The explanation to King Gazel was also troubling me, but I had a meeting with Masayuki and others today.

I focused my attention on that, and fired myself up.

I would first meet up with Testarossa.

I had calmed down a bit.

Today would be a high priority meeting, so only a carefully selected group of people would gather in the conference room.

From our side were Benimaru and Rigurd. Also Shion, Diablo, and now Testarossa.

On Masayuki’s side would be Velgrynd, Calgurio and Minits, plus Bernie and Jiwu.

In the lounge-like waiting room, all the members of our group were already there.

It was short notice, but no one complained about it.

Shuna had also volunteered to serve us, so we were fully prepared.

As for the policies, well…

We don’t want to rule the Empire.

Michael and Feldway, the major war criminals, were still missing, and Lieutenant Kondou, the man who had planned the whole thing, was dead. Even Kondou was suspected to have been thought-induced by Michael’s control, so I didn’t intend to hold him responsible even after his death.

At the time, it seemed that the emperor’s flagship had been boarded by the Empire’s major leaders, with the current surviving chief executive of the Empire as Velgrynd, who held the position of Marshal. She herself had no territorial ambitions, so the topic would probably focus on the end of the war, war reparations, and post-war reconstruction.

At any rate, letting the 700,000 Imperial soldiers fill the labor force, and how to allocate the labor force was also a problem. It would be necessary to appoint skilled personnel as supervisors, and to decide on a well-balanced group so as to avoid an imbalance in skills.

Just as I was thinking ahead…

Blue hair fluttered as a stunningly beautiful woman arrived.

It was Velgrynd.

Her gaze pierced straight through me.

Ouch, ouch, ouch.

I didn’t have a stomach, but my stomach still hurt.

“You wanted to see me?”

I needed to keep my dignity intact in front of everyone. I was wishing someone would praise me for the fact that my voice was not shaking.

“May I have a moment of your time?”

There was still time until the meeting started.

I nodded, and Velgrynd and I agreed to speak alone before the meeting.

“Well, he’s fine.”

“I see, that’s good to hear.”

With a gentle smile, Velgrynd asked for Veldora’s well-being.

When I replied that he was fine, she seemed relieved.

Looking at Velgrynd’s smile, my heart ached a little.

It was because Veldora was still afraid to deal with his sister, Velgrynd.

I had asked him if he wanted to see her, but he had replied, “I have many things to do, and I’m very busy…” pushing it off in a weak voice.

It’s shameful, but I was not in a position to laugh at him either.

Because, really, this is very awkward…

In Veldora’s case, I’m sure he was embarrassed, so I decided to leave it alone for a little longer.

“So, what’s up?”

This time, I started things off.

My heart was pounding.

“I wanted to thank you.”

…Thank me?

That’s a bit…

“Why are you looking so pale? Are you expecting me to summon you to the back of the school?”

“How do you know all that stuff?!”

I shouted, and Velgrynd chuckled.

“The journey to find my beloved Rudra was more exciting than I ever imagined.”

From the sound of it, the journey had been grueling, but from the perspective of Velgrynd, who carried a purpose, it had been a hopeful one. That was why she could say with a smile that she enjoyed it.

“I crossed numerous worlds, spent many years, and pursued that one person. One of the worlds I went to was the one you once lived in.”

“Eh, seriously?!”

“Seriously.”

So that’s why her tone of voice felt more casual.

She was wearing an Imperial uniform right now, but when she first appeared in the labyrinth, she had been wearing a shirt and jeans.

Even just looking at the recorded footage, the sight of her in such a state, defeating her enemies with a single blow, was breathtaking. From the point of view of those who witnessed it and those who were attacked, it did seem out of touch with reality.

However, the fact that she passed through the world I was in meant that there was a way to return from this world to the other side.

Well, as for me, I’m dead, so there was no point in going back…Wait, wait, wait?

In the first place, Velgrynd seemed to have jumped not only through dimensions but also time. If we analyze this, then perhaps…

«Understood. I will begin the analysis.»

Oh, Ciel is so reliable!

Maybe it was just that they discovered a new hobby, but it was really the kind of thing to leave to Ciel.

Either way, it’s wonderful to have hope.

I’m sure there were otherworlders here who would like to go back if they could. If it’s possible, I’d like to make such a future a reality.

Well, I would do my best to make that happen.

“Masayuki is the reincarnation of Rudra, isn’t he?”

“Yes, he is. And I’m pretty sure he’s almost a complete soul.”

Velgrynd muttered to herself, “All that’s left is the memory.”

Um, but Masayuki was still Masayuki, wasn’t he?

Because he was still in that lackadaisical state, I felt a little more relieved. I felt sorry to Velgrynd, but to me, Masayuki was not Rudra.

“Well, how should I put it…”

I couldn’t say “that’s great” or “that’s a shame” so I faked it.

Velgrynd wasn’t angry, and nodded lightly.

I was a little surprised that she was more subdued than I expected.

“Ufufu, you seem curious. I, too, have had various experiences, more intense than the years I spent by Rudra’s side, like a long and short dreams. So I am grateful to you. Thanks you, Rimuru.”

Velgrynd thanked me with a heart-stopping, dazzling smile.

Her domineering aura that brought others down to their knees, was nowhere to be found, replaced with a feeling of peace and tranquility. It was hard to believe that this was the same person.

“It’s good, right?”

“Yes. So, Rimuru. I swear to you that as long as Masayuki has no intention, I will not make an enemy of you. So, please do not betray Masayuki.”

It was a vow I could not have wished for.

Besides, there was no need for her to specifically explain about Masayuki. I had no intention of betraying him.

