

Chapter 2

New Companions

That demon crossed the border like a strong gust of wind, devastating this evil realm. Crossing the ‘Gate of Hell,’ he arrived at a spiritual world—which could be called Hell, or the nether realm. He became the symbol of violence, slaughtering powerful demons along the way.

The weaker demons had already fled, while the strong grouped up to battle him. But to him, this was merely a meaningless struggle of the weak.

He destroyed his enemies in a flawless fashion, crushing them with ease.

Demons were spiritual life-forms. That’s why, even if their bodies were to be destroyed, they would self-restore and over time, resurrect once again. Perhaps it was due to knowledge of this facet, that he obliterated his foes without mercy.

The fearsome personification of violence—this demon was named Diablo.

“Kufufufufu, it has been a long time since I returned. Looks like a bunch of scum is squatting the place. There’s no use in collecting these weaklings. I must hurry and see my old friends.”

These ‘old friends’ were even capable of rivaling the strength of Diablo. The goal of his expedition was to recruit these people.

“Kufufufufu, if it’s those guys, Rimuru-sama would surely be pleased!”

After saying so, Diablo teleported away from the location without a trace, only leaving behind the remains of meaningless fools who knew not of Diablo’s power…

After inspecting the construction in person, I was able to understand the current situation. The laying of tracks for the magitrain was far from complete. We still had a lot of work left, namely: Laying the track between the Dwarven Kingdom and Tempest, between Tempest and Blumund, constructing a road between Blumund and Farmenas, and creating the road that started from the Dwarven Kingdom and went south to Eurazania via Sisu Lake, which was ruled by the lizardmen…

We still had to finish building the road connecting Blumund to Sarion. We also needed to open a tunnel through the Coscia mountains. Only after these plans were complete could the railways be laid down. We must be mentally prepared for long-term construction efforts.

Furthermore, I really wanted to lead the route to the coastline soon so we could provide sea products at a cheap price. We also planned to establish a main railway line between the kingdom of Blumund and Ingracia.

Now that I was considering all of these new connections, it would take some time before the whole traffic network could be considered fully operational.

We also couldn’t forget about the development of the trains. Since the prototype had been completed, we had jumped across the biggest hurdle. Now, all we had to do was to put the prototype through the wringer. Although we had already established our fantastic motor core, the rest of the magitrain still required further development.

It was important to ensure the trains were comfortable to ride. We also had to tackle the issue of noise that the trains would undoubtedly unleash upon its surroundings. Our train was already substantially quieter than traditional steam locomotives. However, traveling at such high speeds still generated a bothersome racket.

The research team headed by Kaijin was currently working to address such concerns. We were breaking down these troubling problems to smaller, bite-sized pieces to tackle them in finer detail and find theoretical solutions. Meanwhile, I also hoped that they kept a record of the processes they took to resolve these issues. It was my wish that this journal would eventually become useful reference material for future research prospects.

With that being said, since we had managed to develop the most challenging component, the ‘Spirit Magic Core,’ it was fine to hand all train-related matters to Kaijin.

For other recently initiated research projects, we spared no expense in their financing from the national treasury. I had to appeal to Myourmiles so he could allocate more funds.

And so, I started to visit the research facility frequently. I even got quite familiar with the researchers and had plenty of opportunities to discuss useful ideas. The knowledge I possessed as an ‘Otherworlder’ was all too intriguing to them. They often stopped to consult my opinions.

Although, when they posed a question that I couldn’t answer, I had Wisdom King Raphael-san handle it. By entrusting my problems to Raphael-sensei, whose ability rivaled that of a quantum computer, no matter how difficult the questions were, it could solve them with ease. And I have been putting it to use relentlessly as well.

After finishing the day’s work, it was also important to squeeze in some time for socializing at night. While not all the night shops were luxurious, they were still one of the go-to spots for researchers to take a breather from work. There, they could relax and engage in casual conversation.

I, for one, was no exception. Sadly, I didn’t get paid overtime.

Pretty incredible stuff, not gonna lie.

By the way, even though I mentioned that our budget had increased, we definitely did not spend the money on booze. It was all for the sake of research! Surely you guys understand what I mean.

In addition, among Veldora, Ramiris, and myself, Ramiris was the one getting paid the most. Her salary was still very promising even after deducting the costs of running the labyrinth. She was compensated with twenty percent of the labyrinth revenues. It was no longer just the two gold coins we had estimated at the start. Nowadays, she could earn up to twenty gold coins or more.

Twenty gold coins were about two million Japanese yen per day. However, Ramiris was also responsible for paying the salaries of Treyni-san and her sisters, as well as Beretta. That said, she was still projected to profit nearly one hundred gold coins by the end of the month.

My daily allowance was the same as Veldora’s: one gold coin a day from the national treasury.

Veldora was the labyrinth master, so Ramiris also rewarded him with extra pocket money. Since the labyrinth greatly depended on Veldora’s magicules, the treasury granted him special bonuses as well. That’s why he actually got paid more than I did.

In spite of this, I did keep some pocket change around. I had been investing in many varying fields and the profits were incredibly favorable.

Motivated by everyone’s enthusiasm for work, I also decided to work hard. I was diligently trying to craft the bodies I had promised Diablo for his demon friends to possess.

The person assisting me was Ramiris. In addition, I also couldn’t forget to prepare bodies for Treyni-san’s sisters. I needed Ramiris’s opinions on that.

Ramiris agreed immediately, though she was also insistent on me providing her with more subordinates.

“We have a lot of work to do and not enough people to do it. With only Treyni-chan and Beretta, my job would be very challenging…”

Isn’t this gal doing this just so she can brag about her having new servants?—while that was my assumption at the time, my viewpoint changed after witnessing how hard Treyni-san and the others were working in the labyrinth.

Ramiris wasn’t just my assistant, she also had endeavors of her own—namely, reconstructing the Elemental Colossus that Hinata disintegrated. The most vital component, its heart core, was already completed. In addition, I had also completed the outline and general sketch of the body. We did have an Elemental Colossus available for reference though. We could always refer to that during research. However, the actual construction would require time.

Moreover, Kaijin was busy with the magitrain while Vesta was focused on developing the ‘Magic Armor Soldier’ by himself. If Vesta were available, he’d come to assist Ramiris. However, it would certainly be awfully tiring for him.

We would be incorporating the completed ‘Spirit Magic Core,’ so I also wanted to collect empirical data, and in order to achieve that, the more help we could get, the better.

“By the way, what has Veldora been up to?”

“Hmm—I don’t know what Mentor has been up to. Every time I asked for his help to do some detailed tasks, he suddenly goes missing…”

I see, so Veldora’s still not that reliable, huh…?

Yeah, now that she mentioned it, I felt the same way, too.

Veldora always appeared to be assiduously working, moving back and forth from place to place. I thought he was going to be a nuisance for everyone, but it also turned out not to be the case. Despite his appearances, he was actually quite knowledgeable and had been of some help. He also seemed to enjoy being praised. That’s why instead of letting him labor as Ramiris’s assistant, I might as well cut him some slack and let him do as he pleases.

“I get it. I’ll try to do some recruiting on my own.”

“Umm, sorry for the trouble!”

After making this promise with Ramiris, I began to worry about the potential new candidates, and if they were right for the job.

And so, the days quickly passed by. Our daily routine had been quite peaceful—until one day, ‘That Guy’ suddenly arrived without warning.

I was inside my office. In front of me were stacks of documents that required my attention. It would have taken an average person an eternity to review them all. But luckily, I had ‘Wisdom King Raphael’ at my aid. I ordered it to precisely scan through the files and prioritize the more urgent cases. Then, I scrutinized each document like lightning, swiftly approving or rejecting them.

In reality, I wasn’t toiling nearly as hard as I had described, but performing such monotonous tasks was still quite the chore. I fantasized over Diablo being here and laboring in my stead, as I continued the same repetitive motions with my hands, gradually chipping away at the pile.

Then came post-work break time.

I transformed into my original slime self and relaxed on the sofa. So comfy. My body itself was super soft, and the pillow was quite plushy as well. With the two combined, it felt as if I were swimming in a sea of soft feathers.

Now that I had a knack for sleeping, this was my little secret hobby.

Suddenly, I heard a knock on the door.

Just when I was about to slack off for a bit, it appeared someone was stopping by. It can’t be helped then. I turned back to human form and sat down on my chair.

“Come in,” I responded while posing stylishly.

Soon after, Shuna opened the door and entered. She bowed deeply to me.

“Rimuru-sama, you have a guest. He said his name was Dino, and that he is an acquaintance of Rimuru-sama?”

As I suspected, I had a visitor. He said his name was Dino and that he knew me. Then, I could only think of one person that fit the bill.

“He’s a demon lord like me, a part of the ‘Octagram.’ What is he doing here?”

“A demon lord? Then perhaps, just in case, I should call Onii-sama here and surround him with our army?”

“No, that won’t be necessary. If a fight really were to break out, simply call for Benimaru and Shion. Although there truly is no need to worry about since he’s probably just here for fun.”

While comforting a seemingly concerned Shuna, I stood up from my chair.

Nothing to worry about.

I recalled during the Walpurgis Banquet that Dino had commented something along the lines of “I’ll drop by to hang out with you.” Although I didn’t pay much attention to it at the time, it looked like he was serious.

“—Understood. Then, I shall do as you have ordered.”

Shuna nodded first before leading me to the guest room where Dino was waiting.

Having a ton of rooms made it super convenient for differentiating who you were receiving. The merchants and noblemen would be shown the luxurious suite. On the other hand, if our guests were suspicious individuals or monsters with great power, we would bring them to a plain room built with sturdy walls. The reason for this differentiation was to minimize losses on our side if the guests were to start a fight in the opulent suite. That was why the space we currently had Dino in was more practical than fancy.

I followed Shuna into the room and saw the disheveled Dino. He was sitting casually on the sofa—lying down on it, to be precise. He was quite laid back despite being in someone else’s house. To put it bluntly, he was a thick-skinned, airheaded man.



“Hey, long time no see, what’s popping?” he greeted me, showing no intention of getting up, still comfortably sprawled on the sofa.

His reaction made Shuna glare at him with distaste. However, she stayed silent and simply left the room after bowing. She was presumably preparing tea for us.

“Umm, I’ve been good. It’s just that I’ve got a ton of problems to deal with, so I can’t say my life’s been carefree, that’s all,” I answered as I sat down on the chair on the opposite side of Dino.

I began to carefully observe him. Just like our last encounter, Dino still looked decidedly nonchalant. Despite appearances, however, he had an oppressive aura around him. No wonder Shuna acted so cautiously.

“What do you mean? Are you having difficulties? Sounds like a big hassle.”

“Indeed. Ever since I became a demon lord, nothing’s been easy. By the way, what are you doing here?”

“Eh, me? Just as I’ve said before, I’ve come to hang out,” Dino quickly replied to my question.

However, it sounded as fake as it could get.

Both of us fell silent.

It was then that Shuna entered the room with a tray of tea and desserts. In this room filled with deafening silence, she soldiered on with her duties as if there was nothing wrong. She expertly served both of our portions and left after giving us a bow. She really was professional.

I first took a sip of tea, then stared at Dino. He appeared to have given up the pretense and began speaking slowly, “—Not really. In reality, Dagruel chased me out.”

“Huh?”

“Ahh, it’s nothing. I don’t actually own a home or anything, so Dagruel took me in. Also, I’m broke—”

Oi, oi. Are you really a demon lord?

He spoke those words without a shred of shame. This guy seemed to be the worst kind of trouble.

“—While I was thinking of a solution, I recalled that Dagruel’s sons were living in the care of your nation right now. That’s why I’ve come here to be in your care as well!”

I must not show any weakness or compassion.

“Nope, nuh-uh,” I rejected Dino immediately.

