

Chapter 5

The Hero’s Awakening

Ahh, so sleepy.

Hinata was on the edge of a bottomless abyss, fighting against an almost irresistible temptation. Her life flashed before her eyes—the memories from her childhood to the present.

Right, I remember now. When I was young, my father would spend time playing with me.

Since she could only see the present, she had forgotten these important memories.

In the past, Hinata once had a normal family.

But everything went to hell when Hinata’s father’s company went bankrupt. Had father not strayed to devious ways, mother would not have gone insane. Hinata didn’t have even the slightest intention of imagining just how much her father was suffering.

That was why, even to this day, she still hated him. She lived in hatred, trying to escape from the unfortunate reality that was her family. Unable to forgive her father’s sin, Hinata focused the blame on him to justify her own actions.

A common trait in humans was that their hearts were weak.

Her father was the same.

Had the family supported each other, perhaps things would have ended differently…

Perhaps it’s laughable for someone like me to act all high and mighty about justice. Perhaps that’s why I pursued the shadow of my father in that man…

This sense of justice—regardless of if he denied it—she felt saved by his unbounded good-heartedness.

Hinata’s heart had struggled and was about to burst until the one that brought enlightenment to her and put her at ease had undoubtedly—

With that being said, that was just what Hinata thought. He would probably be very troubled if she shared this sentiment with him. But sometimes she let herself dwell on this sweet and tempting possibility that perhaps he would accept it.

Wouldn’t that make me just like what Granbell said? After all this time, I still couldn’t forgive myself.

Realizing this, she felt rather melancholic.

All her life, Hinata had been burdened by the thought that her actions were unforgivable. Had she not been the person she was, mother would not have felt sad. Even if she were to go back to her original world, no one would celebrate her return.

That’s why she decided to help as many people in this world instead.

I want to save as many people as possible—this thought became Hinata’s driving force.

But I have grown tired. I just want to rest in this dark abyss—

And slowly, Hinata’s consciousness was devoured by darkness. Her senses disappeared, her doubts vanished, and she had no more regrets—

«You can’t fall asleep—!»

An intense call woke Hinata up.

Is that…Chloe?

This thought brought Hinata back to reality.

No, this was hardly what you’d call reality. Her circumstances were extremely peculiar.

Through a window floating in mid-air, she could see the world outside. Or rather, she did not see through her eyes, but instead could feel it through her heart.

«That’s because Hinata-oneechan is inside me.»

What does that—before Hinata could ask, she recalled what had happened to her.

R-right, I was struck by Granbell…but am I not dead?

As all her memories slowly came back, Hinata fell into a state of confusion. Even with her ‘Mathematician’ running at full capacity, she couldn’t reach a logical answer. In fact, it was already a miracle that she was able to use her Skill under these circumstances.

«I will explain everything to you. Just try and stay conscious. Now then, I hope you can synchronize with me.»

Synchronize?

«Yes, can you see a light ahead?»

Hearing this, Hinata concentrated her mind in the direction Chloe spoke of. Soon enough, she could see a dim light in the direction of her voice.

«Yes, over there!»

Hinata approached the light.

It felt as if she was physically moving her body, while in reality, only her consciousness was moving forward.

And then—

The moment Hinata’s consciousness came into contact with the light, her consciousness was tinged with rainbow light.

A while later:

“Have you woken up?”

‹This is…?›

“Umm, looks like you’ve stabilized. Here’s the thing, Hinata-oneechan—”

‹You can just call me Hinata.›

“…Um, got it! Here’s the thing: Hinata is inside me, in my ‘soul,’ in particular. If not for this, Hinata would have been devoured by ‘Infinite Prison’! I think this is the first time that something like this has happened to you, so you must be confused, but this is all true.”

Hearing her words, Hinata began to understand her situation. She quickly realized the reason behind her not having a body and that her ‘soul’ was inside Chloe. And the ‘Infinite Prison’ Chloe mentioned was the bottom of that dark abyss.

And so, Hinata expressed her gratitude. ‹I see, thanks for waking me up.›

Chloe explained many things to Hinata later.

According to her, when Hinata was struck, her ‘soul’ ended up in Chloe’s. Normally, your soul would leave your body after death and slowly dissipate in the air. However, due to Hinata’s soul interfering with Chloe’s, it led to such an incredible event.

This explanation alone was still not convincing enough for Hinata, but there was something else on her mind. Agitated, Hinata interjected. ‹By the way, is Rimuru all right? What about Luminas-sama? What happened to Granbell?›

However, Chloe remained calm.

“Um—please calm down and listen to me. This is the ancient era.”

‹Huh?›

“Look there, can you see that mountain?”

‹Yeah…eh, could that be?! The spirit hill 12 of Mount Liora? But that—where is this? If going by geo-location, shouldn’t this be the holy land of Lubelius…?›

It was only natural for Hinata to feel confused.

The only thing she could see was the vague summit of Mount Liora, far in the distance. Since there was nothing in the way, she could see things far away.

Indeed—they were standing in an empty plain. However, to her knowledge, this should be a city. Yet there was nothing there.

She wouldn’t want to consider the other possibility—that the city had been wiped out entirely due to the earth-shattering battle among powerful individuals. However, if that were the case, there wouldn’t be any grass growing here.

—In other words—

“I know that it’s a bit hard to believe, but I am not lying.”

Chloe was right.

In short, this was the holy land—or where the holy land was meant to be in the future. Hinata and Chloe had traveled through time to the ancient era before the nation of Lubelius had even been born. It was said that Luminas would move her nation here in another two thousand years or more from now.

With that being the case—

‹There’s no way…?›

Despite her realization, Hinata couldn’t help her utterance.

No way, this is way too strange—Hinata thought doubtfully.

‹Chloe, how can you tell that this is the past?›

Indeed, that was her question.

Even if Hinata was to accept something as ridiculous as time travel, how would Chloe know that this was the past? Wouldn’t there also be a possibility that this was a future where everything was destroyed?

Indeed, not only were there no buildings around, there was no trace of any human occupation either. Since there weren’t any ruins, it was more likely to be the past. But even if that were the case, the ruins could be buried underground, so surely, she could not have concluded that it was the past.

Yet, Chloe had spoken without hesitation.

That was why Hinata was in doubt.

Seeing Hinata’s reaction, Chloe replied with a smile.

“It’s simple. Because this isn’t the first time I’ve been here. Every time I lost control over my power, I went back to the past… Since I’ve been to this place before, I remembered.”

“—HUH?” Hinata thought to herself. She couldn’t say anything out of shock.

As she processed, she began to gradually accept Chloe’s explanation and tried to understand the situation more.

‹Well, I guess you will explain to me in detail what this is all about, right?› Hinata asked, determined.

Chloe’s explanation was indeed very shocking to Hinata.

It appeared that Chloe’s Skill involved time leaping. Emphasis on ‘appeared,’ because Chloe didn’t know this too well herself, either. She mentioned that she couldn’t consciously activate it. At most, she could recall some events from the past.

However, that alone shouldn’t be underestimated.

This ‘past’ was relative to Chloe’s own experiences. And since she had been time leaping over and over, her version of the ‘past’ included events in the linear future of the timeline.

However, she couldn’t seem to recall all her memories clearly…

Human memories could be very ambiguous at times. One may not be able to recall what happened exactly at what time. It was especially so when having over two thousand years’ worth of memories. It was far too difficult to solve the issue.

‹When did you awaken this power?› Hinata asked.

Chloe thought for a bit before answering. “Well, when I was rescued by Rimuru-sensei. In order to stabilize me and the other children, Rimuru-sensei brought us to the ‘Dwelling of the Spirits’ to host a spirit, but—”

Chloe explained that the thing that had taken her as its host was not a spirit, but ‘her power from the future.’ Somehow, her power was self-aware.

“—I think I died in the future. That’s why it seems to repeatedly come back to me at that point in time.”

‹In other words, the ‘Dwelling of the Spirits’ is where your awakening starts?›

“No, that’s not it. At the time, I don’t remember anything. But I will regain my memories the moment I go back in time.”

‹Then you’ve been repeating the same thing over and over?›

“It seems to be the case. I can only remember the details from the last time I was here. Although, there are memories from different lives mixed up in there at times.”

I see—Hinata thought to herself. She was reassured by Chloe’s words.

If she had to repeat this over and over again, it would be hell. The human heart wasn’t strong enough to continue fighting for the same result over and over.

Hinata listened to Chloe’s story in silence later on.

Chloe would always travel back to the same era. Perhaps that was the limit of the time leap.

As for the location she would be in, it seemed to be dependent on when Chloe lost control of her power.

From her last memory, Hinata had died in the Great Jura Forest.

“Rimuru-sensei died, and Veldora was revived—”

‹Huh? Rimuru died? Killed by who? And how? How can anyone manage to kill that cockroach Rimuru…›

“Well, after I accepted my future self from the ‘Dwelling of the Spirits,’ my memories from before leaping back in time have changed a lot. After all, by the time my power went out of control at the church, Rimuru-san was still alive. This was possibly the best outcome I could hope for.”

Hinata noticed Chloe’s address of Rimuru as ‘-san,’ but decided to ignore this detail to avoid interrupting her. She wanted to hear the rest.

Chloe began to summarize key memories from the previous timeline after her visit to the ‘Dwelling of the Spirits.’

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After saving the children, Rimuru used ‘Spatial Movement’ to return to Tempest. However, the timing of his opening the portal was a little different, so he never ran into Hinata.

The otherworlders who were about to invade Tempest were given a proper beatdown, sending a message to the nations around the Great Jura Forest that Tempest was a force to be reckoned with.

Knowing how dangerous Rimuru was, no nation dared to move recklessly. However, since the Farmus Kingdom remained intact, they began to increase their military reserves as they observed Rimuru’s nation closely.

Something happened among the Ten Great Demon Lords too, but as far as she knew, there were only rumors.

Rimuru’s relationship with the grandmaster of the Freedom Association, Yuuki, grew closer and closer, which allowed him to start communicating with other nations. However, due to the interference from the kingdom of Farmus, problems arose.

Even with that being the case, Rimuru did not give up and tried many different things.

The children’s school was one of them.

Staying at the school built by the Tempest Federation, Chloe and the kids studied alongside monster children just like in this timeline.

However, things quickly took a turn for the worst.

The Western Nations—at the request of the council—formed a fighting force led by Hinata to invade Tempest.

‹Me?›

“Mm, Hinata. It was really scary.”

‹I…am really sorry then.›

“It’s all right. In the end, you managed to reach a peaceful conclusion.”

According to Chloe, in that timeline, Hinata and Rimuru’s duel ended in a draw. It was due to the children’s involvement—especially Chloe, that Hinata stopped.

“Hinata said that she would ‘observe a bit more’ and made peace with Rimuru-san.”

