

Chapter 4

Shattered Ambition

I received the report from Dino, but the contents were ridiculous.

As I expected, Michael had made his move.

It was within expectations, so that was good.

What surprised me was Obera's actions.

To my surprise, she had left Michael's group with her own troops.

I was stunned by this.

‘‘What, are you kidding me?’’

‘‘I’m serious. I was also shocked. By the way, this was something Michael didn’t know yet either. I was about to tell him.’’

Hearing that, I was convinced that this guy (Dino) was an asshole.

There were too many things going on, and this was not the time to be bothered. No, even before that, I thought he should report to his own boss before leaking the inside information to me, the enemy.

But well, you know?

It's because Dino had such a personality that I was saved, right?

For a moment, I felt a little sorry for Michael and Feldway.

But before I got too excited, I had to ask something important.

‘‘So, where did they decide to attack?’’

‘‘Oh, it’s Leon's territory. As I said, Obera left and I'm staying behind, but all the other officers have been mobilized. Pico and Gracia are also being taken by force, so if it comes to a fight, please be merciful to them.’’

‘‘What kind of a convenient story is that!? Well, I'll keep it in mind.’’

‘‘Please do. Oh, and I have one more favor to ask.’’

‘’I'm busy too, so make it quick.’’

I listen to what Dino has to say as I prepare to go out.

‘‘As I thought, I really enjoyed working with Vesta-san and Ramiris, and I'm bored here. So, Rimuru-san, please beat up Michael and free me!’’

‘‘…’’

I was speechless.

‘‘Hey, is your head okay? That's not something you say to an enemy, do you understand me?’’

‘‘So mean! We're friends, aren’t we? Don't be so cold! Oh, and by the way, did you apologize properly to Ramiris so that we could make up later?’’

‘‘Screw you! I told you to apologize to her yourself!’’

‘‘Wa—please wait, Rimuru-san!’’

‘‘Moving on—’’

Yes, moving on.

I can't allow myself to be manipulated by someone against my will.

‘‘Do your best to escape from their control as soon as possible. If you don't do it soon, you'll lose your title of demon lord!’’

‘‘Hahaha, I'll do my best. Well, I know you're a dependable guy. There's no one who's as good at leaving things to others as I am, so I'll just use you the best I can.’’

That had to be a joke.

However, I also thought that it was very typical of Dino.

‘‘And one last piece of advice. That bastard Feldway is teaming up with the Insectars.’’

‘‘I know. Seems pretty dangerous.’’

‘‘It’s not just dangerous. I had never seen that king Zelanus until before, but he might even be better than Guy. I can’t know for sure until I actually fight him, but I know that I couldn’t beat him even if I really tried. They're staying back this time, but we don't know when they'll make a move, so don't let your guard down.’’

I'd like to say that it was just extra, but it was very valuable information, and also very unpleasant.

Just by hearing that he was like Guy or above, my depression level was at its max.

And more than that, if such a dangerous guy was waiting with his army, we needed to think of a countermeasure for immediate response.

I thought about calling back Geld and the others whom I had left in various countries, but I decided not to do that either. We would be at a disadvantage if they targeted us while we were short-handed.

If that was the case, it seemed that we would have no choice but to make do with what we had.

‘‘Thanks for the advice. I'll pass it on to everyone and be on the lookout. Well then, you’re going to have to work really hard.’’

‘‘Yeah. Don’t die, Rimuru.’’

No need to tell me that.

This was my second life—My ‘slime life,’ and I intended to enjoy more freedom.

The war had been going on for a while now, and I was going to get rid of all the troubles and then take it easy.

And I was going to have good times with my friends, including Dino, of course.

‘‘You too.’’

I replied to Dino, as if speaking from the heart.

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As soon as I finished my conversation with Dino, I summoned the remaining executives to the capital city “Rimuru.”

The location was the ‘Control Room’ in the labyrinth.

When I looked at Leon's stronghold with the ‘Argos’ surveillance magic, I saw that it was covered by a blizzard and that nothing else could be seen.

El Dorado has a mild climate. A blizzard like this was unnatural, no matter how you look at it.

It was obvious to everyone that Velzard was behind it.

There was no contact from Leon and the others, and no visual confirmation of the enemy. There must be some kind of communication jamming going on there, and we had no choice but to trust in Dino's words.

Since the enemy was coming out with only their main force, we needed to assemble an appropriate force. If we tried to support them inefficiently, the damage would be too great.

If we sent out too many, the labyrinth defense would be too thin, and if we sent too few, we would not be able to achieve our goal.

It was a difficult decision to make.

“I see, the enemy is also very powerful.”

As soon as I explained what Dino had told me, Benimaru turned his attention to me.

If he was eager to go, then I was not going to stop him.

“I was planning to send just me, Ranga and Souei to support them, but I guess they're more powerful than I thought. We'll be in danger if only we show up, so Benimaru, you should join us.”

“You don’t even have to ask. So, who else are you taking with you?”

As soon as Benimaru announced that he was going to take me, his face broke into a smile.

“Is it me?”

“No, it’s not.”

I shut down Veldora's comment immediately.

Just think about it. Veldora was a good ally, and a great asset, but we had to remember that he was the enemy's target.

“You know, you should be aware that you're being targeted. Besides, as long as you or I are safe, we can still be revived, so it's nonsense for the two of us to go out and fight together!”

“Kuaahahaha! I was careless. Just leave the protection of the labyrinth to me!”

“Please do.”

I was in a serious pinch right now, so I was really counting on him.

Once the most problematic child was convinced, I turned to Zegion.

“Zegion, and Apito, continue guarding the labyrinth. We can't leave this place empty because it seems like there is a dangerous enemy waiting for us.”

“Leave it to me. I wish you the best of luck, Rimuru-sama.”

How very reliable.

The dragon lords would remain as a force, and we’d be able to analyze their strength.

That left Treyni-san, Beretta, and Charys.

“Charys, keep an eye on Veldora to make sure he doesn't go out of control.”

“I don't need to be told, sir. I’ll keep a close eye on Veldora-sama so that Rimuru-sama can go into battle without worry.”

“Eh? I'm being monitored?”

“Don't worry about it.”

“No, no, I'm curious.”

“Read this and calm down.”

Charys handed Veldora a comic book to quiet him down, and I found it reassuring in a different sense.

“Just leave Master to us, we'll take care of him!”

“The labyrinth is well guarded, and we are training so that we will not be caught unaware this time. I am looking forward to showing you the results.”

I'd rather not have that chance, but it was reassuring to know we were prepared for anything. I nodded back to Treyni-san, asking for her help.

“Rimuru-sama has given me strength, and I am stronger than ever. I've been training with Charys-dono, and I have no intention of losing to Dino-sama next time. Please rest assured.”

Well, I believe you.

Whether they can beat Dino or not, the current Beretta team should be able to keep up with them.

That was why—

“I'm taking Kumara with me.”

Me, Benimaru, Ranga, Kumara, and Souei were chosen as the members of this sortie.