“—EH?”

“‘Eh’ what?”

The room fell silent again.

Dino was clearly shocked that I had rejected him. Although, I should be the one surprised by how naive his idea was. Even if you knew me, I had no obligation to take care of a suspicious individual like him. Moreover, I instinctively knew this guy was definitely the type to say: “Also, I don’t want to work at all!”

“H-hold on a second. What is this? Do you want me to starve to death in the street?”

“No, but you can get a job.”

“Please don’t be so difficult! My philosophy is to never work. I’ve never made a single coin with my own hands for hundreds of years, nor have I spent a single coin earned by myself, either.”

No wonder. If you don’t work, you obviously would be broke. And consequently, how could you feed yourself with your nonexistent funds?

“Wow, how impressive! Please leave after you finish eating that.”

You have to chase this type of person out as soon as possible.

Completely ignoring Dino, I reached out for the dessert in front of me: tea and cream puffs.

How delicious. Will I ever get sick of eating this?

Dino seemed unusually frustrated, but still followed in my footsteps and reached out for some of the cream puffs. His expression changed the moment he took a bite.

“Right, I am going to be this nation’s citizen, so let me work for you.”

He suddenly started spewing out some nonsensical crap.

“Huh? Hey man, what are you talking about—”

“No, I am serious. If I can eat something this delicious every day, I won’t regret it at all. Rimuru, no, I shall address you as Rimuru-sama. Please command me as you wish!”

…

No, I should be honest with you. I really don’t wanna hire you.

“—Are you kidding me? Even though we’ve met before, it was only for that one time. So what are you really here for?”

After finishing my pastry, I sampled my tea, and gravely questioned him.

Dino’s eyes darted around. He was a lot like Ramiris in that regard, except this guy, unlike Ramiris, was not cute at all. Finally, Dino gave up on making excuses. He shrugged and dropped his previously presumptuous attitude entirely.

“Here’s the thing. Guy told me that I should stay in this nation, but he never said why. He’s a selfish fellow, after all, and defying him will be problematic. Moreover, Dagruel really did kick me out, so it’s gonna be troublesome going back to his place. That’s why I came here.”

“Guy—that red-haired man said this?”

“Yeah yeah yeah, that red-haired man.”

Uhh—he didn’t seem to be lying.

Guy probably did suggest something like that.

But why me…?

«Answer. Individual ‘Guy Crimson,’ likely in the hopes of not having to deal with individual ‘Dino,’ decided to push the problem to master. The possibility of this scenario is very high.»

Oi. Can you not put it so bluntly—although, it’s definitely plausible.

“Ah, right, Guy had a letter for you,” Dino said as he handed over a folded sheet of paper that was sealed with youki. It was indisputably laced with Guy Crimson’s aura. The piece of paper contained only one scrawled sentence: “Take care of Dino for me.” It looked rather authentic. Since Dino had the letter, he really must have gone to ask Guy for help. It was undeniable at this point.

This was like someone just forcibly gave me the joker card in a game of old maid 2 .

“See?!”

‘See?!’ my ass!

Fuming, I began to ponder the situation I was in. While this was indeed troublesome, it would also be unwise to go against Guy. He was the dominating elite among the demon lords. I wouldn’t have been able to defeat him in my current state. Instead of antagonizing him, it would save me a lot of headaches if I just took care of Dino now.

So my only option is to accept the proposal?

However, I didn’t plan on letting him laze around all day. Even though I never invited him as a guest, I didn’t want to start off on the wrong foot, either.

It was then that I unexpectedly remembered something. This guy was pretty well-behaved whenever Ramiris was around. She always wanted more subordinates, and Dino’s arrival might as well be perfect timing. Although this demon lord couldn’t be underestimated, he did say, even in a joking tone, that he would serve me. Then service you shall provide. Appointing Dino as Ramiris’s assistant was a stroke of genius.

I cracked an evil grin after settling on the idea.

“Okay, I understand. But you will have to work as well!”

“What are you babbling on about?!”

And you have the audacity to talk back! Weren’t you the one saying, “please command me as you wish!” just now?

I masked my inner irritation and divulged details about the position to Dino.

“Well, even though it is a job, its responsibilities are extremely simple. I want you to be Ramiris’s assistant.”

“Ramiris? That gal is also here?”

“Yeah, she’s been helping out a lot for my work.”

“What the hell? That pixie has always been a recluse in her maze, and I thought she was one of us…”

Dino had incorrectly assumed Ramiris was just like him. Although, I could sympathize with him; it was only recently that I realized Ramiris was a surprisingly diligent worker.

“We’ve been collaborating on a bunch of projects lately. She even seems to be having fun! That said, I want to hasten the research process, so there’s still a lotta work to be done. Having her around has been really helpful.”

She would undoubtedly get all smug if she heard me praise her like this. That was the reason why I would never bring this up in front of her. However, these were my genuine thoughts.

Dino was baffled for a bit before asking me timidly, “T-then, when you said job… What exactly am I supposed to do?”

Looks like he really hated being productive. I was struggling to come up with an explanation on the spot when I realized that may not have been the best approach. I should bring him to the actual research site. We could educate him once he was introduced to the people in charge.

“Don’t assume it is anything too difficult yet. Accomplish what you can to the best of your ability. First, let me show you where you will be working.”

“Uh, umm, right. Just don’t expect much from me!”

“Hmm? Ahh, don’t say something like that before you even try. I don’t think there will be any problems. Just follow Ramiris’s instructions.”

With a sense of uneasiness in heart, I decided to bring Dino to the private research facility located on the one-hundredth floor.

We teleported directly to the one-hundredth floor, crossing the room that Veldora was guarding. It was a large chamber whose purpose was to receive the arriving labyrinth challengers, while Veldora’s private quarters were situated beside it. There were two rooms in total. There was also no sign of Veldora in either of them.

Where did Veldora go? He’s probably off horsing around somewhere.

“Oi oi oi, how come the magicule concentration here is so dense?”

“Oh, because that’s Veldora’s room over there. Don’t go inside, the guy is really selfish. You’ll piss him off if you touch anything.”

“Ah, so this is where Veldora lives. I was wondering what your relationship was with him back during Walpurgis.”

“We are…friends. Good friends.”

“I half guessed that you guys were not just acquaintances, but friends… Well, let’s talk about it later.”

My answer surprised him so much so that even his sleepy eyes suddenly widened a bit.

“I see. That explains why Veldora hasn’t been easy to detect lately; it’s because he’s been hiding inside Ramiris’s labyrinth this whole time…”

“Oh, that’s not it really. His presence disappeared because he learned how to conceal his magicules. That guy used to let his youki go wild, so his magicule leakage was all over the place too. Wouldn’t it be dangerous if I wanted to attract more people to our nation? That’s why I have been telling him to practice and get his youki under better control.”

“Whaaat? Are you saying you’re demanding that egocentric troublemaker, the former guardian of the Great Jura Forest, to listen to you? Moreover, you’re commanding him to regulate his youki so well, that even I couldn’t sense it? That Veldora?”

Can you not make it sound so easy—this was what Dino implied as he feverishly questioned me. Even if what he said were true, it still wouldn’t change anything. And that was a fact.

“Umm, yeah. In fact, he agreed immediately. Otherwise, half of the residents in this town would be dead by now.”

“No, even if you put it that way… Isn’t this the Veldora with an insane pool of magicules that we’re talking about here? Isn’t he the flying catastrophe, the tyrant that everyone fears, the one unleashing his youki all the time before the Hero sealed him up?”

People’s opinions of him seemed rather negative, but they were probably justified. After all, we had an actual example of a victim: Luminas. From what I had been able to gather, this guy truly had committed all sorts of horrible misdeeds in the past.

“In any case, that guy’s changed a little. Nowadays, if I want to ask him to do something, he’ll listen to some degree. He’s not that selfish.”

“Weren’t you the one who was just complaining about how selfish he was?!”

Eh, did I say that?

«Answer. Yes, you did.»

I-I see.

“Selfish as he may be, he’s not that unreasonable. And concerning the whole deal with controlling his youki…”

It’s times like these that I needed to quickly change the subject. I began to describe what had happened when Veldora was released.

“On the matter of his youki, I told him that ‘You’ll be super cool if you can suppress it.’ Since then, he’s been practicing hard to mask everything. It was equally tiring coaching him by myself.”

But the hard work was worth it, otherwise, I couldn’t even let Veldora outside. This was something that couldn’t be compromised on.

Likely out of admiration, Dino’s expression shifted slightly as he gazed at me.

“I-I understand now. You are quite impressive, Rimuru. I knew you had it in you.”

No no no, you only came here to mooch off me. I’m not gonna be swindled by your sweet talk.

“The fact that you were able to tame Veldora is incredible,” Dino complimented, feeling impressed yet again.

Speaking of being selfish, Milim was worse than him. Yet, in spite of her self-centered attitude, she couldn’t even raise her head in front of Frey. Everyone had their own kryptonite, I guess.

“Veldora wasn’t the only selfish one, Milim also—”

And so, I divulged to Dino about my experience with Milim, how I knew her, and how egocentric she could be. Since Milim wasn’t here, I had the rare opportunity to spill my guts.

I even generously shared the mess Milim had been giving me recently to Dino. I also revealed Veldora’s self-indulgent acts of late, since I wanted to hear his opinion regarding which one was more difficult to handle.

I ranted on and on.

Dino demonstrated his enthusiasm by putting his brain on autopilot mid-way through our conversation. I was going to ask him whether Milim or Veldora was more annoying, yet wound up with no answer.

And so, I brought Dino to our research facility.

I glanced around in the facility to discover Veldora, who I was looking for, helping Ramiris out. Evidently, he’d been toiling away today. Despite Ramiris ordering him all over the place, this dragon was surprisingly diligent.

“V-Veldora is working…?”

“See, told you.”

While Veldora often complained about having to do work, he nevertheless decided to support Ramiris in the end. He was probably happy to be called “mentor” all day that he took a predictable liking to Ramiris.

The same applied to my requests as well. Ultimately, he would agree to help out. After all, if he weren’t easily instigated and manipulated, I wouldn’t have nicknamed him Gullidora 3 for nothing.

Even Vesta, who was in charge of constructing the Elemental Colossus on the ninety-fifth floor, was present. Ramiris did mention before that she was short on personnel, but was that just an excuse to make the project a priority?

Ramiris and Veldora were happily going about their business with evil grins on their faces. On the other hand, Vesta appeared utterly drained; he was practically on the verge of death.

Is he all right? I was kind of worried.

“Hey hey—what’s up? How’s the research going?” with a casual greeting, I entered the facility.

Upon noticing my arrival, Vesta immediately stopped writing on the document he had been busy with and stood up.

“Ahh, Rimuru-sama’s come to see us.”

“Yeah, but don’t let me distract you. Speaking of which, are you okay? You look thoroughly exhausted.”

“I’m fine is what I really want to say…but researching down here has been bad for my health…”

Hmm hmm? It was apparent that he wanted to get something off his chest.

Just when I was about to inquire, Veldora suddenly cut in, “Oh, it’s Rimuru. I showed up to help as well. Ramiris begged me to come and help her, so I had no choice.”

“Thanks for the help. She does seem to be lacking manpower.”

My research was classified as top secret, so I couldn’t summon just anyone from level ninety-five here. I could only bring people that I wholeheartedly trusted—actually, I just wanted people who wouldn’t complain about the upcoming research.

After all, I was preparing a bunch of bodies whose sole purpose was to be possessed. And as for who was gonna possess them, those would be demons, of course.

People may recognize this as a military threat rather than research.

It’s best that we keep this a secret from the other nations.

“Yahoo! Rimuru, I’ve been waiting for you! Mentor’s support is like giving me an extra pair of wings. But I still need more help, fast!”