“All right. I swear, by my name, and by the name of my companions, I will not betray Masayuki. Sometimes there may be a lie of a quarrel, but that kind of thing—”

Velgrynd’s gaze became cold and frightening.

“…I understand. I swear I’ll try not to lie to him or fight with him unless necessary.”

I didn’t understand.

Why did I have to swear?

It seems that sometimes I am too honest, so I’ve reflected a little.

Even if there was a good reason for, I had certainly done something wrong, so it was natural to feel relieved that I was not being resented for it.

Just when I was thinking that I could now face the meeting in a good mood, someone came rushing into the waiting room.

It was Vesta.

“Hey, what’s with all the panic?”

“It’s not the time for such things, Rimuru-sama! I just received an urgent message from my home, and it seems that King Gazel is on his way here!”

By ‘his home,’ he probably meant from one of the family members who remained in the Dwarven Kingdom.

Vesta was still a former minister of the great kingdom of Dwargon. He was a duke, a nobleman of high rank second only to the royal family.

That was probably why he had been jealous of Kaijin, a commoner…

Although Vesta was expelled from Dwargon, it did not appear that his relationship with his family had been severed. It appears that Vesta had been keeping in touch with the duke family.

The reason was that Vesta was still the head of the duke’s household.

I was also surprised when I was told this.

The punishment given by King Gazel did not include taking away or demoting his title. It was only punishment for Vesta himself, and no blame was placed on his family. Moreover, no successor to Vesta was named, so there was no change in the head of the family.

The wise King Gazel must have intended to reinstate Vesta as a minister in the future. That’s why he didn’t punish him excessively and instead asked for him to reflect on his actions.

Another reason seems to be that he was afraid of the reaction of his family members.

If the Vesta Duchy were really serious, they were capable of starting a civil war in Dwargon, and Gazel probably wanted to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

After all, Vesta, who was no longer jealous, was a good man and well-liked by his own people. His influence was so great that he was punished with a spoonful of punishment that would not cause dissatisfaction.

That’s why the Vesta family was still alive and well, and it seems that they still had contacts in the royal court.

But I still didn’t understand.

“Uh, why? Didn’t you tell him I was going to explain everything later?”

“Yes, that’s correct, but apparently His Majesty Gazel doesn’t trust me…”

“No, no, no. That can’t be true, can it?”

“I can’t be sure about that. I have done a lot of things myself, such as negotiating the price of potions, pulling out technicians other than pharmacists, and securing human resources by mobilizing the entire Duchy. Even if I’m suspected of being on your side, there’s no way for me to refute it. In the first place, I am now prepared to devote myself to this country until I die.”

In other words, it was not a matter of trust, but Vesta was just doing whatever he wanted.

I originally thought he was a decent and serious man, but he was indeed a former minister. As a politician, he seemed to really understand the ins-and-outs.

Oops, this was not the time to be impressed.

If King Gazel was coming, then it would not be a good idea to start talks with the Empire right now. It would be rude to keep him waiting.

That said, it seems even more rude to come here without prior negotiation, so what should I do in such a case?

“It’s King Gazel who’s being rude, isn’t it?”

Leaving aside the Vesta thing, it seemed like I didn’t have to give up anything.

“You’re right. If you enter a country without a notice, you can’t argue with that even if you’re attacked. So I’m guessing we will be contacted once he’s at the border.”

Vesta said that King Gazel would never lose his manners.

As if to prove his point, a flustered messenger rushed into the room.

“I’m sorry to be rude, but I have an emergency report! We have just received a request for permission to enter from His Majesty Gazel of the Armed Nation of Dwargon—Five people in total. How should I proceed?”

There was no reason to refuse, but permission could not be so easily given—So that was why the ministerial staff had come to ask for my approval.

I think it was the most appropriate thing to do in this time of emergency.

Even I would be upset if it were the other way around, so I think it was the right thing to do. It probably should have gone through the executives, but I’d let it slide this time.

Shuna thoughtfully handed over a glass of water.

I spoke to the staff member who was drinking it gratefully.

“I’ll talk to him.”

Then he prepared a magic tool for communication and started the liaison.

As a result, it turned into an urgent meeting with King Gazel.

That was why I personally came to pick him up.

Diablo and Shion were escorting me, but this was business as usual.

“Fufufu. Thank you, Rimuru.”

“You knew this would happen, didn’t you?”

Even with the Pegasus, it would have taken a day to get from Dwargon to the Capital Rimuru. But now, since magic circles had been set up in both capitals, it was possible to travel back and forth by magic in an instant.

That’s why I guessed that the reason he came all the way to the border was to summon me.

“Hahaha, so you noticed?”

It wasn’t funny, but it wasn’t a big deal.

“I’m just glad that Velgrynd can be so accommodating.”

“That’s the thing. You’re not planning to join forces with the Empire, are you?”

So that was what Gazel was worried about, after all.

“It depends on the discussion, but that’s the general idea.”

“Hmm, wait a minute. I’d like to hear your thoughts on the matter.”

There was no reason to refuse, so we went to a coffee shop near the border.

The clerk hurriedly prepared a seat for me. Moreover, the customers, who appeared to be adventurers, read the situation and left their seats.

I felt bad, so I announced that I would take care of the bills here. Everyone was very happy, so I was sure they’d be fine.

There were roughly 30 minutes left until the scheduled meeting time. We could be on the move instantaneously, so I was planning to listen to him until the last minute.

Before that, I would start with what I had to say.

“As for leaving you to clean up after the war…”

“That’s fine. Our soldiers are still struggling to work at full capacity…but that’s only possible because we survived. I’m grateful. There is no one who would hold a grudge against you.”

That was good to hear.

I was a little worried about that, because even at barbecues, people who skipped on cleaning up were always resented.

