majin Corps in reserve.

I wasn’t exactly dissatisfied with the idea of Rigur in command, but I was worried. No matter how you looked at it, sending in an unorganized force with barely any preparation was dangerous.

“Hmm, I think I’d rather leave this to Benimaru. As for this Mixed Majin Corps, let’s call it the Red Numbers from now on. Select a couple members of Kurenai and have them each lead battalions of 1,000 soldiers. This will be the Fourth Corps, and Benimaru, you will be the corps commander and take direct command.”

It’s red because this corps screams danger…get it?

It’s been a while since I’ve cracked a satisfying dad joke.

«…»

Yeah. Jeez, I can already hear crickets; I should probably keep that one to myself. Despite throwing around stupid quips in my head, I somehow kept a straight face. Thankfully, nobody noticed, and the meeting went on smoothly.

“I understand. If that’s the case, please leave it to me.”

Benimaru apparently anticipated this outcome and assented without a hint of surprise.

Since he had the Unique Skill ‘Generalissimo’ under his belt, he could easily compensate for the unit’s lack of training. He was the perfect choice to handle such a random assortment of troops. Thus, in addition to commanding the entire armed forces, Benimaru also placed the Red Numbers under his direct command.

Lastly, we had the Volunteer Corps.

“What are we going to do about the Volunteer Corps?” I inquired.

“That’s the problem,” Benimaru replied with a furrowed brow.

The Volunteer Corps consisted largely of humans. Benimaru was evidently worried that appointing a monster as the commander of such a unit might stir up unnecessary discontent.

“That’s true,” I agreed. “If word gets out that humans can’t get ahead in a monster country, our reputation is going to be damaged.”

“Anyone who complains about such things is a weakling and a failure. We can’t expect them to make it big anyway, so there’s no need to worry about it!”

“No, Shion. I mean, that’s not completely wrong, but it’d be easy for people to believe that if they don’t know us.”

“I see. Humans are difficult beings.”

Shion remained skeptical, but our image-building strategy was important.

It’d be ridiculous if we were called discriminatory over this kind of thing, so I thought we needed to give it some serious thought.

“But is there truly no one else more suitable?” Diablo asked.

He was right, and that’s why Benimaru was worried.

“You aren’t wrong,” I said. “They’re volunteers, after all, so they’re an unplanned addition, as far as I’m concerned.”

“Yet, not taking advantage of their offer would be a waste.”

That’s right. I genuinely appreciated the sincerity of those who volunteered, and I didn’t want to let it go to waste. However, if we wanted to make good use of it, we needed a capable commander. These guys were even more of a mess than the Mixed Majin Corps, which was now known as the Red Numbers. I couldn’t imagine anyone other than Benimaru bringing them all together.

Well, I don’t know what to do.

“What about Girard, who is under Souei’s care?” Benimaru probed.

“Not possible. We took him in as part of an undisclosed deal with the Kingdom of Ingracia, and I doubt he wants to be seen in public,” I admitted.

I haven’t heard what kind of deal Testarossa made, but I don’t think it’s a good idea to let Girard play an active role in the public eye. Apparently, he was even labeled as a traitor to humanity, so they had to make an example out of him by publicly declaring his death. While I didn’t have any obligation to protect him, I didn’t want to force him to play an active role, either.

“He would be more than competent, but he isn’t a realistic option…”

Benimaru made a case for him, but he wasn’t really pushing for it. He quickly gave up on him and started thinking about other candidates. Yet the problem remained—we needed a human as the commander. Names were proposed one after another, but nobody seemed to fit the bill.

“How about asking the Holy Knight Order for help?” Shion suddenly suggested.

Benimaru and I glanced at each other, then stared at Shion.

“W-we can’t do that, can we?”

“No, that’s not—”

That’s not possible—was what I tried to say, but Shion brought up a name and cut me off.

“Then, how about Masayuki-dono?”

Masayuki, eh? It was as if a light bulb went off in my head.



“That’s it!”

“That was impressive, Shion!”

Benimaru and I shouted at the same time.

At that moment, we locked in Masayuki as the commander of the Volunteer Corps.

Although the decision to appoint him was made without his approval, it was a wonderful choice that everyone could agree on. Masayuki was the only person that remained skeptical.

“Why should I…?”

When I revealed the news to him, he had his head in his hands.

But it can’t be helped, right? Sad as it may be, war was looming over us. His opinion didn’t matter. Although that might be contrary to my earlier stance, there was no need to be concerned about Masayuki because if we left it to him, then everything would eventually turn out perfectly fine on its own. He was a good friend to have in troubling times like these.