“I knew you’d say that, and for that reason, I brought someone new to assist you. Ramiris, don’t you know this guy too? From today onward, Dino-san, who’s also a demon lord, is going to cooperate with us. You can rely on him for all sorts of menial tasks.”

Although Dino didn’t exactly give the impression of being an academic type, he could probably still contribute via manual labor. As an amateur, he really shouldn’t be an assistant researcher. At most, he would provide help by carrying heavy stuff or collecting data. With that being said, we definitely needed more people to do the grunt work. I thought he would be of use to some extent.

Dino appeared to have taken an interest in everything, swiveling his head around to scrutinize the place. He addressed everyone after hearing my introduction.

“I’m Dino. Although you probably already know at this point, allow me to reiterate, I am one of the demon lords. I personally don’t want to work, but I’m being forced to contribute. I’ll be in your care now.”

This person is—how should I put this?—obviously not motivated in the slightest. But that’s fine. At least he seems willing to lend us a hand.

After a general exchange of greetings, I found out the reason why Vesta was down here, and the current circumstances of his visit.

The motive for Vesta’s lengthy pilgrimage to my private research facility, located on the one-hundredth floor of the labyrinth, was due to Ramiris’s persuasion. As I had suspected, because of the lack of authorized staff, Vesta had to suspend his research and prioritize mine.

However, I also heard that Ramiris’s so-called “persuasion” was, in fact, quite effective. She didn’t care whether Vesta was available or not.

That couldn’t be helped. She needed people to handle secretarial tasks such as filing documents or collecting references.

Beretta’s schedule was already packed.

Treyni-san was in charge of managing the labyrinth and taking care of Ramiris’s daily life.

Veldora didn’t carry out the aforementioned job, which was why Ramiris chose Vesta.

“Will the Elemental Colossus be okay?” I asked.

“Uh—I can’t confidently conclude that no problems will arise. But when our work here is finished, Treyni-chan’s sisters will have bodies too. We may as well construct the Colossus at the same time.”

I see, that does sound very sensible.

“Sorry for the trouble, Vesta,” I replied with an apology. He responded with a weak, yet somewhat enthusiastic smile.

“I am still rather disappointed in the failure of the ‘Magic Armor Soldier,’ but the research here is also…”

Vesta’s internal feelings were conflicted. On one hand, he wanted to resume with his own work, but on the other hand, he was overjoyed to participate in my project. As a researcher, Vesta’s interests seemed to be torn between the two. Just the fact that he had these inner turmoils was a testament to how far he had come along. Even now, he demonstrated an example of his maturity. He was able to overcome the initial shock of finding out that Dino was a demon lord, and he was quick to regain his composure.

Since he has experienced numerous traumatic scenarios, he had grown a nearly unshakable heart. And because he was exceptionally competent, I assumed that Vesta would probably want to devote himself to his own experiments…but it appeared that I was mistaken. The contents of my project were the reason why Vesta was so exhausted.

“Please allow me to continue researching here. I want to see the bodies that Rimuru-sama wishes to create through to the end. There have been so many astonishing discoveries every day, to the point that I forgo sleep just so I wouldn’t miss out!” he informed me without even trying to contain his excitement. It became clear that Vesta’s exhaustion was naturally due to sleep deprivation.

Despite the ability to restore stamina with magic, the spell wasn’t omnipotent. It couldn’t just completely replace the need for sleep; you still needed to achieve a minimum amount of rest.

That was why I decided to pressure Vesta into taking a break. Because we just so happened to have a new helper, we could hand the chores to Dino and let Vesta get his well-deserved rest. Thus, he began giving Dino a rundown of the job he needed to do.

I hoped Dino would have a good time with everyone here.

Vesta didn’t look afraid, by any means, even though he was talking to a demon lord. His explanation was both concise and natural.

“Then Dino-dono, I know this is all very sudden, but you will be my assistant.”

“Eh…”

“Please don’t ‘eh’ me. Come now, we are short on time!”

“But I’m a demon lord, you know?”

“So what?”

“What do you mean ‘so what’…”

“Phew,” Vesta sighed, eyes aimed at Dino.

“Please hear me out. It doesn’t matter if you are a demon lord or not here. As you can see, Veldora-sama and Ramiris-sama are both enjoying their work.”

“Yeah, it does seem that way, but—”

“How wonderful that you understand. Well then, let us begin!”

“—Okay.”

Vesta was simply phenomenal. I observed the situation for a bit and there was no indication of any issues. That was when I felt reassured to let them handle it.

Now, let’s examine the intriguing results of our research.

Even though this was a reward for Diablo, assembling almost a thousand bodies was still a monumental project. I wanted to build a magisteel doll like Beretta and replicate it with ‘Wisdom King Raphael.’ But that would be dull. That said, it also wasn’t feasible to build each one from scratch. It was then that I unexpectedly thought of a better alternative: create a workshop that could mass-produce them.

I prepared a one meter wide, three-meter-high transparent cylinder made of tempered glass. I officially named it the Growth Capsule. As the name implied, the goal was to grow entities such as monsters inside them.

The capsule would be filled with the water I had stored in my ‘Stomach’ from the underground lake within the ‘Sealed Cave.’ Since the lake water contained a high concentration of magicules, I decided to name it “magiwater.” It could be added to fortify our Tempest potions or even restore mana in humans. The useful properties it exhibited had a wide variety of potential applications.

The growth capsule had a pipe fitting that allowed additional magicules to be added. By inserting supplementary magicules, the density of the magiwater increased, which subsequently improved the chances of spawning a monster.

When the concentration of the magiwater dropped below the minimum threshold, the capsule would automatically refill with magicules in order to revert this change.

I prepared one thousand growth capsules. When I had finished assembling them, I suddenly realized it would have been much more convenient to simply build one thousand dolls from scratch—well, don’t sweat the small stuff. That was my belief. The point was to be romantic enough 4 . After all, I was delighted to have worked on my project and had zero regrets.

The hall was now filled with growth capsules. Magnificent.

In order to spawn monsters, specific conditions must be met first—it was thanks to our recent research that we had discovered this fact. Otherwise, no matter how many magicules we pumped into the filled capsule, no monster would spawn. However, if you were to combine certain factors, then you attained the ability to spawn strong monsters as a result.

For instance, if we threw a snake into the capsule, the dense magicule concentration would poison it to death. Regardless, its flesh would combine with the magiwater and be rebuilt as a tempest serpent. And as a result, an A-minus ranked monster would be created. Now, you probably have some idea of just how incredible the growth capsule was.

It was evident that monsters produced from the growth capsule were several times stronger than their original counterparts. The reason these monsters were so strong was likely due to the fact that they were born in a stable, lab-controlled environment filled with magicules.

Despite this, sometimes an individual’s body would break down upon birth and quickly die. Whether these monsters could survive was all down to luck.

There was still room for improvement, and I planned on taking advantage of the growth capsule’s properties to generate the necessary thousand bodies.

“Well then, how’s progress coming along?” I inquired.

“Quite fine! I’ve also been doing a lot of research lately!” Ramiris cheerfully replied.

“Ho? Then I’ll be looking forward to—eh, what the hell is that?!”

I got spooked upon noticing the floating object inside the growth capsule. It was almost hard to believe; a complete one-eighty from what I’d expected.

For my original plan, only the skeletons of the one thousand bodies would be crafted out of magisteel, and then they would be submerged in the magicule medium. Theoretically speaking, the skeleton would be used as the foundation to form a bone golem.

Since the framework was artificial, there was little possibility of their bodies decaying. There wouldn’t be any soul possessing the bodies, either. Only the magicules in the liquid would crystalize on the skeletons. The probability that the bodies would abruptly gain self-consciousness was theoretically zero.

Unlike when I had created Beretta, they did not require detailed modelling. The demons planning to acquire the bodies would no doubt use their own magicules to alter their appearance to suit personal tastes.

At least that was how I initially envisioned it…

Within the one thousand growth capsules were humanoid dolls drifting in them. However, various measures were taken to implement each essential body part. The most eye-catching one was the central component. Inside their chest was the artificial representation for the heart, the pumping ‘Spirit Magic Core.’

“This is…”

“I came up with the idea! If they have a strong enough core, the monsters would probably be even stronger,” Ramiris casually revealed with a smirk.

In layman’s terms, it was already very difficult to prepare one thousand ‘Spirit Magic Cores.’ It wouldn’t take me too long to craft them, but with a lack of interest and passion, I considered it a chore and didn’t have the motivation to make them. That was why I wanted to resort to something simpler. Yet, Ramiris was apparently too stubborn to compromise. Looks like she did the work the traditional way to prepare the portions for one thousand bodies.

They even had ‘Emulated Souls’ installed. It seemed that the technology to possess a homunculus from Sarion was also being utilized here.

Although Beretta easily possessed his body, if it were Treyni-san’s sisters, they presumably would struggle to achieve the same result. With that being said, using ‘Emulated Souls’ was probably the right choice.

On the downside, this would obviously have led to a ton of work… No wonder why she complained about the lack of manpower.

“Ramiris-sama’s ideas were wonderful and truly intriguing. When I saw what she was trying to integrate, it would’ve been impossible not to assist her endeavor,” Vesta explained with distant eyes.

That was only natural. With the sheer amount of stuff here, he could have gotten as much data as he wanted.

These fist-sized ‘Spirit Magic Cores’ were all top-quality products. When combined with the skeletons I had built, the alteration greatly differed from my original design. There were even enchantments on the metallic bones. As magicules enveloped the skeleton, they began materializing as muscle tissue. We could further observe the process of how monsters were born.

I finally understood why Vesta considered sleeping a waste of valuable time.

“How about it? Aren’t these all super fascinating?”

“GAHAHAHA, seeing that expression on Rimuru’s face has already made it worth our time!”

Ramiris and Veldora were visibly pleased with themselves.

“Yes, it’s very interesting…but did Ramiris really come up with this?”

“Of course! Well, how about it? What do you think?!”

Apart from shouting her line, Ramiris also proudly puffed out her chest.

Mhm, you can show off all you want this time. This is truly extraordinary stuff.

While Ramiris looked a bit ditzy at first glance, she was still intelligent. She was highly knowledgeable about spirit engineering to the point of mastery, and right now she was also learning about magic science. I heard that she’d been visiting level ninety-five quite frequently.

She didn’t just idle around during her immense, cyclic lifespan. Her proficiency in the laws of physics was exceptional. Surprisingly enough, she was fully qualified as a researcher.

I can’t allow her appearance to deceive me.

“Ahh, these are really impressive. And they’re all hand-crafted as well. How much work did you put in making this?”

“It was super tiring. Although they aren’t dolls with ball joints like Beretta, but rather simply bodies imitating human skeletons, if we prepare heart-emulating cores like this, I’m sure that they will absorb a large quantity of magicules when submerged in the capsule.”

I wholeheartedly agreed with a nod after listening to Ramiris’s opinion.

Thus, we now had the ability to manufacture bodies that were far stronger than I had predicted. They would be the cream of the crop.

Gazing at the vessels that were suspended in the capsules, I tried to estimate their potential strength. I suspected their magicule content would be at the top of rank A—and there were a thousand of them.

This was all thanks to the integration of ‘Spirit Magic Cores’ and ‘Emulated Souls.’

What an incredible feat. I was thoroughly impressed from the bottom of my heart.

A few days had passed since Dino’s unanticipated arrival. Diablo had yet to return, but I suspected that it was almost time. In order to complete the bodies early, I headed to the research facility today as well.

The place was bustling with activity; Ramiris was in a heated argument with Veldora.

“Like I said, I want to pour mentor’s magicules directly into the capsules to accelerate the growth!”

“But what would happen if you messed it up? Wouldn’t all the blame get pinned on me?”

These guys are up to no good.