At the time, Hinata had likely found that the whole thing was strange, so she began to investigate by herself. Her investigation revealed that the Farmus Kingdom was behind all this, and that was when she decided to believe in Rimuru.

Five years passed after that.

Rimuru never became a demon lord. He had lived as the ruler of the Great Jura Forest and led the same busy daily life as before.

After making peace with Hinata, he established stronger relations with Lubelius as well. For some reason, Luminas kept an eye on Rimuru too, and peace was maintained.

Chloe grew up to be very strong. She even became good friends with Milim, who occasionally dropped by to play.

However, this peace didn’t last.

The fateful day arrived—the Empire began their invasion.

“I’d fallen in love with Rimuru-san at that time. I wanted to be selfish and told him not to go to the battlefield. The Empire was powerful and had many terrifying weapons. I didn’t think he would win, but Rimuru-san smiled and said, ‘Don’t worry, just leave it to me!’”

“In reality, he was also scared, but he still put on a brave front. He even gave me the mask…”

‹Shizu-sensei’s…›

“Umm, yes. The one I gave her.”

This was an event that would happen in the future, yet at the same time, had already taken place in the past. It was a circle of repetition.

Chloe continued the story.

Rimuru never returned from the final battle, and the Tempest Federation fell. This was because Veldora had suddenly been resurrected. Enraged, Veldora rained chaos everywhere. As a result, the Empire’s army was decimated.

Afterward, Luminas, Hinata, Chloe, and the others fought together against Veldora, fearing that human society would be destroyed if he were not dealt with.

But, before they could finish their battle with Veldora—

Hinata was murdered by an unknown individual.

Chloe saw a flash of light piercing through Hinata’s chest, which triggered her ability. She was sent back in time, but could not remember what happened next.

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Even if her experiences differed slightly each time, Chloe’s loop would repeat in this fashion regardless.

The key was Hinata’s death, and it was the same this time.

This time was the same. Which means that I die every time…

Hinata was quite bewildered. It was rather discomforting and awkward.

Yet Chloe did not mind Hinata and continued.

“But this time was very special. Usually, Rimuru-san would already be dead before I leap into the past. He’s never seen me time-leap before!”

Rimuru would always die from some unknown cause. Until now. Rimuru was fine this time when Chloe leaped. Hinata had seen it too, so perhaps they could expect a different outcome for once.

Indeed, many things had changed compared to last time.

Perhaps Chloe’s endless cycle could end here too—Hinata silently decided.

‹…Considering that guy, he’d probably think that he could pull through under those circumstances somehow, even if it’s illogical.›

“Right?! If I get back to that time period, Rimuru-san will still be there. No one will die this time, and we can find who killed Rimuru-san and Hinata!”

Just as Chloe had said, compared to the last timeline, the entire situation had improved.

The future is filled with hope—Hinata thought.

‹By the way, how come things turned out so differently this time around? What could the cause behind this be…?›

“Hehe, actually, I managed to regain some memories of the future when I was in the ‘Dwelling of the Spirits’ this time. That’s why I acted all spoiled to Rimuru-san back in Ingracia, just to have him stay a little bit longer.”

And then he gave me this—as Chloe said so, she pulled the mask out of nowhere.

‹That’s—I see. You got it this time as well. Then surely you can get back to that direction in the future.›

Hinata was very mindful of the mask too. Because of the different situation at the time of her death, she thought Chloe might not have been able to get the mask. Hinata considered the possibility that if things had changed, the mask wouldn’t be given to Shizue at the right time. But since Chloe had acquired it, there was no need to worry about it.

How clever. Impressed, Hinata began to plan for the future. Since she decided to trust Chloe’s words, she wanted to place her hope in the future.

It was then that Chloe whispered something to Hinata:

“By the way, let me be clear about something. Even though I really like Hinata, I won’t let you have Rimuru-san!”

‹Huh?›

“Between girls, there are some wars that can’t be negotiated—even Alice-san said that!”

They really are just kids—Hinata couldn’t help but give a wry smile, hearing Chloe’s words. Me liking Rimuru? No way…

But she felt rather troubled at the same time, thinking of the possibilities…

“Were you just panicking?” At Chloe’s teasing remark, Hinata firmly changed the topic.

‹Not at all! Never mind that, let’s get to work!›

—Now that I think about it, this kid has over two thousand years of memories after repeating this over and over, right? I must not be deceived by her appearance. I must not treat her like some innocent child…

The reality of the situation finally dawned on Hinata.

And so, the two, Chloe and Hinata, embarked on a bizarre adventure together.

Hinata and Chloe decided to first visit one of the few acquaintances they had who was actually alive in this era—Luminas.

Chloe started off without hesitation.

‹Do you know where she is, though?›

“Umm, there was a massive battle over there, and I went check it out.”

‹Was it because of Veldora?›

“Uh-huh. Even though he is friends with Rimuru-san now, he was an enemy before. It looked like he was fighting someone, so I wanted to help.”

“Is that so? That someone was Luminas, right?”

“Yeah. I want to go early this time before Veldora-san causes any trouble to tell everyone to evacuate. I will try to get Luminas to trust me and help me.”

Chloe sure was determined.

She also had a good sense of direction, unlike Rimuru. She didn’t need Hinata’s advice at all, and they made it to their destination without once losing their way.

And so, they arrived at Luminas’s castle.

‹So this is Night Rose…no wonder Luminas-sama was so proud of it.›

It was a beautiful castle.

Even though it was completely man-made, it looked like an entirely natural fortress. It held a great sense of majesty to it. There were sharp ridges like the thorns of roses in various places. Those seemed to be guards’ outposts.

Soon enough, someone noticed Chloe approaching the castle, and a large number of vampires ran out.

Chloe spoke up to the soldiers surrounding her. “I am here to see Luminas, please lead the way.”

Hinata was surprised at her words.

‹H-hold on! Do you think they’ll let you leave in one piece with you calling Luminas by her name here?›

Even with Hinata’s warning Chloe was composed.

‹It’s all right, I am friends with Luminas!›

‹Wouldn’t that be after you save them from Veldora’s wrath? You are a total stranger now.›

It was then that Chloe realized that she had confused her memories.

‹Ah, right. I’ve done this too many times and thought they already finished fighting. And I always get scolded by Hinata for this too…›

Of course you’d get scolded, Hinata thought. Regardless, she began to worry about how things would turn out as well.

Indeed, even though Chloe had gotten used to her situation, this was a first for Hinata. It’s better to have a fresh view when dealing with these things—Hinata thought to herself.

That’s why Hinata proposed that she should take charge for Chloe.

‹Listen now, Chloe. Let me give you advice. Don’t reply immediately, but listen to my opinion first.›

‹Umm—got it. I figured this would be better too. If I accidentally say the wrong thing, history could be changed.›

At Chloe’s prompt agreement, Hinata felt a bit reassured.

However, upon realizing the significance of the words she just said, it also sent shivers down her spine.

Hold on a second! She’s right. Any slight deviation can alter history. We have such a hopeful future, but if we were to do something wrong, wouldn’t it all be for nothing?!

At this, Hinata realized that her stopping Chloe’s reckless act was the right thing to do. Even though she had just made a major mistake, it was fine as long as she avoided repeating her mistake later. It’s still salvageable, Hinata thought to herself.

Soon after, they were brought before Luminas.

Of course, it was not as simple as it sounded. Chloe had to force the soldiers to let her pass.

Furious to the point of trembling, Hinata snapped at Chloe, ‹Seriously, do you even remember what I just said?›

‹It’s fine, I’ve had similar experiences in the past,› said Chloe, casually. ‹I had to barge in so I could inform her about Veldora’s attack!› She sounded as if she had done nothing wrong. Since she claimed that she had done this in the past, Hinata couldn’t come up with a retort.

Luckily enough, we haven’t had any problems. By the looks of this, I’ll have to have another look at the information we have…

The thought in itself, induced a headache. Hinata sighed.

“That evil dragon will come here soon, you say?”

“Yes. I know Luminas is strong, but you won’t be able to win against Veldora. He will destroy the castle too, so it’s best if you can all take shelter as soon as possible.”

Although Hinata’s ‘Mathematician’ analyzed Luminas’s personality and said it was fine to tell Luminas the truth, Hinata still felt uneasy. Is this really okay?

Obviously, they wouldn’t tell her the whole truth. Some important parts had to be left out.

“Hmm, I do not know you, so I cannot trust you easily. Do you have any proof?”

Luminas’s tone turned a bit gentler. But that was nothing to be reassured about. That was just an act to bait the foolish.

Hinata knew this well enough, which was why she began to advise Chloe calmly.

She acquired information about what year they were in from Chloe, and by processing all the information in her head, Hinata calculated the time Veldora would invade.

“At the fastest, Veldora will arrive here in two weeks. At a minimum, he will come by fall, so you must be on guard.”

Luminas was no fool.

She could tell if Chloe was lying by analyzing her heart rate and such. Even though Chloe could be lying, she did intimidate those proud soldiers like they were nothing. So there was no reason for her to be a liar.

In the end, Luminas decided to drop the decision of trusting her or not, and instead allowed Chloe to stay at the castle.

Later on, Veldora came.

Luminas fought valiantly.

While Chloe wanted to join Luminas in battle, she was stopped by Hinata.

“Listen closely now, you did not fight against Veldora here in the previous timeline, right?”

“Umm, but…”

“Then you should forget about the other memories. The important thing here is to repeat what you did last time. You must tell Luminas about the future in order to win her trust. However, you must not tell her what happens in the future.” This was important, so Hinata repeated it. “You only need to follow the road you took last time, so it connects the past with the future we came from.”

Overwhelmed by her determination, Chloe could only nod in agreement.

If Chloe were to share her memories of the future—for instance, Granbell’s betrayal—Luminas would undoubtedly take him out quickly. In that way, it may be impossible for Chloe and Hinata to return to the future where they came from.

It had to be avoided no matter what. Hinata and Chloe reconfirmed this.

Even though the castle was destroyed by Veldora, due to Chloe’s active involvement, there weren’t many casualties. This therefore aligned with the history Hinata knew.

Since Veldora’s attack proved Chloe right, Luminas seemed to trust Chloe too. And so Luminas and Chloe became good friends.

In her secret chamber, Luminas met with Chloe.

“So you’ve leapt through time on several occasions already, Chloe?”

“Umm, I have about two thousand years’ worth of memories. Would you like to hear it out?”

“Very much so, do tell.”

With Luminas’s approval, Chloe began to tell her about herself.

That was of course while consulting with Hinata.

Chloe told Luminas that she would be active as a Hero for two thousand years.

After that time later, there would be a slime called Rimuru. After going onto the battlefield, that slime never returned and then Veldora was released. She also told her that Luminas made friends with Hinata. But that Hinata would be killed by an unknown individual.

Neither Chloe nor Hinata knew who killed her and Rimuru. Even though she couldn’t give this particular detail, she did reveal information about the circumstances of their deaths and more.

