

And now, back to the main topic.

It was a good opportunity to check Ranga’s status.

I had been wondering about it for a while, but that seemed to be stronger than even the native gods worshiped in many remote areas—was that okay?”

With the exception of Souei who would be treated as a subordinate deity of Benimaru, it seemed that a race would become ‘divine’ once the existence value exceeded 2 million.

I wasn’t sure, but that’s what I thought.

«We still need to collect more examples, but I am pretty sure that’s the case.»

An existence value exceeding 1 million is probably a ‘Saint,’ and a value exceeding 2 million may be a ‘Shinjin.’ That was not the same as the conceptual all-powerful “god,” but it was a reliable symbol of strength.

Ranga had an existence value of more than four million. That is comparable to Benimaru without his sword.

“Very impressive, Ranga!”

“Hahaha, this is all thanks to my Master!!”

According to Ranga, this was all thanks to living in my shadow, bathed in my demon energy.

Perhaps it was because he had been lurking in my shadow and absorbing magicules for so long that his evolution has been going smoothly.

What’s more, he even suddenly got a great power.

It was the Ultimate Skill ‘Stellar Wind King Hastur,’ but…it seems that Ranga, and not Veldora, had acquired it.

This was definitely…

«Correct. It was me providing a little help.»

I knew it.

It wasn’t an ultimate gift, so Ranga probably got it on his own, but there was no way that Ciel didn’t have a hand in it.

But well, since it was a power that suited Ranga, I had no complaints.

This power included the following seven abilities: ‘Thought Acceleration,’ ‘Universal Perception’ ‘Demon Lord Haki,’ ‘Weather Domination,’ ‘Sound and Wind Domination,’ ‘Spatial Domination’ and ‘Multilayer Barrier.’ It was so powerful that it could even be considered exceptional.

I could understand the greatness of this supernatural power, which was capable of controlling even the weather.

It was truly a skill worthy of Ranga.

I was starting to worry about whether Gobta would be able to handle Ranga.

Although I had played with Ranga all night without sleeping, I was in perfect shape.

The first to arrive was Kumara.

Her first words spoken to me after the greeting was.

“I heard Ranga-sama boast that Rimuru-sama could modify our Skills? I’d love for you to give me new powers, too!”

Kumara, dressed as a little girl, adorably made her request.

Ranga acquired his abilities on his own, but he seemed have exaggerated the help he received.

Actually, I think he should have praised himself, but for some reason, Ranga emphasized and bragged about receiving help from me.

To be precise, it wasn’t me, but Ciel, but that was a secret, so I nodded ambiguously.

Now then, what should I do?

«Let’s do it.»

I knew you would say that.

I was worried about leaving the rest to Ciel, who had no intention at all of feeling sorry for itself…But I guess we should take all the countermeasures we possibly can since we have enemies.

“All right. Well, it’s mostly up to you, but I’ll see what I can do.”

Even for Ciel, what cannot be done cannot be helped.

If Kumara did not have the right aptitude, she would not be able to receive a ‘gift.’

After obtaining her approval, I left it all to Ciel.

Kumara acquired the Ultimate Gift ‘Beast King Bahamut,’ which included the following six powers: ‘Thought Acceleration,’ ‘Universal Perception,’ ‘Demon Lord Haki,’ ‘Gravity Domination,’ ‘Spatial Domination,’ and ‘Multilayer Barrier.’

She could even interfere with planets, seemingly able to manipulate the gravity of a wide area.

As for Kumara herself, her race had also changed.

From the Nine Heads to the Nine Tails.

It may seem that a change from ‘heads’ to ‘tails’ was a weakness, but that was not the case. She used to have eight magic beasts, but now she had only one head. In other words, Kumara could achieve complete control over all of them by her own consciousness.

As it was before, the will of the magic beasts resided in eight of Kumara’s nine tails. Therefore, it was possible to leave them to their free will as subordinates.

In that case, eight magic beasts with an existence value of about 200,000 would be separated from Kumara. Even so, the existence value of Kumara would remain over a million. This was not a miscalculation, but rather a fact.

The existence value of her subordinates would a multiple value of the separated value, which meant that they had been strengthened tremendously.

Although she was not a divine race, she possessed existence value of nearly two million without relying on armor, so it was likely that she would soon evolve.

Like Geld, she also had an earth attribute.

Since she was an earth spirit beast, a semi-spiritual life form, she was very compatible with gravity manipulation.