Having piqued my curiosity, I concealed myself and eavesdropped on them. I had become quite skilled at hiding my presence lately. It seemed Veldora didn’t even realize I was there.

“It’s okay with so many bodies here! Moreover, I will also show support for that thing mentor wants to request from Rimuru. So pleeeese, pretty please!” Ramiris beseeched Veldora to donate some of his magicules.

They sure are close. I couldn’t help but smile at the scene.

By the way, what was it that Veldora wanted to request from me? I had no idea, which further piqued my curiosity.

“I just can’t get mad at you… Just remember to support me on that thing,” Veldora sighed, signaling his defeat.

“Mhm mhm, just count on me!” Ramiris hurriedly reassured.

It looked like they both came to an agreement. Veldora nodded with an ‘Mhm.’ Despite acting all pompous, his expression clearly gave away the fact that he was more than happy to do it.

On one hand, it was probably because of Ramiris’s instigation, while on the other hand, he likely would have agreed regardless.

Veldora raised his hand toward a capsule and bellowed, “HYAA!” It was quite the spectacle as he injected his magicules. The abnormally dense magicules began to swirl inside the capsule. The pressure within was so intense that it looked capable of sending the entire facility to kingdom come.

Will this really work?

I was a bit apprehensive but continued to quietly observe with high expectations. Even if the cylinder broke, we could still revise our course of action. Compared to that, I was more curious about what Ramiris intended to accomplish.

Within the capsule, magicules crystallized and adhered to the magisteel skeleton, like moths to a flame, forming artificial tissue. Everything followed Raphael-sensei’s plan to a T.

But with Veldora dumping a massive quantity of magicules, unexpected side effects were bound to arise. A large amount was absorbed by the skeleton and consequently caused structural modifications.

“How strange? It seems different from what I expected…” Ramiris said, perplexed.

Well, that was usually how scientific experiments went.

The material that made up the skeleton could no longer be classified as magisteel. We didn’t mix any rare elements like gold or silver in, so it was neither orichalcum nor mithril. However, in terms of yield and tensile strength, while it was not as strong as the ultimate metal, Hihiirokane 5 , it was strong enough to rival orichalcum.

But what bothered me the most was that despite being a type of metal, it almost looked alive…

«Answer. Deducing that the wavelength of the individual ‘Veldora’ has caused its quality to improve. It is a subset of the material adamantite. Following its classification, the corresponding name is most likely dragotite.»

I see.

Ramiris had attempted to speed up the completion of the bodies, only to end up discovering a new, interesting metal instead.

Hold on, looks like it’s not finished yet.

“W-wait a second, mentor! Stop, stooop!”

“Huh? WOAHHH, there’s a crack in the capsule!”

Ramiris and Veldora both exclaimed with consternation.

Are these two geniuses or idiots? By the look of things right now, I can’t tell for sure.

“What are you two doing?”

In order to clean up this mess before it got any bigger, I decided to reveal myself in front of the two. And so, while working to fix the damaged capsule, we grabbed some coffee to tide us over.

We called Vesta and Dino as well and gathered together to enjoy coffee and cakes. The meal was prepared by the dryad Treyni-san.

“Tsk, we were just about to get to the good part…” Dino complained.

“Ah, so you don’t want your cake? Then I’ll give your share to Ramiris—”

“Sorry, I was just joking. No, wait. Even though what I said were my genuine feelings, it was just a slip of the tongue.”

Dino’s reaction implied that he was pissed off about being interrupted while working. Yet, when I suggested taking his cake away, he immediately lowered his head and apologized.

Are you really okay being like this, Dino-san? Are you really living up to the name “Sleeping Ruler”…?

Still, seeing that he was at least putting effort in reassured me a lot.

Vesta and Dino were performing experiments together. I was told that they were recording data from the one thousand growth capsules. Additionally, when they had spare time, they left to examine Kurobee’s slotted weapons and his interchangeable magic crystal enchantments.

The reason for their sudden interest was because I bragged about it.

If the outcome of the research went well, it may even contribute to the construction of the Elemental Colossus. That explained why Vesta was eager to start his own investigation on Magic Marble Combination.

I gave Dino a couple of magic marbles as samples to play around with, while Vesta would observe and jot down detailed notes. Noticing Dino’s displeasure when I called him over to relax with us, it became obvious that he was enjoying research. It was work, but the line between work and play had blurred. Dino would go on some tangent about not wanting to be productive, yet he seemed to have already assimilated into this professional workplace without realizing.

It is imperative to enjoy your work.

Next—

As I finished the last of my coffee, I turned to face Ramiris.

“By the way, Ramiris, why were you in such a hurry to complete the bodies for possession?” I asked rather directly.

“Ah, about that…” Ramiris was dodging the question.

Coming to her aid, Treyni-san interjected, “Please hold on, Rimuru-sama. Ramiris-sama was doing this for my sisters and companions. She was simply trying her best for them!”

I didn’t mean to chide her, but Treyni-san mistook my intentions and tried very hard to defend her. She was usually like this as well. To be honest, I thought Treyni-san outright spoiled Ramiris.

“It’s not that, I just wanted to know her reasons. I’m not scolding her, don’t worry. So, why did you do it, Ramiris?”

I attempted to calm Treyni-san down and continued to question Ramiris for her rationale.

“Umm—now that I have some time to think it over, I was being too rash. These children admire me a lot, so I wanted them to get their own bodies earlier. This way, they would be happy, and we would also get extra help. The more the merrier, right?”

Ramiris was quite embarrassed as she answered.

I could empathize with her motivation. The dryads could move freely around the labyrinth without a body, whereas the treants couldn’t. Although treants retained the ability to reposition near where they were rooted, they couldn’t possibly leave the forest and enter areas without soil. Essentially, without a body, their mana would steadily dissipate over time, which was detrimental to their well-being.

The same concept applied to the dryads, where if they were too far away from their corpus, then their strength would greatly diminish as well. They were considered high tier species among the rank A monsters and much stronger than greater majins. If the same restrictions also applied to the dryads, then demanding more from the treants, a lower species, would be far too cruel.

From Ramiris’s point of view, with the dolls that were cultivated in the growth capsules, not only the dryads, but even the treants would possess the capability to effortlessly travel in the future. That was probably why she wanted to test her idea out on some of the dolls behind my back.

“If that’s the case, you could have discussed it with me. Diablo hasn’t come back yet, and there’s no telling how many subordinates that guy will bring. If there aren’t enough, we can always make more later. Let’s first prepare the bodies for the dryads,” I suggested with a genial tone.

“Can we really?” Ramiris excitedly inquired.

“Of course.”

“Thank you, Rimuru!”

She flitted around me, overjoyed.

To be fair, this decision was also made with my best interests in mind. We truly lacked the number of people necessary to operate efficiently. Treyni-san’s sisters, as well as the other dryads, were all assisting with running the labyrinth and its related matters. They were already busy enough as is and couldn’t spare any more time. If this were to continue, everyone would be overworked since administering the labyrinth required twenty-four-seven attention. That was why I desperately needed more staff to fill in the shifts.

With these state-of-the-art bodies, even the treants would rise to rank A and be able to move unhindered inside the labyrinth. Furthermore, in the rare case that their bodies were destroyed, their original corpus wouldn’t be harmed. However, they could only travel as far as their willpower allowed—in essence, only within the confines of Ramiris’s labyrinth—but that was sufficient.

As for the dryads—

“By the way, we should turn Trya-san, Triss, Alpha, and the rest of the dryads all into dryas dolls—”

“Huh?”

“Is it really okay?” Treyni-san launched her question at me with terrifying fervor, all before I could even finish my proposal.

“Can we really do that, Rimuru?” Ramiris nervously asked, completely ignoring Dino and the others who were unfortunately left out of the discussion.

“Can we do what?”

“That—evolving them into dryas doll dryads 6 . But won’t that take a lot of work?”

“I suppose, but they’ve also contributed their fair share. I hope they will continue to help us with the labyrinth’s management in the future as well.”

“All because Rimuru-sama allowed us to live here… Since Ramiris-sama is determined to support Rimuru-sama, we naturally will follow Ramiris-sama’s wishes as her subordinates,” Treyni-san admitted.

After hearing my reply to Ramiris, Treyni-san seemed rather guilty.

With that being said, we benefited tremendously from the dryads’ involvement within the labyrinth. In a sense, this was my token of appreciation for them. I wanted to give them the opportunity to act on their own. Although it required handcrafting humanoid dolls, I was quite keen on matters involving creating dolls for beauties or bishojos.

I originally planned on using the same bodies I had prepared for Diablo, but that would seem like a cheap gesture. Dryads should use wooden dolls.

“No no no, you guys really helped out a lot, so please enjoy these. And whether they wish to directly possess these bodies or become a dryas doll dryad by possessing extra wood from their original tree host, the choice will be up to them,” I proposed to Treyni-san.

She nodded happily.

Ramiris muttered on the side, “Hey you, why are you more polite talking to Treyni-chan than to me? I won’t take that…”

But I’ll just pretend I never heard that.

As soon as break time was over, Vesta and the others returned to work.

“Looks like this place is beyond my field of expertise, but it’s still very fun. I’ll go finish my work now. Let’s go, Vesta-san.”

“Understood, Dino-sama.”

And somewhere along the line, Dino put emphasis on the word “work” as he left with Vesta.

This guy had clearly never done anything productive until he came here. He was a waste of space before, but since he’d been working hard, I would overlook his past behavior. Speaking of which, I needed to work on my own stuff as well—

“Hold on, Rimuru. I have something to ask of you. Ramiris, it’s time to fulfill your part of the bargain!”

I guessed that he was going to trouble me with something, so I was trying to run away. It appeared Veldora had been waiting for the moment right after break time ended.

“…And what is it that you need me for?”

Truthfully, I really didn’t wanna do it, but I still begrudgingly replied, nonetheless.

“Umm, the thing is—”

“Mentor said he wanted an assistant. It will be a good thing if we have more people to help, that’s why I also…well, have a favor to ask…”

Uhh, my ominous feeling came true! More hassle was headed my way…

We’re already understaffed right now, so who could we possibly spare to be Veldora’s playmate?

“No no no, everyone is very busy. They don’t have time to hang out with you—”

“Wait a second! Rimuru, you got it all wrong. I have been helping Ramiris and guarding the labyrinth, all very important tasks. If I can have an assistant at my side and praise me from time to time, then it will have quite the therapeutic effect. That way, I won’t be exhausted quickly,” Veldora passionately argued.

Ramiris displayed her support with vigorous nods. However, since I already heard every bit of their conversation just moments ago, I could only think “You really do stick to your end of the bargain.” But, since no one available came to mind, I would have to end that train of thought.

“No. Unfortunately—”

“Hold on, hold on, hold on—!”

I was interrupted yet again.

Veldora apparently did not want to back off. He was adamantly standing his ground.

“To be honest, when I was staying inside your ‘Stomach,’ I met someone whom I can call a friend. I hope that you can give him a body just like the ones you are preparing here,” Veldora suddenly revealed.

I was clueless. What kind of friend are you talking about here?

«Answer. The individual is deduced to be the greater spirit ‘Ifrit.’»

Huh? How did Veldora befriend Ifrit?

«Answer. Individual ‘Veldora’ intervened at the time to move Ifrit to the same isolated position during Master’s ‘Predation.’»

I see, it is exactly what Raphael-san described.

When I consumed Ifrit from Shizu-san, he was moved to the space in my ‘Stomach’ where Veldora had been isolated. This, however, did not affect us from taking Ifrit’s data. That’s why Raphael-sensei, or ‘Great Sage’ at the time, did not resist the change and allowed it without notifying me. Since it wasn’t an inconvenience, I only discovered this fact just now. That is to say, unbeknownst to me, Veldora befriended Ifrit.