Well, it was a tough fight. I was so happy to have made it through that I couldn’t even think about the chores.

“So, what did you want to ask?”

I was planning to organize my thoughts depending on the flow of the conversation. I’m sure there were things I couldn’t answer if asked now.

“I want to hear it clearly from you. You have no ambition to join forces with the Empire and attack me in Dwargon, do you?”

What is this old man even talking about?

There’s no way I would go through that much trouble.

There was no reason to, and above all, there was no benefit. On top of that, we would lose the trust of the Western Nations if we did so. It was a completely impossible option.

“No. The trust we’ve worked so hard to accumulate would be lost in an instant. And on top of losing a reliable backer, we would be burdened with unnecessary hard work. Asking me such a question…how stupid do you think I am?”

I replied with a look of annoyance, and Gazel began to laugh, looking sincerely relieved.

Hey, come on, you weren’t actually worried about that, were you?

“My apologies, Your Majesty Rimuru. These allegations were all my own proposition. Therefore, I take full responsibility for offending you. I hope you will be so kind as to forgive me.”

Dolph-san must have noticed my annoyance, and expressed his apologies.

I asked him to explain in detail what he meant.

To put it simply, if the Empire and Tempest were to join forces, Dwargon would be sandwiched between the two powers. In this case, resorting to force would be suicidal, and a decline in diplomatic power would be inevitable.

If a country declared that they would not listen to the arguments of an opponent they did not fear, that country would be forced to accept unfavorable conditions in future negotiations. He had been afraid of this, and wanted to confirm it in advance.

“Huh? But that’s not something Dwargon could stop either way, is it? Although I have no intention of starting a war, I think it’s a good idea to join forces with the Empire.”

“That’s right. In the end, it all comes down to what you wish. Although Dwargon is a great power, we do not have the strength to compete with the True Dragons Velgrynd and Veldora. Dolph’s worries are meaningless, but as a king, I cannot simply admit it.”

Gazel said this to me with a serious expression on his face.

As a king responsible to his people, he must always be prepared for any eventuality.

Only this time, it was pointless to worry.

However, there was also no guarantee that we would not start a war.

Even if we did not start one, the situation would be the same if the Empire did.

Assuming that the Empire and Tempest had formed an alliance, whose side would Tempest really be on if the Empire tried to attack Dwargon?

If I were to be asked that, I would be at a loss.

“Rimuru, do you understand? You chose to join forces with the Empire to keep your country from going to war. That is all well and good, but it didn’t consider the situation in Dwargon. Of course, I’m not saying that that’s a bad thing, because you’re only responsible for your own people. However, on my side, I cannot easily allow it.”

Yes, I was convinced.

Indeed, even if Tempest had an alliance with both Dwargon and the Eastern Empire, it did not mean that any relationship was formed between Dwargon and the Eastern Empire.

If these two countries were to go to war, our own movements would be restricted.

But wait?

“But because we have ‘mutual military cooperation’ in the event of national crisis—”

“Well, there’s no set deadline for that, is there?”

“Eh?”

“There’s no such thing as a permanent agreement. All of them are temporary agreements that can only provide temporary peace of mind. In fact, you could even argue that having an agreement with a fixed term is safer.”

Just as I was wondering about what he meant, Ciel secretly coached me.

There were two types of agreements—those with no fixed term and those with a fixed term.

Assuming that one side wanted to break the agreement, which one would be more difficult?

If there was no deadline, one could ask the other to break the agreement at any time.

On the other hand, if there was a fixed term, things could be considered safe while the agreement was in place.

It went without saying that it would be more credible to terminate the agreement and then launch a war, rather than a breaking the agreement and invading in a breach of trust.

Of course, this was only an appeal to other nations, and if they had territorial ambitions like the empire, it’s possible that they would not care at all.

It was clearly out of the question to break a fixed term agreement without permission. Both parties were obliged to abide by the agreement when it was renewed.

If I did such a thing, I would lose the trust of the Western Nations. It would be a major deviation from my strategy, so it would be better to lay down realistic and reliable rules.

“I see. So even if we’re allied with the Empire, there’s still a chance that the agreement could be abandoned. That’s why you came all the way out here.”

“I’m glad you understand.”

“Yeah, that’s definitely something to worry about. Understood! Well then, even if we decide to form an alliance with the Empire, we’ll discuss the details of the terms carefully.”

When I said that, Dolph-san and the others looked relieved.

“Look at that. I told you that you were worrying too much!”

The words came abruptly from King Gazel. Where had all his kingly responsibility gone now?

“Rimuru-sama, it’s almost time!”

Shion reminded me, looking at her watch.

It was one of the watches I had made with Kaijin as a hobby. I gave it to her as a gift, thinking it necessary for a secretary to wear one. She was delighted upon receiving it.

It was a good memory for all of us, as it gave Shion another job to do.

“Let’s go.”

“Kufufufu. Then I will open the portal.”

Thus ended the spur-of-the-moment meeting.

We walked out of the coffee shop and returned to the conference room.

Everyone had all gathered in the conference room.

The participants were seated at a partially round table with a gap.

Or rather, the table was shaped like the ‘C’ in an eye test.

«This design, known as the “Landolt Ring,” was invented by the Swiss ophthalmologist, Edmund Landolt, in 1888…»

It’s great to be so detailed, but I don’t want to get into all that right now, so please just explain the key points.

One could go in and out through the gap in the table, making it easy to serve tea and materials to each person. In addition, a huge screen was installed at the end of the gap section so that everyone in the meeting could watch from any angle without having their view blocked.

Since the meeting was to be held by the three major powers, it was decided that such a shape would be more suitable than simply facing each other.

