

Dino decided to take things seriously.

It was a very annoying situation where he was struggling against an opponent he could easily defeat, but that was over now.

“You can’t afford to look the other way, can you?”

The words fell out and Beretta’s sharp fist slice across his cheek.

“What an underestimation. I can’t believe you’re taking us on with your head in the clouds.”

Apito’s Osiris Rapier also flew by.

The sting was sure to be painful—Dino did his best to avoid it.

I thought I was far superior to these guys, but was I just being overconfident? Even with two opponents at the same time, I didn’t think I’d be having such a hard time.

Dino felt a little unsure of himself, wondering if he had become weaker after slacking off for such a long time.

The fact that he had time to think about it was proof that he still had the strength, but not the self-awareness.

Apito, thanks to her training with Hinata, had acquired an intuition that could almost predict the future. The difference in ability between Apito and Dino was obvious, but Apito was still an opponent to be reckoned with.

Beretta acted as a shield, and Apito attacked from behind. Beretta would also occasionally join in the attack, so the two of them could reach Dino.

And Beretta’s magic was even more troublesome.

Dino was immune to most spells, but Beretta’s magic was predominantly the support type. In other words, Beretta’s magic was not used to attack Dino directly, but to strengthen his own physical values.

Weakening Dino’s magic was ineffective, but there was no way to interfere with spells that increased the speed, strength, or durability of Beretta or Apito.

In that case, all he had to do was to interfere with the activation of the spell, but Beretta, being a demon who was good at magic, could unleash magic without even thinking about it.

Moreover, Beretta was immune to the Unique Skill Sloth’s ‘Fallen Hypno.’ Because of this, Dino had been struggling.

But now, that was finally over.

The long-awaited feeling had finally accumulated, and it was time to fight back.

“Shut up! Two people teaming up to bully a weak man like me, and yet you talk so high and mighty! It’s only because I’m patient that I’ve been able to keep you guys company. You should be grateful! Take this and get some rest!!”

By the time he had finished saying this, the Fallen Hypno had been activated. As was typical of Dino, there was no concept of fairness in his dictionary.

“Phew, is it finally over?”

Seeing Apito fall to her knees, Dino was convinced of his victory. His eyes turned their attention to Beretta—only to be met with an incoming fist that he scrambled to avoid.

“Whoa, you resisted my sleep?!”

“Of course I did. It was a mistake to get caught even once, so how could I get caught twice?”

It was because the demon race was resistant to abnormalities that Beretta was able to devise a countermeasure. With his Unique Skill ‘Double-Crosser,’ he was able to reverse the drowsiness.

“Seriously…”

“Well, it’s too bad for Apito, but I’ll just let her die and come back to life.”

Beretta remained calm in front of Dino.

Dino was more impressed than dismayed by the way he was so obediently following the logic of victory.

I can’t believe he’s managed to keep things this even until now with me as an opponent. It’s not because of me, but because Beretta and the others are so good. In that case, I’ll have to use that…

Dino had a secret move.

He didn’t want to use it, because it would bring back terrible memories, but now there was no other choice.

“I’ll admit it. You should be proud of yourself for making me take you this seriously.”

As soon as Dino shouted this, he unleashed the power that he had sealed away.

Ultimate Skill ‘Heavenly King Astarte’—the ultimate skill given to him from Veldanava.

[Confirmed. The evolution of the Unique Skill ‘Sloth’ through the ‘Creation’ of the Ultimate Skill ‘Heavenly King Astarte’…Successful]

Dino took advantage of this, and evolved the Unique Skill ‘Sloth’ into the Ultimate Skill ‘Sloth King (Belphegor).’

That was Dino’s secret move.

The ‘Creative Evolution’ of the Ultimate Skill ‘Heavenly King Astarte.’

If one uses the power of the Ultimate Skill ‘Heavenly King Astarte,’ they can achieve their desired evolution, though it is limited to their own Skill.

Of course, that wasn’t everything, but Dino wanted to preserve his Ultimate Skill ‘Heavenly King Astarte.’ This was because the labyrinth was under constant surveillance, and things were constantly being recorded.

Dino, as a “Watcher,” was reluctant to expose everything about himself.

Also—

That Rimuru guy is terrifyingly intelligent with an abundance of resources. Even when he took out Clayman, he brought out recorded footage as evidence. If my power is exposed, then he’ll easily be able to take countermeasures.

Demon Lord Rimuru was not an opponent to be underestimated. When it came to him, Dino knew that there was no such thing as too much caution.

That is why Dino created the ‘Sloth King Belphegor’ as a power he could show.

Now, that power was targeting Beretta.

“Now sleep! ‘Fallen Catastrophe’—!!”

The laws were rewritten, and the positive factors began to regress to the negative factors. This temptation, regardless of whether the person was alive or dead, lead them from a state of activity to a state of cessation.

However, there was no compulsive force to this, and the target of the attack would voluntarily walk the path to destruction.

This could be considered a type of hypnotism, except that the effect reached different dimensions.

One would not be able to awaken from the slumber of the evolved ‘Sloth King Belphegor.’ It destroyed not only the mind, but also the body.

In this case, however, the guided destination was “destruction,” but it was also possible to lower the level and limit it to abnormalities such as sleep. It was a very versatile Skill.

Because this power did not use sound as a medium to transmit the interference waves, it could not be prevented by physical ‘barriers’ or the like. It was worth mentioning that there were very few means of defense.

Absolute domination over those who possessed wisdom and feelings—that was the power of the ‘Sloth King Belphegor.’

He tried to destroy Beretta carefully so that he would not be able to move for a while. That is why ‘destruction’ had been chosen, but now it proved to be more powerful than expected.

Beretta had vanished into the dust, and it would take some time for him to recover. The bracelet had also disappeared with him, but Dino didn’t care, thinking that Ramiris’ power would be able to handle it.

Furthermore, if he had gone easy on Beretta, he would have failed in his mission.

‘Don’t blame me if you die,’ Dino thought irresponsibly.