“Ahh, so you want me to revive Ifrit?”

“GAHAHAHA! As expected from Rimuru, you understood me so quickly!”

Veldora-san was delighted, but on the other hand, I had mixed feelings. Ifrit and Shizu-san were totally incompatible with each other, and he was also Demon Lord Leon’s subordinate. If I were to revive Ifrit, would he play nice? With this thought in mind, I couldn’t just agree to his proposal so easily.

“Hmm…”

“S-so that’s a no?”

“R-Rimuru, I want to ask you too! Please fulfill mentor’s wish!”

While I deliberated, Veldora gazed at me with sad puppy eyes whereas Ramiris pleaded for her mentor’s sake.

What a headache. I was quite troubled with this turn of events.

To be honest, I preferred having more people to work for us, but I just didn’t feel safe releasing Ifrit. Despite his modest appearance, he was still head and shoulders above any second-rate greater majin in terms of strength. Although we would win if he were to start a fuss, damage would be inevitable. He might even wind end up fleeing back to Leon. I wouldn’t want to wake a sleeping baby—I figured it was understandable for me to think this way.

“However, Ifrit seemed to have pledged his loyalty to Demon Lord Leon before… Are you really sure he’s willing to be your assistant after being revived?”

“Uh? Umm umm, that’s definitely the case. You don’t have to worry about it. My sincerity has moved Ifrit. That guy really is willing to be my assistant,” Veldora hurriedly reassured.

Oi. Seriously?

For a brief second, Veldora seemed like he was talking to someone; it had to be Ifrit himself. In other words, Veldora was communicating with him in my body in some unknown fashion.

“Were you just talking to Ifrit?”

“Yeah, I can do anything.”

“Mentor is super amazing. He asked Ifrit to summon a bunch of flame salamanders for the magitrain! That’s why we should plan for the future and make him one of our companions,” trilled Ramiris.

I see how it is.

Indeed, within the labyrinth itself, Ramiris could summon spirits at will with ease. However, once the magitrain commenced operations, it would be much more reassuring if someone could actually command the salamanders. Guuhh, I really couldn’t refuse the proposal from a profit standpoint. Moreover, Veldora personally guaranteed that he would take care of Ifrit.

I suppose I will put my faith in Veldora.

“All right, all right, since you are so convinced, just make sure you take responsibility for the whole thing!”

“All right, just leave it to me!”

“This is great, Mentor!”

Veldora and Ramiris were hyped up like I was going to buy them a pet or something. Hopefully, my faith in Veldora being responsible wouldn’t backfire.

“Then let’s—”

“Right, right, Rimuru. Don’t we still have the shell of the magic core of Charybdis? That contains the remainder of my mana, so it can adapt to my power easily. Ifrit has been submerged in my youki for a long time, so using that as a ‘Core’ would be better.”

According to Veldora, the compatibility would work better than an ‘Emulated Soul.’

«Answer. I agree with the views of individual ‘Veldora.’»

Since Raphael had agreed, I had no reason to object.

“Okay, then we will use this body for Ifrit to take over.”

I stood in front of the growth capsule that had just been repaired before our break.

A skeleton originally made of magisteel, which had transformed into a unique metal called dragotite, was floating inside. Inferior beings wouldn’t be able to endure the exposure to Veldora’s excessive magicules. However, since Ifrit was a greater spirit, he should be able to hold his own.

“Oh ho, this is great. That guy will be happy as well,” Veldora assured as well.

I began to execute the conversion without hesitation.

«Report. Remains of Ifrit have been discovered. Transferring to the magic core of Charybdis… Successful. Proceeding to phase two, constructing soul container… ‘Merging’ with the body made up of dragotite.»

The operation was completed in an instant.

As expected from Raphael-sensei, how masterful.

The next moment—

After Veldora, Ramiris, and I watched the body receive Ifrit’s core, its form underwent drastic changes. Muscles and blood vessels started growing on the silver black skeleton. Skin quickly formed the final layer, and just like Veldora, it had a tanned hue. Its head was veiled with wavy long hair, whose black color gave off an impressive sheen. There were highlights of red intertwined, like a burning flame was scattered within. It had golden eyes, while its dragon-like pupils glowed a deep scarlet.

Eh, no matter how you looked at it, that figure was a female. And a superb beauty as well.

“Oh oh, Ifrit, how does it feel to return to the mortal realm with a body?” commented Veldora.

Ah, so this femme fatale was undeniably Ifrit. Putting aside whether spirits really possessed genders, I explicitly remembered that it had a more masculine body type. How did this change happen?

“Veldora-sama, this is the first time I have seen you in this world. And Rimuru-sama, I am eternally grateful for you resurrecting me.”

Despite my confusion, Ifrit kneeled as soon as she finished speaking. I was afraid that Ifrit would rebel out of her loyalty for Leon, but it seemed that I had worried for nothing. Immense relief flooded through me.

“Oh, oh oh, I’m glad you look well. But I want to ask you something…” I wavered for a moment.

“Please ask away.”

I had so many questions. However, what I was most curious about—

“I recall that your previous look was more suited for combat, I mean, you looked a lot more agile moving around…”

And you didn’t have gigantic breasts like those, right?

—I didn’t dare say the last line out loud. I didn’t have the audacity.

You couldn’t exactly blame me for thinking this way. Ifrit only had a few thin articles of clothing that covered her private areas. She was aiming for a super-hot belly dancer outfit. Her elbows, belly, thighs were all exposed, which came off as really erotic.

“Are you referring to this look…”

Upon saying so, Ifrit suddenly sighed for some reason.

“I am afraid this was Veldora-sama’s fau—I mean his will.”

She wanted to say, ‘It was Veldora’s fault,’ didn’t she?

Ifrit seemed a bit worn out, and I got the impression that she was wholly exasperated. Could it be that she’s been suffering the whole time in my ‘Stomach’? Now that I thought about it, Ifrit had been alone with Veldora for approximately two years with no means of escape. I was pretty sure she had a rough time.

“Hmph! It was thanks to me that you got a body. Do remember to be grateful!” Veldora reproached.

“—Understood.”

Ifrit’s reply sounded rather forced.

“You said it was the will of Veldora. What did you mean by that?” I inquired, wanting clarification.

“Hmm?”

“Oh, about that. Even though I am a greater fire elemental spirit, now I can somehow wield wind elemental power as well. My hair should have been red, yet for some reason its color is mostly dark. I believe that Veldora-sama’s power has influenced it greatly. Furthermore, it may have been because the Charybdis was a female that I ended up looking like this.”

«Report. Correct.»

She got it right?! Oi oi, can you really change something like gender this casually?

I didn’t mean to offend her, so hopefully she wouldn’t hate me for it.

“W-well, if you are not satisfied with it—”

“How could I be unsatisfied. Putting aside my appearance, I have become far stronger than I had ever been before,” Ifrit declared while cracking a brilliant smile.

Veldora had probably teased her so much to the point where she had grown accustomed to it. She seemed to be tremendously adaptable. It also made her quite affable. Unlike when she was fused with Shizu-san, I couldn’t sense any malicious intent from Ifrit anymore.

“Do you not hate me?”

“No, how could I hate you? Veldora-sama taught me many things while I was trapped inside Rimuru-sama. Thinking back, the sense of duty and responsibility Shizue Izawa and I both shared was very strong. However, our ideologies were diametrically opposed, and so we weren’t able to build any other connections. I can’t help but think that maybe we could have changed the way we treated each other.”

It looked like Ifrit genuinely didn’t harbor even the slightest trace of resentment against me. She was even regretful to have never opened her heart up to Shizu-san. I couldn’t help but feel saddened.

We decided to go to a different venue to discuss plans for the future.

Thus, I chatted with Ifrit for a while. Just as I suspected, she truly had endured arduous hardships. Before I knew it, she grew on me.

If I were to appoint anyone to deal with Veldora, then I would appoint her without hesitation. She was still reminiscent of Demon Lord Leon, but not to the point of pledging her loyalty to him again.

“Even though Rimuru-sama defeated and almost killed me, I was lucky enough to have been saved by Veldora-sama so that my consciousness wasn’t erased. That said, I am self-aware now as well, and I feel different from before. I still think that Leon-sama is an incredible demon lord, but I wish to pledge my loyalty to Veldora-sama now,” she explained, clearly expressing her will.

I believed Ifrit was worthy of my trust, and besides, Veldora seemed to have complete confidence in her from the beginning. I probably didn’t need to worry that much.

“I understand. Then please continue to work hard in the future as Veldora’s assistant!”

“Yes sir. I am willing to give it my all and pledge my loyalty to Veldora-sama.”

Ifrit sure was serious.

I still felt kind of bugged with the whole ordeal regarding Shizu-san. But since Ifrit had shown remorse, it was all water under the bridge.

And so, I decided to accept Ifrit.

“By the way, Rimuru, I have something else to discuss with you,” Veldora slyly added.

What is it again?!

I legitimately did not want to deal with any more of these annoyances. Yet if I ignored him, he’d probably nag me to death.

“What is it, Veldora-kun?”

“Um! Here’s the thing, I want to name Ifrit. You see, ‘Ifrit’ is an individual name, but at the same time it’s not. That’s because all the greater fire elemental spirits summoned through the Spirit Summoning ‘Flame Giant Ifrit’ are called Ifrit…”

Wow, a surprisingly serious suggestion. A name, indeed, was warranted. However—‘Naming’ could be very dangerous. Now, even if I, who had experienced several miscalculations during naming, was saying this, then you knew it was credible.

“Won’t it be dangerous naming Ifrit now? Your magicule content is huge, but there’s gonna be a big problem if you don’t know how much to give!”

Giving too many magicules had the same effect as poisoning, and the one being named would be in danger as well. The fact that no accidents happened during my namings was purely due to good luck.

“GAHAHAHA, but I can leave all that to you, right? If I were to give away too much, you should be able to cut me off with our ‘Soul Corridor.’”

Hmm, that would indeed be safer.

«Report. Please leave it to me.»

Welp, since Raphael said so, we should be fine.

“Very well, I shall assist you,” I declared.

“Oh, I knew you’d say so!”

And so, Veldora named Ifrit.

“Ifrit, from today onward you shall be known as ‘Charys’!” he proclaimed in a majestic tone.

Charys—that would be Ifrit’s name. Clearly, the name Charys had nothing to do with Ifrit, but instead was an abridged version of Charybdis. Although, in my honest opinion, a name like ‘Irys’ would have been more fitting. However, it would’ve been a bit too rude to interject now.

Through the ‘Soul Corridor,’ I observed a large amount of magicules disappear from Veldora’s body.

Ifrit’s magicule content was already at Special rank A—meaning she rivaled the strength of a Calamity-class monster. While she was weaker than Shion and Benimaru, she could put up an even fight against Souei and Geld. And now that Ifrit received a name—

“Understood. I shall henceforth be known as ‘Charys.’ I pledge my loyalty to the servitude of the great Veldora-sama!”

Ifrit accepted her ‘name.’ At that instant, Raphael shutdown ‘Soul Corridor’ and cut off Veldora’s power.

It worked. Veldora successfully named Ifrit. The flame giant began to evolve—it was practically exploding with magicules, rapidly reaching the level of a demon lord-class. Ifrit not only surpassed Treyni-san, but seemed to have even surpassed Karion and Frey.

«Report. Greater spirit ‘Flame Giant Ifrit’ has evolved into ‘Flame Lord.’»

Raphael-san dutifully notified me.

A flame lord, you say?

This race was a spiritual life-form that gained a physical body through monsterfication—essentially, exposure to a massive amount of magicules.

“GAHAHAHA! Well done! I knew I could count on you, Rimuru.”