The gap section was located on the southern side.

My group was seated on the northern side.

I was in the in the true north seat, while Benimaru was in the northeast seat, and Rigurd was in the northwest seat.

Shion and Diablo were standing behind me, as usual, without sitting down.

On the Eastern side sat the Imperials.

Jiwu and Bernie were not seated, but stood behind Masayuki. It was good to see that the two were in charge of the escort. It also meant that they had smoothly reconciled.

On the Western side of the table was Gazel and his group, who had joined in urgently.

Gazel was in the seat due west.

The northwest seat was occupied by Dolph, the Commander of the Pegasus Knights, and the southwest seat was occupied by Jaine, the court mage (archwizard).

Anrietta, the Head of the Night Assassins, and Vaughn, the Admiral Paladin, did not take their seats, but stood and acted as guards.

And so, just like this, the three forces faced each other.

I looked around just in time to see Masayuki, who’s eyes seemed to be wandering around.

His expression was exhausted, as if to eloquently say, ‘Why am I in this situation?’

But rest assured.

I felt the same way.

Because of this sense of closeness, I wanted to help him if anything happened.

The moderator of the meeting, Testarossa, stood up and drew everyone’s attention.

She stepped to the center of the room and began the introductory remarks.

“Now, the time has come. It looks like everyone is here, so I would like to begin the meeting.”

After a bow, Testarossa returned to the southern side.

There were chairs put there for her sit and rest when it was not her turn.

I had asked her in advance to help me if there was trouble, so I was sure Testarossa would live up to my expectations.

“First of all, I would like to explain the purpose of this meeting. Because this is a high priority meeting without prior consultation, there may cases where unwanted remarks are made. In such a case, I would please ask you to remain calm and listen to the other side’s arguments first, rather than becoming belligerent.”

At this time, Testarossa paused and looked at each of the participants to see their reactions.

As the representative of my country in the Western States Council, Testarossa was very familiar with these situations.

Hoping that this would go on smoothly until the end of the meeting, I continued to watch Testarossa with that desire.

“Let us begin by confirming the final objectives of this meeting. With the Imperial side, we would like to conclude an agreement to end the war. And with the Dwargon side, we would like to conclude a new treaty based on our future relationships with the Empire. Is that correct?”

“No objections.”

Masayuki looked as if he wanted to say something, but Velgrynd answered before he could.

“Yes, I have no objection.”

At the same time, Gazel nodded gravely.

I was a little late in response, but I didn’t panic and opened my mouth.

“Since that’s the case, let’s examine the status quo first—that all right with you guys?”

My tone of speech was a little odd, but who cares?10

I checked the reactions of both sides, while maintaining a natural expression.

Masayuki was looking at me with respect.

Fufu, what a cute guy.

That’s right, I think I’m really amazing too.

Because the people gathered here now are very important people from very important countries. In my previous life, I had never been to an event where one could meet a member of Parliament, let alone the prime minister.

At most, I only met the staff from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism when they came to inspect the site. It was not really a kind of entertainment, but just a tour of the site.

Back then, I had been nervous just to make small talk about something other than my work.

And now, I’m the king. I was deeply moved just at the thought.

“Since there seems to be no objection, I will leave it to Testarossa to explain. My remarks will follow later. If there are any questions or doubts, I will accept them and correct any mistakes. Now then, please explain.”

The meeting proceeded as planned.

After asking for no interruptions, I left it to Testarossa who took over. She said this would help the conversation to proceed smoothly.

King Gazel, who is my equal, Emperor Masayuki, and Velgrynd, the plenipotentiary agent, were also allowed to speak. Anyone else, however, would be punished for insulting the king’s words.

I felt a little indifferent about this, but if it would make thing easier, I had no complaints.

Testarossa began the explanation.

With a few falsehoods mixed in, she described the battle on the airship that Gazel and the others may not have known about.

Then I tried to tell them that Emperor Rudra had actually been taken over by the conscious will of a Skill. And before that, just as I had won the battle with Velgrynd…

“Wait.”

Gazel objected first.

“Huh? If you want to speak, please do so afterwards…”

“That’s not the point!!”

Did I do something strange?

“Um, King Gazel, is there something wrong?”

I couldn’t help but become meek and ask. Gazel stared at me while holding his head. Without saying a word, he then turned his gaze to Velgrynd and opened his mouth solemnly.

“I know it’s rude. But will Velgrynd-sama tolerate what King Rimuru has just said?”

Quite unusually, Gazel was speaking with honorifics.

And he was even calling Velgrynd with ‘-sama.’

This seemed to be an attitude unbecoming of a king of a great nation.

As I watched the situation unfold, Velgrynd flashed a smile without getting angry.

“No problem, King of the Dwarves. You are very shrewd and thoughtful, a much better king than Rimuru over there. Rudra thinks very highly of you and had been talking about taking you under his wing ever since you became a Sword Saint. So I am also well aware of you and do not dislike you. No need to be so formal, just take it easy.”

“Y-Yes! But no, you who are the guardian deity of the Empire, and one of the most powerful True Dragons, in public—”

“You don’t need to worry about it. I won’t do anything about it. You’re Rimuru’s friend, aren’t you? In that case, I won’t fight. After all, what Rimuru said earlier was true. I was defeated by him.”

Well, that was surprising.

I was expecting Velgrynd to be like Veldora and claim that she hadn’t lost to save face. But instead, she gracefully and easily admitted her defeat.

I was surprised by this, but the others seemed more than just surprised.

“Geeee-eh?! Wh—Velgrynd-sama was defeated?!”