The current Kumara, with all of her magic beasts integrated, could be ranked highly amongst the Twelve Guardian Lords in terms of specs alone.

Unfortunately, she was still inexperienced.

If they fought, she would still lose to Souei, and the only ones she had chance to win against currently would be Adalmann and Gabil.

That said, there were some scary things in store for Kumara, as she had a lot of potential.

She was still a young girl, and her future growth was something to look forward to.

Leaving Zegion in the hallway first, only Apito entered the room.

It would have been fine if they were both here at the same time, but in the name of a private interview, I decided to respect Zegion’s wishes.

As soon as we sat down facing each other on the chairs, Apito gently handed me a package.

“Rimuru-sama, this is the honey that was just collected.”

“Oh, thank you!”

I was so happy, my cheeks relaxed.

This honey can be used as a panacea and is amazingly delicious.

It was a well-known story amongst my subordinates that I had used this to tame Milim with a single blow.

That’s why it was a very popular product.

Laughing, I put the package away in my pocket.

I am not a man who would give in to bribes, but I decided to be nice to Apito.

Apito’s current status was as follows.

Apito’s strength had already surpassed that of the former demon lords. Although she was not as strong as the Special S ranks defined by our country, she seemed to be stronger than the pseudo-awakened Clayman.

Moreover, according to Apito, her ‘Queen Worship’ Skill had created nine insectar majins.

They were still chrysalises, but it seems that they would be quite powerful majins once they were born.

“In that case, we should celebrate.”

“I’m so happy! I beseech you to give them a name.”

A name, that’s right.

“Yeah…”

I tried to avoid answering directly and wanted to change the subject.

“Naming is dangerous, so…”

«No problem. I have mastered the art of total control, so there will be no danger.»

Mastered it…

That’s right, it’s the same as what you did with Charys back then.

I guess I have no choice.

I was hoping to avoid having to come up with nine names, but…

“Reichi, Reni, Resan, Reyon, Rego, Reroku, Renana, Rehachi, Rekyuu—how is that?”8

Don’t ask me why, I’m just doing it.

Although it was just a combination of number variations, I still hope she’ll be okay with it.

I don’t even know if the majins will be male or female, so I’ll just assign them something appropriate like that once they’re born.

“Oh my! I can feel Rimuru-sama’s loving kindness, and my children are so happy to feel it as well!”

“Oh, you can sense that too?”

“Of course. The hearts of my children are unbreakably connected to mine.”

The children created by her Skill can be given orders through ‘Magus Control,’ and the speed of transmission in instantaneous. Also, unlike with ‘Telepathy Net’ where the exchange is mutual, the order of priority is made clear.

This made sense to me, but let’s leave that alone for now.

Ciel has been annoying me since a while ago.

«I don’t understand. I am just asking for permission to use ‘Skill Alteration’»

That’s what it said.

Ciel seems to be eager to play with Apito’s Skills.

In fact, Ciel could actually force Apito to do it even I didn’t give it permission because I had superior authority over the people I was connected to via the Soul Corridor.

But this was currently a time of peace, and there was no longer an emergency. It didn’t want to do anything without my permission.

What’s more, Apito was of Zegion’s lineage, so from my point of view, she was a secondary family member. Since the connection between us was a little weaker, it would be easier to do it if I asked for permission.

Thinking it was too late, I asked Apito.

“By the way, if you don’t mind, I’d like to help you with the direction of your power. What do you think?”

“What do you mean?”

“Mmm. Your Skill seems to have two evolutionary possibilities. You can either be the commander-type who is served by her subordinates as the ruler of insect demons like you are now, or you could become the hero-type who leads her subordinates in battle herself. The difference is simple—The commander-type retains the ability to create insect demons, but the hero-type loses that ability. Instead, the hero-type’s physical abilities will be strengthened, and their skills will be enhanced to be more suitable for combat.”

I directly conveyed what Ciel had said. At the same time, I realized that Ciel didn’t go through with this because of the two possibilities.

The choice was up to Apito. Otherwise, the true power of Skill would not be realized.

“Of course, you can also choose not to change anything.”

After hearing what I had to say, Apito asked me back without pausing.

“If I choose the hero-type, does that mean I will be unable to have children?”

What did she mean?