However, there was still one thing that was bothering me…

“Sorry, Benimaru. I made the decision without asking your opinion, but if you don't like it, you can turn it down. Did you want to stay and protect your wives?”

Momiji and Alvis were very pregnant.

Apparently, the gestation period of monsters varied widely. Momiji's mother, Kaede, had been carrying Momiji in her belly for over three hundred years.

In the case of beastmen, some had embryos and some had eggs, even though they were the same species. Alvis was said to be have an embryo, but she also maintained her transformed state throughout her pregnancy.

It may be that the human figure was more overworking, but it seemed that there were also individual differences. Well, it's not like I knew about out the whole biology of monsters yet, so there was no point in worrying about it.

Let's hope that some ecologists who were interested in the subject would solve it within a reasonable range.

I left it at that.

What is important now was Benimaru's feelings of leaving his two pregnant wives to go to the battlefield.

‘Which is more important, work or me?’

I think that this was one question that everyone hated to be asked.

Well, I had been a bachelor, so I never had to deal with that question.

I didn’t regret it—I’m not jealous, okay?

I was such a corporate slave that I couldn't even come home from work on my birthday, so I think it would have been bad if I had a girlfriend.

Emotionally, the wife took priority, but rationally, it might be the job. If one didn’t have money, they couldn’t make a living, so one would have no choice but to give priority to their work.

However, that is difficult because there are times when a man has no choice but to protect his family.

There is no doubt that it was ideal to work for an understanding company.

Anyway, as a policy of our country, I wanted to pursue this ideal as much as possible. As for me personally, I didn’t want Benimaru to have a marital crisis, and I wanted to respect his will.

Benimaru replied, as if laughing at my concern.

“That is an unnecessary concern. I will do everything in my power to protect the people I love. In the first place, I wanted to have an heir so that they could take my place in case something happened to me. If you misunderstand that, I’m not doing the right thing.”

Well, that may be true in theory.

But is that really okay with him?

“But, you know…”

Strange as it may seem, I was the one who was lost.

As if to reassure me, Benimaru smiled.

“Don't worry. The safest place on earth is here, and I've asked Hakurou to guard them. If something should happen, he'll take over for me and raise my successor. So, there's nothing to worry about! Besides, I don't think I'm going to lose, and I don't doubt Rimuru-sama's victory.”

He said it so refreshingly.

Souei nodded his head in agreement, and looking around at the faces of the others, they all seemed to feel the same way. It made me wonder if I was the one who was wrong.

“Hohoho. Rimuru-sama is very kind. It's probably because he was born in a time of peace, but that is not the mainstream way of thinking in a world of war. My daughter Momiji and Alvis-dono are prepared for this. On top of that, I believe in Benimaru-sama.”

The fact that he didn’t call Benimaru “young” showed how serious he was about his statement. As if agreeing with Hakurou, Momiji and Alvis had arrived before I knew it.

“That’s right. There is no way that my husband can lose!”

“Yes, I agree with Momiji-san. Benimaru-sama, if you leave us and die, we'll chase you to the ends of the earth. Please be prepared.”

It seemed that these two were already prepared.

If that's the case, there was no time for me to be confused.

“Okay, I appreciate the sentiment. I'm not saying we'll win, but I promise that we'll all make it back alive.”

“Hmm, just leave it to me, Rimuru-sama. All we have to do is win.”

I forgot to mention that Benimaru was an incredibly confident person. When he and Souei were together, it seemed like they could defeat any opponent.

The same was true for Kumara and Ranga.

“Yes, sir. I will do my best too, and we won’t be defeated.”

“My lord, I am with you! No matter who the enemy is, there is no doubt if it’s you!”

There seemed to be some kind of a mistake, but I understood what they were trying to say.

“You’re right. This is no time to feel lost, and there’s no use worrying about it before the fight. Although the goal is to defend Leon, let's do our best to crush Michael's ambitions!”

I declared as such.

Speaking calmly with Michael and coming to some beautiful understanding—I wasn’t going to pretend that we’d be able to do something like that

He’s dangerous.

He has no humanity, and he’s willing to sacrifice anything to achieve his goal.

It was annoying, but in the end, I had no choice but to pick a fight with someone who was outside the line of mutual respect.

“Let's go!”

Everyone nodded at my words.

Do not worry about anything until after everything is over.

I made up my mind to do so and began to ‘Teleport’ everyone to the battlefield.

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By the time Rimuru and the others had begun their preparations, the war had already begun.

There was no declaration of war, and Vega began going out of control.

“Damn it, can't he at least try to follow the plan?”

Kagali nodded in agreement when she heard Feldway complaining.

The purpose of this operation was not to destroy El Dorado, but to bring the angelic skill owners before Feldway and add them to their ranks.

Kagali was confused when she heard that Michael's “control” could be handled by Feldway. However, she believed that it was tactically correct to keep the generals out of the battlefield.

So, without any doubts, she accepted the current plan.

The plan was simple.

Everyone here, Feldway, Velzard, Zalario, Pico, Gracia, Kagali, Yuuki, Tear, Footman, Vega, Orlia, Arios, and Mai Furuki, thirteen in all, would go on a rampage.

The idea was to slaughter those who rushed out to intercept them, while searching for the angelic skill users.

Although it was a guess, and not a definite one, Kagali was sure that it was Leon. Even if she was wrong there would be no problem. The mission would be over as soon as the target was taken.

If they didn't come out to defend the city, Kagali and her team were going to go in as an assault team.

However, as soon as they had arrived at the site through Mai's ‘Instantaneous Movement,’ Vega went berserk, ignoring all instructions. He struck at the city's defense barriers and destroyed them. He then charged straight into the place that appeared to be the royal castle.

Kagali was dumbfounded.

He’s even dumber than before now that he's got more power. We can't incorporate him into our operations at this rate, we might as well seriously consider a purge.

Violation of orders was strictly forbidden in any organization.

Moreover, if it was an executive who did it, it might eventually become a matter of not being able to control the military discipline. To make an example of the subordinates, they might have to think about how to handle Vega.

Anyway, the operation had already started.

Kagali decided to discuss the plan with Feldway, leaving Vega to be dealt with upon their return.

“Myself and Velzard would be a perfect diversion, but Zalario, Pico and Gracia, should stay here. I'll put the rest under your command, so you can run wild and find the people you want.”

Tear and Footman, not to mention Arios, Orlia, Mai, and the rest of the undead elf resurrection team, were under the influence of Kagali's spell. The orders were not compulsory, but they were connected by ‘telekinesis.’

Besides, planning strategies was Kagali's forte. Feldway recognized this and had given her command.

Therefore, Kagali gave the order.

“Vega will be reprimanded for his outburst later, but for now, hit the enemy with all your might. If you can't win, I'll allow you to retreat, so go ahead and go wild!”

With the exception of Yuuki, all of them there had gained a great deal of power. They at least had more self-control than Vega, but were still eager to see how strong they had become.

That's why, as soon as Kagali gave the go-ahead, they all started moving at once.

And Kagali, alone, followed behind.

I have free will and have been given a certain amount of authority. I might not get any more opportunities in the future.