“I can’t believe it. The myth of the unbeatable…”

The Imperial congregation, who had been cultivated under Velgrynd’s domination, had abandoned their previous silence and were now in turmoil.

“Wha—?!”

“H-Hey, are you serious?! You defeated that god-like existence who was undefeatable no matter the circumstance? I can’t believe it, but if she admits it, then I guess it means you’re not lying…”

Dolph-san was in a daze, and Vaughn-san couldn’t seem to accept the reality.

Anrietta-san was smiling at them and King Gazel for some reason.

“Fufufu, I feel so refreshed because I don’t have to report this time. If I had reported this story, people would have suspected that I was mentally ill.”

Isn’t that disrespectful?

Well, I wasn’t going to stop her because it was a story from another country, and it felt like now was not the time to get into it.

As I was observing from a distance, Jaine-san called out to Gazel, who was contemplating with his head in his hands.

“Gazel-boy, and you guys too, all of you need to calm down. I’m not even surprised anymore. I already got tired and surprised by the primordials, and by the time I saw the evolution festival, I understood that it was foolish to keep being shocked.”

It seemed Grandma Jaine had been enlightened.

That’s why she alone was able to get through this time calmly.

The people on Dwargon’s side came to their senses with those words.

They were embarrassed and straightened their posture one by one.

By the way, the reaction from our side was…

“What?! So Rimuru-sama has triumphed in the face of Velgrynd-sama. Are we having a feast tonight?”

Rigurd really did find every opportunity to party.

You didn’t doubt my victory from the start, did you?

“Well, I thought that was the case. Or rather, I was watching it.”

This guy, Benimaru, actually said he was spying on me. Although it seems that someone overheard you.

“Benimaru, what do you mean? No way…You didn’t watch Rimuru-sama fight with such majesty all by yourself, did you?”

“N-No, it’s not like that. It was my duty to confirm the status of the battle, so, just a little…”

He seemed to be desperately trying to think of an excuse, but that was one of Benimaru’s weaknesses.

Diablo, on the other hand…

“Kufufufu. Oh, Shion, did you not see it? I’m sorry to hear that. It’s quite a shame that you were unable to witness such a magnificent battle!”

Do not agitate her! Do not agitate her!!

Was nobody better than this guy at harassing people?

Testarossa was sighing in amazement, estimating that nobody could be as troublesome than Diablo.

“Everyone, please remain calm.”

Testarossa was dumbfounded, but she had not forgotten her role. She saw the time for everyone to gradually quiet down, and raised her voice to calm the situation.

If she had been one step behind, Shion and Diablo might have started a fight.

Good job, I silently praised her.

Now that everyone had regained their composure, the meeting continued.

Testarossa, the moderator, signaled me to continue, so I did.

“—Well, as mentioned previously, I defeated Velgrynd-san and then questioned her about the situation in detail, at which point I discovered discrepancies in the story. It seemed to me that Emperor Rudra was not entirely himself, so I observed Velgrynd-san until I learned the terrible truth. I won’t go into too many details, but it turns out that her thoughts were being ‘dominated.’ And the culprit was indeed Michael, the conscious will of Emperor Rudra’s Skill!”

I put on a smug look with all my might.

Now came the good part.

I grinned and was about to continue—

“Wait.”

Oh no, someone was talking again.

Moreover, it was still Gazel this time.

“Well, I’ll deal with your questions later, so—”

As if to interrupt my words, or perhaps to calm himself down, Gazel let out a big sigh.

Then, with his eyes fixed on me, he opened his mouth gravely.

“Listen, Rimuru. It’s true that this attitude of mine is inappropriate, but, well, this is really not the time to worry about that.”

“What do you mean?”

“How can you leave out so many details?! A vicious Skill that can dominate even Velgrynd-sama!—how can that even exist?! And what was it you just said?! The will of a Skill?? I’ve never heard of such a thing! Jaine, do you know anything about this?”

“…I …No, I’ve never heard of it either.”

Gazel was desperately trying to keep his composure, but he still couldn’t hide his exuberance. When asked by Gazel, Jaine-san’s response was sluggish, as if she was thinking too much about something.

That said, it was strange that no one was complaining about Gazel’s attitude.

Velgrynd herself was smiling and seemed to be enjoying the situation. It seemed that as long as Masayuki was around, nothing else was needed or interested her.

As for Masayuki, he seemed to have already given up on understanding the situation.

He was sitting in his chair in a very dignified manner, as if it was none of his business. By doing so, he seems to have been misunderstood by Calgurio and the rest of the empire, and in doing so had further increased his own reputation. But I guess he himself did not realize it…

About that, let’s just tell say ‘don’t mind.’

Benimaru and the others were also very interested.

If I didn’t want to say it, they wouldn’t have pursued it, but in their hearts, they most likely still wanted to hear about it from me anyway.

That was probably why Testarossa did not stop Gazel either.

However, she seemed to have sensed her lapse in judgment and was trying to manage the situation as if nothing had happened.

“Everyone, please remain calm. Regarding King Gazel’s questions…”

Although I was impressed at how quickly she recovered, trying to remedy this situation was going to be difficult. I mean, I could just let it go, but I decided that it wouldn’t hurt to explain.

“Okay. I’ll explain.”

“Rimuru-sama, is that all right with you?”

“Yes. There are only a few important people from each country here anyway. I don’t think they’ll reveal the secret lightly, and even if they did, it wouldn’t be a big deal.”

That’s right.

There was no particular problem about revealing the existence of the Manas. The only secret that I had to strictly keep was the existence of Ciel.

“I’m sorry, Rimuru. I appreciate you for doing this.”

Gazel bowed to me, expressing his gratitude.

His tone had returned to that of a senior brother, as if he had given up trying to fix things.