«Although the Unique Skill ‘Queen Worship’ will lose its power of ‘Birth of a Dependent (Insect Demon Birth),’ the ability to reproduce without relying on the Skill will remain, so doing so will not affect the natural conception of a successor.»

“It’s just that you will be unable create dependents through your skill. It won’t affect the natural birth of children.”

“I see. In that case, there is no problem at all. My children already have the Skill ‘Birth of a Dependent,’ so they will be able to produce an army exactly as I want them to as the Queen.”

Really? So Apito had already handed over a part of her power to her dependents.

So then, Apito’s answer was…

“I would like to take the lead myself!”

Apito declared as such, just as I thought she would.

As soon as that happened, Ciel immediately sprang into action, as if it had been waiting all day for it.

«Apito’s ‘Skill Alteration’ has been successfully completed. Unique Skill ‘Queen Worship’ has evolved into the Ultimate Gift ‘Queen Possession (Proserpina)’»

It really only took a moment.

Perhaps it was because it had already been analyzed earlier, but not even a second had passed.

“It’s done. You can check on it later to practice using it.”

Ultimate Gift ‘Queen Possession (Proserpina)’ is a skill that seems to have been selected and enhanced from the original ‘Queen Worship.’ It included ‘Thought Acceleration,’ ‘Magic Perception,’ ‘Ultra Intuition,’ ‘Insect Domination,’ ‘Military Command,’ ‘Ultraspeed,’ ‘Lethal Attack,’ ‘Spatial Manipulation,’ and ‘Multilayer Barrier.’

It was just an enhancement of her original power, so it wouldn’t be out of place for Apito to use. I’m sure she would practice it without me telling her, but that’s what I advised her to do.

“I am thankful for the unparalleled good fortune. With supreme joy, allow me to pledge my allegiance to Rimuru-sama once again.”

With that, Apito knelt to the floor.

I nodded grandly and finished my interview with Apito.

Instead of sitting on the couch, Zegion politely sat on a wooden chair.

It was obvious that he was already the strongest in the labyrinth, but he was still so thoughtful. He seemed to be trying to avoid damaging the leather of the couch with his exoskeleton, and I thought it was very meticulous.

That aside, Zegion’s performance had been magnificent.

Zegion was already a high-spec existence, and even before his awakening, he had been on a par with Diablo.

Compared to the other Twelve Guardian Lords, there was a clear gap in strength, and now he seemed to have become even stronger. Looking at his battle records (archives), it seemed that he had kicked Dino’s ass while still hiding his strength.

What a terrifying child.

Honestly, it a good thing that this guy is on our side.

“Zegion, you’ve done very well this time. If you hadn’t woken up in time, I don’t know what would have happened.”

“You’re flattering me. Even the timing of my awakening was all according to Rimuru-sama’s calculations, wasn’t it?”

No, of course not!

“No. I knew Dino was suspicious, but I didn’t expect him to make a move at the most inopportune time.”

“Ohoho, so that’s why. It was in anticipation of that situation that I woke up.”

I told you, I didn’t know that would happen!!

Speaking of which, I didn’t even know that Velgrynd existed—no, that’s not true, I did know, but I just didn’t think she’d come straight over here.

Otherwise, I wouldn’t have run off with my executives to negotiate with the emperor face-to-face.

I was completely lacking in strategy this whole war, and we were lucky to have survived. And yet, Zegion seemed to want to give me credit for everything, no matter how I explained it.

I gave up early.

“Anyway, I’m grateful you were there.”

“No, I’m really not much. Even if I wasn’t there, Rimuru-sama could have killed Dino with a blow that transcended time and space, right? I was merely responding to the opportunity you gave me to play an active role.”

What the hell are you talking about? A blow that transcends time and space?? I can’t do that…What kind of monster am I in this guy’s mind?!

“Uh, yeah. Right…Maybe I could…”

“Ha! It would be easy for Rimuru-sama.”

Zegion enthusiastically affirmed my powerless agreement.

This was beyond the level of deep respect, and I felt like he was looking at me with a gaze that seemed to give reverence to a god. Although, Zegion has compound eyes, so it was all just my imagination…

I regained my composure and continued my interview with Zegion.

I heard from Zegion himself about his thoughts on the battle with Dino.

I had thought that Dino successfully managed to escape, but that was apparently not the case. Rather, Zegion said that he had carved a curse in Dino, in anticipation of his escape.

It was a terrible thing that controlled the bearer’s life and death.