“I see, and you intend to change the future?”

“No. I hope it will be aligned as closely as possible. Any major changes would likely result in a very different future.”

“I suppose you have a point. I wouldn’t complain about a future like that either. But if I must say, I would not accept the fact that the person called Hinata was killed. I have never even met this friend, so I don’t know what to expect,” Luminas said smiling.

Luminas…thank you. I never thought you’d say this, I am truly happy.

It was rather unbelievable that Luminas would say this due to her cold appearance. But she was, in heart, very kind.

Hinata knew that very well.

“Then I promise to be at your aid. It might be difficult to convince Roy, but everyone else should be fine. I will let everyone know that you are my friend.” Luminas’s eyes sharpened. “So, what is your plan for the future?”

In response, Chloe declared, very naturally, “Just like before, I want to become a Hero and help those in need!”

Seeing how straight-forward she was, Luminas smiled brightly.

“Is that so? How interesting. It’s also quite intriguing to know the person your fate revolves around. What should you be known as then?”

Chloe and Hinata paused a bit.

‹It probably would be bad if the name Chloe becomes widely known.›

‹Umm, Leon-oniichan will definitely find out about it.›

Regardless, neither Hinata nor anyone else ever found out the actual name of the Hero anyway. Even though they had given Luminas her actual name, it was best that they hide this from the world.

‹What should we do?›

‹What did you do before?›

‹Well, I’ve always come up with a random name. Usually I don’t have to give any name before leaving.›

Then you should do the same—Hinata was about to say this when she recalled Rimuru’s words.

He complained a lot about the trouble he had when naming monsters.

That’s why Hinata decided to throw out a name she thought of in that instant.

‹Right, since your name is Chloe, and have the Unique Skill ‘Time Travel,’ we can combine it with the god of time, Chronos, to be ‘Chronoa’?›

‹Why not Chronoa?›

‹We’d get exposed quite easily if we spelt it that way, no?›

‹Ah! You have a point. Got it, then I shall be called ‘Chronoa’!›

Using Hinata’s ‘Mathematician’ to accelerate their internal conversation, they had this emergency conference to quickly decide the alias they would use.

“—Call me Chronoa. It’s best that the world doesn’t learn my real name. From today onward, I shall be Chronoa the Hero.”

And so, the name ‘Chronoa’ left its mark in this world.

Leaving behind the ruined castle, Luminas and her men left for a new home.

Naturally, Chloe also came along.

‹Now that I think about it, why did my ‘Usurper’ disappear too?›

“I’m not sure, but I think Hinata’s power would always merge with mine in the end…”

Chloe paused at that. It seemed to be somewhat difficult for her to talk about. Judging from her attitude, Hinata could guess how that ended.

‹Never mind, it’s fine. It’s only a matter of time. By the way, your stealing my Skill after taking the name ‘Chronoa’ from me is really similar to naming a monster.›

“Oi! Wasn’t that a bit rude?”

‹Ahh, sorry, I meant no harm.›

“Hinata can be so mean sometimes. What a waste of your beauty; no one’s gonna fall for you like this.”

‹Shut up already, it doesn’t matter since I’m already dead anyway.›

The two cheerfully bantered as they continued on their journey.

After parting with Luminas and her men, Chloe actively used the identity of a Hero just as she declared.

Time passed.

It was almost three hundred years before their time leap—when Veldora was sealed.

Having lived for this extensive period of time, just like before, Chloe learned ‘Absolute Severance’ and ‘Infinite Prison.’ Hinata, with her Unique Skill ‘Mathematician’ had also been supporting Chloe while inside her body.

As this matched the timeline, Chloe casually declared:

“I’m going to seal Veldora now.”

This was what Chloe said after reuniting with Luminas.

“I see. I do recall you mentioning that. But are you really sure about this?”

Luminas seemed worried. Unlike before, now Chloe and Luminas were very close friends.

“There won’t be a problem. After all, I have Hinata with me.”

Chloe had also revealed Hinata’s existence to Luminas alone.

Luminas accepted another soul within Chloe very quickly.

“That’s good to know. Just don’t push yourself too much!”

‹Don’t worry, I’ll handle fighting with Veldora,› Hinata said.

“Eh?”

It seemed that it was Chloe’s first time hearing Luminas so bewildered. But Hinata didn’t mind it at all and spoke in a firm tone.

‹I actually fought with Veldora once. At the time…›

The situation then flashed through Hinata’s mind.

KUA-HAHAHAHA! So weak, so weak.

This is supposed to be humanity’s guardian? Don’t make me laugh!

PHEW—KUSUSKUSU, what is it? You can’t get up already?

How unbearable, the price I’d pay to know defeat.

All right then, it’s about time for me to end this.

I don’t have that much time to play around.

—That was about how it went down. It was a rather humiliating memory for Hinata.

‹…Things happened. I’ll have to give him a good beating to ease my grudge against him.›

Chloe could tell from her tone that she was serious.

Luminas was serious too.

“I can understand your feelings. I would like to see that lizard bite the dust for once.”

‹I managed to make him show me every Skill he had. This is a great opportunity. I’m sure we can use it to our advantage during battle.›

Hinata and Luminas happily discussed how to punish Veldora.

In Chloe’s memory of the future, Veldora had spent time playing with her, so she didn’t hate Veldora as much. However, knowing how violent he was in the past, she didn’t feel like defending him that much.

“I don’t really know about your past grievances with him, but please hold back a little. Veldora-san is actually a very nice person!”

So in the end, Chloe let Hinata have her own way with him.

During the battle against Veldora, Hinata was in full control. With Chloe’s assistance, they managed to seal Veldora completely.

“GUWAAAAAAHHHH!”

Hearing Veldora’s furious roar, the beautiful face behind the mask twisted with satisfaction.

And with that, Hinata handed the control of the body back to Chloe.

Chloe’s time was about to come to an end.

That point between past and present was approaching.

“I haven’t mentioned this to you guys before, but I will be disappearing soon.”

“Chloe, what are you talking about?”

‹What does that mean?›

Chloe had kept it a secret this whole time, but she intended to tell them now. The truth is—

Hinata had half-guessed this.

Soon enough, Leon would appear in the history Hinata knew. Since Leon and Chloe were thought to have come to this world together, it would cause a special situation where two of the same person existed in the same era at the same time.

If one were to take the multiverse theory as truth—the idea that new universes, including parallel worlds, emerged one after the other, yet also at the same time—then perhaps having two Chloes at the same time was plausible.

However, if assuming there was only one world—

Chloe’s Unique Skill ‘Time Travel’ was an abnormal case, to the extent that the notion of multiple worlds shouldn’t be surprising. In any case, it was still hard to believe for Hinata.

It was more logical to think that the world was being remade. Or else, if many versions of themselves existed in many worlds, Hinata and Chloe’s efforts would be meaningless in the grand scale of things.

If there is a world that will be saved, then there is another that will perish—Hinata found this idea hard to accept.

That was why she made up her mind to end Chloe’s endless cycle and save the world. It didn’t matter if she had to be sacrificed in doing so. However, there was also a problem. And that was what Chloe had just said.

By the looks of it, my theory seems to be correct…

There really was only one world, and it did not allow the existence of a paradox.

—No, that’s not entirely true. It’s not that it doesn’t allow the existence of a paradox. It just stops the world from collapsing. If there was something strong enough, such as the creation of the mask, then even the paradox couldn’t destroy it, and instead only twist its existence. Otherwise, there’s no way to explain the existence of the peculiar mask.

Whilst relieved that her reasoning appeared sound, the thought of what would happen plunged Hinata’s heart into darkness once more. She knew that what would happen next was entirely based on luck; their fate would fall into someone else’s hands.

“—That’s why I won’t have memories from that moment on. I think Hinata will probably take over afterward and help save Shizu-sensei…”

‹Me too. So I can only come into play until my future self who doesn’t know anything comes, right?? What do you think would happen next?›

In the future, Luminas had always kept something very important to her.

Now that Hinata thought about it, it was probably the sealed Chronoa.

“I vaguely recall losing control and going berserk. But that probably wasn’t me, but a different personality.”

Hinata suddenly recalled her naming of Chronoa. The moment she gave Chloe that name, it robbed Hinata of her Skill.

It finally dawned on her that Chronoa might actually be something akin to a monster.

“Anyhow, Chloe will lose consciousness soon, right? That is probably what happens when two of the same entity exist at the same place in spacetime continuity. Hinata, I believe your theory is correct.”

‹Right. And then, Chloe’s younger self will be physically transported to that time period since she’ll have just been summoned.›

“It would most likely be the case.”

“Umm, that’s why, Hinata, even though I know asking you to do something like this is—”

‹It’s fine. After saving Shizu-sensei, I will go and ask help from Luminas-sama.›

“Please leave it to me. I shall craft a Holy Ark using holy power to isolate you from the world. I will find your ‘souls’ in the future myself, and then completely unbind the seal.”

Chloe, Hinata and Luminas.

The three remained united in heart.

All was entrusted to Luminas.

After Chloe’s consciousness disappeared, Hinata was alone. Apart from proving her theories to be true, she was also hit by a great sense of unease and pressure.

She felt uneasy because she was lonely. On the other hand, she was pressured by a strong will raging within her body, attempting to take over their shared body. It was tiring suppressing this will.

Chronoa is raging after its master Chloe disappeared. But I never imagined its power to be so strong…

Despite her shock, Hinata bent it to her will with her steely resolve.

Hinata went to Leon’s castle and rescued Shizue, handing her the mask successfully. Now that this mysterious mask had been given to Shizue, Hinata had a major breakthrough. And even though Hinata couldn’t show any of her yearning for Shizue, she traveled with her.

Their journey, however, eventually came to an end.

The day came, where they had to part.

While Hinata wanted to spend more time with Shizue, she could not do so. Perhaps due to the prolonged absence of Chloe’s main personality, Hinata was beginning to have a hard time controlling Chronoa. If this were to continue, their plan could fail. And all of this would have been for nothing.

In the end, Hinata bid farewell to Shizue according to the history she knew and went to seek Luminas’s help.

Hinata never truly found out what Chronoa was in the end.

Instead, Luminas used her power to seal Hinata in the Holy Ark.

Soon, she herself, completely ignorant of all their history, would come here.

What would happen to the slumbering Hinata?

If she were lucky, perhaps she would remain unaffected. But if not—the one to awaken first might be Chronoa.

But even so, there had to be…

I believe you will be able to find a solution—Rimuru!

Reminiscing about that slime she’d missed, Hinata fell into a deep sleep with a smile.

Veldora went to take on Chronoa, yet he quickly started yelping:

“GUWAHH—I-I’ve been cut—! R-Rimuru, I’ve been cut!”

Ah—sure, sure.