But hey, even Beretta is only a mid-tier player amongst all Demon Lord Rimuru’s subordinates…

It was only natural that Dino felt like complaining.

Even an opponent as troublesome as Beretta was still only a lower-ranking existence who had yet to acquire an Ultimate Skill. Moreover, he wasn’t even the demon lord himself, but merely a subordinate.

Dino thought while shuddering at the fact.

If the upper ranking members of the labyrinth had remained…

Would he even have been able to win by himself? Annoyed, Dino turned his attention to Ramiris.

He saw that Ramiris was sleeping, and touched her body.

He should have been able to touch her.

Ramiris turned into a particle of light. Then, taking the form of a butterfly, began to fly around Dino.

It seemed to be mocking him.

—H-Hey, no way. Am I hallucinating…?!

He didn’t want to believe it, couldn’t believe it.

But there was no other way to explain the situation.

Sure enough, this battle was being monitored.

I’m glad that I was cautious, but still…

One of his trump cards was also exposed to the enemy.

And…

His next opponent would surely be far more dangerous.

-Clack, clack, clack—the sound of someone’s footsteps could be heard.

The beautiful butterfly of light fluttered like a dance to the man who approached slowly, stopping at his arm.

The butterfly turned back into a particle of light, and then changed its form again…into the innocent, sleeping Ramiris who had a blissful expression on her face, seemingly unaware of anything around her.

Beretta, who had somehow been resurrected, reverently received Ramiris, who had made his forearm her bed.

“Beretta-dono, please take care of Ramiris-sama.”

The man spoke quietly.

“Yes, leave it to me. Do you need support?”

“No need. I alone am enough.”

From the very beginning, Ramiris’ escort had been foolproof.

Deep in the safest part of the labyrinth, many heavy traps were laid out.

All according to a certain someone’s instructions, orders were sent out to the battle forces to fight in small, gradual bursts in order to expose the abilities of the encroaching enemy.

And above all, this labyrinth had the strongest of guardians.

Before leaving the labyrinth, Veldora had had entrusted the protection of Ramiris to his trusty disciple and confidant.

Ramiris was the only one who did not know about it.

And now…

That person was on the move.

The man standing before Dino was the “Mist Lord” Zegion.

The absolute powerhouse of this labyrinth.



In response to Veldora’s request, he grasped the situation in the labyrinth perfectly.

With the overwhelming blessing of ‘Absolute Defense,’ he was able to ensure Ramiris’ safety.

Dino recognized this as well.

Seriously, you’ve got to be joking…

Those were Dino’s honest feelings.

Just when he thought he had finally beaten the enemy, a new one suddenly appeared, all the while with the purpose of exposing his own hand.

I knew it! That Rimuru is such a cunning bastard, of course he would prefer this kind of tactic!

At this point, the operation has failed.

Forget about capturing Ramiris, Dino’s own escape had now become a difficult problem.

Besides that, when did he even evacuate Ramiris in the first place? I was in this room the whole time and even saw Ramiris talking. She turned into a butterfly, so she should’ve been long gone by then, right?

If that wasn’t the case, then that meant Zegion had let Ramiris escape in a way that even Dino couldn’t see.

—But if that’s true, then…I’ve been talking to an illusion this whole time?

If so, then that was also a big problem.

It was an unusual state of affairs.

Dino is an Ultimate Skill holder, and is also well versed in hypnosis. Even so, it seemed Zegion had left Dino in a state of hallucination which should have normally been impossible.

However, the possibility could not be dismissed in its entirety.

If Zegion also possessed an Ultimate Skill and was proficient in mental attacks…then there was still the possibility that he could use illusions that were enough to fool even Dino.

Dino also knew how powerful Zegion was.

He was a powerful humanoid of the Insectar race and was also of the Demon Lord Seed. He was favored by the Demon Lord Rimuru, and had acquired extraordinary fighting abilities.

It was heard that Zegion had taken Veldora as his teacher, and that his fighting skills were even superior to those of the “primordials.”

That was Zegion, the one regarded as the absolute king of the labyrinth.

When the Imperial Army had invaded the labyrinth, Zegion had eliminated the intruders with an overwhelming power. At that time, Dino had taken the opportunity to observe the fight and concluded that Zegion was invincible in physical combat.

However, the most important point here was that he had only been fighting physically. He hadn’t used any mental or spiritual attacks, let alone an Ultimate Skill—he hadn’t even seemed to use a Unique Skill.

—No. Is his Distortion Field skill alone strong enough to reach the ultimate level…?

Still, it was a physical ability, and Dino, who was good at mental attacks, thought that it was still manageable.

At this point, the only thing that came to his mind was the celebration from the other day.

On that day, Demon Lord Rimuru had granted Zegion some kind of power. Under the guise of a celebratory reward, he had initiated an evolutionary ritual that awakened his subordinates who had distinguished themselves in battle.

In fact, some of them, such as Gabil and others, had greatly increased their power and had entered the slumber of evolution.

It was a phenomenon very similar to the Harvest Festival for demon lords, and it was also no wonder that Zegion had acquired new skills.

But isn’t that still strange? How is it that even his subordinates can evolve into the same realm as the lord Rimuru?! I can understand if the subordinates of an awakened demon lord are at the level of Demon Lord Seed, but even his subordinates are at the level of an awakened demon lord—that’s too much of a foul!!!

This was a phenomenon that even Dino, who had lived for a very long time, could not have predicted. Even Guy could not have done such a thing.

—No, once it’s all said and done, this is unending. In the first place, the fact that he uses the “primordials” as mere subordinates is insane. With a guy like that, no matter what he does, it shouldn’t even be a surprise anymore.

Dino was inwardly cursing at Rimuru.

As the strongest of all demons, they could have easily stopped Dino in his tracks. The superiority and inferiority of existence values could not be a reliable factor with a “primordial” as an opponent.

For Rimuru to take such existences as his minions was completely abnormal in Dino’s eyes.

Dino had thought it best to stay uninvolved as much as possible.

And yet…

The Zegion in front of him was comparable to those primordials.

He was clearly foreign.