Veldora-san sounded particularly pleased, yet he frowned as soon as he saw Ifrit. Her appearance had greatly altered once again. Or rather, it was restored to its original form. Its hair was still the same pattern of black and red, but its body had reverted back to more masculine proportions. Although some changes remained, Ifrit’s will might have strongly influenced this physical transformation.

“Tsk, and I went the extra mile for fun—I mean, I thought you’d look better, so I made you beautiful. I never knew it’d turn out like this,” Veldora complained.

So it was his fault, after all.

Ifrit—I mean, Charys, sighed in resignation, “I see that it was true. I should have guessed so. Luckily, my will has triumphed, which is reassuring. That said, I can change back to my female form if you were to insist…”

“No need, no need, I was just joking around. I won’t complain if you can maintain your preferred form!”

Veldora’s jokes were so lame.

Even though Charys successfully restored his appearance, he had the option of reverting back to his old look. I needed to be careful in the future as well.

“How are you feeling?”

“I feel very good, my lord—eh, t-this is?!”

After my question, Charys suddenly realized the change in his body. Dazed, he began to confirm his strength.

“S-such tremendous power…”

He was taken aback by his own power.

“Kukuku, you got that right.”

Veldora-san gave off a satisfied smile like he had predicted this outcome.

“About your race, you apparently evolved into a flame lord,” I casually added.

“Y-you said flame lord?! I cannot believe that I now wield such power…”

I suppose he really couldn’t. To suddenly gain the strength to rival those of the demon lord-class immediately after being resurrected, it was no wonder he had such a reaction.

Despite the fact that you became this strong, your job was still to take care of Veldora. In addition, if you were to become too powerful, you had to be wary of Veldora exploiting you even more. I was becoming somewhat sympathetic to our new addition.

And so, we gained a new companion by the name of Charys.

It wasn’t long before Charys settled in and immediately began being exploited by both Veldora and Ramiris. Although my worries came true, he didn’t seem to mind, so I guess it was fine. With this new assistant, our efficiency in researching improved significantly.

“Um, since when did we get such a tough guy as our new member?” Dino asked, dumbfounded.

“When you were still addicted to playing with magic marble combinations,” I replied.

“No no no, you made it sound so simple! This is a spirit lord that can rival demon lords we’re talking about here!”

“Actually, it’s a monster spirit lord.”

“Whatever! I don’t give a crap what type of ‘lord’ it is! That’s not my point!”

Dino was the only one who was shocked. Meanwhile, everyone else was already accustomed to this sort of outcome.

“Ah ah, don’t get so worked up now. This type of thing just happens, you know?” added Vesta.

“No, but—Vesta-san?”

Ramiris also comforted Dino by saying: “Dino-chan, you shouldn’t be surprised at trivial things like these while spending time with Rimuru and Mentor.”

“But, that’s…”

Dino wasn’t capable of accepting this reality. However, he finally relented after everyone talked it out with him.

You get used to it. Sometimes, it was better to not overthink things.

Afterwards, I began cutting down the necessary wood to craft dolls and evolve the dryads into dryas doll dryads. Unlike their original counterparts, these dryas doll dryads could wield their true strength even when they were far from their roots.

No one was against the idea of evolving, either.

And so, the number of dryas doll dryads we had increased to nearly ten. They didn’t have any combat experience, and none of them was stronger than Treyni-san. However, they had plenty of opportunities to train in the labyrinth. In the near foreseeable future, they would surely become capable servants of Ramiris.

In addition, the bodies that I wanted to lend to the treants—or rather, the humanoid dolls—were also near completion. These bodies were only being used for possession, so it didn’t really matter whether they were strong or not.

There were no issues with compatibility either. With this, around a hundred plus several dozen treants would be able to roam inside the labyrinth. I regretted the fact that we didn’t start recruitment much earlier. We would have secured a considerable number of capable people from the start.

The dryads were mostly in female forms while the treants were mostly male. Since they were spirits, they didn’t seem to have specific genders. That was why I focused more on efficiency when crafting the dolls. The treants could modify the details to suit their own tastes when they possessed them.

Once we were finished, they began the transfer almost immediately. With some minor work here and there, the operation was finally complete. Now with all the new helpers, we wouldn’t be that busy anymore.

“Thank you, Rimuru-sama!”

I shook my head as I heard Treyni-san thanking me. This was really nothing. I had always wanted to express my gratitude for all the help they provided.

“Well then, I’ll be counting on you guys in the future as well. Ramiris, report to me if anything happens.”

“Roger that! I’ll fly straight away to inform you.”

I told her to notify me should any problems arise.

There was still some work at hand for me to do.

For one, I had to attend daily meetings with Rigurd and Myourmiles to make executive decisions. Even criminal trials required my verdict now. It was also my duty to mediate disputes between my lieutenants. I genuinely wanted to help out with the research here, but reality often intervened. I desperately needed to scout some talent that would alleviate my workload—that was my task at hand. I could still find time for my hobbies since I technically didn’t require sleep, but sometimes you just wanna slack off for a bit, ya know? And I thought I was all mouth and no trousers, but it looked like I was really diligent after all.

While feeling a sense of doubt towards this statement, I headed back to my office.

“Diablo-sama has returned with some strangers. He wishes to see you; what should we do?”

The long-awaited news had finally arrived.

Now if it were only Diablo, then he would have just casually strolled in. However, he had guests with him this time. Although I felt that it was troublesome to do this, since there were other people around, I decided we should go through with the standard procedure.

Let me see them right now before Benimaru catches wind of this and wants to greet them together.

“I shall meet them in the reception room. Summon them immediately!”

The attendant bowed respectfully before leaving. Her movements were rather stiff. She must have felt very nervous around me. I thought to myself, this really can’t be helped, before asking the other attendant waiting next door to prepare some tea.

Shuna was busy with her work. During the day, she would labor at some other venue, though she would always prepare meals for me in the evening.

Shion, on the other hand, was training the ‘Yomigaeri’ inside the labyrinth. She seemed to be examining just how difficult it was to kill them, and thus was conducting extremely rigorous training. I heard that they were currently residing in the lower levels, so I shouldn’t bother them if nothing important came up.

This was why I had two attendants serving me now. Even though they were goblinas that had evolved from goblins, they were indistinguishable from humans. Recently, some simple cosmetic items that Shuna had developed were growing popular as well. This was probably why our female citizens were becoming ever more beautiful.

Had I not been their master, they’d probably be top-tier servants who wouldn’t even break a sweat when confronted with foreign dignitaries. Their skills were masterful.

I began moving towards the reception room—the sturdy one, by the way. Despite the fact that I figured nothing would go wrong, it was always better safe than sorry. Speaking of which, I had no clue just how weird the subordinates chosen by Diablo would be.

When I entered the guest room, the attendants brought out tea and desserts. The preparation was flawless. As I thought so, someone approached the room.

“Rimuru-sama, I have returned!”

With a happy smile, Diablo also entered. Though I shouldn’t be saying this, Diablo’s smile looked extraordinarily evil. While I may not have seen it that way, other people would probably have considered his smile as a bad omen. He was emanating an evil aura as if he were up to no good.

“Today, I have brought the people I had hoped to show to Rimuru-sama. I couldn’t be happier if your grace wished to meet them.”

Like usual, Diablo greeted me with the utmost respect. It was to the point of being excessive, but I was getting used to it by now. This guy treated me like his one and only master, almost like a god.

Three females followed Diablo in.

He told me that he was looking for subordinates, so were these women the ones? They appeared to be rather young; however, age was irrelevant to demons. I had no idea how many years Diablo had lived through, but since he said that they were his old acquaintances, they had probably been alive for quite some time.

Urged by Diablo, the three women bowed to me and seated themselves on the sofa.

“Are these girls your old friends?”

They don’t look particularly strong—

«Negative. These three are the highest race among the demons—archdemons. It is suspected that these individuals are concealing their magicules perfectly and are mimicking a human being.»

Raphael was quick to comment and correct my misunderstanding. Lately, my appraisal had become more accurate, but it seemed that I still had room for improvement. After hearing Raphael’s words, I tried to raise the precision of ‘Magic Perception.’ Yet, no matter how hard I looked, they resembled ordinary humans.

—Eh, did you just say archdemon?

Compared to a greater demon summoning, the chances of calling an archdemon was next to impossible. After all, one archdemon would already be a strategic force to be reckoned with.

Sometimes, a summon would fail even after great sacrifices. If humans were to summon them, they would have to prepare a huge ritual at the national level. And right here in front of me were three archdemons. I should have guessed, considering that Diablo used to be one as well.

“Indeed. I thought only people at my level would be worthy to meet Rimuru-sama in this place,” Diablo proudly stated.

“Is that so? They are truly impressive to have blended in like that. In fact, they all seem like normal humans. Perhaps even the Holy Knights wouldn’t be able to tell that they were archdemons.”

My words shook the three a bit. Diablo laughed happily in response.

“Kufufufufu, as expected from Rimuru-sama. I told them to try their best to hide their race, yet you saw through it with such ease.”

Seeing Diablo’s reaction, I nodded pompously and replied, “I guess.” This was actually all thanks to Raphael-san.

“And the others?”

“Only seven were worthy—”

Yeesh. This guy was a bit too harsh.

I already prepared a thousand bodies for you, and in the end, you gave me less than ten…

With that being said, the treants already used more than a hundred of them, so this might have worked in our favor.

“—And the remaining are small fry. However, they are the subordinates of these people, so that’s why I considered letting them enjoy the honor of joining Rimuru-sama’s ranks.”

Ah, so there were more.

“In that case, how many have you brought?”

“To answer that, they will have to report with the details,” Diablo concluded.

“Nice to meet you, Rimuru-sama. I feel greatly ashamed to meet you as a nameless one. I hope to be in your care. I’ve heard that Noir-chan 7 highly admires you, which, to be honest, was hard for me to believe at first…but now I can see why.”

“Is that so?”

An alluring lady stood up and greeted me. She had a head of pure white hair. Her movements were refined and elegant, like nobility. She had a dazzling smile, one that radiated warmth and grace; she was nothing like a demon at all.

“Indeed, my heart started racing the moment I laid eyes on you. I hope that Rimuru-sama will allow me and my two hundred subordinates to join your ranks,” the white-haired beauty proclaimed with a charming smile.

Being praised like that made me blush a little. But thanks to Diablo, I was already conditioned to it. I better take this type of praise as a given from now on and ignore it.

“Me too, sir. I, along with my two hundred servants, wish to follow Rimuru-sama,” a purple-haired bishojo declared energetically. Her side ponytail only further accentuated her appearance, making her look extra cute. She was so cute that I earnestly doubted if she really was a demon despite what Raphael-san just told me.

“I don’t object either! I, along with my two hundred soldiers, pledge my service to Rimuru-sama!” a young girl with a head of shining blonde hair announced rather arrogantly.

Seeing that a somewhat annoyed Diablo was about to stand up, I reached out my hand to stop him. She seemed to be trying her best to show me the maximum amount of courtesy she could muster. I saw no reason to scold her for that.

And so, I greeted everyone here.

The three ladies and their two hundred subordinates each.

In total, six hundred demons are about to join me—I mean, join the ranks of Diablo? He sure is a terrifying guy.

I never expected him to prepare an actual army.

“Kufufufufu, they each have two lieutenants, and there was one other person that caught my attention as well. That person has around one hundred subordinates of his own. Thus, there are approximately seven hundred in total. I, originally, was planning to recruit one thousand. I must apologize, I feel tremendously ashamed by my incompetence,” Diablo lamented.

“Oh, no no! Don’t be so hard on yourself. Let me see them first.”

So, it’s not six hundred, but seven hundred… That just seems a bit excessive.

“Oh, thank you so much! Before that, regarding how I recruited them, please allow me to report in detail—”

“Is it going to be long?”