Of course you got cut. You were using your hand to block her sword. I mean, that’s no ordinary sword she is wielding. It’s an immensely powerful sword that was considered mythical-grade. And you just ran in recklessly trying to catch the sword by your hand.

How unreliable—

As I suspected, this guy had gotten weaker after turning into his human form. And because of how confident he acted before, my disappointment was immeasurable and my day was ruined.

I had been looking forward to Veldora beating Chronoa.

But as it turned out, there’s no free lunch in this world after all.

“Seriously, how are you so careless?! Obviously you would have gotten hurt!”

I started crying seeing the pathetic state Veldora was in. This was some grade-A bullshit.

“B-but, Rimuru, that sword was even stronger than when we fought last time…”

“So you’re saying the Hero is using ‘Absolute Severance’? Didn’t you say you’d been hit by it before?”

To be fair, I didn’t know how credible the ‘Absolute’ part was. But I definitely didn’t want to use my ‘Absolute Defense’ to test which one was stronger.

“No, that’s because…I was fine being cut by that…”

With that mutter, Veldora concentrated on evading Chronoa’s attacks. He would get cut at times, but fortunately, he seemed to have strength to spare.

No, in fact—

I understood what Veldora meant.

He was saying that in his previous battle with her, he didn’t take nearly as much damage with these same slashes. But the reason why was rather obvious if you thought about it a bit. This was purely the result of different sizes. The size of a slash could be estimated, and even if it could be widened through skill, it, surely, would not have been able to cut through Veldora’s giant draconic body.

However, Veldora was in his human form now. And he was stupid enough to try to use his hands to catch the sword, so of course he would be cut. Even though it would quickly regenerate, compared to his dragon form, it would consume magicule at a much higher rate. Normally speaking, when fighting in human form, it wouldn’t require nearly as much stamina. However, it didn’t seem to be strong enough against Chronoa.

He was probably too confident in his proud ‘Veldora-Style Killing ArtsTM’ and tried to recreate the made-up technique of blocking a sword with his hands from manga.

That said, I wasn’t really panicking. This would be a good lesson for Veldora. That’s why I decided to let him continue drawing Chronoa’s attention completely.

I turned my attention to Leon.

Under Charys’s protection, Leon was conducting a summoning. Even though it hadn’t been that long in reality, it felt like an eternity.

Leon summoned a rapier.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting. I couldn’t do anything about our enemy without a weapon. That’s why I’ve summoned my beloved sword ‘Flame Pillar’ from my time as a Hero for this occasion.”

It turned out to be mythical-grade, befitting of an ex-Hero demon lord.

The round, golden shield in his left hand seemed to be legendary-grade. It looked very impressive, but didn’t look strong enough to block Chronoa’s sword attacks. Leon probably just felt it was better than nothing.

All in all, Leon seemed to be ready.

We could finally start our counterattack—

Or so I thought. Suddenly, Luminas was sent flying in my direction.

Is she losing—I got worried a bit, but seeing how Luminas was uninjured, it looked like she was pulling an act.

In that instant, as Luminas and I crossed eyes, she sent a strong telepathic message to me.

‹Let me explain this for you first. Chronoa is another personality of Chloe! Hinata’s soul may be resting inside her too, so you must not kill her!›

—WHAT!

Compared to the strength of her ‘Telepathy,’ the message she delivered was far more shocking.

How could you say something so important at a dire time like this so casually?!

I panicked when I saw Leon approaching to fight against Chronoa.

Luminas, right after dumping responsibility onto me, headed back to take on Granbell.

I didn’t know what to do now that I had been informed of the truth so suddenly.

Chronoa was Chloe.

Now that she mentioned it, they looked quite similar.

But what was the thing about Hinata’s soul? I didn’t know what to take from that…

What in the world is happening there?

«Report. Considering all possibilities, it could be deduced that Chronoa = Chloe.»

And that means?

«In other words, individual ‘Chloe Aubert’ likely time-leaped to the past and grew to be the ‘Chronoa’ in front of you now.»

No way, no no no.

Is that even possible?

I could just ask Luminas, but she was busy fighting to the death against Granbell. So I couldn’t just have a Q&A. Even her ‘Telepathy’ was only just sent in the nick of time.

Speaking of time leaps…is it like time travel or a time slip? I don’t think she can control it freely, so I suppose it’s more like sliding in and out of time?

—Eh, why do I believe all this.

No, the thing is—

Chloe disappeared in front me before.

«Answer. Assuming the phenomenon occurred at that time was a ‘Time Leap,’ then it is impossible to observe all elements of the event. Without authority to interfere with ‘Time,’ it is naturally unobservable.»

I suppose, after all, even if you know the concept of time, observing time itself is impossible.

Actually, hold on. I didn’t have to understand any of this. If I just accepted that it was possible, then so many things suddenly made sense.

When I was trying to help the young Chloe, the ‘thing’ we summoned must have been from the future. If something happened to the future Chloe, and the spiritual part of Chronoa was sent to the past—

«Correct. This possibility is extremely high.»

I see.

If that were true, it would explain why Ramiris was so panicked at the time. The Chronoa in front of me reeked of an evil aura. Sensing that aura, Ramiris would naturally try to stop it.

There was no use worrying about this now.

Chloe had definitely leapt through time, that was for sure.

Then how to explain the situation right now?

«Report. The same ‘soul’ cannot exist in two places in the same spacetime. Thus, they reacted to each other, causing one of the two to disappear. However, the crucial factor is that individual ‘Luminas Valentine’ utilized a holy spirit power ‘Barrier’—Holy Ark—to seal the ‘soul.’ Therefore—»

Chloe and Hinata’s ‘souls’ may all be sleeping inside Chronoa’s body?

If the power of the Holy Ark really surpassed the ability of Chloe’s ‘Time Leap’—uh, I had no choice but to believe it now.

In that case, my plan would be…

“Leon, don’t attack Chronoa, just focus on defense.”

“Did you come up with a plan?”

“Yes, you may not believe me but—”

“—Nah, I’ve got faith in ya, ‘cause ya trusted me too.” 13

I was surprised. I didn’t expect to gain his trust so easily. He spoke less formally too. I suppose a more casual Leon wasn’t that bad either.

A thanks would have to suffice for now. I then gave my order to Veldora.

“Veldora!”

“You can count on me.”

But I didn’t even say anything—

Never mind, it’s fine. I had no time to roast this dragon.

“I’ll give you a signal later. Please suppress Chronoa. I figure you probably know this will be very dangerous—”

“Didn’t I say that you can count on me, Rimuru? I have faith in you. That’s why you gotta make sure your plan works.”

—That was reinvigorating.

I didn’t want to hurt Chronoa—I mean, Chloe. But that might just be selfish of me.

All of this was still just a theory. We could still be wrong anyway. To have such a naive thought before an overpoweringly strong individual like Chronoa would be suicidal.

But even so—

Since there was the possibility, I wanted to wager on it.

“Sorry, please hold on a bit more.”

“GA-HAHAHA! Don’t mind it, it happens all the time.”

“I’ve noticed something too. I’m gonna play along yer plan just to confirm it. No other intention behind it.”

I didn’t know about Veldora, but perhaps Leon had realized it too.

Chronoa was Chloe.

I really wanted to explain it to him in detail, but now was not the time for it.

Leon crossed swords with Chronoa calmly, but sweat was absolutely gushing down his forehead. Surely, it’d be difficult for him to even answer my calls.

If this plan worked, I needed to apologize to him properly.

Next, regarding how we’d infiltrate Chronoa’s soul—

‹Rimuru-sama, it was wise of you to have kept the details of your plan quiet. The Grand Cathedral is likely still under the surveillance of Demon Lord Guy.›

Diablo also spoke to me through ‘Telepathy Net.’ His ‘Telepathy’ was concealed with careful and meticulous encryption.

By the way, it felt very similar to Luminas’s ‘Telepathy.’ She must have been very aware of her surroundings as well. In actuality, I just didn’t say it aloud due to my own selfishness. I also didn’t want Chronoa to hear my plan.

I suppose it was fine as it turned out to be the right choice.

‹That so? What do you want then?›

He must’ve had some reason for speaking to me like this.

Diablo was truly talented. He seemed to have already caught up on the situation. Perhaps he could give some valuable suggestions.

‹Please allow me. If it is Rimuru-sama, you should be able to send your thoughts directly to her by interfering with her soul. However, there is another way which is more reliable.›

‹What would that be?›

‹This method would be to maintain physical contact with your target and use that to enter her spiritual plane. And then, in allowing your astral bodies to interact with each other, you can directly interfere with her ‘soul.’›

Regardless of my ability to do so, it still sounded very dangerous. I may end up never returning…

Couldn’t I just reach her like how I usually used ‘Telepathy Net’?

«Answer. Proposal suggested by individual ‘Diablo’ has a higher chance of success. However, the level of danger involved is insurmountable.»

That’s probably why Raphael hadn’t brought the idea up before.

‹Thanks Diablo. But I do want to say something to you.›

‹Yes, do tell.›

‹You are overestimating my abilities way too much.›

‹Kufufufufufu, surely you jest. Yet again, how very modest of you!›

It’s not modesty!

In order to save Chloe and Hinata, I needed to use the method with the greatest chance of success. However, in this situation, I needed to prioritize my safety.

I should show Diablo just how useless I am this time.

I decided not to argue since he seemed to have run into Guy. I hoped he didn’t say anything weird. If he bragged about me like he usually did, it might attract Guy’s attention. I’d scold him properly about that later.

‹If possible, it is best to stabilize her first with a certain object. Then, I wish Rimuru-sama glory in your conquest!›

Diablo’s faith in me was unmatched.

But for now, I needed to focus on the useful information he gave me.

“But how do I calm her down…?”

If I could do that, everyone could relax a little.

There’s no way some miracle item like that would just be laying around…

From his position supporting Leon, Charys spoke up. “Rimuru-sama, why not try using the ‘mask’?”

This guy seemed to understand what I was trying to do.

Impressive, but also somewhat scary.

“Mask?”

“Yes. That thing was able to seal even me. Surely it is enough to calm that person’s spirit down.”

“I see…”

While his idea was brilliant, he didn’t seem to realize I actually wanted to keep this quiet. But perhaps, in the end, it was my bad for muttering too much.

Well on that note, the mask, huh? But didn’t I give that to Chloe? Where is it now? Eh, hold on a second…

It was Shizu-san’s memento and then I remember fixing it. And then I gave it to Chloe as a present—does that mean that the mask ended up going back to Shizu-san again?

Huh, if that’s the case…where did that mask come from in the first place?!

—No, there’s no time to think about that.

Can I somehow recreate the mask?

«Answer. Do you wish to ‘Copy’ the ‘Anti-Magic Mask’? YES/NO»

YES!

As expected from Wisdom King Raphael, it managed to create a replica almost instantly. It looked just like the real thing, and had the same quality as well. With this, perhaps we could calm Chronoa down.