Perhaps she should wait for a better time. Such a thought crossed her mind, but she was terrified that Michael was in control of her will.

If she were to be turned into a complete puppet, all hope would be lost.

It was not unlikely that this was her last chance. Optimism was a dangerous thing, and Kagali decided to take action.

From the very beginning, she had no intention of being loyal to Feldway and the others.

Michael and Feldway were crazy.

Their insanity was so palpable that Kagali was convinced that a future with them was not bright.

‘I swear I will not betray you. And I will accept your dominion.’

That’s right.

Kagali had sworn that she would never betray her friends.

Even if that meant accepting Michael’s control.

And she was prepared to repay the favor she had received from Yuuki, no matter how dirty her hands would become.

Michael's control seems to be absolute within a certain range. However, it might be less effective if the distance is increased. Or, if we isolate ourselves from the same space, we might not be affected at all!

They could look for signs of the other skill owners’ whereabouts. However, the locations of those three skills were still unknown.

In other words, there was a high possibility that it was a safe zone.

Ramiris’ Labyrinth.

If they could escape there, then there was a chance that Kagali and the others could be saved.

Fortunately, they were allied with Demon Lord Rimuru.

No, that’s doubtful right now, but there was still a good chance that the good-natured Lord Rimuru would hide Kagali and the others.

So, the best course of action for Kagali and the others was to create a big mess here and find an opening to escape.

For that reason—

‘‘Can you hear me, Laplace?’’

‘‘—Chairman!? You're all right!!’’

‘‘I'm fine, but I'm in a tricky situation. That’s why—’’

‘‘Please order me to do anything you need. So, where should I go?’’

‘‘—It’s El Dorado.’’

Kagali called upon her most reliable trump card.

And so, Laplace had joined the fight.

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On the other hand, Leon's subordinates immediately became tense.

They had been training for what was to one day come.

Today, it was the real deal.

It wasn't long before Leon had received a report that the city's defenses had been breached and that they were currently being invaded by the enemy.

With a follow-up report, a bleeding knight shouted.

“There are only eight intruders, but their strength is enormous! They have already entered the city, and we are in chaos!”

Leon turned to Guy, seeing off the knight who returned to intercept.

“Have you contacted Rimuru?”

“Damn, we're being cut off. She’s up there. Velzard. Which means that there's more than eight of them.”

Leon nodded in agreement.

Even if he had been the enemy, he would move first to break the enemy's link. This, of course, was to be expected.

So, as a countermeasure against such a situation, Rimuru was also keeping track of the situation of each force with the monitoring magic ‘Argos.’ There would be a bit of a time lag, but he would know if something was wrong.

Help was bound to come.

Besides…Even if they didn't make it in time and things went horribly wrong, there was still the plan that Rimuru had jokingly mentioned.

It might not have been serious, and Leon would probably want to reject it, but in a serious situation, there would be no time to argue.

In any case, he thought that he should probably do his best to prevent that from happening right now, so Leon asked Guy,

“What do you say, should we wait here until Rimuru and the others arrive?”

“No, that would be difficult. If it weren't for Velzard, we'd be fine. If she gets serious, this place could easily disappear.”

“……That's not good.”

Using ‘Spatial Transportation’ required the exact coordinates of the current location and the travel destination. If they had been cut off, it was safe to assume that the enemy had taken such spatial measures into account.

“If the ‘magic transfer circle’ is destroyed, then the arrival of reinforcements will be delayed even more.”

If we can buy a dozen minutes of time, Rimuru should arrive by then. In order to hope for that, they would have to defend this base.

“Right? Then I guess I'll just have to go out there and deal with her.” Guy said, standing up.

“I will go with you.”

“I'm going to take it seriously today.”

Mizari and Rain followed Guy's lead.

The abilities of these two people had already been grasped after living together for the past few months.

In particular, Rain's skills were improving rapidly, to the point that Leon began having a hard time with her.

Normally, that would be annoying, but now that she was on their side, it felt reliable.

Mizari complained that she wished she could always take it seriously, but that one comment summed up everyone’s feelings.

Then, another annoying person interrupted.

“Kufufufu. You two weaklings won't be of much use if you follow us. I'm unwilling to help Guy, but I respect Rimuru-sama's orders. I'll help you, so let’s go together.”

‘You should thank me for helping you,’ that man, Diablo, laughs out.

Rain is repulsed by this and starts to argue with him.

Guy yells at them in a disgusted tone.

Mizari shakes her head in exasperation.

‘They must be close,’ Leon thought, as he watched them leave in a loud racket.

However, there was no time to think about such things.

Guy and the others would take care of things outside, and Leon would have to do his part.

The screams of his men could be heard from the corridor, and it was clear that the situation was bad.

He could not move carelessly, for he was in danger of being dominated. It was frustrating for Leon.

“No one is headed for the city, are they?”

He asked his trusted ally, Silver Knight Alrose, who was always at his side.

Alrose, who had been communicating with the knights on the ‘Telepathy Net,’ replied succinctly.

“Ha! It seems that they are all trying to get in the castle.”

So they were piling in. Leon nodded.

“In that case, have the Magic Knights seal off the castle! Isolate the intruders inside the castle and do not allow them to communicate with the outside world!”

“Understood!”

Dismissing Guy's concerns as irrelevant, Leon skipped to the instructions.

If they could contain the enemy inside the castle, then there would be no damage to the city below. He would then wait for support from Rimuru and take out the isolated enemy.

“To prevent further damage, each Knight Commander must intercept the enemy.”

“Yes, sir!”

After sealing the castle with the isolation barriers, he sent the knight commanders to intercept the enemy.

It was the deployment of their reserve forces.

The maintenance of the city defense barriers was left to the Yellow Knights, who specialized in defense, and the White Knights, who specialized in recovery. The offensive Red Knights were dispatched to intercept the enemy.

The only remaining force was the Blue Knights who specialized in raiding. Depending on the situation, they would cover the weak points.

Alrose took charge as Leon gave out commands.

Before Leon, the six pillars knelt down.

“Demon Lord Leon-sama. Give us permission to go out.”

They were the demon generals under Guy.

Not Guy, to be exact, but Mizari and Rain's subordinates.

They used to be archdemons, but when Mizari and the others evolved, they became “demon peers.”

Among them, Misora, the leader of Rain's subordinates, was a duke-class demon because of her hard work. Although she was weaker than Moss, who was also a duke, she possessed an outstanding fighting ability.

Kahn, the leader of Mizari's subordinates, was also no slouch.

Although he was inferior to Misora in terms of combat ability, he was a powerful demon worthy of the rank of marquis. 101

The other four pillars were as strong as the leaders of the Magic Knights. It was a shame to keep them idle.

“Permission granted. Go. Work with Fran and the others to defeat the enemy.”

And so, the demons were also unleashed.

The only ones standing by Leon's side were Commander Alrose and the Black Knight Claude.

If he could, he would have wanted to send these two to intercept the enemy as well. However, because the enemy's goal this time was Leon, they had to leave an escort here.