More than just becoming a Million-class, his domineering aura gave the impression of endless power.

A power that transcended numbers—It was an aura that only those with the ultimate power could emit.

It also implied that Zegion, like Dino, had acquired an Ultimate Skill.

This is why I hate working…

Dino lamented having drawn the short end of the stick.

Exhaling a sigh of resignation, he tried to look for the best solution forward, but good ideas were not easy to come by, and time waits for no one.

“Is there anything else you would like to say?” He asked.

“Haven’t you just been hiding from me all this time to force out my cards? Don’t be ridiculous, it’s despicable!”

Putting his own actions up until now on the shelf, Dino was the first to complain.

He was just taking it out on him, but it would helpful if the other party got angry.

“Ridiculous. This is a fight.”

Of course, Zegion was unconcerned.

Dino also realized this, and the conversation ended.

Tension flared between the two.

Dino knew Zegion’s strength. This was an advantage for Dino, however, his trump card had also been exposed to Zegion.

In that case, there was no other choice but to go head-to-head…

Zegion specializes in melee combat. Furthermore, although unconfirmed, it is highly likely that he possesses an Ultimate Skill.

Dino, on the other hand, specializes in mental attacks. No, Dino is not limited to that if he uses his hidden skills, but he didn’t want to expose his skills in this labyrinth.

Well, I’ve already exposed a bunch of trump cards, but it would still be a huge loss to expose them again…

And Dino also naively thought that it would be okay to just run away.

“Why do you not attack?”

Zegion’s words were doubly stressful.

The mere question almost made him stiffen, but Dino fought it back with all his strength.

“Hah! Don’t underestimate me. No matter what, I am still a pillar of the Octagram. After living for so long, there is no way I would lose to a little chick like you!!”5

He then raised his greatsword up high and swung it down towards Zegion.

“Eat this and perish! Fallen Strike!!”

—There was no exchange of tricks, just a single deadly blow. It was a great move that Dino, a lazy man, did not want to waste.

However, the power of this technique, “Fallen Strike,” was real.

Dino had also applied the ability of his Unique Skill ‘Sloth’ to his swordplay, and had created the ‘Phantom Flow style6.’ By hindering his opponent’s perception, he could control the battle at his will.

And now, the Unique Skill ‘Sloth’ had evolved into the Ultimate Skill ‘Sloth King Belphegor.’ The effect was incomparable, and the ‘Phantom Flow style’ had become more accurate and powerful.

Although Dino was a bit of a pain in the ass, he still had a great sense of combat.

But even so…

Dino had decided that fighting close combat with Zegion was still not a good idea. If his own abilities did not work, then the Phantom Flow would not be viable.

In that case, there could be no more reservations—so Dino unleashed his special technique.

This was the Fallen Strike, one of the few orthodox sword techniques of the Phantom Flow Style, and it contained Dino’s full intentions.

The intent was to incapacitate his opponent.

Even a mere glimpse of it could deprive the target of the will to live, as it contained special vibrations that stimulated negative emotions. It was not something that could be ignored like an illusion or a hallucination. It was impossible for the weak-minded to resist it.

Only those whose mental power was strong enough to acquire the Ultimate Skill would be able to withstand the attack.

Even then, it was impossible to go unharmed. The ‘will of laziness’ that Dino had poured into this attack would also cause physical destruction.

Even if one succeeded in evading it, the negative vibrations would be emitted from all directions. The mere exposure to them would diminish the target’s energy, and their fighting ability would inevitably decline.

After that, it was only a matter of taking advantage of that chance and stabbing the enemy with his sword.

This technique, which could trick enemies with double or triple his strength, was the strongest blow that Dino could deliver with confidence.

The best way to get out of this situation was to kill Zegion without taking any chances. Although Dino was reluctant to do so, he was not willing to cut corners when it came to making things easier.

Even Guy wouldn’t be safe from a direct hit. So then, can you take it?

Dino grinned, confident in his strike.

Zegion has always seen only Dino’s laziness, and probably did not expect him to use a big move all at once. Dino was convinced that everything went as planned.

But Zegion did not move.

It wasn’t that he couldn’t react, it was just that he had plenty of time to deal with it.

Zegion confirmed the trajectory of Dino’s sword and caught it just before it hit him.

The mythical-grade greatsword “Kuzurekiba (Crumbling Fang),” which swung down from above, was powerful enough to shatter any material on earth. Zegion calmly met such a blow with his left hand exoskeleton that had been transformed into hihiirokane.

“Idiot! You didn’t even dodge my sword, and just took it head-on! I’ve won this battle!” Dino shouted.

The lazy act that he had been performing had finally come to fruition in this moment.

Although, to tell the truth, it was neither an act nor a performance, but he just liked to think of it that way.

It was the fastest attack the current Dino could release, but as expected, Zegion was able to catch it. This was unavoidable, since speed tended to be sacrificed in larger swords.

But in exchange, the power was extraordinary.

As if it was a trivial attack, Zegion had caught it with one hand. That in itself was admirable.

But for now, Zegion’s left arm must have received a tremendous impact.

His left hand doesn’t seem to be shattered, but I guess it will be useless for a while. He’s still standing there, but I’ll just have to be patient.

Dino thought to himself, looking at Zegion, who seemed so unconcerned.

However, this game was Dino’s victory.

Zegion’s ‘Distortion Field’ is amazing, but it could only prevent physical attacks. Dino’s ultimate “Fallen Strike” would penetrate all physical barriers and go directly to Zegion.

Letting my opponent mistake this for a physical attack with a big sword and drop their guard, when in fact it was a lethal mental-type attack being used—this is my victory.

Zegion is indeed strong.

That is why Dino predicted that Zegion would look down on him to show off his superiority. He knew that Zegion would not dare to evade the attack because he was good at melee combat.

“Hmm. Give me a break, man. I’m sure the bracelet will bring him back anyway, so I should collect Ramiris quickly.”

Spitting that out, Dino turned towards Beretta.

But at this point, there was a pause.

‘Something’s wrong,’ he thought.

First of all, Beretta was not wary of Dino.