I showed the mask to Charys and thanked him with a smile. Then I turned my attention to Chronoa.

The plan was settled. Now I just needed to get serious and engage.

Leon was still dueling Chronoa. It was a one-sided battle, however, as she controlled the entire fight. Leon was only defending, but his injuries were still piling up. Even someone as strong as Leon was having trouble dealing with Chronoa. He would no doubt be defeated if this were to continue—that is, if I didn’t intervene.

“Veldora, now!” I shouted as I approached Chronoa, mask in hand. The next moment—

As I placed the mask on Chronoa’s face, my consciousness faded to black.

Taking the shock wave released by Razul head-on, Shion and Ranga were sent crashing through a wall and outside the church.

Razul casually strolled out to pursue the two.

In their fierce battle with Razul, Shion and Ranga were greatly wounded. However, Shion was still very calm. She wasn’t afraid at all and confronted Razul as if it were nothing. She was maintaining a false pretense of confidence in order to avoid showing weakness to her opponent.



Behind Shion, Ranga was trembling as he regained his footing. Unlike Shion, Ranga didn’t have ‘Ultra-Speed Regeneration.’ So every attack he received added up. He did, however, possess many resistances, wherein his defense was strong enough to nullify most physical and mental attacks. In addition, due to my blessing, he also received the Unique Skill ‘Magic Wolf King.’ The ‘Ultra-Instinct’ of his ‘Magic Wolf King’ Skill gave him the ability to predict and evade almost all attacks.

It would normally be impossible for him to be beaten down like this. Moreover, he was fighting against a single enemy with Shion. The fact that they were still losing showed very clearly just how dangerous of an opponent Razul was.

Almost as if she were protecting Ranga, Shion stepped forward.

“Ranga, it’s okay for you to take a rest.”

“How can I do that? This guy is strong. If we are struggling as it is with the both of us, it will be too dangerous for you to fight alone, Shion.”

“Don’t worry. I think I’m getting the hang of it. You should try to save your energy as much as possible until I give you the signal, Ranga.”

Shion didn’t wait for Ranga to respond before raising her odachi at her opponent. Her stance was very beautiful, a symbol of her unwavering will.

“Magnificent. Even amongst demon kind, few have been able to stand against me for so long,” Razul praised.

To Shion, having been complimented by her opponent, who she failed to even land a scratch on, was nothing but humiliating.

“Shut up! I’ll rip that smugness off your face!” Shion shouted, raising her sword high and then bringing it down with the wrath of a demonic god. While her action seemed to be uncomposed, it was a swift movement without any flaws.

Razul was completely unmoved. He simply raised his left arm.

A family reverberated.

It was the sound of Shion’s odachi being deflected off Razul’s exoskeleton. He was an insect type monster and his body was covered in an exoskeleton stronger than steel. That’s why, even without weapons or armor, he still had incredible defense. Moreover, Razul’s exoskeleton deflected Ranga’s magic attacks. It would seem that his exoskeleton had a special field around it, rendering any attack completely useless.

After blocking Shion’s attack, Razul threw a punch. He was strong enough to crush a boulder. So if a human with flesh and bones were to be hit, they would be splattered into pieces by it.

Had it been the Shion of the past, she probably would have taken it without much thought. Her past self would have had no choice but to endure or die.

But Shion had grown since then. Perhaps it was due to her having to educate her subordinates, she had learned to see the bigger picture.

If she were to die here, the whole battlefield would be affected. If she could buy some time before she lost, surely, someone would come at her aid. These days, she had learned to prioritize her survival instead of recklessly seeking victory.

It was why she wanted Ranga to rest. If they both went all out here, should something happen, they would both be useless. So, to avoid that, Shion, who still had strength to spare, decided to be the meat shield.

Although, naturally, she had other reasons as well.

Hehehe, if I win here, Rimuru-sama will definitely praise me!

That’s what she was really thinking about.

Although she prioritized survival, Shion was not going to give up on trying to win. Her growth had given her plenty of room in her heart. And that extra room accelerated her dormant talent to blossom.

Shion’s fighting style had also changed compared to that of the past. Having devoted herself to Hakurou’s teachings, she learned to value the importance of technique instead of relying on brute force.

Her duel with Razul had honed her skill even more. That was why Shion embodied the beauty that an orthodox swordsman would have.

It was brute force plus techniques.

The result was—

In swinging the odachi, Shion created a shockwave heading for Razul.

Of course, Shion only used it as a distraction for Razul and then rapidly closed in. She launched her next attack in a swift motion. Razul managed to deflect the blow yet again, but it numbed his arm. She had improved greatly. Even during combat, she was refining her skills.

Not enough, this is still not enough!

Just now, she utilized her Unique Skill ‘Cook.’ She wanted to use ‘Guaranteed Outcome’ to destroy Razul’s hardened exoskeleton.

She had not given up even though he deflected every blow. She focused on slashing the same spot all this time, only holding one thought: “destroy the exoskeleton.”

Shion’s goal was to bend the rules and break the seemingly unbreakable exoskeleton. Regardless of how strong Razul was, Shion refused to relent. She kept him busy, and even when her skills seemed useless, she did not fall into despair. She had faith that her wishes would come true as she continued to attack.

Razul calmly parried Shion’s attacks. He attacked and defended with mechanical precision. He was entirely nonchalant in how he calmly handled Shion.

On the other hand, Shion tried every trick in the book. She even activated her Intrinsic Skill ‘Ogre Berserker’ to go beyond her limits as she fought. Yet no matter what she did, to Razul, her attacks were a piece of cake.

The difference in strength was unfathomable.

Shion exhausted everything in her arsenal. She could barely stand against her enemy. In comparison, Razul was as steady as a calm river. Yet, there came a sudden storm to flood the river.

Shion had drained her willpower after continuously using her Skills. If she were to lose her balance even once, she would suffer the repercussions of overtaxing both her body and mind.

Moreover—

Since Ranga had withdrawn from the battle, Razul had been able to grasp Shion’s techniques. During the fight, he had carefully probed her to confirm each trick until she had none left.

The next second, Razul’s youki swelled dramatically. With overwhelming aggression, he began to launch a fierce counterattack. His power had grown several times greater than before, and he used it to rain a barrage of fists on Shion.

Just a moment again, Shion and Razul had been in opposite positions, with one stationary and the other on the move.

“You are indeed strong. And you should be proud of that. But you can’t win against me. You failed to damage my shell. You’re finished. You should just give up and surrender!” Razul declared.

Yet Shion answered him calmly, “Hehehe, how laughable. Did you think I was attacking mindlessly? I want to reach greater heights than this. If I don’t, I will always just be looked down on by that arrogant second secretary, Diablo, and not be of any help to Rimuru-sama.”

“What?”

“You’re one clueless insect, aren’t you? I said that I will surpass you.”

Shion’s youki suddenly grew exponentially as well, and she swung at Razul again with all she had.

The odachi slammed into Razul’s arm.

Unsurprisingly, Shion’s attack was deflected by Razul.

Yet, Shion cracked a smile. “Hehe, as expected.”

At that, Shion pulled herself up from the ground, shaking, to face Razul again.

“How disappointing. Your attack couldn’t harm me after all.”

Shion sneered at Razul’s words.

………

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…

Shion recalled how shallow she was in the past.

Strength is justice.

As a monster, it was only natural for her to think this way.

The weak would only be exploited.

Shion was born as an ogre, a higher ranked monster of the Great Jura Forest. Yet Shion’s thought process was very concerning to the other ogres. Especially to the mentor of Shion, Benimaru, and the other ogres—Hakurou.

Shion’s mind and body received thorough training. Even though it made her more modest, she probably didn’t understand the true meaning of it.

When Rimuru set the rule—“Don’t look down on other races”—Shion didn’t oppose it, but neither did she care about it.

The weak can only die—that was just the law of the land.

It wasn’t until Shion had died herself that she realized just how flawed her view was.

She was afraid of dying.

She did not fear death in itself, but instead the thought of disappearing before she could be of any use.

Later when Rimuru saved Shion, she was relieved. It was the kind of relief one felt when realizing that they hadn’t been abandoned, and that their parents still protected them.

After the battle with the Holy Knight Order, even Rimuru shared some wisdom with Shion.

She changed again.

At the time, she thought that humans were detestable adversaries. But afterwards, Shion let go of most of her anger. Even though she had to reflect on it afterwards, Rimuru’s words helped solve the issue of what humans were to her in her mind.

Rimuru said that not all people were bad. If there were bad people, then there were also good people.

The important thing was being able to tell the difference.

A person’s value depends on how they choose to live.

Stuff like strength or weakness had no intrinsic meaning. Even if you seemed to be useless in some field, perhaps you just had to explore your talents in another.

‘A person’s value should not be determined by other people but themselves.’

Shion understood what Rimuru meant. In this way, she realized that there was no need to be envious, or begrudge others. She knew that she was inferior to Diablo in every way, and so she had always been afraid that Rimuru would abandon her.

But that was not true.

Knowing that Rimuru would not forget about her, Shion’s insecurities vanished. That ugly emotion had occupied Shion’s heart until recently, but finally disappeared entirely.

There was no need to be envious of others; she just had to surpass them. She focused on her own improvement. She no longer treated other people as her competition, but instead, found meaning in improving herself.

By doing so, she believed she would continue to grow.

Even if it took her years and years, Shion’s kind lived long, so she would doubtlessly reach a point where she was no longer fragile and weak…

This change of heart helped Shion grow, and she was less anxious as a result.

Even further, under these extreme conditions, her tenacious spirit bore fruits—

«Confirmation complete. Intrinsic Skill ‘Ogre Berserker’ of individual ‘Shion’ has evolved to Unique Skill ‘Battle God.’»

This was not Shion’s aim. This miracle was simply a byproduct of her endless determination and struggle in attaining victory.

………

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…

“I’ll tell you this. The goddess of victory looks favorably on the persistent! Take this, ‘Unleash Battle God’—!”

Without hesitation, Shion put her newly evolved Unique Skill ‘Battle God’ to use.

Her overtaxed muscles screamed in pain as she pushed her body to its limits yet again. Using ‘Ogre Berserker’ earlier had burdened every part of her body, but in order to continue fighting, Shion spammed ‘Ultra Speed Regeneration.’

Unique Skill ‘Battle God’ was like the upgraded Skill of ‘Ogre Berserker.’ It would not cause the user to lose self-control, and instead, purely enhanced the strength, stamina, and psyche of the user. Just like Benimaru’s ‘Magic Flame Transformation,’ the Skill enhanced the user’s strength, and gave them the properties of a spiritual lifeform.

However, it wasn’t an all-powerful Skill. In fact, it had some major flaws.

Whilst activated, Shion’s physical strength was directly added to her spiritual body. However, it consumed magicules really quickly, enough that it could dry her storage in a short amount of time.