“It's frustrating.”

“Please be patient. While it’s strange that I am protecting Leon-sama, we must trust everyone here and stay put.”

“Fufufu. There are eight enemies in the castle. In addition to the four knight captains, there are those demons. And there are also highly trained knights. There is no way we will be defeated.”

While Claude admonished Leon, Alrose expressed his optimism as if to encourage himself.

He knew it would not be easy, but he had to prevent Leon from falling into the hands of the enemy.

They decided to be patient and wait for good news in the throne room.

After a while, violent tremors could be heard throughout the castle.

The fiercest battleground was the battlefield where Vega was rampaging.

Misora was in command, and the demons were stalling for time with the four pillars.

Supporting them was the White Knight Maetel, the leader of the White Knights.

Maetel was a blond-haired, blue-eyed beauty. Her specialty was restoration magic, and her presence alone enhanced their ability to fight on.

The demons were taking advantage of this and were fighting well against Vega.

Yes, it was a good fight.

One by one, they would leave the battlefield, and Maetel would heal them and bring them back. This happened repeatedly.

In the face of such overwhelming violence, there was no choice but to throw themselves into the fray.

Misora's face is distorted with pain.

But she was undeterred.

She was always being tormented by the recklessness of her master, Rain, time and time again.

And besides…If the demons retreated here, Guy would purge them. So they would fight proudly and fulfill their duties.

However…Vega's existence value was over 10 million, while the demons, even the upper ranks, were only about 500,000. Even Misora was only about 700,000.

They did not possess an Ultimate Skill, and the difference in strength was obvious.

“Gahhahaha! Weak, weak you’re too weak!!—No!! I'm too strong. I'm just too strong. Sorry to say, but you’re too weak to even think about eating, so you’ll be suffering for a long time. You must hate your weakness!!”

They had no choice but to calmly deal with Vega, who was spouting off abusive tirades, trampling on the demons' pride.

No, that was the demons’ strategy.

They were good at reading emotions, and were taking advantage of Vega's personality. By letting Vega rampage comfortably, they were able to maintain the stalemate.

Unlike the fierce yet stable battle against Vega, Arios’ opponents were surrounded by a tense atmosphere.

“Hyaahahaha! I can kill all I want!! What the hell, this power is awesome!!”

Intoxicated by the violence, Arios was rampaging as if he had lost his reason from when he was human.

The Ultimate Enchantment ‘Punishment King (Sandalphon)’ was embodied as a pistol that could shoot as much as Arios wanted.

There was also a bastard sword 102 in his right hand. This was a weapon created by Orlia's ‘Multiple Weapons.’

These two weapons were far more powerful than a simple mythical-grade weapons. By using these weapons, Arios was able to slaughter the knights. He looked like an imitation of Lieutenant Kondou, but this was a sign of “admiration” that even Arios himself would not admit.

The leader of the Blue Knights, the Bleu Knight Oxian, and Kahn teamed up to challenge Arios.

The difference in weaponry could not be bridged, but it was fortunate that their skills (level) were on par. Kahn used his pride as a great demon to interfere with Arios with his magic, and Oxian used his brilliant swordsmanship to confront Arios.

The fact that Oxian was good at auxiliary magic was also significant. His physical strength and the durability of his sword were compensated for by the multiple layers of Kahn's and Oxian's magic.

Even so, the chances of victory were almost zero. Oxian, a nihilistic nobleman, did not want to win against an opponent who would not be injured by a direct hit. He was conscious of the fact that his sword would not be broken, and was trying to make this battle last as long as possible.

He did not want the enemy to reach his beloved Leon.

The daunting battle had only just begun.

The Red Knight Fran and the Yellow Knight Kizona, the commanders of the Red and Yellow Knights, respectively, were fighting against Orlia.

Fran was a healthy, auburn-skinned beauty, lightly armed and focused on offensive power. Kizona was small in stature but cheerful in disposition, and wore heavy full-body armor.

Fortunately for these two women, Orlia had a lack of fighting spirit.

Orlia was cautious.

Unlike Vega and Arios, she was cautious about her skill.

However, Fran and Orlia were the worst match-up. All of her magic had fallen before Orlia's shield.

Orlia experimented with her ‘Multiple Weapons’ to see what weapons she could create. She gave Arios a bastard sword, and Mai a crescent bow. And for herself, she had prepared a morning star 103 and a tower shield 104 .

With this, she could test both her offensive and defensive capabilities.

It can be said that those two were saved by Orlia's character.

With the two of them as his test subjects, Orlia was slowly and surely getting used to the weapons she had created with her Ultimate Enchantment.

Mai was on the battlefield, but she couldn't get rid of the feeling of being out of place.

She didn't understand the point of fighting.

But it was impossible to go against Michael.

Even Yuuki, whom she trusted, was a follower of Michael, and Mai could not win against him.

On the other hand, she didn’t feel like turning her blade on the knights who had no grudge against her, so she just stayed on the sidelines.

If she had seriously participated in the battle, the situation would have turned in favor of the angels long ago.

But that didn't happen.

“If things continue like this, everyone will be unhappy. But what am I supposed to do? Tell me, Yuuki-kun…”

Mai was at a loss, troubled, and unable to find an answer.

She still needed some time before she could make a move.

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Guy and the others went to intercept her, but there was a blizzard outside the castle.

It was Velzard's work.

“I'll deal with her.”

Guy's words were met with no objections from anyone.

He had fought Velzard several times before, both long ago and recently, and she was clearly very strong. Inevitably, Guy would have to be the one to face Velzard.

Besides, the current Velzard wasn't holding back her power. The evidence was that she had changed from a girl to a grown woman.

And her eyes were not the usual deep-sea blue diamond hues, but were golden. They shone with a mysterious, evil, and shining light.

That was Velzard's true form, her human battle form. Seeing this, Guy realized that she was serious.

And Velzard was going crazy with emotion.

When he flew up to Velzard, who was stationary in the sky and at the center of the blizzard, Velzard saw Guy and shouted happily.

“I love, love, love you, Guy. So—you should also kill (love) me more and more and more!!” 105

She then challenged Guy with a big smile on her face.

“Che, that’s why I said these things were troublesome!”

Guy was also fighting back seriously.

It would be suicide to go easy on Velzard.

And so, in the skies above the castle, a battle broke out between the strongest forces in the world.

Guy was strong.

His existence value was so high that it almost reached 40 million.

But Velzard was different.

Velzard was more than twice as powerful as Guy and had unimaginable power. She was not just the sister of the Creator, she was the most absolute on earth.

And Velzard had never been serious, even when dealing with her sister, Velgrynd. She always responded in the form of a girl, that is to say, with her own power blocked.

Even when she wiped out Veldora, she had only dealt a playful blow. This meant that her attacks were very energy efficient.

The only time she got serious was when she took on Guy.

The only reason Guy was able to fight her on even terms was because of his superior combat ability. On top of that, he always tried his best to keep the ground as unaffected as possible, so one could understand how terrifying a man like Guy Crimson was.

The battle, as always, lead to a stalemate.