In addition to the repeated battles, Dino’s remaining magicule count was also low due to the fact that he had used his trump cards. Even so, Beretta would be no match for Dino, and yet, the look in Beretta’s eyes still revealed the calmness of a victor.

He couldn’t see his true face under the mask, but it was still creepy.

“Do you think you can beat me?”

“Hohoho, you must be joking. I am not thinking about winning, it’s just that you are not my opponent.”

As soon as those words fell, Dino felt a strong chill.

Dino hurriedly looked back at Zegion in a panic. Indeed, there was something unnatural about the Zegion who had stopped moving.

The fact that he had not been shattered by a mythical-grade blow meant that Zegion’s left arm was also of mythical-grade strength. If that was the case, then it was not surprising that he had a willpower comparable to that of a spiritual life form. It seemed correct to assume that he had an Ultimate Skill, which had been a concern earlier.

“No way…!”

“I’ll ask you, is the effect of your attack delayed? Or did you really think that you could beat me with just one breeze-like blow that doesn’t even tickle?”

‘Damn it,’ Dino thought.

There was no doubt about it, Zegion was the holder of an Ultimate Skill.

Although it was unclear what kind of power it was, it was at least powerful enough to nullify Dino’s spiritual attacks.

“You suspected that I possessed an Ultimate Skill, didn’t you? If that was the case, you should have attacked me in more ways than one instead of taking such a mild approach. That lazy nature of yours is the reason why you lost this time.”

“Don’t talk as if you’ve won!”—in the face of such a shouting Dino, Zegion held out his left hand. When his clenched fist opened wide, five flashes of light shot out from it.

It was Zegion’s ‘Dimension Ray (dimensional cutting ray).’

“That hurts…”

Dino took evasive action as quickly as he could, and barely managed to avoid a fatal wound. However, his right arm was severed from the elbow down.

It hurt so much that he wanted to cry out in pain, but now was not the time.

His instincts were warning him that he would be in real danger if this continued.

“So you have an Ultimate Skill after all, huh? I didn’t expect you to be able to neutralize my ‘Fallen Thanatos (Hypnotic Induction of Death).’ Don’t tell me that mental attacks don’t work on you, either?”

‘Fallen Thanatos’ was the lethal mental attack that Dino had put into his ‘Fallen Strike.’ It was effective as long as the opponent had a mind, so even if the target was a ‘Clone,’ it would affect the main body at a distance.

It was a sure-fire power with no way of escape.

And yet, Zegion looked as if nothing had happened after being hit. It was no wonder that Dino couldn’t accept it.

In order for him to win—no, in order for him to even escape from this place, he needed to figure out this mystery. Dino knew that he would never get an answer, but he couldn’t help but ask Zegion.

“I am not obligated to answer that question.”

Of course, Zegion was indeed ruthless.

But then, a cold voice gave him the answer.

“—But I will answer for you, wretched one. This so-called dream, that is to say, the mystery. From the very beginning, you have been in the palm of my hand. Remember, I am the “Mist Lord,” King of the World of Illusion, and mental attacks are useless against me!”

This was the attitude of a strong man who showed mercy to his enemies.

Hearing these words and deducing the facts from them left Dino stunned.

The fact that his own ability had been neutralized meant that his opponent’s ability was stronger. In other words, he realized that Zegion had evolved into an existence equal to—no, and existence even greater than himself.

It’s gotta be a lie, right?! His melee combat is so strong, and yet he’s better at mental combat?! And this guy—he just said that he’s the King of the World of Illusion? In other words, has he reached the point where he can create a “unique world?” You’ve got to be kidding me!! How much stronger can he get?! It’s impossible to win against this kind of opponent without preparation!!!

Dino’s Skill was the strongest of the deadly sin series, and had even evolved into an Ultimate Skill. But even so, Zegion was able to defeat it.

It was no longer something that evolution could explain because Zegion should not have had an Ultimate Skill until just recently.

Dino is definitely not weak.

But this time, his opponent was very strong.

No, rather he was too overpowering…

The mission to kidnap Ramiris was fundamentally wrong from the start, but as soon as Zegion had completed his evolution, it was guaranteed to fail.

Realizing this, Dino sighed heavily and looked up to the heavens.

At that moment, he saw a figure on one of the monitors, and was left completely speechless.

Oh, Velgrynd…

That blue-haired beauty was, without a doubt, Velgrynd.

She was supposed to be fighting against the Demon Lord Rimuru outside the labyrinth after subduing Veldora, but now she was somehow with Masayuki and the others.

What was even more worrisome was that Cornu was nowhere to be seen.

No way, no way, no way!!

Bad premonitions often come true.

Dino understood this from experience.

Hold on a minute!! There’s just too much information for me to understand. That, is that—?! Velgrynd was supposed to be under Feldway’s control, but was that a lie? Or did she escape from it? Either way, does that mean that Cornu was disposed of by Velgrynd? No, no, no, this… it’s no longer a matter of combat failure, is it?

Dino let his Thought Acceleration run at full speed as he tried to comprehend the current situation. In the end, he came to the conclusion that no matter how hard he tried, it would be impossible to go on with the operation.

He had always been eager to run away from the very beginning, but at this point, he didn’t even have the will to try anymore.

For Dino, he had done good enough.

“Pray. He who has touched the depths of hell, repent for your sins and die! ‘Dimension Storm!’”

From the very beginning, this location was a part of Zegion’s dominant space.

That pointed to one fact.

No matter what Dino did, it was impossible for him to leave this realm.

If Dino had used the powers he had reserved, there was a possibility that he could have seen a glimmer of light. However, even then, the odds would be so ridiculous that Dino had no regrets about giving up.

In fact, the only other possibility he had now was…

A rainbow-colored storm swallowed Dino, and his existence was erased into nothingness.

It was, indeed, a supernatural high-energy storm.

There was nothing Dino could do, and he disappeared from this world without leaving a single piece of flesh behind.

“Oh, were your prayers answered? Your bad luck is to be commended.”

Zegion murmured.