When Shion activated her Unique Skill ‘Battle God,’ she would quickly be pushed to the limit of her abilities. Her next strike would decide the victor of the battle.

And so, with this resolve, Shion entered the final confrontation with her enemy.

“What is this power?” Razul exclaimed. “It’s coming straight for me!”

Under the influence of ‘Battle God,’ Shion’s youki was overwhelmingly powerful. At the same time, it had enhanced her body, sharpening all of her senses. Shion could feel her strength boiling inside her.

“Now, Ranga!”

“Got it!”

Shion raised her Hercules Ex to the sky with both hands.

It was then that Ranga released ‘Black Lightning,’ having concentrated all his energy on it. He had been saving his energy to charge its power. It was the most powerful strike Ranga could manage.

Ranga had faith in Shion, and even if the lightning he summoned hurt her, if that were what she wanted, he would do it in a heartbeat.

“You punks! My shell—”

Shion didn’t give a crap about what Razul was going to say.

“CHAOTIC FATE!”

With all her willpower infused in her strike, it could cut through all the laws in the world. As lightning intertwined with her odachi, she swung down—

Shion’s attack left a small crack on Razul’s arm. His exoskeleton blocked most of the attack, but that was more than enough for Shion. As long as she could make a tiny opening, she would be able to activate ‘Optimal Action’ and reach ‘Guaranteed Outcome.’ This was the secret of Shion’s Unique Skill ‘Cook.’

—The blade flashed, leaving a severed blade flying through the air.

Shion’s odachi had broken into two in the end. Yet, Razul was the one to fall.

Starting from the left hand that was originally cut, a huge wound extending from the center of his body and his shoulder severed him in two.

The devastating lightning ripped through the wound and scorched Razul’s insides.

It was at that moment that the battle was decided.

Razul fell to the ground. He knew he would die soon. He turned his eyes to see Granbell fighting against Luminas.

Sorry, Gran—I will go first. I shall meet you, at the place…we promised—

The light faded from his eyes, and Razul finally passed into oblivion.

Like that, Shion and Ranga emerged victorious.

As she watched Rimuru place the mask on Chronoa’s face, Luminas couldn’t help but think, ‘Did he succeed?’

It was a gambit.

Chloe and Hinata had placed their trust in Rimuru, and so would Luminas put all the hope in him.

The two had mentioned Rimuru to her a long time ago. Luminas had decided to feign ignorance, whilst keeping a close eye on him. When she discussed it with Hinata, she even pretended to know nothing. She only attended the Walpurgis Banquet because she’d learned that Rimuru would be present. However, Luminas had been told differently. Especially in regard to Rimuru becoming a demon lord.

As Chloe’s words gradually came true, Luminas no longer had any reason to doubt. And that was why Luminas had never intended to antagonize Rimuru in the first place.

However, recently, these events contrasted greatly with the story Chloe and Hinata had told her. Inconsistencies were beginning to rise.

This stirred great fear in Luminas. She was afraid that Chronoa, hidden in the Holy Ark, wouldn’t be revived correctly if things continued to change…

Her fear was realized when the least expected happened.

Right before her much anticipated music concert, her long-time subordinate Granbell betrayed her. Actually, she knew Granbell would betray her a long time ago, but never expected him to rebel against her so openly.

And then, Hinata died.

Chronoa was revived.

Facing all these irregularities was to depend on Rimuru. Despite what she knew, he had also survived, so he, too, was an irregularity. Thus, he was the best candidate to handle the situation.

That was how Luminas judged the matter.

Sure enough, Rimuru did not disappoint. He decided to try to call for Chronoa’s ‘soul.’

That mask looks just like the one Chloe had. Then there’s still hope! Luminas cheered internally.

It was then that Granbell spoke to her.

“You seem quite happy, Luminas-sama. Do you truly believe that your beloved Chloe would return?”

“What did you say?”

“Isn’t Chronoa the will of destruction? Now that the Holy Ark once containing it has disappeared, you must return Chloe’s will in order to stop Chronoa. But do you really believe that Chloe’s soul still rests inside Chronoa?”

Luminas was stunned. “How did you know this?”

She quickly turned her thoughts around. Had it been Granbell, it would have been possible for him to eavesdrop on Luminas and Chloe’s conversation.

“I see, so that’s why you…”

“Indeed. Just as you thought. This is the fastest way to destroy the world: just hand responsibility to someone stronger than me!” Granbell laughed, and his eyes were dark with madness.

“Silence! Don’t think you can achieve that so easily!”

“But I will. This world has always trampled my dreams. For example, my friend has just died.”

Hearing Granbell’s words, Luminas noticed that another battle had concluded. Rimuru’s subordinates had won and Razul had perished.

“Hehehe, this world is so cruel to me.”

“So what?!” Luminas snapped.

Granbell merely declared to her calmly:

“—That’s why, a world like this should just disappear.”

“Quit talking to yourself. You can despair all you want, but do it by yourself!” Luminas shouted as she raised her beloved saber.

It was called ‘Night Rose,’ named after her hometown.

Granbell responded to Luminas in a similar fashion.

He drew his partner since his days as a Hero—the Longsword of Truth.

Both of their weapons were mythical-grade, and had similar quality.

Then—

“Despair? No, that’s not it at all. Right now my heart is filled with hope!” Granbell roared. Suddenly, the energy released from Razul’s body began to flow into his.

It was Razul’s soul, and his power.

Maria, Razul, and Granbell.

The three’s power sublimated in their ‘souls’ to create one hope.

«Confirmation complete. Conditions satisfied. Unique Skill ‘Unyielding One’ has evolved into Ultimate Skill ‘Hope King Sariel.’»

Granbell had once again gone to greater heights of strength under these circumstances. He had reached the ultimate realm, which only the chosen could reach.

Coincidentally, both Ultimate Skill ‘Hope King Sariel’ and Ultimate Skill ‘Lustful King Asmodeus’ had the same authority, and that was over ‘life and death.’

Now even their powers were on par with each other.

Granbell stood silently, gazing at Luminas with his darkened eyes.

“I am ready too, Luminas-sama. Let us end this once and for all.”

“—Well said. I shall accept your resolve. Now then, rest assured as I will kill you.”

The next moment, the two powerhouses collided.

A duel between those who had awakened their Ultimate Skills—yet the victor was decided in an instant.

In a flash of red, Luminas struck with her Night Rose. With a dim blue flame, Granbell blocked her strike with his Longsword of Truth.

“MEMORY END REQUIEM—!”

“—FORTITUDE!”

The Ultimate Skill ‘Lustful King Asmodeus’ clashed with ‘Hope King Sariel.’ In having the same abilities, the one with the strong will would win the battle.

And because of that—

The unyielding Hero Granbell had no reason to lose and yet—Luminas was the last person standing.

After placing the mask on Chronoa, I could feel myself sinking into her spiritual world. Of course, I had no idea how to do that myself. Raphael-san handled the operation entirely.

I thought her world would be a void of darkness, but as it turned out, it was rather bright. Since a place like this definitely wouldn’t have any light source, I suppose that this must have just been an imaginary scene.

As I bounced forward, guided by my instincts, I noticed someone walking towards me.

“Hey, long time no see, slime-san. Actually, I should call you Satoru-san.”

It was Shizu-san.

Despite my nostalgia, I felt a little shy. So I said, half-jokingly, “Don’t be so formal. My name now is Rimuru. Not to discard my past, but it’s a bit embarrassing being called that.”

It definitely wasn’t because I was hoping she would call me that.

Definitely not.



By the way, this mental scenery was really convenient. If I ever felt lonely, even the dead could keep me company.

Shizu-san wasn’t wearing her mask, and instead greeted me face to face. Her burn scars were gone as well, which once again confirmed to me that Shizu-san was absolutely beautiful.

It was only natural that I looked like a bishojo myself due to it being based on Shizu’s appearance. I suppose that made sense.

Although, as a guy originally, the feeling was rather strange.

Having Shizu-san accompany me boosted my confidence and my pace hastened.

Shizu-san smiled and followed.

Yet, in front of us, stood another bishojo. It was Chronoa. Her eyes were flooded with hatred. It was terrifying. It really looked like she wanted to destroy the world.

First, I wanted to talk to her.

Hopefully she would listen. But as I was about to speak, something unexpected happened—

“—You are…Rimuru? Is this real…is it Rimuru himself?”

This reaction was rather surprising.

I thought she would be more hostile towards me.

“Y-yeah, Rimuru-san here.”

Confirming that it was me, Chronoa stepped forward to hug me.

The bishojo was hugging a slime.

It was pretty nice.

Seeing us like this, Shizu-san giggled. She patted Chronoa’s head lightly and murmured: “You have worked very hard. I really wanted to see you too, Hero-sama.”

Hmm—was it okay for us to act all lovey-dovey like this now?

People were fighting intensely outside, but here I was feeling really happy…

“W-well—are you Chronoa?”

Now that we were with each other face to face, I started to suspect that Chronoa was how Chloe would look after growing up. They were very similar.

“Yes. I am Chronoa. I am a personification of evil trapped inside Chloe. I am also her alternate personality. If Hinata never named me, I probably wouldn’t have become self-aware as a separate personality.”

I-I see.

I still hadn’t really computed the situation just yet, but it seemed that the situation was a lot more complicated than I originally thought.

“Then your goal is—”

If she wanted to destroy the world, I had to do my best to stop her. But since she was Chloe’s alternate, maybe I could figure out a way to call Chloe back and switch them—which was why I had to ask her.

However—

“It’s all okay now. Because Rimuru is safe and sound,” Chronoa asserted calmly. She didn’t seem to have any other conviction.

What do you mean I’m safe and sound, please don’t say something so ominous.

I had safely pulled through many dangerous situations in the past. So now, I didn’t want any more trouble like that again.

“I mean, I’ve always been fine?”

At my answer, Chronoa became furious. “How dare you say that? You sacrificed yourself to save me!”

I sacrificed myself? I was very confused.

I didn’t really know why she was pissed, but I decided to just apologize anyway.

“Ahaha, sorry sorry, I’ll be careful in the future.”

“Don’t lie to me again! Pinky promise.”

I then promised Chronoa to not do anything reckless.

I don’t get it. It’s not like I go out to do reckless things. Oh wait, hold on. If Chronoa has memories of the future, maybe in the future I’d—

«…The likelihood is very high.»

Oi, there’s no way that’s true, right?!

I really didn’t want to hear that—actually I suppose it was better that I did. Better hear it now than later.

Never be reckless in the future—I solemnly swore.

With Chronoa finally calming down, I moved onto the important questions.

“Then, do you know where Chloe is?”

And is Hinata with her?

Even though I was getting impatient, I still needed to be careful. If I got on Chronoa’s bad side, she probably wouldn’t tell me anything.

But it seemed that I was worrying for nothing.