To even be able to do something like that…just how far had Zegion evolved?

I almost made a strange noise.

The values that Ciel reported far exceeded my expectations.

Zegion also seemed to be a divine race, but that was to be expected. His existence value was just under five million, the second highest after Benimaru.

His attribute is water, but according to Ciel, he also has spatial attributes.

As a semi-spiritual life form, he has excellent resistances. Not only does he not have weaknesses, but his skill level is also perfect.

He was undoubtedly powerful.

Zegion seems to be able to condense the water molecules in the atmosphere to construct a temporary body.

The magic steel that I gave him had already evolved into hihiirokane via adamantite. It is only because hihiirokane possesses such fantastic properties that such a thing was possible.

Zegion’s obsession with his exoskeleton was probably because it was the form I had originally created. Otherwise, he could have taken it off long ago and become a complete spiritual life-form.

I was happy to see that he was taking such good care of it.

Besides, Zegion, who specialized in close combat, was strong enough as he was.

After all, a complete spiritual life form is meaningless without a physical body. Rather, shouldn’t it be said that his current form was the most perfect form?

«That’s right! And now Zegion is the masterpiece that Master and I have created together! Although I left the teaching to Veldora, many of the key points of knowledge were given by me to guide him, so there is no need to worry.»

Well, basically I don’t understand what that means, right?

Ciel’s boastful talk continues bursting out, paying no heed to my confusion.

Since Zegion dominates the water element, he is incomparably strong whenever water is present.

So, because the world’s atmosphere is also laden with water, Zegion can use any place on this planet as a battlefield to his advantage.

In addition, the majority of living things have bodies mostly made of water. With him being able to control that water, one can understand how dangerous Zegion is.

The human body, for example, is about sixty-five percent water, so being hostile to Zegion would be suicidal.

However, this is only the start of how dangerous Zegion is.

Zegion’s Ultimate Skill ‘Illusion King Mephisto’ includes ‘Thought Acceleration,’ ‘Universal Perception,’ ‘Demon Lord Haki,’ ‘Water and Lightning Domination,’ ‘Spacetime Manipulation,’ ‘Multidimensional Barrier,’ ‘All of Creation,’ ‘Mental Control,’ and ‘World of Illusion.’ There were several dangerous abilities in it, but none of these were the one that had carved the curse into Dino.

The name of that technique was “Dream’s End.”

In other words, the engraved curse was a technique created by Zegion.

This move could even break through Yuuki’s ‘Anti-Skill.’ To fight against it, one would have to have a very strong will, but it would still be very difficult to surpass Zegion.

After all, the ‘Dream’s End’ was a combination of three powers—’Water and Lightning Domination,’ ‘Mental Control,’ and ‘World of Illusion.’

With ‘World of Illusion,’ Zegion was able create situations that were beneficial to him, and he could become practically invincible in such environments. Such Skills are called ‘World System’ skills and are very rare.

Even I don’t have one, so it’s no wonder they’re so strong.

«Would you like me to prepare one?»

“……”

I didn’t know how to answer that question, so I’d just pretend I didn’t hear it.

Anyway, we were talking about the “Dream’s End.”

This technique was capable of instantly reaping the life of the target if they behaved in a way that was not in accordance with the caster’s will. However, because there were no restrictions on the target’s actions, the target could still move fairly freely.

In this case, as long as Dino did not disobey Zegion’s will, he was allowed to act freely.

“So, how do you activate the curse?”

“Yes. It’s not something I do on my end, but it is triggered automatically the moment Dino takes a certain action.”

Zegion’s curse was an automatic type that required no management. Once it is activated, Zegion, the caster, will be made aware, but otherwise, he will not be conscious of it.

And the key to its activation lied in Dino’s actions—that is to say, aiming “killing intent” on my companions.

The moment he decided to kill someone, the curse would Dino’s core. It was impossible to escape from this curse even if you were a spiritual life form.

However, since the key to the curse was limited to Dino’s conscious actions, it would not be activated if he aimed for someone he did not know was one of our companions.

There was no way for him to know the faces of all the people in our town, so I could not say that it was completely safe. However, since indiscriminate attacks on the town were judged to be murderous, this curse was sufficient to keep Dino at bay.

How could Dino, who possessed an Ultimate Skill, be imposed to such a terrifying restriction?

“Excellent work, Zegion. Any reduction to a threat is welcome.”