I felt much better and went straight into my explanation.

Then I explained that as a result of Emperor Rudra’s exhaustion, the Ultimate Skill ‘Justice King Michael’ that he had once possessed, had developed an ego, and had become the “Manas” Michael. I disclosed its heinous powers to the best of my knowledge.

“Ultimate Skill…? So you’re saying that powers of the unique level will not work on someone who possesses it…”

“Strictly speaking, no. Skills vary in strength depending on the strength of one’s will, so even at the unique level, there are skills that reach the ultimate level, though those are usually few and far between. In addition, special techniques (Arts), which reflect the strength of will, may result in attacks that can reach the ultimate level. In my opinion, I think Gazel King could do it.”

“Is that so…”

“Also, magic is the same. Magic is both a Skill and an Art, so depending on the strength of the user’s will, they may be able to defeat even the Ultimate Skill holders. Jiwu and Bernie should understand what I’m saying, right?”

Those two had been defeated by Diablo, so they should be able to understand what I was talking about. When I asked them, they both nodded emphatically.

As for Diablo, he had a sickeningly intoxicated expression on his face, so I didn’t know what he was thinking.

He definitely wasn’t thinking anything good, and though I was tempted to say something to him, he was standing quietly for now, so I decided to just ignore it.

Shion then muttered, “Then I guess I should acquire an Ultimate Skill as well…”

You know, it’s because it’s not easy so easy to get that it’s called the ultimate, right?

But for some reason, I had the feeling that Shion could do it.

That seemed a little scary, so I stopped thinking about it.

“Well, that’s pretty much how it is. Michael has special powers that allow him to have absolute control over the Angelic System of Skills. That is why Velgrynd-san couldn’t resist, and was at his mercy without even realizing it. It seems that Lieutenant Kondou was also under the control of his Skill, though in the end, he broke free from the spell and entrusted his will to our Carrera.”

“What, even that information-feeding monster was…”

“I can’t believe it, but I’m not so foolish as to doubt His Majesty Rimuru.”

“I see, so then Damrada-sama…”

“Yeah. I think he might have noticed that something was wrong with His Majesty the Emperor.”

Though not enough to interrupt what I was saying, there was a commotion from the Imperial side. This was an act that should not have been done, but it was too late to care about it now, so I would just ignore it and continue.

“As for Michael’s purpose, this is also known. It is to resurrect his true master and creator, Veldanava.”

“““Nonsense—!!”““

The shouts overlapped, and it was difficult to tell who was speaking.

No, actually I knew, but it wouldn’t have helped to point it out.

“Knowing that it was all due to Michael’s domination, I do not intend to hold the Imperial side responsible for the war. If they wish to continue to wage war against us in the future—”

I broke off at this point and glanced at Masayuki and the others.

Masayuki remained completely unfazed.

He was completely oblivious to the situation, to the point of being admirable.

Calgurio and Minits were smiling bitterly.

There was no way they could win, and there was also no reason to fight anymore. They understood that, which was why they were reacting this way.

Looks like things seemed okay.

“—It does not seem to me that you have any such intention. I have also made peace with Velgrynd-san, so now it is necessary to establish a new leader now that Michael, who was playing as Rudra, has gone into hiding. That’s what the meeting for today was about, so can you shed some light on that?”

I asked, dropping the topic to Masayuki and the others.

In order to have a common understanding of the current situation, we needed to know what the future of the empire would be. That was what Gazel and the others were most concerned about, so I thought we should discuss it here, without hiding anything.

However, this was also a gamble.

Normally, when you hold a meeting like this, you are supposed to confirm not only your own ideas but also the opinions of the other side beforehand.

Since we did not do so, we could not predict what kind of conclusion we would reach. I was told that this was normally not allowed to be done in discussions between countries.

Testarossa, however, did not stop me. She laughed and said that it would not be a problem, so I stopped caring and went ahead with my honest talk.

The result was—

“Minits.”

“Yes! I, Minits, would humbly like to take this opportunity to explain. The current state of the Empire is that we have lost over two-thirds of our forces, and further war is impossible. We are willing to accept full and unconditional surrender, but there is one problem, and that is the absence of a supreme commander. As His Majesty Rimuru has just pointed out, the most important thing is to find a new leader. So today is the perfect opportunity to ask for the approval of our new Emperor.”

Minits said this without hesitation, bowed, and then looked at me and Gazel in turn.

“Hmm, so that’s how it was. Rimuru, I take it that my arrival today was exactly as you planned?”

Huh?

Of course not.

“You got me. This isn’t about the Empire and Tempest joining forces, it’s about Tempest backing the new Emperor and building a solid foundation for the Empire. In that case, of course—”

“Well, needless to say, Dwargon will be joining, so I guess I can expect something in return, can’t I?”

Whoa, whoa, whoa.

How did we go from talking about acknowledging the new Emperor to talking about building a foundation or some nonsense?

“King Gazel’s words are very encouraging. Naturally, in return, we would like to live up to your expectations as much as possible within the limits of what is acceptable to both countries, so please rest assured.”

Minits—no, let’s call him Minits-san. Unlike when he’s fighting, he has the mannerisms of an effective politician. He’s just as graceful, but he seems to be able to do everything with ease.

I, on the other hand, am struggling to comprehend the situation. Nobody could see it because I wasn’t sweating, but inwardly I was in a panic.

Well, now that Gazel seems to have agreed, I was next. Benimaru and Rigurd glanced at me, so I nodded back, and opened my mouth.

“I also agree. And I promise to do my best to provide full support depending on the situation.”

I would just go with the flow.

I was finally catching up to the situation.