“She is lost in the ‘Infinite Prison’ deep inside my heart. In the past, I was the one trapped there. But as times changed and two of the same existence appeared, we switched places.”

And so, she told me everything.

It seemed that Chronoa cherished Chloe a lot too. She seemed to think that Chloe was indeed the main personality while she herself was the supporting alter. I believed her.

Upon thinking so, I asked my next question.

“What about Hinata?”

“Hinata… She’s already dead,” Chronoa said.

Her answer made me freeze. “How can that be? Luminas said that Hinata traveled back in time with Chloe…”

In that way, Hinata should be fine—

“You are mistaken, Rimuru. Hinata has already died here. Granbell’s attack could even extinguish souls. They were able to leap back in time together because Chloe absorbed Hinata’s ‘soul.’ But Hinata alone would not be able to withstand the ‘Time Leap.’”

Eh?

But, I thought…Luminas said she spoke to her as well.

Moreover—

“Wasn’t Hinata the one who gave the name Chronoa?”

“Umm.”

“Wouldn’t that mean—!”

“Only Hinata’s consciousness was left from the residue of her soul. Since it was stored inside Hinata’s Unique Skill, I couldn’t absorb Hinata’s ‘Mathematician.’ If I did that, Hinata’s consciousness would disappear too—”

Seeing how sad Chronoa was as she answered, I knew she wasn’t lying.

But, hold on.

Her Skill was born from her soul, and Hinata used it to preserve her consciousness, right? If so, if I put her Skill back into her body, wouldn’t that revive her from the dead?

“I know what Rimuru is thinking. I—Chloe had the same idea in the past too. But it didn’t work. Didn’t I say this before? The remnants of Hinata’s soul are also trapped in the ‘Infinite Prison.’ It’s a chaotic void, where everything mixes together. As someone who was born there, I can tell you that Hinata’s ‘Mathematician’ is probably integrated in that void already—”

It was different for someone like Veldora, who had a sizable ego and immense energy. But for Hinata, even if she became a Saint, she was still human. There was no way she could survive in the ‘Infinite Prison’…

Hinata’s body was outside.

As long as the soul was all right, she could be revived.

Chronoa sighed and I felt depressed.

But then someone spoke.

“No, don’t worry. Hinata is a very resilient child. She won’t have disappeared completely. So let’s try to call for her.” It was Shizu-san. She was smiling.

The unsettling feeling on my mind gradually dissipated.

It was better to grieve after we had confirmed the result.

“Indeed, you have a point. Chronoa, I want to save Chloe and Hinata from ‘Infinite Prison.’ Is there a way to do that?”

“Now that I’ve calmed down, I think I can feel the aura of the other me, ‘Chloe.’ But it’s gonna be difficult trying to deactivate ‘Infinite Prison.’ I’m not sure myself, but my body might disintegrate if I do that…”

This was because she had locked up her enormous energy reserves in the ‘Infinite Prison.’ I almost forgot to mention this, but it was actually Chronoa here who controlled the young Chloe’s power.

If the amount of energy unleashed was strong enough to rival Veldora’s, Chloe’s body would be obliterated. Moreover, we still couldn’t confirm whether Hinata’s soul was inside or not.

I wanted to trust Shizu-san’s words.

Since we needed to cleverly control the energy inside ‘Infinite Prison’ and save Chloe and Hinata—how about having Wisdom King Raphael interfere with ‘Infinite Prison’?

Or perhaps, it could simply examine what was inside instead of unlocking the prison?

«Negative. Based on current circumstances, it is impossible. Insufficient access to interfere with the smallest physical unit, ‘information particles.’»

Raphael said it could unlock ‘Infinite Prison.’ However, it did not have the authority to interfere with the information locked inside there. So that was a dead end.

Veldora managed to revive himself, but it seemed that he was a special case.

“I get it! Then I’ll transfer the authority to you. The other ‘Chloe’ agreed too. We will have Rimuru do as you wish!”

—Eh?

As I worried about what to do, Chronoa suddenly made an unexpected proposal.

An ‘information particle’ was a substance smaller than even ‘spiritrons,’ and was close to having no mass at all. All matter in the world had to contain ‘information particles.’

Even though they only existed in my ‘Stomach’ and Chronoa’s ‘Infinite Prison,’ these ‘information particles’ could be observed. Raphael seemed to have the ability to manipulate information particles to either combine or abolish Skills.

Now with the access granted by the owner of the ‘Infinite Prison,’ Raphael obtained the freedom to exercise its authority over it.

«Report. Access granted. Interference will begin.»

How should I put this…Raphael-san sounded very happy. It must have been just like that one time when it was playing around with my Skills.

The series of events that took place next happened extremely fast.

Before I could do anything, Raphael took charge by itself.

«Complete. Unique Skills ‘Infinite Prison,’ ‘Absolute Severance’ and ‘Usurper’ have been combined along with a large sacrifice of magicule to evolve into an Ultimate Skill.»

Without asking me «YES/NO» as usual, Raphael acted promptly.

Actually, it probably didn’t have to ask for my permission.

Since it wasn’t my Skill—eh, this felt a little off.

Ignoring my concerns, Chloe—Chronoa—their power evolved to Ultimate Skill ‘Spacetime King Yog-Sothoth.’ Moreover, even the discarnate entity Chronoa, which was originally the other personality of Chloe, went through the upgrade to become an information-particle entity called ‘Manas,’ which gave her the authority to manage Skills and ability to switch with Chloe at any time.

Is it really okay to make such drastic modifications?

I wanted to follow-up with a ‘No, it’s not okay at all’—but everyone seemed okay with it.

“Rimuru is always so reckless, but I love Rimuru for it!”

Not only did Chronoa hug me, she kissed my right cheek.

Moreover—

“Eh, Chronoa! How can you cut in line before me like that?!”

I felt a soft touch from the other side too.

Just like Chronoa, Chloe came to hug and kiss me. Chloe was also in her adult form. Chronoa and Chloe had the exact same appearance, like twins. They were incredibly beautiful.

The mind’s imagination is the best.

Even though the fact that this wasn’t reality was a bit saddening, it was still very nice to be sandwiched between two beauties.

On that note, couldn’t I shift out of my slime form and return to the appearance of that nice guy from my previous life?

I began to get immersed in my lewd fantasies.

Shizu-san watched me from the side.

Someone else was there too.

“Looks like you’re having fun, Rimuru. You’re enjoying yourself so much that you didn’t even check if I revived or not.”

It was Hinata.

She was right, I shouldn’t get ahead of myself.

I gave a couple dry coughs with my face flustered.

A-as expected from Hinata-san, you are just as pretty as before.

Should I compliment her like that to start a conversation?

I would say that, but I had seen her earlier.

But I suppose it was always good to praise a woman.

“As expected—”

“Spare me the flattery.”

“Ah, yes ma’am.”

She saw through me immediately. But I still had something to say first.

“That said, while it’s strange to say that I’m glad you’re okay, I am truly happy to reunite with Hinata under these circumstances.”

That was genuine.

“Thank you,” Hinata said. Her cheeks were a bit red.



She had to be blushing.

Could that be a “dere” 14 moment?!

«Negative. It is not.»

I figured as much. There was no way.

Hinata then proceeded to ignore me, and joyfully reunited with Shizu-san. It looked like she had become a bit more open as Hinata’s eyes were filled with tears.

“I am sorry, sensei. I never meant to cause you any trouble…”

“I understand, Hinata. I never noticed at the time. I should be the one apologizing. And thank you. You were the Hero that saved me from Leon’s castle, right?”

“—Yes, sensei.”

Seeing them hugging each other, I had the urge to cry with them.

“Hinata, you’re a really strong girl. Your ‘Mathematician,’ born from that iron will of yours, was likely the reason you’re still here now,” Shizu-san whispered sincerely.

I see, perhaps she had a point.

Hinata was just like before, nothing had changed.

“But my other power disappeared.”

“Hehe, that means you don’t need it anymore. You will be able to face yourself properly and grow on your own.”

“—But can I really be revived?”

“There won’t be a problem. And you believed in it too, right?”

“Umm, sort of…”

It was then that Shizu and Hinata turned their eyes to me.

“How long do you guys plan to hug him?”

With Hinata’s interjection, I realized that Chloe and Chronoa were still clinging onto me.

“But I want to hug Rimuru a bit more!”

“That’s right, Hinata. I haven’t seen him in two thousand years, let me hug him a bit more too—”

Saying something like that could be easily misunderstood, you know?

I wasn’t doing anything, but Chloe and Chronoa had buried themselves in my slime body, that’s all.

With a smile, Shizu-san intervened. She faced Chloe and Chronoa. “All right, all right, we will talk about that later. It’s time for me to go. I hope you will be revived soon, Hinata.”

“Where are you going?”

“Shouldn’t you know, Rimuru? I am just an illusion you created.”

Right, this was just an imaginary space, so—

“All dreams come to an end one day. I am happy to have met you girls too. The children seem to be doing good as well. And thanks Rimuru, for punching Leon. I have forgiven him. It seems like everything was just a misunderstanding. Knowing this makes me feel a little better about this world. That’s why I no longer have any regrets and feel satisfied.”

Chloe and Hinata were trying to convince her to stay, but seeing the satisfied smile on Shizu-san, they swallowed their words. They then vigorously nodded their heads.

“Rimuru, I’ll leave Hinata to your care,” Shizu-san said.

“Rimuru-san will definitely be able to do it,” said Chloe reassuringly.

“I’m quite looking forward to your performance,” came Hinata.

All three of them were giving me quite a lot of unexpected pressure to revive Hinata successfully.

It actually made me sweat a lot.

What if I fail—

No, I couldn’t think like that. I couldn’t show weakness like that. It wasn’t my style to give up before even trying.

Hinata was probably more anxious than me, so I needed to stay calm.

“Just count on me, Hinata. I’ll get you out in no time,” I declared.

Words had power. I must succeed—with this resolve, I left the mindscape.

Back in the real world, I was still in my human form. My posture hadn’t changed at all, and it looked like I hadn’t moved one bit.

I stretched and cheered myself up.

Inside the scenery of the mind, the last thing I saw was the smile of the fading Shizu-san. I had to hold on a bit longer to not fail that smile.

“Oh, Rimuru, you seem all right!”

“What happened? I saw Chronoa stop and fall—”

“I’ll explain to you guys later, can you please keep your guard up, so I won’t get disrupted?”

“Just leave it to me!” Leon agreed without hesitation.

On the other hand, Veldora seemed to be hesitating, “Right, but remember to explain it in detail later.”

Now I could rest assured.

I doubted it, but if Yuuki were to come back, the two would be able to handle him.

Let’s see where Hinata’s body is—

I found it completely uninjured after being healed by Luminas’s magic. She was lying next to the fallen Chronoa.

Ahh, there was a hole opened near Hinata’s chest area. I pulled out my backup coat and put it on her. This was the kind of charm you could expect from a mature adult who knew when to show tenderness.