“Yes, very long, in fact. However, this is to inform Rimuru-sama of my exploits—”

Diablo was ready to start his lengthy brag post.

I stopped him immediately.

“Then never mind. They probably don’t want to hear you boasting either, so tell me in the future when the chance arises.”

Although there wouldn’t be any chances like that.

Diablo froze up on the spot in shock.

Seeing his reaction, the three demonesses snickered among themselves. Obviously, they were just as worried about having to sit patiently through Diablo’s long and laborious speech.

Knowing that my judgement was correct sure was satisfying. I spoke again with a grin, “It’s inappropriate to let the others wait so long, so do introduce them as well.”

“—Y-yes sir. Then let us change the venue…”

Diablo’s face was filled with regret. But I wasn’t spoiling him this time.

I’ll admit that Diablo was an outstanding subordinate, but giving him treats like this in front of our new recruits would be a very bad influence. I couldn’t let people think that I was endorsing nepotism with him, so he would have to endure it for a bit. And of course, I didn’t want to waste time listening to him blabbering on and on—but since these were my genuine thoughts, there was no need to say them out loud.



Diablo quickly regained his composure. It was probably because he was a spiritual life-form that his spirit was so resilient.

Jeez, why are my words such a big deal to you? He always took whatever I said a little too seriously. What a fascinating guy.

“Since summoning all those people in town would be troublesome, let’s head to the labyrinth first,” Diablo said.

On the bright side, he seemed to have matured somewhat. At least now he was a bit more mindful of others.

—And just when I was about to be impressed by his newfound growth, Diablo quickly dashed my hopes.

“Kufufufufu, it will ruin the barrier if we gather those guys there. That magic circle was meticulously handcrafted by Rimuru-sama, so I must be extra cautious.”

You’re looking at this the completely wrong way! And just when I got my hopes up to boot.

Speaking of which, his words did remind me about something. Here in the capital city of Rimuru, we applied an experimental barrier that encompassed the entire area. It was an improved version of the holy purification barrier, and it could suppress the magicules leaked from monsters. Since many humans were visiting the town, this was created to guarantee their safety.

Even though it was slightly burdensome for the monster residents, it wasn’t a big enough deal to interfere with their daily lives. As long as they were able to handle it without any issues, we could ensure that the magicule density was maintained at a human-friendly level.

Moreover, it would prevent the casting of unauthorized magic and protect the town from wild monsters. Any monster capable of destroying the barrier had to be, at the very least, Special A rank; otherwise known as a calamity-class threat. And even if they weren’t, they still wouldn’t be able to just destroy it instantly. If anything abnormal were to happen to the barrier, we would notice right away. During that time, the guards would take care of the problem. Speaking of A ranked magic beasts, they weren’t a threat if they were non-intelligent. Mindless beasts would be a piece of cake for our elite soldiers.

I was just worried that there may be people among the seven hundred demons who were capable of breaking this important barrier. The three in front of me could easily destroy it, but perhaps there were even more dangerous demons amidst their ranks?

Diablo was no slouch when it came to evaluating people. When he said that those seven were capable, he clearly meant it…

Thus, we made our way to the research facility inside the labyrinth.

“I permit you to show yourself. Come now!” Diablo ordered.

Seven demons appeared right after and knelt down. Behind them were seven hundred more, that swiftly followed suit.

Should I say that this was to be expected?

There were six archdemons among the seven. The labyrinth had mechanisms that prevented the leakage of magicules, so anything that happened inside had minimal impact on the surface. That was why the demons were able to reveal all their ominous appearances.

Speaking of which, the seven in front of me were the ones Diablo personally recognized. They indeed had the presence of strong demons. Although one of them was a greater demon, he appeared to be a special case. Surely, he had some level of strength as well. I heard that this demon actively sought after a fight with Diablo, though Diablo promptly beat the crap out of him afterward.

He had guts, which was good. On the other hand, it was never a good idea to challenge someone without knowing how dangerous they were. With that being said, he was definitely an oddball.

According to Diablo, he had challenged him over and over again for some reason. This wasn’t a problem about having guts or not. He was definitely an idiot. However, Diablo seemed to have taken a liking to this greater demon. Since Diablo liked him, I wasn’t going to complain.

Moreover—

What I was more concerned about from the start, were the three demons. Each of the three had two subordinate archdemons under their service. Beyond magicule content alone, they definitely had more to them than what meets the eye.

«Answer. Demon race has no definite life span. As such, the older a demon is, the more combat experience it has. In the world of demons, they divide classes similar to how divisions between ‘Royalty and Nobility’ work. Among them, the ruling class has enormous authority, which distinguishes them from other demons like night and day—»

Is that so?

I’ve heard about the demon race having growth limits, and how they could at most only evolve to archdemon. After that point, instead of being judged based on their racial hierarchy, they were ranked based on their combat experience. A ‘class’ that distinguished their true strength, one could say.

Even though the demons may have similar magicule content, each demon’s fighting ability varied greatly. This included their knowledge, their ambition, and their willpower. The existence of a demon was established by combining these constructs.

Furthermore—

«—Archdemons are also classified in terms of the era they were born.»

There were legendary demons who had lived for over three thousand years —the prehistoric species.

There were great demons who had lived for over a thousand years—the ancient species.

There were those who had lived for over four hundred years or more—the medieval species.

There were those who had lived for around a hundred years—the early modern species.

There were those who had lived for only around half the lifespan of most humans—the modern species.

There were those who were just born—the late modern species.

And lastly—the primordials who were defined as the original demons.

«The extent of a demon’s power is determined by the number of years they’ve lived. The ruling class refers to the ancient species and older—the equivalent of counts and their superiors.»

Thanks for the detailed explanation.

Raphael-sensei was kind enough to provide in-depth information on demons for me. Much appreciated.

Well then, let’s put this knowledge to the test by observing the demons in front of me.

The three ladies who arrived first were among the ruling class, so let’s assume the six archdemons here were younger than the ancient species. Did this mean that, apart from the three from before, Diablo was also an old demon that was ranked higher than count?

I had no clue before, but it looked like I had gotten my hands on an incredible companion. This realization sent shivers down my spine. It was then that Diablo began speaking with a smile, “These fellows have great potential. I enlightened them about just how magnificent and amazing Rimuru-sama was, and they ended up crying and begging for the honor and privilege to pledge their loyalties to you. This was why I considered bringing them along.”

And so, Diablo laid out an engrossing tale. Although, I had the sneaking suspicion that he might have embellished the story a little bit there.

I scrutinized these seven demons. They probably did cry and beg, though I highly doubted whether or not they actually said anything about pledging their loyalty. After all, they showed signs of being roughed up here and there, especially the lower-ranked greater demon. I was amazed that he was even alive, given his current condition.

In short, Diablo was concocting fables again.

The seven demons looked like they wanted to say something, but with their superior right next to them, they didn’t dare speak up. They were pretty tame—I mean, probably because a certain someone had threatened them.

“From now on, we are the loyal servants of Demon Lord Rimuru-sama. We await your commands!”

The seven demons simultaneously bowed their heads and pledged their fealty to me, prompting the seven hundred demons behind to mirror their actions. The synchronized kneeling of seven hundred demons was quite the sight to behold.

Diablo smiled with satisfaction as he nodded, seemingly in approval.

What a terrifying guy. I felt relieved that he was fortunately on my side.

Since the demons were spiritual life-forms, without physical corpora, their mana would gradually dissipate if they remained in this world. It would be difficult for them to maintain this form for a long time, so it was imperative that we granted them bodies as soon as possible.

The method was simple.

First, use ‘Gluttonous King Beelzebuth’ to predate on the demons. Then, use ‘Wisdom King Raphael’ to fuse them onto the ‘Emulated Souls’ of the figures growing in the growth capsules.

Of course, the result was a resounding success. After obtaining their bodies, the demons began changing to their preferred forms. They would completely integrate in two to three days.

However, there were problems with the three demonesses. I felt that it was inappropriate to give them the same treatment as their subordinates. They were Diablo’s old friends, so I might as well give them some special privileges. After all, they were gorgeous.

It was time for me, a scholar of beauty, to shine. I wanted to remove their demonic characteristics while preserving their current charming appearances; I preferred that they looked more like humans. And with Raphael, it would be a piece of cake, which was why I proposed my assistance.

“Do you need me to adjust the appearance for you?” I offered.

“Could you really?”

“That would be great.”

“Then, please indeed help us with it.”

The white-haired beauty smiled and accepted my proposal. The other two, witnessing this, also allowed me to amend their bodies for them.

I readily agreed and commenced with modifications. It was a difficult task to change the exterior while preventing the skeletons from being affected. However, with my hands’ precise movements and Raphael-san’s flawless calculations, re-sculpting the three demonesses’ appearances was relatively straightforward. For them, once they grew accustomed to their skeletons, they would be able to control the flow of their own magicules and perfectly reproduce their self-image.

I could also slip them some extra goodies. I mixed gold into the magisteel skeletons and turned them into orichalcum. Since these were Diablo’s close friends, I could at least do this much for them. Gold was a widely used universal metal in this world as well. Its compatibility with magicules was excellent. In addition, not only its strength, but also its overall quality was above that of magisteel.

The three ladies all praised how beautiful the skeletons looked; they were eminently well received.

“ “ “Thank you so much, Rimuru-sama!” ” ”

Seeing how happy they were, I felt decidedly satisfied as well.

And so, my work here was done.

Now, we just had to wait for them to wake up.

Oh yeah, it’s inconvenient not to name them—and just as I thought so—

“Oi oi oi, what have you guys been up to since last time?”

“Yahoo—Rimuru! Did Diablo bring his subordinates? Are you gonna introduce them to—eh?”

Dino, Ramiris and Veldora demonstrated their hobby of rubbernecking and ran to us.

“Just as Ramiris said, Diablo has brought his subordinates. These people are all demons, that’s why I was preparing the bodies back then,” I explained to Dino, who was out of the loop.

“Actually, I’ve heard about all that…”

Then why are you so surprised if you’ve already heard about it?

“This is another miraculous sight. Diablo sure is incredible, to suddenly assemble so many demons.”

Ah, it was because of the large gathering. Indeed, there definitely were a lot of them. It was thanks to Veldora’s remark that I realized why Dino was shocked. Had I not heard about it beforehand, I would have been even more shocked.

“No, that’s not all. I was kind of scared as well, since the three over there seem to have lived for a looong long time…” Ramiris admitted with a flabbergasted expression while Dino nodded along.

“Oh, they appear to be the ancient species of the ruling class. They apparently have lived over a thousand years,” I added.

“Eh…?”

“Did you make a mistake somehow?”

What mistake? There’s no way Raphael-san’s explanation could have been mistaken.

«…Negative. It is a misunderstanding. Because there is no knowing the precise time and year of their existence, the deduction is purely speculative. The so-called ‘lived for over a thousand years’ can even include those who have remained alive for over thirty thousand years.»

I see, this was the correct definition. The one description, ‘lived for over a thousand years,’ included three thousand, four thousand, and even ten thousand years. Raphael didn’t make a mistake, but it wasn’t necessarily the correct interpretation either.

“Hmm—even if you guys say so…it’s inappropriate to ask a girl her age,” warned Ramiris.

“GAHAHAHA, I learned about this lesson as well. It will make you seem like a troublemaker and piss people off,” Veldora boasted.

“In any case, how long they’ve lived isn’t that important. It’s enough to know that the powerful demons of the ruling class have become our companions.”

“If Rimuru can accept that, I won’t object.”

“What an impressive mindset, I wouldn’t be able to mimic it—”

“Kufufufufu, as expected from Rimuru-sama. What you meant must be ‘It didn’t matter how long they’ve lived, but how they’ve lived’?”

Eh, Eeehhh?

While Ramiris and Veldora voiced their opinions, Diablo seemed to have given a really good summary. Feeling slightly embarrassed, I still nodded in agreement, nonetheless.