I had intended to help Masayuki from the beginning, but if I thought about it carefully, that would mean supporting him as a nation. If we could build a better relationship in the future by selling favors here, we would never have to go to war with them again.

Well, even if things didn’t go that well, we should be okay for the time being. All the rest can just be left to future generations, so the most important thing was the ‘now.’

“Thank you very much. I’m sure the His Majesty the Emperor will be pleased to hear that.”

Minits-san bowed once again.

You don’t have to be so formal. Just get on with it.

“So, the new emperor is Masayuki-kun, right? Ah, then is it bad to call you that?”

“King Rimuru…”

“Oh, it’s no problem at all. In fact, can I still call you Rimuru-san?”

Ah, Masayuki, a friend of my heart!

“Of course, Masayuki-kun! It’s so hard to understand what kinds of words to use in these situations, isn’t it?”

“Rimuru-san! I haven’t been able to relax until just now—Rimuru-san has never been as reliable as he is now!! These past few days, I’ve been feeling so suffocated…”

Yes, I understand.

You’ve been struggling all alone without help, haven’t you?

Velgrynd doesn’t give a damn about the feelings of her subordinates. She probably wouldn’t understand why you were so worried about such trivial things.

The Empire’s leaders must have been occupied with their own affairs. They must have been so busy with their own problems that they had no time to think about Masayuki’s situation.

That’s probably why he wanted to talk to me, but it was a mistake to let Shion send the message.

In fact, I really would have preferred to have had a private meeting with him to figure out what to do. I felt that way, and I’m sure Masayuki felt the same way too.

But now that this all happened, it couldn’t be helped anymore.

I don’t know anything about etiquette, so I’m just going to continue with what I want.

“May I have all your attention, please?”

Before anyone else could say anything, it was Testarossa who spoke up.

“Our king, Rimuru-sama, would prefer the meeting to be more relaxed and casual. We may all have our own positions, but I’m sure we can understand each other’s perspectives, so can we please agree continue the meeting more informally?”

Testarossa looked at everyone present with a smile as she said so.

Nothing could be more reliable than that!

Masayuki looked happy too.

Gazel chuckled, and did not argue.

Now that the kings had given their approval, there would be no objections from the subordinates. That was the end of the formal discussion, and now the real talks began.

“Yeah, I wanted to do that too, actually.”

“Idiots. What is the leader of a country to do with that?”

“Fufufufu, Gazel-boy says that, but he used to be the same way. Dignity and formality are things that can be mended over time with practice and experience.”

“Jaine, you don’t have to bring that up here.”

The tension disappeared in an instant, and it only took a moment to relax.

It was probably because Masayuki had been appointed Emperor and we had already decided to back him up. All that was left was to work out the details, so there was no need for formal conversation.

So, in a casual manner, I asked the question that had been bothering me the most.

“By the way, it’s fine for Masayuki to become Emperor, but will the Imperial people accept it? We’re fine with it, but what about the people? Or are they subjects? Anyway, if the people don’t agree, it’s no good, right?”

Hearing that, Masayuki nodded his head in agreement more enthusiastically than I would have liked.

“Of course! It’s completely ridiculous, isn’t it?!”

“Ahem! Your Majesty, please calm down a little.”

Calgurio admonished him, but Masayuki seemed to have no intention of letting the question go unanswered.

It was Gazel who came to his rescue.

“In the first place, what are you going to do about the bloodline issue? He does not share a single drop of blood with Emperor Rudra, right? If you do not protect the royal line, the nobles will not be satisfied.”

That question was answered by Velgrynd.

“No problem. It is written in the imperial code that ‘The person recognized by Velgrynd, the guardian dragon of the empire, is both Rudra and the Emperor.’ Although many might think of this as a formality, it is the truth and the most important sentence.”

Minits-san came forward to endorse that statement.

“Yes. His Majesty Rudra has always reincarnated as the wife’s first son, but in the long history of the empire, there have been arrogant people who have sought to replace their successors. The one who saw through them and punished them was the Marshal here, Velgrynd-sama.”

Of course it was bound to be exposed.

Anyone who understood how Rudra’s reincarnation worked could easily tell the difference between the real one and an impostor.

I don’t even want to imagine how those people were punished. Even if I don’t bother to ask, I’m sure it was horrible.

“Well, His Majesty Rudra inherited the ego. Even if Velgrynd-sama hadn’t pointed it out, it would have revealed itself when he grew up…”

I see, so once they’ve grown to the point where they’re self-aware, it is easy to identify them.

“So, what about calling Masayuki an illegitimate child?”

“That’s impossible, Rimuru-sama. The Senate has Rudra’s records. Not only his blood type, but even his DNA. The mother can be faked, but it would be impossible to claim Masayuki-sama as the son of His Majesty Rudra.”

Oops, so then the Empire’s technology had advanced that far? I had thought it was a good idea, but Minits-san rejected it.

“Even so, I didn’t realize that DNA testing existed in this world…”

“What is DNA?”

“That’s…”

Since Gazel asked me, I would clarify.

Next to him, Calgurio and the others were chatting.

“I hear it’s a big deal because there were no precise ways to test it back then.”

“That’s true. Every time I was asked to make a decision, it was a pain in the ass.”

Well, wouldn’t that be even worse?

Now that the real person was gone, there was only Masayuki—the reincarnated one who had lost his memory. It was difficult to prove that the ‘soul’ is real, so in other words, there was no way for others to recognize Masayuki as the true Emperor.

“In that case, wouldn’t it be easier for Masayuki to just imitate Rudra, since they have the same face?”

We could use the emperor’s privilege to cover up the inspection.

Then we could find the opportunity to replace Rudra’s records and be done with it.

“Rejected.”