“Thank you for your kind words. Although I am still inexperienced, the joy of Rimuru-sama’s praise sends a surge of enthusiasm to my heart.”

Why so serious??

Charys, Geld, and Souei were also this way.

Beretta too, I think.

Thinking about it this way, there were many serious guys in our group, but Geld and Zegion were particularly so.

The growth of all these talents was really a threat considering they were not easily satisfied by their efforts.

I hope that they would continue to do their best with pride in this manner, and not become complacent.

Anyway, I now understood that the Ultimate Skill ‘Illusion King Mephisto’ was a tremendous Skill.

It should be impossible for Dino to be released from the curse, but there was no such thing as absolutes in this world, and perhaps it was possible to undo it easily with some unknown power.

But even if that happened, Zegion’s reputation would not be diminished. In that situation, one could only honestly praise the opponent.

Honestly, Zegion was an excellent all-rounder in all aspects.

This time, he had taken advantage of Dino’s death and used it as an opportunity to perform a move. It was this keen sense of judgment that made Zegion a fearsome opponent.

It was not enough to have good Skills. Being able to utilize them properly is the real threat.

In this respect, there was no one more specialized in combat than Zegion, and no one more suited to his Skills than Zegion.

The two complemented each other.

While many tended to play to their strengths to gain abilities, Zegion eliminated his weaknesses to gain abilities, and was skilled and flexible with his Skills.

Brilliant.

There was nothing more to say!

With the ‘World of Illusion,’ he could create a situation that was advantageous to him, and the range of tactics would expand more than just by developing your specialty. He was probably one of the best among my subordinates in terms of combat sense and skill level.

I was convinced that even fighting races like the “primordials” could not defeat Zegion.

Zegion, what a terrifying guy.

It’s no wonder Ciel calls him the greatest masterpiece.

The strength he had shown up until now was only the tip of the iceberg.

Even if I say this, I still think it’s quite unfair that I can check the status and Skills of my subordinates like this.

Come to think of it, Zegion’s title “Mist Lord” was given to him to imply mystery, but it also had the meaning of something hazy like fog.

What an apt description.

It was also a good match in terms of his attributes.

Uh, then could it be…Zegion didn’t misunderstand my words and set his evolutionary path in that direction, did he?

No, no way…

Ciel would’ve pointed it out.

You’d point it out, right?

«…Of course!»

No way!

The reaction was a bit delayed, and the pause in the beginning made me feel very concerned.

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It was Adalmann who came into the room.

“Rimuru-sama, I, Adalmann, am truly happy for the opportunity to attend this meeting today, and my gratitude is greater than words can bear!”

This is something beyond serious, isn’t it?

I casually nodded and let him sit down on the couch.

I would waste a lot of time to let this go on.

That was the mood I was in, so I forced Adalmann to sit down.

“So, how are you feeling since you woke up?”

“Wonderful! I feel full of energy, as if every inch of my body has been filled with holy energy.”

That’s what Adalmann said, but he really did seem to be glowing.

I couldn’t believe it, but when I checked his status—

Even though he was a Dead Spirit, he had a light attribute.

From the looks of it, Adalmann was probably the most demon lord-like in appearance. I found it very ironic that he had the light attribute.

However, in Adalmann’s case, he was also able to change his attribute with the Extra Skill ‘Holy-Demonic Reversal,’ so there wasn’t much to say.

I thought it should’ve been the other way around, but I shouldn’t linger on that.

Because there were other things to worry about.

For example, his existence value had reached the level of an awakened demon lord, and there were just so many things I had to say about him that it gave me a headache. The biggest issue was the Ultimate Gift ‘Necronomicon.’

What the hell is this…?

«I gave it to him.»

I didn’t need to ask.

I couldn’t think of anything else, but it seems that it really was the result of Ciel’s meddling.

“The most wonderful of all is this power given to you, Rimuru-sama. The ‘Necronomicon’ is the crystallization of wisdom and has become the source of my power.”

Adalmann recounted happily.

Adalmann’s ‘Necronomicon’ include ‘Thought Acceleration,’ ‘Universal Perception,’ ‘Demon Lord Haki,’ ‘Chant Cancellation,’ ‘Analyze and Assess,’ ‘All of Creation,’ ‘Mental Crush,’ ‘Holy-Demonic Reversal,’ and ‘Domination of the Dead.’

In addition to his original powers, he could now use necromancy and holy magic without chanting.