There was a small sound of something breaking coming from somewhere as Dino’s existence seemed to be reborn.

Zegion had a proper grasp of the situation.

His voice remained calm, as everything unfolded as Zegion expected.

\*

“Well, I guess I won the bet.”

Dino let out a sigh of relief.

His equipment was still intact, and there was no physical damage.

“No, this is something else. Ramiris was merciful enough to let me escape, right?”

After muttering that, Dino looked at the broken bracelet.

It was a cheap bracelet that he had bought at a store in the labyrinth—yes, it was a Resurrection Bracelet.

Because Dino hadn’t recorded a save point, the resurrection point was still above the labyrinth. It was left in place as one of the escape routes, just in case something like this happened.

“Not giving me a real bracelet with an unlimited number of resurrections was meant to be a warning. But you could have eliminated the entire function if you wanted to, you naïve yet sweet fool.”

Dino sadly muttered to himself.

He had kept the item made by Ramiris, the target of kidnap, as a secret insurance. The fact that he was able to do such unprincipled things without hesitation was what made Dino, Dino.

It was an inferior product that could only be used once, and it was made in large quantities by Ramiris. He had gambled his fate on it, but it seems that heaven was on Dino’s side.

I guess I’m still an angel, even after I fall.

Thinking to himself, Dino looked around. He was planning to join his colleagues who were fighting Geld and the others, and retreat as quickly as possible.

He also didn’t forget to contact Zalario through ‘Telepathy Net,’ telling him that the mission had failed.

Dino’s colleagues had been tasked with obstructing the re-closing of the labyrinth in order to secure an escape route. Until Zalario came out, they were unable to escape either.

Since the mission had failed, they should not stay much longer.

But even so, that guy is way too strong!

I really can’t stand him—Dino grumbled again, remembering Zegion.

Feldway would be furious, but Dino felt lucky to have survived.

That said, this is probably the first time Feldway’s plan has ever failed. Also, it seems like Cornu was taken out…I don’t know how, but I really shouldn’t be hostile to Demon Lord Rimuru…

In fact, Dino, who had been reluctant about this mission from the start, wondered to himself why he had even agreed to it.

The thought of what was to come made Dino feel depressed.

All in all, since Zegion had become such a monster, it would be hopeless to conquer the labyrinth in a straightforward manner.

Not only Zegion, but all of the higher-ranking executives of Tempest were monsters.

He didn’t even know what was happening with Rimuru and the others, but he could guess that something terrible had changed.

That’s why I didn’t want to do this!!!

Dino wanted to live in peace and quiet in the labyrinth.

But still, all this had happened.

Even though it was unavoidable as his job, he could not help but feel depressed.

I don’t know what Feldway is thinking, but he’s probably not going to give up. But this really isn’t possible…

Just now was probably the best chance they could have gotten.

Now that the opportunity was gone, Dino understood that there would be no next time.

In addition, there was another problem.

Aah, I won’t be able to go back anymore because of this hostile relationship.

The days of living in the labyrinth were very comfortable and easy for the lazy Dino.

Even though it was work, helping Vesta was fun. He had become friends with Gabil, helping each other in various ways. Dino was also happy whenever the researchers made a discovery.

Dino had developed sense of companionship with Vesta and the others as he spent his days without boredom.

And one more thing.

Perhaps everyone had forgotten, but Dino was here under Guy’s orders. In other words, he had been given an intelligence mission to report on the events occurring in the labyrinth.

Dino doesn’t think that Guy expected much from him, but he still felt it was a bit unbearable.

He’s a pain in the ass when he’s angry…

To be honest, it was super troublesome.

It was just as troublesome to keep thinking about it, so Dino hurried towards where his companions were.

The “Barrier Lord” Geld was fighting against the muscular female warrior, Gracia.

It was shocking that the two were fairly equal in strength. To Dino, it was a sight that really made him wonder if something was wrong with his eyes.

If he’s evenly matched with Gracia, does that mean his power is already greater than mine? You’ve got to be kidding me…to evolve into this…

Geld’s body was stained with blood, but Dino couldn’t tell if it was his own or if it was his enemy’s. After all, he didn’t see the slightest sign of injury anywhere on his body.

If the damage was caused by a mana attack, the effects of a healing potion would not be enough to heal the wound. Naturally, Gracia’s attack would be mana tinged with the intent to destroy.

The fact that Geld was unharmed by such an attack might be due to his incredible defensive power, or to his supernatural recovery ability.

As Dino was pondering this, Gracia flashed her longsword before him. The blow sliced through Geld’s scale shield and ripped open his arm.

However, Geld was completely unfazed. He simply threw away his broken shield and took a new one out of his ‘stomach’ and held it up.

Dino saw it.

There were no wounds left on Geld’s arm.

Aaaaaah, it’s Ultraspeed Regeneration. It’s skilled enough to heal even Gracia’s attacks…

Dino was not happy at all, even though he knew the answer.

“That’s enough! You’re so stubborn! You don’t even change your stance when I attack you—are you crazy?!”

“Hmm? Is that so? I actually don’t know much about it myself, but should I have praised you for your excellent attack?”

“You’re being sarcastic! Damn it, if I don’t kill you with one blow, the wound will heal right away. I should be the one praising your toughness.”

With that said, Geld and Gracia resumed their fierce battle.

Neither of them cared about their own injuries and did their best to take advantage of their opponent.

Geld’s meat crusher knife was flicked away by Gracia’s circle shield as fierce sparks wildly flew about.

Just that alone sent a shockwave rushing through the ground.

Dumbfounded, Dino completely missed the chance to speak to Garcia.

Geld had always been a behind-the-scenes, silver-tongued kind of guy.

He had no outstanding record against the Empire, so Dino had thought lightly of him.

But that was a terrible mistake.

I get it now! The people of this country are all just crazy!!!

Dino was forcibly convinced that he had finally found the truth.

And above Dino’s head, a fierce air battle was also underway.

“Ahhhh, dodging left and right is so annoying!”

“That’s what I wanted to say. You don’t even have wings to fly with, but you’re so cocky!”