And then Guy realized.

This person wasn’t being controlled after all.

No, she was being controlled, but it seemed to be the result of not daring to resist, because it was in line with Velzard's wishes.

Velzard seemed to be very happy.

It was a very familiar look that could only be seen in the midst of battle.

Rather than good news, this was a disappointing fact.

A long-repressed desire that had been suppressed for so many years, only to be unleashed because of Feldway and the others. That means that this relationship would not improve until Velzard was convinced.

If she was only being controlled, it would have been enough to release it. But since she wasn't, there was nothing Guy could do.

Velzard wasn’t the kind of person who responded to persuasion. The only way to bring her to her senses was for Guy to stay with her until she was satisfied.

“Good grief, man!”

While complaining about this, Guy fearlessly sneered.

And then he happily intercepted Velzard.

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Above the castle, even higher than Velzard and the others…

Standing in front of Feldway and Zalario was Diablo.

“Evil demon who does not know your place, you dare to challenge us alone?”

“Kufufufu. You told me to be prepared the next time I saw you, but are you going to entertain me today?”

“…Damn it. I don't have time to play with the likes of you. Zalario, I’ll let you deal with him.”

Feldway avoided a fight with Diablo.

Diablo was a troublesome demon. Knowing this well, he hesitated to deal with him.

Feldway left the castle without saying a word.

Diablo thought about interfering, but Zalario would not allow it.

He was annoyed at being pushed around, and frankly speaking, he wanted to refuse. However, since it was an order from his immediate superior, he decided that he had no choice but to accept the situation.

“It can’t be helped. Now that you have acquired the name Diablo, let's see how strong you've become.”

With that, the two sides went into battle.

Zalario, though reluctant, was confident.

He had just been incarnated, but his body was in good condition. It had been a long time since he had exerted himself to the fullest, but he wouldn’t be broken down, and that lifted Zalario's spirits.

“Dark Eight Palms.”

Zalario took the initiative.

It was a very simple technique that involved putting magical energy into the palm of one's hand, but its power was immeasurable. Eight separate energy projectiles were flying towards Diablo.

“Worthless. So that's the extent of it.”

Diablo, on the other hand, muttered in a bored tone.

It was not a strategy to stir up trouble or to make himself look good, but his true feelings.

When you are dealing with a lower-ranked opponent, or even a competitor, you have to be very careful about what you do.

Diablo lightly evaded the projectiles and glared at Zalario.

“Are you just an amateur with a lot of power, wasting your energy?”

He asked this quite seriously.

Zalario was annoyed by this, but kept his cool.

‘This is why I hate this guy’—He replied while hiding his anger.

“Shut up. That was nothing for me. In the first place, you and I are different in terms of the absolute amount of power we contain. You should worry more about yourself, not me.”

This was a fact.

Zalario's conditions were now different from when he had invaded Ramiris' labyrinth. Now that he had a physical body, he was able to fully exercise the power of his main body in the Palace of Monsters. With an existence value of over 20 million, he was confident that he would not be defeated even by a True Dragon.

There was no need to worry about wasting a bit of energy, as it would be quickly recovered.

But only Diablo snickered.

“This is why amateurs are no good. In our fight, we must either annihilate our opponent with a single blow or prepare for a long battle, you know? So, the basic rule is to focus on how to fight without being exhausted. If you can’t even understand that, then Zalario, you've been slacking off, haven't you?”

Zalario was annoyed by Diablo's superior attitude.

He’d put up with it if it was said after a loss, but the fight has only just begun. It might have been a tactic to disturb the opponent's mind, but Diablo was not aiming for that.

He was sincerely and earnestly trying to give advice.

The fact that Zalario understood this made him even more annoyed.

“Shut up. Your advice is none of my business, so just shut up. Even if you weren’t worried, I’ve been fighting on the front lines against Insectars, the natural enemies of demons. You should know that someone like you who has been living comfortably on the surface is no match for me now!”

“Hmm, that's very impressive. And don't worry. I, too, have fought to the death against Zegion-dono. Zegion-dono is also an insect-type majin (insectar), and a very strong one at that. Moreover, he has been given Rimuru-sama's cells, which are enviable, and has very few attackable parts. So, even for me, he is a difficult opponent to beat.”

The small number of attackable parts was a self-imposed rule that Diablo had set for himself. Diablo's own rule was that he would not target the parts made of Rimuru's cells.

Because of this rule, the three demon girls had also been unable to defeat Zegion…But that’s another story.

“I don't know what you mean, but no matter how much I train on this tepid ground—”

And then, Zalario suddenly remembered.

He hadn't heard the name Zegion before, but it was familiar to him.

Zegion was the name of the person that Dino had declared as troublesome and whom even Zelanus had expressed interest in. If he had been fighting to the death against someone like that instead of training…

“I see, it seems that this is no time to be playing around.”

And so, Zalario got serious.

The battle between Diablo and Zalario was about to begin.

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In front of Rain and Mizari stood Pico and Gracia.

“I-It’s cold.”

Rain's heart was already about to break.

If she wasn't a demon, she would have run back to the fireplace by now—Rain was thinking about how to get out of this situation.

“Rain……You said earlier that you were going to get serious today, didn't you? So why do you look so unmotivated?”

“That's a silly question, Mizari. It's because it's cold. Why should I have to fight in such cold weather, in a blizzard, against an opponent I don’t even hate!?”

When asked by Mizari, Rain blurted out her true feelings without any intention of hiding them.

‘What are you talking about?’—is what a dumbfounded Mizari wanted to say, but surprisingly, someone else also agreed.

It was Pico, who was supposed to be the enemy.

“Tell me about it! Why do I have to fight like this in a place like this where I can't even see from all this snow!”

In fact, Pico also looked very cold.

So did Gracia, for that matter.

“Don't complain. I'm cold too.”

She was trying to calm Pico down, but it was obvious that she felt the same way.

Rain and Mizari were wearing maid outfits, but Pico and Gracia were only wearing thin clothes. Gracia, for example, was wearing a bare shoulder outfit that made her feel cold just looking at it.

Oh, perhaps I was the only one who was really trying to fight?

Mizari was upset when she realized this shocking fact. Not caring about her, Rain and the others began hitting it off and started spilling their complaints.

“I mean, Velzard-sama, she really shouldn’t be blowing snow everywhere all of a sudden.”

“Seriously, I agree. I mean, if she was going to do that, she should have told me in advance.  Then I could have worn my favorite fur coat.”

‘That way I could brag about it,’ Pico said.

“Hold on, Pico, when did you find the time to buy that?”

“Fufufu, just a little in between work~”

“Ah! That’s the city from last time! That place was a special hole-in-the-wall.”

It was the Blumund Kingdom.

As a city where the West meets the East, goods from all over the world had begun to gather there. Naturally, there was also an influx of many domestic monster products, and some of the clothing was of a very high quality.

Pico and Gracia had been traveling around the world on a surveillance mission. They were Dino's companions, and seemed to be doing whatever they wanted. They had their own hideouts all over the world and enjoyed the latest fashion.