Adalmann’s army had become even more formidable as his control and protection over the dead was strengthened.

He explained these things to me with great joy.

If he was happy, then that’s fine.

I decided to refrain from saying anything rude.

«Incidentally, this ‘Necronomicon’ is in the same system as the Ultimate Gift ‘Grimoire’ that was given to Gadra. I removed the knowledge unsuitable to Adalmann from ‘Grimoire’ and then added the necessary powers.»

Ciel seemed to want praise.

I had also just learned that it gave Gadra powers as well.

It was awesome, no doubt, but I couldn’t help but think there was no way for me to honestly understand it.

Shifting topics, I realized that Adalmann and Gadra were good researchers. They were great friends who enjoyed doing research on magic together.

From my point of view, those two were magic maniacs, and since they were harmless, I let them do what they wanted. It was a good thing to be passionate about something you loved, because you might be able to discover the truth.

The ‘Necronomicon’ and ‘Grimoire’ could complement each other. They seemed to be an appropriate Skills for these two people, so I decided that this was indeed the right answer.

The interview with Adalmann was over, but I also interviewed Albert and Wenti.

The two of them said they did not dare to expect an interview with me and were overwhelmed with fear.

They said that if they did not earn more achievements, then they were not qualified to see me.

It was overly reverent to the point of being incomprehensible.

What on earth do they all take me for…?

Anyway, it was important to grasp the situations of all my subordinates.

Albert was a servant of Adalmann.

And Wenti was a servant pet of Adalmann.

Presumably, both of them would be destroyed if Adalmann were to die. But on the flip side, as long as Adalmann was safe, they were immortal beings.

Thus, it could be said that they also received an Ultimate Gift through Adalmann.

«I worked hard.»

That’s because it’s a hobby, right?

No doubt, Ciel has a good character. I listened to the report, convinced of that.

In addition, both of them had a lot of nullifications and near-perfect resistances.

Adalmann’s resistances were the same, so it must have been due to the fact that he had once died.

As for their powers, their Skills had different names, but the contents were the same.

They all included the three powers ‘Thought Acceleration,’ ‘Complete Regeneration,’ and ‘Slavery Immortality.’ There was room for others, but that was still under consideration.

By letting Ciel do as it pleases, there might be some problems, but never any mistakes.

Because their ‘souls’ were entrusted to Adalmann, their bodies appeared to be imperishable.

If Adalmann died, they would die with him, just as I expected.

Since Adalmann was also immortal, they were practically invincible.

I couldn’t help but think that their team was a cheat.

Incidentally, Albert also had a lot of room for growth.

After all, the potential value of his mythical-grade weapon was one million, and as long as Albert’s existence value continued to rise, his performance potential could still be enhanced.

I believed that Albert, who was also an excellent swordsman, would be able to do so in the near future.

With that anticipation, I watched as Adalmann and the others walked out of the room.

Shion had been well prepared for this long ago.

“Rimuru-sama, I’m sorry to have kept you waiting! It’s finally my turn!”

I wasn’t waiting for her, but I decided it was better not to say that.

So I simply nodded my head and faced Shion.

At the same time, Ciel explained everything to me, but it was mostly wrong.

Shion’s strength did not depend on Skills.

Shion’s weapons were mythical-grade, so even if she did not have an Ultimate Skill, she could still harm Ultimate Skill holders.

Her body itself was a threat, plus her ‘Infinite Regeneration’ was a nightmare.

Even if one were to aim for an endurance match, Shion’s existence value was also outstanding, rivaling that of Benimaru’s. In other words, she had a huge amount of magicules, and waiting for her to run out of mana was a bad idea.

Her resistances were also perfect, so the only way to defeat her was to fight head-on. If that was really the only way to win, I felt pity for the enemy.

“You’ve gotten stronger, haven’t you?”

“Hehe, it’s embarrassing, but I’m so grateful for the compliment!”

She didn’t seem to be embarrassed at all.

But her getting stronger was true, so I wasn’t complaining.

That said, I was surprised that there was only a Unique Skill, because everyone else so far had possessed Ultimate Skills.

Ciel, could it be that Shion rejected you?

«No. Shion possesses massive potential, so she was carefully assessed. The Unique Skill ‘Cook’ is also very powerful, so I think it is enough to do nothing.»

Hmm, she’s certainly strong, but…

I had recently become better at reading Ciel’s emotions.

