

Epilogue

The Emperor’s Hegemony

“You’re awake, Rudra.”

The words were addressed to a man sat atop his throne, dressed in opulent clothing. The speaker, a beautiful, blue-haired woman, was the Marshal, the one in charge of the meeting hall.

“Yes. How did the meeting go?”

“We’ve decided to move forward with the expedition.”

“Thank you for your hard work. Did Gadra oppose the idea?”

“Yes, he did. The old man is very realistic. Weapons from otherworlders cannot rival the True Dragons. There was no way he could not have known that, and it would be silly for him to assume otherwise.”

“Hehehe, that’s obvious. Nevertheless, we must carry out this great expedition. Thou shalt know that I am the ruler of this world.”

It’s what I promised Guy, after all, Rudra whispered. Snapping back to reality he turned and smiled pleasantly.

“By the way, Velgrynd. Tell me, how do you think this expedition will go?”

Velgrynd—the name of one of the only four True Dragons of this world. She was the symbol of flame, the crimson dragon that wielded blazing heat. She was a being even older than Storm Dragon Veldora, and immortal too. Her name was Scorch Dragon Velgrynd.

There was only one person with this name in the world.

And it was this beauty who answered Rudra’s question.

“We will undoubtedly emerge victorious. We shall force the dwarves out of their hideout and crush that new demon lord’s ego. I will also beat some sense into that lazy, dumb brother of mine and make Guy realize the ruler of this world is Rudra—you!”

She was not a single bit hesitant about calling this name. Indeed, she was Velgrynd. One of the strongest beings, a True Dragon—Scorch Dragon Velgrynd.

Despite being in the presence of such a majestic being, Rudra continued in a friendly tone: “Is that so? That would be wonderful. Do you really think your brother will attack?”

“Of course he will, Rudra,” she answered immediately. “He will definitely show up. That kid likes to get in on the fun. However, I feel that he has yet to return to his prime after his seal was undone. I didn’t detect any violent magical storm, like the ones that ravaged the lands in the past. In the past, I would’ve felt that aura from any corner of the earth, but now it seems to have disappeared completely. Perhaps his resurrection was incomplete?”

“…In that case, perhaps my army has a chance against him.”

“That would be very fun indeed. That demon lord dares to bribe my foolish brother and deceive my dear niece. I will be sure to punish him properly.” At that, the two shared a conspiratorial smile.

To Rudra and Velgrynd, it did not matter whether the attack plan succeeded or not. Rudra was playing a game with Guy, and they had wagered the right to rule this world. This game didn’t have any complicated rules. You simply had to use your “pawns” to overwhelm your opponent. The world was their board, monsters and humans their pawns.

At first, Guy’s pawns were monsters and majins, while Rudra’s were a portion of humanity. They had kept up this game, switching their pieces over the centuries. And now, the game was coming to a head, as the situation on both sides grew chaotic.

Fundamentally, stealing pawns from each other was fair game. Not to mention, their strongest pawns were their partners—the True Dragons. There was only one absolute rule in their game: they could only use the aforementioned pawns. In other words, as long as Guy and Rudra did not confront each other directly, they could do whatever they wanted.

If this world were destroyed, naturally, the game would end. But neither of them wanted that, which was why certain preventative measures needed to be set in place.

With that being said, there were certain wild cards in this game. These included the remaining True Dragon, Veldora, and the primordial demons. These wild cards were not directly involved in the game. Whether they were turned into allies or enemies was entirely up to the players, Guy and Rudra.

One of Guy’s pawns—his ally, Demon Lord Leon—was held under constant pressure by Jaune, the Yellow Primordial, in his domain. In the West, any reckless action could bring down the wrath of Violet, the Violet Primordial, who resided there. And in the East, there lurked Blanc, the White Primordial. These demons were immensely powerful and immortal. It wasn’t impossible to wipe them off the board, but it would require careful preparation. As opposed to suffering great casualties, they had a better chance negotiating with them and turning them into allies. It was the best solution. In order to turn the tide in his game with Guy, Rudra and Velgrynd agreed that this was the right option.

If Velgrynd were to fight by herself, she could even eliminate Blanc. But this came at a cost and was bound to cause unimaginable damage to the surrounding area. In conclusion, fighting them wasn’t a viable method.