Rain looks at them with an alert gaze as they chat like this.

“It's fine to boast. But first, don't you have some work to do?”

Mizari was surprised to hear that.

Oh, as expected of Rain. Was her earlier comment intended to catch them off guard? I didn't realize that she was aiming to take advantage of them like this.

And so, in reconsideration of her colleague, she was quite impressed.

With that in mind, Mizari waited for the signal to start fighting. However, what she heard next was a ridiculous proposal from Rain.

“Talking in a place like this is out of the question! Don't you think we should get out of the cold first?”

Indeed, that’s exactly what she said, going at her own pace.

“‘“—!!”””

The three others were surprised.

The concept of enemy and ally had completely vanished, and only confusion remained.

Rain didn’t care.

She quickly landed herself on the ground and activated a certain spell.

“Strategic Magic: Freezing Hell (Cocytus)!”

“Hold on, Rain! That spell can destroy the city—wait, that’s pretty skillful…”

Mizari was so disappointed, but she wasn't wrong.

Rain is the one who was weird.

The ‘Freezing Hell (Cocytus)’ magic used by Rain was a spell that froze a wide area. The range of the spell was based on the magic power of the magician, but if Rain was serious, it could cover a radius of thirty kilometers.

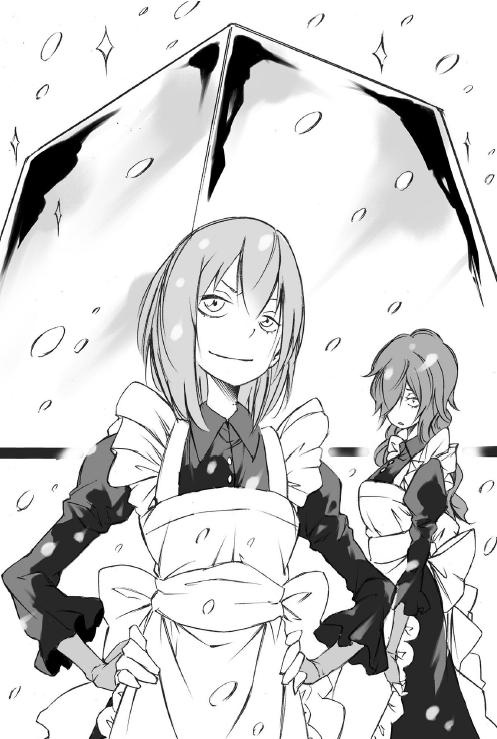
It was an extremely dangerous magic, but what appeared in front of Mizari was a three square  meter cube of ice.

It was a waste of such an evil magic, but there was no damage.

The result was a joke in a sense that it gave the impression that she did it perfectly.

“So what do you think?”

Rain said smugly.



And Pico grinned at her, as if he understanding the meaning.

“Gracia!”

“Right, leave it to me. I know exactly what you're thinking!”

Gracia also understood what Rain was thinking.

She rode on that speculation and immediately prepared her spell.

“Ice Breaker!!”

This was another high-ranked elemental magic that could be used against enemies. It was a magic with outstanding killing power that froze the moisture in the air and then broke everything up.

However, this time, Gracia manipulated it dexterously, and only hollowed out the cube of ice.

And thus, the “ice igloo” was completed on the spot.

“You did a good job.”

“Yeah, you too.”

Rain and Gracia acknowledged each other, and a friendship was born.

“Come on, let's hurry and go inside!”

Pico was the first to go inside.

Without any hesitation, Rain and Gracia followed.

Mizari, who was left alone outside, was stunned and left muttering to herself.

“Uh, Rain? So, it wasn't a joke or a strategy, you were being serious…”

But the one who should be answering was inside the igloo.

Mizari began feeling like an idiot and hurried inside.

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“—So, the method was a secret, but we were given the honor of evolving at the hands of Rimuru-sama.”

This was the answer to Gracia's question, ‘By the way, you guys have gotten stronger than when I last saw you, haven’t you?’

“—You've been telling that much to the enemy…Okay, that's enough.”

Despite Mizari's dismay, Rain had also been getting information from Pico and the others.

It seems that the skills of Dino and Pico were under the control of Michael.

Pico has the ultimate skill ‘Rigor King (Jibril),’ and Gracia has the ultimate skill ‘Glory King (Haniel).’ Although they were not aware of it, they probably wouldn’t be able to disobey Michael's orders.

In addition, she had also been told the full extent of the enemy forces.

The information given by Rain was not very important.

It was only the fact that she mentioned Rimuru's name without permission that was careless, but Rain judged had that it was okay because she had not specifically been told not to talk about it.

If Rimuru heard this, he would be angry, and would probably lament that he should have kept his mouth shut.

In any case, in exchange for the information that she was able to evolve thanks to Rimuru, Rain was able to get a very important story out of them.

From there, they were just complaining to each other.

They started talking about each other’s hardships and complained about their bosses.

Incidentally, the four of them worked together to build a fire and poured magic power into it to keep the room at a comfortable temperature. On top of that, the sweet potatoes that Rain had hidden in the fire were being roasted on skewers, giving off a faintly delicious aroma.

At this point, Rain took out some sweet sake.

“This is perfect for when it's cold.”

“You, you’re not actually going to…”

“Well, come now, Mizari-san, let's not be so formal. I think it's fine, don’t you?”

“You just want to drink, don't you, Gracia? Well, I want to as well, so I won't stop you.”

“That's right, Mizari. After a fight, you’re supposed to drink to make up. It's called common sense.”

When did we even fight?

But there was no one other than Mizari to intervene here.

With a three against one, the odds were really against her, so Mizari had no choice but to give in. Thus, the inside of the igloo became like a women's club.

As the battle outside raged on, the girls continue to quietly exchange opinions…

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Leon sat on his throne.

The time of peace was over.

With a loud bang, the front door was broken down.

The great door leading to the audience room shattered into pieces, scattering debris like dust.

And out of that dust, the intruder proudly emerged.

“Hoohohoho. Good day, everyone! My name is Footman. Footman the “Angry Pierrot” of the Moderate Clown Troupe. Pleasure to make your acquaintance!”

With his fat body and angry clown face, he exuded a certain air of strangeness.

Leon had met this clown once before.

He was now in remembrance of his own stupidity, a business partner with whom he had made a contract.

He had felt a certain power when he met him before, but now it felt nothing like that.

He felt an uncanny power.

What bothered him, though, was Footman's true purpose.

If he had wanted to capture Leon, it would be reckless for him to come alone.

As I thought, the enemy's forces must have outnumbered ours. But I don't understand. What is he thinking? If he goes and helps the others, he would have the power to change the course of the war…

As he pondered this, Leon left his seat.

“You come here alone and think you're going to make it out alive?”

Alrose shouts.

Claude keeps his hand on his sword, ready to protect Leon at any moment.

Leon thinks.

This Footman must have some other purpose, or—

Just as he was wondering about that, a woman steps through the broken door and into the audience room.

“Ah, there you are, Demon Lord Leon. Do you remember me?”