Dino and the other’s interruption almost made me forget about what I was going to do. I wanted to name the demons. Let’s cut to the chase this time. I planned on giving them supercar names like Diablo. I wasn’t trying to imply that their price tag indicated their strength, but was simply just borrowing the names of premium sports cars.

“From today onward, you shall be known as Testarossa, Ultima, and Carrera,” I announced in a majestic tone to the three golden skeletons floating inside the growth capsules.

The first female had exquisitely shining white hair and snow-like pale skin. In contrast to her porcelain skin, her elegant eyes and soft, striking lips were a brilliant shade of crimson. That touch of red reminded me of the beautiful Ferrari Testarossa sports car.

The violet-haired, energetic girl was the one I named Ultima. She was full of energy, a characteristic quite reminiscent of the Ultima GTR supercar.

Carrera, which went without saying, referred to the famous Porsche automobile. The blonde-haired girl had a pair of coquettish eyes, just like this famous car that picks its owner.

“Hold on, oi!” Dino, alone, scrambled in a panic. “You can’t just name these people so casually—”

It was too late to give advice like that now. There was no use panicking at this point.

Look at Ramiris and Veldora; they weren’t the slightest bit freaked out—

“Isn’t he always like that?”

“It’s normal for Rimuru to do something like this!”—and so on and so forth. They quickly changed the topic thereafter.

As soon as I finished speaking, the three archdemons completed their possession. Flesh and blood vessels began to cover the golden skeletons, quickly shaping into the naked bodies of goddesses. Soon after, magicules transformed into clothes that covered their bare skin.

The growth capsules shattered, unable to contain the youki that was surging from their bodies. That was to be expected. After all, due to my naming, they had all evolved to demon peers.

They were on a completely different level than before. Their overwhelming power was fearsome, coupled with a strength beyond comprehension.

“This can’t be… Even Ex-Demon Lord Karion can’t hold a candle to them? Hey, just how deep does this rabbit hole go?! Thank goodness I’m not hostile to Rimuru,” Dino moaned, though no one paid attention to him.

Vesta, who arrived late, was mumbling in a corner by himself, “I didn’t see anything, ahaha, I don’t know, nope, saw nothing! None of my business…”

Watching him mindlessly bash his head against the wall, repeating the same words, was truly saddening. But let’s just pretend we didn’t see that.

And just like that, we called it a day.

Depleting my magicule stores was never good. I gotta be more careful. To see how much more I could spare, I should take it easy and name a couple more. I suppose it was the right choice to limit the naming to three people a day.

With that in mind, I began to name the demons over the course of the next few days.

Moss.

Veyron.

Agera.

Esprit.

Zonda.

Cien.

Venom.

As such, I named the strongest ones first.

Testarossa’s lieutenants were Moss and Cien.

Ultima’s lieutenants were Veyron and Zonda.

Carrera’s lieutenants were Agera and Esprit.

The demon that piqued Diablo’s interest was Venom.

The three girls alone were already a huge military force in their own right. In any case, the addition of these three demon peers was just the beginning. The seven demons completed their evolution the moment they were named. They casually hopped out of their capsules.

Two of them were now demon peers. The other four were still archdemons. Nonetheless, their auras felt different from before. Although I couldn’t put my finger on it, it felt as if their limiters had been removed. In addition, Venom also evolved into an archdemon, greatly boosting his power.

I, on the other hand, was stunned to the point that my mind blanked. To put it simply, you couldn’t simply find demon peers in the wild. They were all legendary demons that reigned supreme like the demon lords. Including Diablo, our nation now had six of them. Having this many definitely detracted that ‘legendary’ feeling though.

What should we do with all these new additions then? I personally wanted to recruit some people who were well-versed in politics and finance. Could any of them handle such a role? I had my doubts, but it couldn’t hurt to ask anyway…

While I was pondering this, I still had to figure out names for the other seven hundred demons. Since I had made a promise to Diablo, I would see it through to the end.

However, I soon became aware of an unexpected miscalculation. According to Raphael-san, I could just name the demons by consuming the magicules within the growth capsule—what a pleasant surprise!

And so, with this motivating information in hand, it took me only two days to finish naming everyone else.

The seven-hundred-strong army of demons was now kneeling before me. Most of them were originally lesser demons, but with their new bodies and names, they were able to evolve into greater demons. And just as I had suspected, regardless of where they stood on the racial hierarchy, all of them were at least rank A.

We now had seven hundred new subordinates that surpassed rank A 8 . While it might sound weird coming from me, this excessive addition to our military force was quite frankly ridiculous. Some of them even evolved to archdemons.

I might have just overdone it again…

Our new military power was terrifying. In fact, the three ladies from the start—Testarossa, Ultima, and Carrera—were already insanely strong.

Welp, no point thinking about it now. I’ll just pretend like nothing significant happened. Yep, let’s go with that.

This was the best way to maintain a tranquil mind.

“Rimuru-sama, we would like to offer our utmost thanks for bestowing upon us these beautiful names and this wonderful power. Please allow us to henceforth pledge our loyalties to you!” Testarossa vowed on behalf of everyone else present.

“Mhm!” I nodded, then offered encouraging words like: “Do your best!”

Now that I thought about it, Diablo should take full responsibility for these guys.

I merely kept my end of the bargain. Surely, Diablo will educate these demons well, I thought to myself, throwing any notion of responsibility out the window.

While Rimuru was escaping reality—

“Noir-chan—I mean, Diablo. I finally understand why you revere Rimuru-sama so much.”

“Mhm, what an incredible character.”

“Not only did he completely see through us, he even dismissed us as an irrelevant threat. Yet the ancient Demon Lord Dino was so scared, he turned pale in front of us.”

Testarossa, Ultima, and Carrera noisily chattered.

Little did Rimuru know, the three originally weren’t planning to pledge their loyalty to him. They were only temporarily lending their strength and subordinates because their old friend Diablo reached out to them.

………

……

…

They all had immense longevity. They were the strongest beings in this world. And so were the demons that served them.

Following human definitions, two of their servants were of the so-called prehistoric species. These demons had been alive for a remarkably long time and had never lost a fight. They were Moss and Veyron.

Moss—who was undefeated for over tens of thousands of years—was the archduke of the demon world. His strength was only inferior to the primordials.

Veyron—who had lived for more than four thousand years—was a cunning and sly marquis. He lost several times to Moss and had repeatedly reincarnated.

The other servants were no simpletons either.

Agera—early modern species—held the rank of viscount.

Esprit—the viscount that never suffered a single defeat for the past five hundred years.

Zonda—the baron that never suffered a single defeat for the past three hundred years.

Cien—yet another baron that had never been defeated for the past three hundred years.

Agera was a special individual. After surrendering to Carrera’s service three hundred years ago, he hadn’t lost to anyone since. What was rare for demons, however, was Agera’s specialty. Unlike most demons, his proficiency was in weapons, such as the katana, instead of magic.

Esprit, Zonda, and Cien were like Veyron in the sense that they had reincarnated over and over again. They were born in ancient times and were individuals very similar to the primordials.

Venom was another special individual, instead born with a Unique Skill. Although he hadn’t been around for too long, his rate of growth was rather astonishing.

These powerful entities that even excelled in the demon world were all recruited by Diablo. Rimuru knew nothing of it and held a careless attitude like he usually did. He was even reckless enough to give them ‘names.’

And as a result—the demons were reborn with power to defy the ‘Truth of the World.’ They became a legion beyond comprehension. They were fearsome and evil demons. In spite of numbering less than one thousand members, this group undoubtedly could be called a legion.

The Black Numbers. 9 They were the strongest force of the Tempest Federation, and the symbol of fear.

—Or at least, widely known by generations to come.

The moment the demons were freed from the growth capsules, the Black Numbers was born.

………

……

…

Testarossa’s white cheeks blushed as she muttered, enthralled, “Ah, how interesting. As opposed to constantly playing the same game of corrupting nations, or fighting for supremacy with you guys, it’s so much more fun observing that lord.”

“Yeah, I think so too,” Ultima voiced her support. “Rather than torturing those naive demons, it’ll be more interesting to work in this nation.”

“Indeed,” Carrera agreed with them both. “Just like you guys said, Rimuru-sama is incredible. The ‘Menace’ I unleashed just then was like a child’s play to him! It really made me feel excited, serving a lord like that. Now that he gave me a ‘name,’ I have genuinely decided to pledge my loyalty to him,” she affirmed, giving off a bright smile.

“I was planning to kill you then, you know?” Diablo proclaimed, looking deadly serious. But he probably could tell that Carrera wasn’t lying, so he had no intention of pursuing the matter any further with her.

Seeing how Diablo was acting, Testarossa announced: “By the way, Diablo. I have to thank you. When you first found me, I was actually intending to kill you.”

“I know. You’re that type of woman after all. I was greatly intrigued about why you would accept my proposal. Had it been you, you would have fought me until you were satisfied.”

The ‘Blanc’ Diablo knew was a real rebel and would never obey anyone else. Duels between demons were all about knowledge and techniques. Even though Diablo had evolved to a demon peer, he was still concerned regarding whether he could have won against Blanc or not. However, that uncertainty was part of the fun.

“Indeed, we are strong. Do you think there is anyone in this world stronger than us demons?”

“No,” Diablo answered Testarossa’s question with a satisfied smirk.

Her smile deepened as she continued, “Right? That’s why I became interested in your precious master, Diablo—someone who was capable of charming one of my kin, one of the strongest people in the world. Had he been too boring, I was planning to kill him on the spot.”

“Me too,” Ultima chirped.

“Hmph, even though I’ve already given up that thought, I did consider dueling him right there,” Carrera added.

Diablo smacked his mouth anxiously in response.

“It was commendable that you guys didn’t embarrass me in front of Rimuru-sama. However, if any of you really were to have done that—”

“Don’t worry, Diablo. Similar to how you are proud of your name, I also took a liking to the name ‘Testarossa’ Rimuru-sama gave me. I swore with this name to serve him. Don’t you also think so, Ultima and Carrera?”

“Mhm!”

“Just like what I said before.”

The three ladies nodded almost simultaneously.

Diablo shook his head rather helplessly, “Anyhow, apart from you three, all the other trash probably won’t be of much help to Rimuru-sama. This unfortunately can’t be helped. Just don’t give me unnecessary trouble. You guys are not only answering to Rimuru-sama, but to me as well.”

“‘You are the one who can’t be helped!’ is what should’ve been my line. I suppose this is returning the favor for introducing us to Rimuru-sama.”

“Fine, I don’t object.”

“All we have to do is to aid Rimuru-sama and eventually surpass you in status. But until then, I suppose I shall allow you to give us orders.”

Diablo was extremely anxious, but since the three agreed to obey his orders, he didn’t press the issue any further.

The number of people that Diablo tolerated could be counted on one hand. From that alone, you could tell just how special those three were to him.

And so, unbeknownst to Rimuru, a chain of command was established.

—I’m not sure whether this conversation above really took place or not.

While I was planning on having a nice, peaceful day, Diablo whispered something to me, “—We had this conversation once before. Although these people are under my command, there’s no telling what they will do. Although there’s no need for Rimuru-sama to worry, please keep that in mind!”

“Uh-oh.”

Eh, what is this guy talking about? Aren’t those three recruited by you?!

Well, there was no point in crying over spilled milk. All I wanted was to be happy and have a nice, peaceful day. And now he’d dumped this unnecessary problem onto me. I was looking forward to new companions, you know…

Never mind. I’m not sure how much of what he said was the truth. After all, they were under Diablo’s command. He should take some responsibility, at the end of the day.

Employer responsibility? What’s that? Can I eat it?

So there’s that. And so, I very casually tossed my problems for other people to handle.