Apart from that, an error in their judgement showed itself: The Western Nations had begun to act with their own ideals and logic. The native religion called Luminism was born in the western lands and gradually grew into the dominant monotheistic religion. Its authority was solid and unified the people of the West.

They had already discovered the true identity of Luminas as a demon lord, but it was all too late by then, because the religion had since taken root and wove itself into society. By the time Rudra gained complete control over the East, the West had begun unifying under a single banner. That was the point at which Guy and Rudra’s game became locked in a stalemate.

“Because of the active presence of the Heroes Chronoa and Granbell, invading the West became unfeasible. They posed a huge hurdle for us. Had it not been for those meddling Heroes, victory would’ve been yours a long time ago.”

“Not necessarily. My path to ruling the world will forever be fraught with intrigue—it’s probably the trial Veldanava laid out for me. That guy’s always been fond of pranks.”

“Yes, indeed. My elder brother really was a handful…”

The two of them smiled as they took a moment to relish the nostalgia.

“But the opportunity has arisen,” Rudra said. “All the necessary pawns are in place. I will grasp victory soon enough.”

“I shall checkmate Guy and sister Velzard this time.”

“Hehe, Guy has been waiting for an opportunity, too. If you and Veldora were to fight, surely he would jump at the chance.”

“Indeed, how annoying,” Velgrynd replied. “Had that not been the case, I would have taken care of that child Veldora myself—”

She was talking about the failure of the last expedition. Had Velgrynd moved out, Veldora would not have posed a threat. On the flip side, this would’ve made them vulnerable to Guy. If Rudra were to use his strongest pawn, a True Dragon, he needed to have everything prepared perfectly.

And this was the perfect time to do so. Rudra’s spies across the world had brought back all sorts of information.

“Even though it’s been a long time coming, the wait was worth it. Our biggest roadblock to invading the West has been removed.”

The true identity of God Luminas was Demon Lord Luminas. With this knowledge, they could narrow down a ballpark estimate of her strength. Moreover, her demon lord double had died, and the Seven Celestial Sages had fallen too. Plus:

“That Granbell, the roadblock, has passed away. The threat of the Western Nations has been drastically reduced.”

“That is indeed the case. Those who dared to stand in my way have met their demise entirely on their own.”

Both of them firmly believed that this had to be a divine revelation preceding Rudra’s domination of the world.

“By the way, Rudra, how are you doing?”

“Perfectly fine. My power—’Army of Angels, Armageddon’—can be activated at any time.”

‘Armageddon’ was Rudra’s ultimate trump card. The conditions for its activation were very strict, and once it was triggered, there would be a long wait before this Skill could be called upon once more.

There was only one reason why the Empire had stayed put until now—they had been waiting resolutely for the day that Rudra could unleash ‘Armageddon’ again. Now with the threat of Granbell out of the picture, needless to say, Rudra believed that they would be victorious.

As for Guy, he still had not been able to control the demon lords completely. They were uncooperative with each other. All the demon lords did as they pleased. Each of them possessed great influence individually, but they were no threats in Rudra’s eyes.

“This time, everything is stacked in our favor.”

“But do we have enough time? I really want to bring my foolish brother to our side. That way we can use him to deal with Guy. If we could even manage to dispose of my sister, Velzard, then Raine and Mizeri won’t stand a chance against us. That brings me to my next question: How is your power of ‘Domination’?”

“Rest assured. If you could keep Veldora occupied on the battlefield, I can use ‘Regalia Dominion’ to achieve complete control over him.”

A gentle smile emerged on Velgrynd’s cruel yet beautiful face upon hearing this.

“Ara, then victory is all but guaranteed.”

“Naturally. Everything is going just as I planned.”

“Wonderful, though I am rather worried about you—”

“Oh, stop that,” he chided. “This is the natural order of things. The human body is truly inconvenient…”

“Rudra…”

“Successively inheriting my will and memories each time I reincarnate has taken its toll on my ‘soul.’ It would be fine if I had some time to rest like Gadra, but that is a forbidden luxury for me. If I were to do that, my ‘power’ would be sealed again.”