It was a beautiful woman with a graceful appearance.

She was dressed in a navy-blue suit, like what a secretary would wear.

Her skin was white and delicate, and her blond hair was tied up in a chignon that suited her well-toned face.

Her eyes, indigo with a mysterious glow, were fixed on Leon.

“Since I’ve changed my appearance, it's probably more accurate to say it's nice to meet you. I am Kagali. I'm the chairman of the Moderate Clown Troupe. I've got a grudge against you for killing me, so I guess I'll have to deal with you myself.”

Needless to say, it was Kagali.

She greeted him, while somewhat over-acting.

Then, two clowns followed Kagali, coming in one after the other.

The girl with the teary-eyed mask was Tear.

She was carrying a large sickle on her shoulder and greeted everyone in a playful manner.

“I'm Tear. Tear the “Teardrop” of the Moderate Clown Troupe. I hate sadness. All of Kagali-sama's enemies will be eliminated by me!”

When Tear declared as such, she began spinning her scythe dexterously and moved to her place as if dancing.

Stepping forward to take his place was Laplace, a man with an asymmetrical clown face that looked like he was playing a trick on someone.

“I'm Laplace the “Wonder Pierrot,” vice-chairman of the Moderate Clown Troupe. Now then, everyone. It sure is a beautiful day today—but I don’t care about that! I was told to ‘dash here as fast as possible’ and now I'm really tired. And it looks like we're in big trouble. I feel like I want to go home……”

It was very typical of Laplace to be complaining without saying hello.

As soon as the clowns finished their speech, the last one showed up.

A young boy wearing a black Imperial military uniform with a fearless smile on his face. It was Yuuki Kagurazaka, who was still under Michael’s control.

“Hey, I guess I'm the last one. I hear my name is Yuuki. You're Demon Lord Leon, aren't you? I think we've met before, but my memory's a little foggy. I'm sorry, but I'm not sure.”

There were different stages to Michael's domination.

There were cases where the victim retained some of their free will, and cases where they were more restricted.

In the case of control over the angelic skills, there was no fear of betrayal, so they were allowed to behave quite freely. However, Yuuki was being controlled by the “Regalia Dominion” and was therefore restricted to a greater extent.

In a sense, this was evidence that Michael acknowledged Yuuki. If he had recognized Yuuki as a lower rank, he would have allowed him to act freely like Kagali and the others.

Anyway, the current Yuuki was somewhat vague, and as soon as he finished introducing himself, he lost interest in Leon and the others, and stood there leaning against the door.

‘Hmmm…’ Leon assessed the situation.

There were five of them total, but each one of them was as strong as him. No, they seemed to have more strength than that. Since he was outnumbered, the situation had become the worst.

Leon couldn't decide whether or not to make a move.

He might be able to defeat at least one of them, but this was not the time to make a desperate attempt. If he couldn't win, he should run away, and he had the means to do so.

But Leon was also at a loss because he saw a light of reason, not madness, in Kagali's eyes.

He had been told by Rimuru that Kagali was the Demon Lord Kazaream. He had almost forgotten about her, but he remembered clearly those eyes full of madness.

Kagali would say that she had been jealous, but to Leon, it was a horrifying look. And yet, now, those eyes were as beautiful as a lapis lazuli.

She's not a different person. So, there may be something else going on. And does that mean there’s room for negotiation?

In spite of the situation, Leon understood the circumstances of the other party.

In front of such a Leon, the clowns continued their speeches.

“Demon Lord Leon. You are not only responsible for the destruction of Kazaream-sama, but also for the murder of our brother and friend, Clayman, the “Crazy Clown!” I won't make it easy for you. Because I'm angry!”

And with that, Footman bent his fat body in a dexterous bow.

Laplace followed suit.

“Yeah, that’s right. That idiot Clayman didn't become a demon lord because he wanted to. He was just the only one suited for it, so we sent him out as a replacement in case something happened to the Chairman. I regret it so much that it turned out like that.”

His voice sounded sad, as if he was remembering Clayman.

“It's really sad, isn't it? But Kagali-sama gave us a chance for revenge! I'm going to give you the full force of our grudge, so stay with me until the end!”

Tear added sadly at the end.

And then battle began.

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On Leon’s side there were three people.

On the other hand, Kagali's group had five.

However, Yuuki was not moving.

Tear headed to Alrose, and Claude took on Footman.

There were only two people left, but of course, Leon would have to deal with them himself.

Under normal circumstances, defeat would have been inevitable.

However, that was not the case.

As Leon drew out his Flame Pillar, Kagali struck him with the Ruin Scepter borrowed from Michael.

The impact of the mythical-grade weapon collision sent shock waves throughout the hall.

At the same time, Leon heard a voice in his head.

‘‘Can you hear me? I want to negotiate.’’

His prediction was correct.

‘‘Yes,’’ Leon nodded.

‘‘Thank you. I've got eyes on me. That's why I’m acting with that in mind. No matter how careful I am, it can never be enough.’’

You're right,” said Leon with a look.

The conversation was like a tightrope walk, with both sides playing out a fierce battle.

Incidentally, Laplace's role was to relay the ‘thoughts.’

Through the master-slave connection between Kagali and Laplace, encrypted information was being transmitted. Kagali sent the information to Laplace, and then retransmitted it to Leon. The reply from Leon was also encrypted and transmitted to Kagali through Laplace.

The reason for using this particular method was to prevent Michael from reading her mind. Believing that not all of her thoughts could be read, she put up multiple barriers in the back of her mind.

The reason she was so wary was because Kagali was about to betray Michael.

Kagali had once been trapped in a grudge against Leon, but now that she was away from Michael, she had regained her composure.

As a result, she decided that it would be best to join forces with Leon.

As long as she could get to Ramiris' labyrinth, she could escape Michael's surveillance. And that mysterious slime would free Kagali and the others by any means necessary.

‘‘Anyway, didn’t you prepare some kind of connection passageway in case of emergency? I can't get to the labyrinth with magic, so if there is on, let me use it.’’

There was also transfer magic, but that was a gamble. If she did any unplanned actions, Michael might tighten his control over her.

Ideally, she wanted to evacuate directly to the labyrinth.

If that was not possible, Kagali wanted them to be prepared to receive her and the others.

‘‘I see, I understand your situation.’’

‘‘I’m just taking some time, but you're the one Michael wants, right? You have the ‘Purity King,’ don't you…?’’

‘‘…I won't deny it.’’

Leon admitted that there was no point in hiding it now.

The moment they attacked this country, he judged that the owner of the skill was already known.

In that case, the words of Kagali and the others became more credible.

With such a large difference in strength, there was no point in extracting information from Leon. They could simply disable Leon and take him to Michael.

Besides, while Tear and Footman were rampaging wildly, Alrose and Claude were still unharmed. If they really wanted to kill them, they would have been dead by now.

In this situation, there was no point in acting like this.

That's why he could be sure that Kagali's words were true.

‘‘I believe you. There is indeed a magic transfer circle in this castle that leads to Ramiris’ labyrinth.’’

‘‘I knew it!’’