“Hmph, it’s easy enough to manipulate gravity. Compared to that, I’ve had enough of this game of chase. Shall we end this now?”

“That’s my line!”

The mysterious Kumara and the childlike Pico. The two bewitching girls looked quite good together, but their battle was intense.

Pico unleashed a Black Thunder that covered the ground, charring the surface of the earth. Yet for some reason, it was unable to take effect on Kumara’s surroundings.

It was only natural from Kumara’s point of view. The Thunder Tiger Raikou, Kumara’s pet and one of her tailed beasts, specialized in lightning attacks, so it only made sense that her defense against thunder would be excellent.

‘This time it’s my turn’—Kumara moved out with such intent. Driving her eight tails in a fluid motion, she launched a series of nine-tailed slashes. However, these were all blocked by Pico’s spear movement.

A high-pitched sound rang out on the battlefield.

It was a truly even battle, forcing Dino to revise Kumara’s fighting ability upwards in his mind.

The Twelve Guardian Lords, huh? What a scary bunch.

Dino admitted it honestly.

Not one of them, but all of the members were a threat. That was safe to assume, Dino thought.

Pico and Gracia, the former seraphim, were comparable to awakened True Demon Lords. They had been out of combat for a long time, so it was not a simple matter of comparing their strength, but they were definitely not weak.

With the Tempest executives out of picture, Dino had originally thought that he and the two girls alone would be enough to conquer the labyrinth. Feldway had even taken the trouble to send in two of the Three Phantom Commanders, and had even entered the battle himself.

It was a situation of absolute victory, but the results were as one could see.

Dino almost felt dizzy in the face of this reality.

Both Pico and Gracia seemed to have lost their composure, perhaps because they hadn’t fought in a long time.

‘No wonder,’ Dino thought.

Even though they had fallen, they were still the highest-ranked seraphim.

The once brilliant Seven Primordial Angels were struggling in a battle, and their pride must have been torn to pieces.

Dino was no stranger to this, but he had already tossed all that aside.

“You two, fall back! We’re retreating!”

Dino shouted.

The two girls reacted, but seemed unhappy about it.

“We’re just getting started, you know? Don’t talk nonsense when I’m about to get serious.”

“Shut up! From the moment you two came to fight, this operation was already in ruins!”

Pico and Gracia’s role was originally to provide logistical support from the rear, but since there was a gap in the battlefield, it was more prudent to take part in it.

The fact that they were caught up in the middle of a battle meant that the enemy’s strength had exceeded their expectations. A tactical victory here would be completely meaningless in terms of strategy.

“Wait, you mean the mission failed?”

“Huh? Ahhhh, yeah, it failed. If it hadn’t failed, I wouldn’t have run away!”

“Huh?! But Feldway made the plan, right? How could that cautious, perfectionist Feldway misjudge the enemy’s strength?”

“That’s the way it is.”

“It can’t be. With Zalario and Cornu here, how could the mission still fail?”

“Because we already lost. I told Zalario to stand down, but that Cornu bastard was probably killed. In short, none of the goals were achieved, so there’s no point in fighting anymore!”

“Is this a lie…?”

“Seriously, I really don’t think that’s possible…”

Pico and Gracia were speechless.

In contrast, Geld and Kumara wore proud expressions.

“Hey, hey, does that mean you lost too?”

“Huh? I mean, don’t ask me that! Don’t you have the decency to pretend not to notice?”

Facing Gracia’s question, Dino replied perfunctorily, as if he didn’t care. Gracia was stunned, not by the failure of the mission, but by Dino’s lack of remorse.

In any case, there was no reason to doubt Dino’s words.

With their heads already cooled down, Pico and Gracia accepted the retreat.

“Damn it, don’t think that you’ve won!”

“That will not happen. You were splitting your power to stop the labyrinth from recovering during the fight with me, weren’t you? Next time, I hope I can face you in perfect condition.”

“Huh. Ahahahaha! You saw that, did you? I like that. See you later!”

Gracia and Geld acknowledged one another and peacefully said their goodbyes.

Pico and Kumara on the other hand…

“Your name was Pico, right? You get to keep your life for today!”

“Huh?! I wasn’t even serious! You’re the one who gets to keep her life!”

They glared at each other viciously, then grunted and turned their faces away from each other.

Despite the completely different atmosphere, the two agreed to end the battle.

With that, Dino and the others had successfully withdrawn from the scene.

His role in this mission was to create a diversion, and he carried it out perfectly.

The men he had brought with him were fighting on equal terms with the resistance in the labyrinth. This was a literal meaning, and not an act.

It was surprising, but they would need to revise their intel on the enemy upwards. That is what Zalario concluded as he assessed the battlefield.

Most notable were the two people in front of him.

Charys and Treyni, two names that Zalario felt it necessary to remember. Still, Zalario concluded that he didn’t need to get serious.

Originally, I was told that there were only insignificant rabble left here, but that doesn’t seem to be the case. I had thought that in order to intercept me, the enemy would exhaust all of the forces in the labyrinth, but there is still the strong one called Zegion. I hope Cornu and Dino can complete their mission before he wakes up.

He was a little worried, but there was no mistake in the plan Feldway had made. Believing that, Zalario was able to enjoy the battle with confidence.

“Oh dear, Veldora-sama is going to laugh at me later when he learns I was at the mercy of someone who is cutting corners.”

“Such fears are unnecessary. Veldora was defeated by Velgrynd and has fallen into our hands.”

“That’s not a very funny joke.”

“It’s no joke. You’ve noticed it, haven’t you? That is why you are getting a bit impatient.”

“……”

Charys was a majin of great strength.

Even to Zalario, who had destroyed many dimensions, Charys belonged to an extremely rare group of excellent talents.

Treyni, who harbored the spirit king, was also very talented, but not as much as Charys. The high-powered magic she excelled at was threatening, but because it didn’t have much effect on Zalario, it was not much of a problem.

Charys was similar. He deftly manipulated his energy, converging heat energy and shooting out high-powered heat rays. However, this could be nullified by Zalario’s prided ‘Distortion Field.’