I don’t want to get glared at again either—but I’d hide that thought inside my heart.

The key was resurrection magic, but it would be difficult for me to perform it alone. Even though her consciousness had reemerged through ‘Mathematician,’ which was also Hinata herself, it was still inside Chloe’s ‘Spacetime King Yog-Sothoth.’ Whilst merging with the Skill saved her from vanishing, separating them would be difficult.

I had to prepare the energy to replace her and switch out the two while simultaneously applying resurrection magic in order to rescue her. In order to do that, I’d need that gal’s help.

I called out, “Please help me revive Hinata, Luminas!”

“Gu-guwah, good…win, Luminas…sama.”

Granbell fell to the ground, coughing blood.

Struck with a mortal blow by Luminas, his life force was slowly draining out of him. Yet Granbell looked at peace.

“You idiot—”

Luminas had indeed received the true message Granbell wanted her to know.

—If I can’t even overcome such a difficulty, protecting humanity is absolutely impossible. If that’s the case, it’s better for the world to be destroyed by the hands of the Hero who is meant to be humanity’s guardian—

Luminas rightly understood that he was betting on this last hope. Accepting his resolve, Luminas gave him her response and defeated him in the duel.

It was at this point that she painfully understood Granbell’s thoughts. He didn’t want to make Chronoa go berserk, but to awaken her correctly and turn her into humanity’s hope.

He is still so clumsy even after a thousand years. Luminas felt so in heart, but at the same time, a sense of loneliness.

“—My…my pathetic wish…was nothing…against her…power over time. If you, Demon Lord Rimuru…and her joined forces…”

In this cruel world, what was justice without strength? Even someone as strong as Granbell could only lament his own failures.

Suddenly, Luminas heard Rimuru’s voice.

Rimuru wanted to revive Hinata. In other words, Chronoa—Chloe had awakened successfully.

That guy sure is reliable. Mission accomplished perfectly.

Luminas had much praise for Rimuru despite not saying it out loud.

“You’ve done what you can. Leave the rest to me. Be at ease.”

With these final words to Granbell, Luminas planned to go to Rimuru.

Luminas’s strike was more than enough to kill him, but Granbell had already exhausted his life force before that. His life had come to an end. There was no way he could continue to live, even with Luminas’s help.

He could potentially survive if Luminas turned him into a monster, but she knew Granbell would not have wanted that.

“B-before that…Luminas-sama. I have one more request…”

“What is it?”

“Hope…I want to pass my hope, to…that girl…”

Luminas paused at this.

She wasn’t sure whether or not to fulfill Granbell’s wish, considering that it could be another trick of his.

With that being said, Luminas still accepted his request.

Sometimes, Luminas’s heart was just soft.

“Fine.”

“M-much obliged—”

Holding onto the hand Luminas reached out, Granbell was nothing but grateful. At the same time, his body began to dissipate and disappeared in a ball of light.

“—Pass on peacefully to the other world.”

The ex-Hero had fought for a very long time. But finally, seemingly guided by Luminas’s voice, Granbell was freed from his fate and vanished from the world.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting.”

I didn’t even need to check who it was. The arrogant tone told me it was Luminas. Her clothes were still all tidy even after what was obviously an intense battle. She looked victorious. But even so, I wished she had come sooner.

“What is it, do you have a problem with me?”

“No, not at all.”

I didn’t dare to say it out loud. It was probably a result of the exclusively Japanese ideal of not looking for trouble.

But that didn’t matter. We needed to hurry and help Hinata.

“I am going to interfere with Chloe’s ‘Infinite Prison.’ You take the chance and extract Hinata’s ‘Soul.’ If there isn’t enough energy—”

“Don’t worry about that, I will figure something out.”

Wonderful. Luminas was indeed super capable.

And so, I got to work quickly.

I held out my hand above Chronoa’s prone position on the ground and pointed out the location of Hinata’s ‘soul’ to Luminas. She was getting on fast and began to perform some sort of interference. As opposed to magic, Skills were more useful in these times.

“—Rebirth!”

Luminas activated her ability.

As I watched, I realized something.

Luminas was activating some super high-level Skill that I couldn’t learn.

«—Analysis failed. This power originates from an Ultimate Skill.»

My guess was right.

Although, since it was Luminas, I shouldn’t be surprised. I could rest assured with the matter in her hands.

The limp Chronoa and Hinata’s corpse lay side by side. Fragments of Hinata’s soul merged with Chloe’s soul and were compiled into the Unique Skill ‘Mathematician.’

Luminas used her power to grasp Hinata’s soul that I’d managed to separate using ‘Isolation.’ In its place, she was carefully injecting a high concentration of energy to replace what she was extracting.

«……»

The energy injected was far greater than what was being extracted, but it was likely a necessary procedure. I watched as she reached out her hand to Hinata’s corpse instead this time.

Luminas’s power was returning Hinata’s ‘soul’ to her body.

Her hair regained luster, her cheeks reddened, and her heart began to beat once more. The next moment, Hinata opened her eyes and coughed. There were no anomalies inside her body, however.

It worked. Hinata had been successfully resurrected.

And there was Chronoa too. With the abnormal presence of Hinata removed, she recovered to her complete self. While her soul was already very beautiful before, Chloe’s soul right now shone with an inhumanly divine light. It was far beyond the beauty of a normal human soul.

She opened her eyes.

Will it be Chloe or Chronoa?

“Rimuru-san!”

That reaction sounded like Chloe. Although she used to call me “-sensei,” for some reason, she began to call me “-san.” Still, it sounded like Chloe.

She darted over to me.

I hugged her gently. She has really changed from her childhood appearance. She’s gotten a lot more feminine—eh, how strange.

I got a much smoller armful of Chloe than I expected. With a closer look, I found that Chloe had turned back into a child. She was wearing a black, form-fitting suit, likely the result of ‘Holy Spirit Armament.’ That was quite fortunate. I did feel a little disappointed, but I’d keep that to myself.

The others saw me hugging this little girl.

This could easily be misunderstood as me committing a crime.

Hinata’s glare was sharp.

Moreover, Leon looked especially pissed for some reason.

“What the hell is this, Rimuru?”

“You better give us a good explanation.”

Oi oi oi, chill out, Leon.

Also, Hinata-san, glaring so intensely will give you wrinkles.

—But saying something like that would probably be suicidal.

Hinata had finally revived and Chronoa’s rampage was over. But for some reason, I still wasn’t out of the hot water yet.

The sheer absurdity of this made me cry inside. I hoped they would hear me out.

“Everyone, please calm down. Either way, this is no place to talk. I am pretty exhausted for the day already, to top it off. Let’s set a time and place and discuss the matter in detail!”

This motion was passed by majority vote.

And so, the battle concluded.

In the end, there was only the beautiful music left.

How surprising, Takt and the band members had been practicing their performances during the battle. Their diligence was commendable.

I praised the band members before dismissing them.

We also found out something else.

“—Eh? Isn’t Chloe’s power stronger than before?” I commented.

“You must be imagining things.”

“No, just as Rimuru said, it must be—” Veldora agreed.

“Silence! I wasn’t asking for your opinion, you damn lizard!”

Luminas’s words startled us.

She seemed to be so placid earlier. You can’t blame us for getting startled when she suddenly lost it.

It’s better to leave this topic alone—I thought. However, a certain man didn’t know how to read the room.

It wasn’t Veldora, by the way. While he often said stupid things, lately, he’d learned better. Knowing it would piss Luminas off, he and I agreed to keep quiet about it, and he nodded at the thought, as if telepathic.

“No, just as Rimuru and Veldora-dono have said. While at first sight she is merely the most beautiful girl in the world, her strength has surpassed even that of when she was Chronoa earlier.”

It turned out to be Demon Lord Leon.

Despite his calm and collected appearance, he was actually a bit of an airhead, and the type to step in conversational landmines.

I mean, he valued Chloe so much. He’d been rather attached to her, without showing any signs of leaving. He even claimed that she was the most beautiful girl in the world. He was being indulgent and didn’t even have the decency to be subtle.

“Leon-oniichan, you’ve always been like this. You’re too attached to me! That’s why I always tell you that you won’t get a girlfriend acting like this!”

Chloe was quite harsh on Leon.

Leon was just a super [Redacted] born for Chloe—honestly, it is what it is. Spelling it out aloud could hurt some people.

By the way, I might have been fooled by his cool and handsome appearance, but Leon was a really unlucky guy. Ramiris also said that Leon used to be a crybaby. Maybe I should treat him better.

After berating the rather baffled Leon, Chloe turned her head around to face us. “Umm, now seems like a good time to tell you guys. I wanted to tell everyone before, but it seems that I’ve finally awoken into a real Hero. The ‘Egg’ growing inside me merged with the ‘Egg’ incubated by Hinata. But that’s a secret just among us.” Chloe smiled as she finished.

Surprised, I suddenly remembered. “Chloe! Something this important—” I paused.

Guy could still be watching us, so I couldn’t speak so carelessly. I tried to cover it up as soon as I realized, but…

But it turned out that my worries were unnecessary.

“It’s fine! I don’t think anyone is watching us anymore.” Chloe’s declaration assured our safety.

In that moment, Chloe was far more than the young girl she looked to be. Children would eventually grow up to no longer require their parents’ care. While happy at Chloe’s growth, it made me a bit lonely too.

It was then that I realized something.

As of now—‘True Hero’ Chloe Aubert had awoken. Hinata and Chloe weren’t completely separated. Somehow the ‘Hero’s Egg’ inside Hinata was left in Chloe’s body.

Her single body possessed two Hero’s Eggs. It was inconceivable. It shouldn’t have happened, yet Chloe’s awakening allowed her to reach this unprecedented realm of existence.

—No, that’s not true.

It was not some accidental miracle, but instead a certain result of Chloe’s unyielding will. Chloe pushed forward, persevering through her endless cycle of repetition and in the end, managed to overcome all challenges to reach a whole new level. It was Chloe’s undying will that dispelled despair and made this miracle.

At that moment, I admired Chloe from the bottom of my heart.

That was why I decided to say this without any pretense: “You really worked hard. I want to learn from you too. I swear to never give up in the face of anything.”

That was my most genuine thought.

“Mmhm!”

Chloe nodded with a bright smile. I swore to never let her lose that smile in the future.

In other words, I couldn’t always be so naive. Now that I knew that there was a force out there trying to kill me, it was only naturally that I would have to come up with a solution.

Am I right?

«Correct. A comprehensive solution must be made.»

This incident gave me a very deep realization: if I were to be defeated, it would not just be my problem alone.

No mercy for my enemies—I solidified this resolve in my heart again.

Understanding my enemies’ ideals were indeed important, but it was meaningless if it was at the cost of our sacrifice.

—I will do anything for victory—

While smiling back at Chloe, I secretly made this vow.