I thought this was a good idea, but Velgrynd rejected it.

“May I ask why?”

“You haven’t forgotten Michael’s power, have you? Michael’s energy comes from the loyalty of his subjects and followers of Rudra. So, wouldn’t it be better to pretend that Emperor Rudra is dead and take away that power?”

Oops?

Of course, I remembered that…

«Correct. It is pointless to just pretend he’s dead, but if there is a new target of loyalty, Michael’s power can be blocked. However, Michael might have anticipated this and changed the target of his power from Rudra to someone else.»

Well, he had already said something about killing all the subjects.

If he was going to do that, then he would surely use someone I couldn’t touch as an energy source.

Or someone incredibly powerful.

“I’m sure Michael would have taken countermeasures, but it’s safer to do it than to not. That way, we won’t have to deal with the subjects.”

“I’m sure you’re right, so let’s not worry about the details. Just announce that Masayuki is Rudra in my name. That way, no one will be able to resist.”

Velgrynd was very confident.

But then again, that was to be expected.

After all, she was the Scorch Dragon, the guardian dragon of the empire.

Besides, it made sense in light of the Imperial Code, which stated that the person approved by Velgrynd would become Emperor Rudra.

The approach would be tough, but as long as it was Velgrynd’s true statement, it couldn’t be ignored.

“Is that okay with you, Masayuki-kun?”

“Shouldn’t it be fine?”

“…Well, how should I put it…”

I felt that there shouldn’t be a problem, but I would have to go with the flow.

“If you don’t like it Masayuki, then there’s no need to push yourself, okay?”

Wow, Velgrynd’s smile was so gentle—gentle to the point of being scary. That description was a contradiction in terms, but it’s what I really felt.

“…I’ll do it. I’m being hailed as a hero anyway, so one more title won’t matter.”

Masayuki declared; his eyes vacant as if he had reached enlightenment.

Minits-san, Calgurio and the others were happy to hear this. They seemed to think that a new symbol and leader was absolutely necessary for the future survival of the Empire.

I, too, think Masayuki is the right man for the job, and with his Skill, he would be able to gain the absolute support of the people.

“So then, the way forward is to install Masayuki as the new Emperor and move to solidify the claim, right?”

When I confirmed this, everyone other than Masayuki sharply nodded their heads in agreement.

Masayuki nodded reluctantly in agreement.

Masayuki, despite his appearance, was a responsible person. Once he took on the task, I knew he would carry it through to the end.

“Understood. Then we will announce our approval. I will also promise to immediately release the Imperial officers currently held as prisoners of war in our country. We will not hold them responsible, but we will still withhold compensation. What do you think? We can discuss compensations at a later date, after Masayuki has ascended to the throne as the new Emperor.”

“Thank you very much.”

“Thank you for your generosity. I’m grateful.”

Just when I thought everyone had approved, Gazel had something more to say.

“I have no objection to this approach either, but I do have one question. Masayuki-dono, you may be a Hero, but you are about to become an Emperor. So I would like to ask you, what principles do you intend to use to unite your people—your subjects?”

Gazel stared at Masayuki with a piercing gaze that seemed to see through everything.

Masayuki flinched at the aura, but looked at me as if troubled, then opened his mouth.

“…Uhh…hmm? Creating a world where people can live with laughter…something like that, right?”

I laughed when I heard that.

Because he was thinking the same way I did.

“Yeah, that’s the most important thing!”

“That’s right! I knew Rimuru-san would say that!!”

“Of course, Masayuki-kun. Alas, when I told this to Rudra, he only made fun of me for being young and naive, and I was worried that I had been mistaken. But now I can rest assured. It looks like I was right the whole time.”

“Great! I’ve never been good at politics either, so I wasn’t confident about anything. But now, I can be an emperor with pride.”

“Right. Let’s do our best together!”

“Yes, I look forward to working with you!!”

With that, Masayuki and I laughed loudly together.

There were different reactions to those who were watching us.

Diablo and Shion had a look of intoxication.

Velgrynd smiled kindly.

Calgurio and Minits were smiling half-heartedly.

Gazel looked up helplessly at the sky.

“That’s enough!”

“Fufufu, I understand your concern, Gazel, but these people have no ambitions. But they’re amateurs, that’s for sure, so you’ll just have to guide them, and make sure they stay on the right path.”

“I know. I’m just thinking about how difficult it will be to guild these people who talk about politics with such naive idealism.”

Gazel gave another big sigh after saying that. After all, Gazel was always worried about us like this.

“Well, don’t worry so much, I’m studying too, so it’ll be fine!”

Not only Gazel, but also Vesta and El-tan11 were teaching me, so I would probably be fine.

“…Really?”

It was just in my spare time, but it was still true.

If he was still worried about this, then I would reassure him a little more.

“In the first place, I’m not planning to get too involved in politics. Masayuki, you should just let Minits-san and the others handle the actual work.”

“You’re right! That’s actually what I was planning to do, but I wasn’t sure if it was a good idea. Now I feel much better about it.”

Masayuki and I laughed together once again.

“…Well, do whatever you want. You’re not alone. You can take responsibility and grow with your comrades. If possible, I will help you too.”

Gazel still had his head in his hands, but he was finally convinced. No, he may not have been fully convinced, but he was still willing to support us in the long run.

And so the meeting proceeded.

“As for me, I have no objection to the approach decided at this meeting. If the eastern lands are stabilized, our country will also be at peace. I will help with the reconstruction near the border as much as I can.”

“Thank you!”

“Thank you, King Gazel.”

And just like that, things worked out beautifully.

—From this day on, history books of future generations would record this day as the appearance of the savior Emperor Masayuki Rudra Nam Ul Nasca—