“As for me,” Masayuki began, “I’ve gotten pretty good at using my Unique Skill ‘Chosen One.’ I don’t feel like I’m being praised for everything I do anymore, like I used to. But now, I can’t use it even when I try, so don’t expect too much, okay?”

I knew that he was lying, of course, and that he was making excuses so he could try to escape. After all, his popularity hadn’t diminished one bit and he remained as influential as ever.

“Don’t you want to show Kenya and the others how cool you are?” I prodded.

“Urgh, that’s…”

If you go along with this, I’ll let you off the hook for teaching the kids questionable stuff and gaining their respect.

“Don’t worry, you can do it!”

“But…”

“No buts. Didn’t I help you with your fight against Gozer?”

Masayuki and his team had already passed the 50th floor. During that time, I had been secretly helping him along by using my avatar to weaken Gozer, the floor’s guardian.

“Thank you for your help back then…” he mumbled.

“You understand, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

After a little bit of coaxing, coupled with a few sprinkles of threats, he eventually came around to my idea and sealed the deal.

“Yes, I understand. I owe you a great deal, Rimuru-san, and I’d like to repay a bit of that debt at times like these…”

Although he was reluctant to do so, Masayuki agreed to be the corps commander. There were no complaints from the volunteers. Rather, I heard them shouting stuff like, “We did it!” and “Victory is ours!”, all in a state of euphoria.

No matter how dour Masayuki looked, he couldn’t change the outcome now.

“This is how I thought things would end up…”

He said he mastered the Unique Skill ‘Chosen One,’ so what gives? As I’d suspected, it turned out that Masayuki had lied about mastering his Skill. Or maybe this had nothing to do with his Skill and it was simply his natural luck? That’d be even more surprising.

Leon, for instance, was the polar opposite of Masayuki; regardless of what he did, it always came off in a bad light. He’d been that way since his early days as a Hero, and I suppose it wasn’t easy changing one’s natural disposition.

“Well, well. I’m sorry that I made this decision for you, but please shine brightly as the beacon of hope to inspire everyone!” I cheered, trying to console him.

Thus, the 20,000 members of the Volunteer Corps were led by Masayuki and fell under the banner of the Hero.

In the revised organizational structure, the right wing had 52,000 while the left wing had 50,000. Benimaru was listed at the top. Beneath him were the various corps commanders. In total, we had more than 100,000 troops, but even so, it was up in the air whether they could hold a candle to the Imperial Army. But there was no need to panic; our preparations were progressing steadily.

As a reserve force, there were 150,000 soldiers in the Western Reserve. Plus, each country also reported that they were making preparations to ready reinforcements from among their own knights. An allied western force would be organized to be the very last line of defense. The number of this army would probably come out to no less than 200,000, and we would be relying on them if the worst comes to pass.

We were scraping together as many mercenaries and aid from each country as possible. It was a lot, or pitifully little, depending on how you looked at it…

I heard that Testarossa had threatened them at the Council meeting, which was why they were cooperating. Either way, if we lose, then they would undeniably be the next targets, so they had to lend their support. Well, either way those forces would remain in place until our defeat became evident.

We had the home field advantage. We also had Veldora’s presence nearby and the cooperation of demon lords like Luminas and Leon. Milim also promised to help us out. Karion said that his Beast Master’s Warrior Alliance would always be prepared to deploy. And as my personal trump card, the Black Numbers under Diablo were at the ready.

Since I gave Benimaru command of the entire army, ostensibly I wasn’t directly in control of a single unit—that was how we ultimately decided things, but it wasn’t the whole truth. The Black Numbers would only accept orders from Diablo and the demoness trio, who were his subordinates. It was a unit completely independent of Benimaru’s command.

This was the full picture.

We did not take into account how Yuuki would act.

“War, huh?” I muttered quietly in my room.

Did the Empire really want to annex the Western Nations? Guy had mentioned the word “game.” There seemed to be some kind of connection, and perhaps the Empire had some disturbing ulterior motive. But even if that were the case…

“I don’t care who comes, if they try to mess with our paradise, we’ll crush them.”

This was what I genuinely felt from the very depths of my heart. I’m not going to make the same mistake again. I am a demon lord. I couldn’t afford to misjudge what my priorities truly were.

Meanwhile, within the Eastern Empire, preparations for the war were moving smoothly forward, just like in Tempest.

—Or rather, the Empire’s investment in the matter was orders of magnitude greater in scale and time, so immense that the two could not even begin to compare.

They had planned meticulously for a long, long time, all for a major offensive. Soon enough, the Empire was about to awake from its slumber. The days before their ferocious advance steadily counted down.