What Zalario really needed to be wary of was his accurate and calm judgment.

Unlike Treyni, Charys would always try all sorts of tactics against Zalario. He fought cautiously, as if he were checking the effectiveness of each move.

Zalario knew from past experience that such opponents could not be taken lightly.

But that was coming to an end. Charys had begun to grow impatient, losing the prudence from a moment ago.

He was not going to enjoy this fight anymore.

‘It’s almost time,’ Zalario thought.

“I’m sorry about this, but I think we should end this now. You have both been very brave, very strong warriors. But, alas, you are no match for me.”

The difference in strength was obvious.

The total amount of energy was also too much at Zalario’s advantage.

Most crucially, there was the issue of compatibility.

Angels had an innate advantage over spirits. Charys and Treyni, who were rooted in the power of spirits, could not give decisive damage to Zalario, who was a former seraph, albeit a fallen one.

“It’s a shame, but it looks like Triss has reached her limit. I will only be able to hold onto the Spirit King for a few dozen seconds. Charys-dono, do you have any plans left?”

“Unfortunately, no. But don’t worry, Rimuru-sama and Veldora-sama have thoroughly trained me in the art of never giving up.”

Despite the hopelessness of the situation, Charys laughs and said that the battle was just beginning. Seeing this, Treyni also smiled.

“In that case, I will go along with you. I will not let insolvents have their way in Ramiris-sama’s labyrinth!”

Although they had taken a great deal of damage, their energy was sufficient. They still had a strong will to fight and showed no signs of giving in at all, much to Zalario’s disgust.

“Truly, you do not appear to be the kind of fools who do not understand your situation, but are you really going to cling to life in misery until the very end? If you think that you can just be resurrected and have nothing to worry about, then you’re mistaken.”

According to Zalario’s calculations, it would soon be time for Dino to take Ramiris out of the labyrinth.

The labyrinth’s unique “immortality” was only made possible because of Ramiris’ presence. Strictly speaking, if Ramiris just left the labyrinth, it would be fine, but if she left the labyrinth after losing consciousness, then all of the records would be reset.

In other words, once Dino’s mission was accomplished, Ramiris’ followers would no longer be immortal. Zalario was aware of this, which is why he was taking it easy on Charys and Treyni and letting them accumulate damage.

“Your fighting ability is worthy of praise, so if you wish, I can give you a painless and proud death.”

That was Zalario’s way of showing mercy to the strong.

But of course, Charys and Treyni answered with a rejection.

“Fufufu, you think you’ve won? How foolish.”

“I agree. In a battle, you never know what will happen until the very end. As long as you don’t give up on your victory, you won’t lose, but you don’t even know that, do you?”

That defeatist remark was enough to provoke Zalario, and while he had not yet lost his cool, it was enough to make him feel agitated and uncomfortable.

“How unpleasant. It’s rare that I would want to show you a little mercy.”

“Mercy, is it? There are a lot of people who have been defeated after saying that they were going to win in the end. Don’t you know that that’s called a ‘doom flag?’”

Charys recalled having a discussion with Veldora about the ‘list of things you should not say or do.’ There were many of them, but the “showing off and taking it easy when you’re about to win” in particular, was an absolute no-no.

Once you decide to kill your opponent, you must do it quickly without saying a word. If you don’t, you will surely be caught by your opponent with a counterattack.

In the first place, by being in this labyrinth, even stalling for time was often enough to turn the situation around.

This time was no exception—

“…That’s right. And if you dare to go after Ramiris-sama, a friend and ally of my God, then I, the “Gehenna Lord” Adalmann, shall be your opponent!”

Another warrior had awakened.

‘So what if one more warrior is added?’ Zalario originally thought as such.

What bothered him more was the delay in hearing from Dino.

Too slow. Although I’ve known about Dino’s slacking habits for a long time, if we don’t get this done soon, there’s going to be more and more trouble on my side.

Zalario’s frustration was gradually accumulating as the situation failed to go as planned.

Then, a knightly-looking man stepped up in front of Zalario.

“I am reluctant to challenge you with so many people against just one person, but I am not a Paladin anymore. Pragmatism is more important than honor, so please forgive me.”

It was Albert who said this.

Armed with a set of mythical-grade armor given to him by Rimuru, and having received a ‘gift’ upon Adalmann’s awakening, he had evolved into a “Gehenna Paladin.”

As the official owner of the glorious armor, Albert pointed his sword at Zalario.

“There was still a man like this…?”

Even in Zalario’s eyes, Albert’s presence was tremendous. His gestures exuded the air of a swordsman, and the mythical-grade blade in his hand had the potential to wound Zalario. He knew at a glance that this was something that could not be ignored.

“I’m here too.”

That voice belonged to Wenti, the “Hell Dragon King” who had awakened from her evolutionary slumber to become a ‘Gehenna Dragon.’

Now knowing where she learned it from, Wenti bowed gracefully.

Zalario’s expression turned blank as he realized his disadvantage.



Even in the face of these opponents, it should still be possible to him. But that was not the point.

Unless Dino did something about Ramiris, Zalario could not win.

Even if I were to reveal my true abilities here, it would only be exposing my hand to the enemy. But it’s not going to be enough to deal with these guys unless I do so.

Zalario made his decision.

If it was only Charys and Treyni, he could handle them with restraint. However, with the addition of three strong awakened demon lords, even Zalario would have a difficult time.

But now, if Zalario did not act as a diversion here, then Feldway’s plan would fail. As someone who prided himself on his 100% mission success rate, Zalario could not accept such a situation.

It can’t be helped. I’m going to kill them all anyway, so let’s show them what I can really do.

Just as Zalario was about to make up his mind…

“Oh yes, I’ll tell you a story that may be of interest to you as well. My realm of protection is the seventieth levels of the labyrinth, so why do you think I ignored the intruders over there?”

“What?”

“I don’t want to draw out the answer, so I’ll tell you briefly. It’s simply because there was no need for me to be there anymore.”

“…What are you trying to say?”