That way, Rudra would have to start over if he wished to unleash his power. If he were to do that during every reincarnation, he would have no chance against Guy. That was why he had been waiting for his power to mature this whole time. Now that he felt his power reaching full strength, the stage was set.

Despite everything, Rudra was pushing himself quite a bit in order to maintain this state. Not only did this incarnation of him have no empress, he did not even have a concubine. Even though the supposed empress of the Empire was nothing but a title, this was highly abnormal. This meant that no imperial heir was born as a spare for Rudra. Having one wouldn’t separate his power. His incarnations were very special; the heir he brought forth would inherit all his power and knowledge. It was the purest form of hereditary monarchy—in a sense, it wasn’t an heir at all. The imperial heir could be said to be the emperor himself.

However, he did not do this during the present incarnation. It had to do with the use of ‘Armageddon.’ If the imperial heir were to inherit his power, his Skills would be limited until he matured to adulthood. Obtaining immense power came with repercussions, and he wouldn’t be able to contain it. Even Rudra couldn’t hold up against it.

Yet, right now, this was the best situation they’d chanced upon. All the stars had aligned, and to forfeit the opportunity, solely to reincarnate as the prince would waste yet another decade.

Rudra did not want that. But this greatly worried Velgrynd. Maintaining his full strength seemed to push Rudra’s mind to its limit. The duration of his sleep had been shortening and he was often exhausted. Under these circumstances, Rudra’s soul was wearing away rapidly. If he gave his power to the heir, it would delay the activation of ‘Armageddon,’ but it would also ease his symptoms. Yet still, he adamantly refused.

This was his time. He wanted to settle his game against Guy once and for all.

Velgrynd could not bear to see Rudra like this.

“How much time do you have left, Rudra—?”

“You don’t have to worry. At the very least, I can guarantee you that I will not fall before I conquer this world.”

“I-I see. I should have expected that, from you of all people…”

“Don’t be so sad, Velgrynd. When I achieve victory, I shall end this all. Have faith. Simply observe how I dominate this world,” Rudra said with an arrogant smile.

He was the embodiment of a ruler in every sense of the word. He who ruled all and walked the path of hegemony. That was the Hero Emperor Rudra.



Captivated by Rudra’s ambition, Velgrynd steeled her resolve. “Indeed. Then please look forward to it. Those who stand in the way of your crusade will die in peace. I shall rain mercy down on them!” she announced as she gently embraced Rudra.

The two of them continued to chat well into the night.

On the following morning, a legion of unprecedented proportions departed from the Empire and began their march on the Tempest Federation. 19

Notes

[1]

“Oh? You’re approaching me?”

[2]

Kanji: Domination of flame dragon

[3]

Just like they taught us in kindergarten: stop, drop, and roll!

[4]

Fuse phrased this weirdly, but essentially, Rimuru’s “value” went up in Luminas’ eyes.

[5]

See episode 24 of the anime’s season 1.

[6]

Japanese braised pork dish which literally means “square simmered.”

[7]

The ODA is part of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs that assists developing countries

[8]

For clarification, the author made a wordplay on the phrase “Knight” (Kishin) in Japanese. He named these soldiers of the Empire “Kishin” but with a different kanji spelling, making it “Mecha Soldier”.

[9]

The Imperial Knights had the ruby text “Royal Knights” in the original Japanese, which is a misnomer.

[10]

It’s a popular phrase in Japan. Schools limit the cost of snacks kids may buy or bring on a school trip.

[11]

ox-demon

[12]

horse-demon, see volume 8.

[13]

Greek: Minos’s Bull. In Greek mythology, Minos was a king of Crete, and the Minotaur was his wife’s son, who she gave birth to after being cursed to fall in love with a bull.

[14]

Kanji name: Death Knight Captain

[15]

A major is two ranks higher, between them is captain.

[16]

American coffee is coffee made with light roasted coffee beans. It is also called American but is different from Americano. In Japanese English, “American” has been expanded to mean “less concentrated.”

[17]

The word used here is anything related to magicules, the basis for monsters and magic.

[18]

In traditional Japanese aesthetics, wabi-sabi is a world view centered on the acceptance of transience and imperfection.

[19]

There is, indeed, no afterword for this volume.