It was mostly intuitive, but still pretty accurate.

If I’m to believe it, then this feeling indicated that Ciel was hesitating to adjust Shion’s Skills.

«…That’s correct.»

This is a rare occurrence.

When I asked why, Ciel answered reluctantly.

What a surprise. The amazing fact was that if Shion’s Skill was strengthened, there was a possibility that she would gain powers sufficient enough to kill me.

Apparently, Ciel judged that to be undesirable and sealed off Shion’s Skill evolution.

It seemed pretty unbelievable for a Skill cultivating enthusiast to do such a thing.

Although I don’t think Shion would ever have any harmful intentions towards me, acquiring such a scary Skill was definitely something to think about. I did not want to get myself into trouble, so I decided to support Ciel’s action.

After the status check, I enjoyed chatting with Shion for a while.

I listened to her boastful talk and applauded appropriately.

Shion had been very active in the battle against the Imperial Army. Occasionally, I wanted to listen to her stories and praise her like this.

In retrospect, I was often either angry or speechless by Shion’s behavior. I understood that Shion was working hard, and her efforts were gradually showing results, but even so, all of the miserable situation from her messing up tended to make it inevitable for me to criticize her.

That’s why I think it was a good idea to enjoy a peaceful conversation like this after such a long time.

I feel like an old father to Shion, but then—

“Oh yeah, I almost forgot to tell you, but I ran into a depressed Masayuki in the cafeteria—”

—Huh?!

“—He seemed to be troubled about something, so I told him to consult with Rimuru-sama about it!”

Why does she look so smug?!

Once again, without permission…What’s more, Masayuki’s problem was definitely something I did not want to get involved with…

She was always so presumptuous, and it always rippled back to me.

It’s exactly that kind of reckless behavior that’s gonna get me in trouble!

I didn’t want to get involved with this…

After all, the sudden appearance of Velgrynd who was supposed to disappear was surprising. But after calming down and thinking about it, there was undoubtedly only one reason why Velgrynd was here.

Velgrynd had leapt through the dimensions in pursuit of Rudra. And there was only one person she would go after, right?

Not to mention, Masayuki and Rudra looked exactly alike.

With all those circumstances put together, even I could have predicted it.

But…

Even knowing that, I can’t betray Shion’s trust in me.

“I’ll have to decide on a date for all of us to meet.”

I told her as such, though it mainly just to postpone the problem.

However, Shion replied without hesitation.

“Oh, that’s perfect then! I already set up a meeting first thing early tomorrow morning!”

Perfect, my ass!!

What’s the point of having a meeting, let alone an interview, without any prior discussion?

It’s a crazy situation that started only as a personal consultation with Masayuki. This is the kind of problems that arise when you use Shion as an intermediary.

I mean, who is even going to participate in this meeting?

I was getting a headache from the sudden problem that came out of nowhere.

I was still in the middle of the personal interviews, and now this suddenly happened.

There were still the demons I had yet to interview, and if I didn’t finish the interviews today, I might not be able to come back to them until a few days later.

In that happens, I’m worried that they’ll go berserk…

“If that’s the case, tell Rigurd and Benimaru to prepare properly!”

“Understood. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I must go!”

As soon as Shion said that, she left the room in a happy mood.

Only I was left bruised as I hurriedly called Diablo and the others over while holding my head.

I thought it would be impossible to meet with all of them, so I would just dangerously go through with it here.

“Kufufufufu, is it finally my turn? How long I have waited for this moment!”

He was kicked out only yesterday afternoon, but he’s being so dramatic.

“Don’t be silly, Diablo! The decision has not been settled yet, so it shouldn’t be a problem for me to have a meeting with Rimuru-sama first!”

A battered Carrera snapped at Diablo.

Ultima agreed with her.

“That right! I haven’t given up yet, either. I don’t think you should run away from this.”

She was also covered in scars, and looking at her injuries, it was a wonder that she was still standing.

I mean, their clothes were part of them, so the fact that they still weren’t fixed suggested that they were badly injured.

And yet, they were still fighting like they were just fine.

Demons really are tough.

“Stop that. It is disrespectful to fight in front of Rimuru-sama.”

Testarossa intervened, and things finally quieted down.

By the way, Testarossa is very graceful.

She had prepared a cup of tea for me, not caring about the three of us who were quarreling. Her clothes were in perfect order, as if showing the difference in sophistication.