Adalmann, a skeleton in the robes of a saint, smiled evilly and laughed. Zalario, uncomfortable with this, asked back.

Wait a minute…What does he mean? There’s no need for him to be there? Does this mean that something happened to Cornu during the invasion?

Without hearing the answer, Zalario arrived at the truth.

However, Adalmann’s goal was actually to make Zalario waver, so he told him personally what had happened on the seventieth levels.

“That foolish intruder has been eliminated by Velgrynd-sama. That’s why I felt safe to come to you with confidence.”

“……”

Zalario was not foolish enough to doubt those words.

With Cornu’s defeat confirmed, Zalario decided to inquire about the success or failure of the most important objective.

“Huh, I see. With Velgrynd as an opponent, Cornu is no match. There seems to be a lot of odd things going on, but they should still be remedied. So then, you’ve sent the rest of your meager battle power to me?”

As for why Velgrynd hadn’t come him yet, he could only assume that it was because of Masayuki. After all, Masayuki was possibly the inheritor of Rudra’s soul, he thought.

Feldway, who had examined the information obtained by the Imperial Intelligence Bureau, had ordered Masayuki’s extermination in order to eliminate any possibility. However, Velgrynd seemed to have found out about it.

Cornu is also unlucky. If he hadn’t switched roles with me as he had originally planned, none of this would have happened. But I can just ignore Velgrynd. With Michael-sama around, she can easily be controlled. Right now, what’s more important…

What’s more important was what Dino was doing.

“So you can afford it. I see, so then you’re strong enough to take on Velgrynd-sama. I hate to admit it, but it looks like we’ve really been underestimated.”

“That’s true. There’s a good chance we’d lose even if we all took on the challenge together.”

Charys was wise, but Adalmann also had a quick mind.

Both of them realized from Zalario’s attitude that he must be hiding incredible abilities. But even so, Adalmann and the others had the advantage.

Adalmann explained the reasoning behind this.

“I already know the purpose of your questions. You’re really after Ramiris-sama, aren’t you? However, we are under orders to ensure the safety of Ramiris-sama at all times and with the highest priority.”

Upon awakening from his evolutionary slumber, Adalmann had first confirmed that Ramiris was safe.

Naturally, if Ramiris was safe, then everything else would be fine.

Above all, it was a supreme order from Rimuru.

The main purpose of Adalmann and the other Guardians was to protect the labyrinth. In other words, they were to ensure the safety of Ramiris.

“So, Ramiris-sama is safe, isn’t she?”

“Of course, Treyni-dono . Zegion-dono is on his way, so no matter how many people there are, they won’t be able to touch Ramiris-sama.”

“I see, that’s a relief.”

Treyni smiled. The others did the same, each with a look of relief on their faces.

Now they could focus on Zalario with peace of mind.

As for Zalario…

The mere mention of the name Zegion once again gave him the feeling that Dino had failed.

Zegion was the one who could use Distortion Field, right? But if Dino fights seriously…No, that man can’t be expected of much. He was already very reluctant to take part in this mission, so by now he’s probably long gone…

Zalario had a pretty good idea of the current status quo.

As if aiming for that moment, a ‘Telepathy Net’ arrived from Dino.

‘‘Hey, Zalario, I know you can hear me. The mission has failed. Apparently, Cornu screwed up when Velgrynd entered the fray. I’ve also got a nasty bastard on my end, so I’m retreating now. You should get out of here before the labyrinth closes. See ya!’’

It was so one-sided that Zalario couldn’t help but laugh bitterly.

Zalario thought to himself that this was really in Dino’s style, and decided to retreat as well. Since victory at this point was now meaningless, then any unnecessary actions should also be avoided.

“This is the first time I have ever tasted such humiliation—to have to retreat when my opponents are merely a bunch of stragglers who could easily be swept away. There will not be a next time, so remember that.”

After blandly uttering his regrets, Zalario took his men with him and teleported away from the labyrinth.

Those who remained behind felt no lingering sense of victory, but immersed themselves in the peace of mind that came with having successfully defended the labyrinth.

Zegion released his skill ‘World of Illusion,’ and then looked at Beretta, who had just finished laying Ramiris down on the couch.

“Has Dino-dono escaped?”

“It would seem so.”

“Hohoho, you’re too modest. It was only the mercy of Ramiris-sama that let him get away.”

Beretta was right.

Zegion had long noticed that Dino was wearing the Resurrection Bracelet.

He had noticed it, and purposely overlooked it.

It was an experiment.

—Will Ramiris’ blessings be effectively activated even if there is clear hostility towards Ramiris by the equipper?—

The result was as one could see.

Dino had won the bet and survived.

For Zegion, it could have gone either way. The results of this experiment were obtained only incidentally, and the victory condition had been fulfilled when he defended Ramiris.

“If that is what Ramiris-sama wants, then there is nothing I can do about it.”

Beretta nodded back.

If they had succeeded in intercepting the enemy, then there was no need to kill uselessly.

Of course, there would have been no next time if the enemy had been oblivious to the generous master’s mercy.

Zegion had intended to pursue Dino depending on his reaction after being resurrected. If there had been no sign of escape, he would have crushed him, but it seemed that that was not necessary.

Dino not only chose to escape, but also persuaded his companions to retreat. His two companions accepted this and also withdrew from the area.

“So, what about Zalario?”

“Adalmann-dono rushed over, and there is no sign of the other party anymore. They must have given up and fled as well.”

At this point, Adalmann and the others had resurrected and joined the fight, and the remaining enemies seemed to have decided to retreat.

“That’s just as well.”

“Hmm. If it weren’t for Ramiris-sama, we would have been the ones who were defeated, right?”

“Indeed. Even if we had won, there would certainly have been casualties, and for us, that is tantamount to defeat.”

“Exactly.”

Zegion and Beretta nodded to each other.

The thought that it was necessary to revert to a more vigilant posture came to both men at the same time.

But that could come later.

With that, the labyrinth had been successfully secured.

After confirming Ramiris’ safety once again, Zegion returned to his domain.