Kagali's expression brightened as she realized that her plan was now more likely to succeed. Then, while crossing blades fiercely, she threw herself forward and enthusiastically engaged in negotiations.

Leon, who had given up his suspicion of Kagali, wondered if he should simply nod.

However, what came to his mind was Chloe’s smile, the girl Leon loves.

For some reason, that smile was not looking upon Leon's face, but on Rimuru’s…

From the depths of Leon’s heart, dark emotions began to well up.

This is not jealousy. Absolutely not!

Leon swallowed his feelings and endured it.

Then he thought.

Rimuru would accept these people. It wouldn't hurt my conscience too much to put them through the trouble.

Leon felt a little better, as if he didn't have to worry about it.

He nodded his head and began to confirm the arrangements.

‘‘So, are you sure it's just the five of you?’’

‘‘Yes. There are other people who used to work for Yuuki-sama, but I don't trust them. It's not like they're going to kill us if we leave them here, and there's no point in holding them hostage against us, so we're going to leave them behind.’’

‘‘Wouldn't it be better to take them with you, to reduce the enemy's strength?’’

Leon was surprisingly kind.

The reason why he is misunderstood and gives off a cold impression is because he is clumsy.

Kagali sensed that too.

‘‘You're not what I thought you were. You didn't take it easy on me when I was your age…’’

‘‘It couldn’t be helped. With a demon lord attacking, I couldn’t afford to be calm either. I didn't want to prolong the battle and cause civilian casualties.’’

She understood what he meant.

If two demon lords of equal ability fought each other, the damage to the surrounding area would be extensive. In order to prevent that, the best option would be to aim for a short-term decisive battle like Leon had.

‘‘That's true. Besides, I was a fool back then, so I have no right to complain. Forget it.’’

Leon was caught off guard by Kagali's reaction, because he had expected her to complain more.

‘‘—You've really changed.’’

With that said, he muddled his words, changed his mind and resumed the conversation.

‘‘The “magic transfer circle” is located behind this room. This room itself is heavily guarded by a ‘Multilayer Barrier,’ so it's just a matter of opening the hidden door behind the throne.’’

‘‘Thank you. So, what are you going to do?’’

Michael's goal was to get Leon.

‘We should run away together,’ Kagali implied.

Leon's answer, however, was clear and without hesitation.

‘‘I am staying. If I was going to run away, I would have gone to Rimuru from the beginning.’’

Kagali nodded in agreement.

‘‘Michael's rule is absolute, you know?’’

‘‘However, there are also conditions. Worst case scenario, even if I were to be controlled, Guy could observe the process and come up with a way to deal with it.’’

That was just one of the reasons, not all.

Leon was really just trying to protect the people here in El Dorado with his own hands.

That was the true intention of Leon Cromwell, the man who gave up being a Chosen Hero in order to protect the mixed races of human and demon.

‘‘You really are a clumsy guy. For the sake of others, you’re willing to throw yourself away—’’

‘‘Hm, that’s not the case. There are few people as vicious as I am. I tolerated the sacrifice of others because I wished to save the only one I loved. I will be the one to pay for it.’’

These words showed Leon's resolve.

Kagali understood this and decided to respect Leon's wishes. She had her own priorities, and there was no need to try to persuade him.

And so, the decision was made.

Kagali also informed Tear and Footman about the situation through Laplace.

Leon, on the other hand, had been talking to Alrose and Claude. Both of them felt that the enemy was not serious, so they were convinced by Leon's explanation.

The only thing left to do was to force Yuuki to go with them.

Leon gave Kagali a look. In the direction of his gaze, there was a hidden door.

Understanding his intent, Kagali pretended to be blown away and destroyed the door. Seeing this, Laplace signaled to Footman and Tear.

Alrose and the others helped in the act, and Footman and Tear also flew to the hidden room as if they were excessively blown away.

“Yuuki-sama!”

“Well, well, I guess it’s my turn, huh?”

With that, Yuuki leisurely made his way to the hidden room—

Okay! Now all I have to do is get Leon to activate the magic circle!

Kagali was sure of their success.

It had been a tightrope walk, but now she could escape from Michael.

That’s how it was supposed to be.

However—

It was here that fate had given up on Kagali and the others.

Michael, who was still in the Heavenly Star Palace, had discovered Obera's betrayal before Dino could report it.

Michael was furious.

It was the first time in his life that he had experienced this.

He was furious that something had gone wrong with his plan.

The cause, as it turned out, was his own naivete.

In spite of his immense control of power, he had allowed himself to be led astray by trusting in the uncertainties of his companions, and this was the result.

Obera had received the ‘Salvation King (Azrael),’ and Michael knew it. At that point, he should have made sure of his domination.

It was Michael's mistake not to do so.

If he made a mistake, he’d have to make it up.

Michael was furious, but calmly thought as such.

As a result, he reinforced his control over the Angelic skill owners currently under his control with the “Ultimate Dominion” via Feldway.

As a result, Kagali's ego was also taken away.

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Just one more step.

That step felt so far away.

Feldway emerged from the broken door that led to the audience room.

“I was curious, but I didn't realize you were planning to betray me. All of you are fools who do not understand my cause!!”

Seeing Feldway screaming in rage, Kagali knew that the plan had failed. At the very least, she should try to let Laplace and the others escape.

All it would take was a single command.

And yet, she was unable to utter a word.

“It's useless. The ‘Ultimate Dominion’ has taken complete control over you. Michael-sama is also angry. I let you do whatever you want. And then there's—”

Feldway's cold stare pierced Leon, who had stopped moving.

“It looks like our target was here as well. You, too, will be a loyal servant.”

Before Leon could even listen to those words, he had activated ‘Purity King (Metatron)’ at full force. He was about to unleash a godlike blow with the desperate intent to kill.

But it was already too late.

Shit, I can't fight this—

Loyalty towards Michael, whom he had never even met, began to well up as if overflowing from the depths of his heart. Leon's memories and knowledge remained intact, but his ego was being filled with ecstatic feelings.

Chloe, I—!!

The smile of the girl he loves, etched into his mind, was being overwritten by an irresistible elation.

In the same way as Leon, Kagali's heart had also being stolen.

Her loyalty to Michael outweighed her feelings for her dear friends.

I'm always so naive—

Kagali lamented in a terribly sad mood, but even that regret quickly disappeared.

“Chairman, you can’t just give up now! I—I believe in you”

Kagali heard a voice that confused her.

However, it sounded like the voice of a child screaming through multiple layers of glass, and could not be heard clearly.

“Kagali, does the spell not work on him?”

“Yes. Laplace is special, so he doesn't have to follow my orders.”

“I see. Then he is unnecessary.”

A cold voice that seemed to have lost all emotion was transmitted to Kagali.

“Yes. You've been through a lot, Laplace. At the very least, I will take care of you with my own hands.”

“Wai—Chairman!?”

Laplace was the only one who was confused by Kagali's change.

Tear, Footman, Yuuki, and even their former enemy, Leon, were all ready to watch as if it was a matter of course.

Kagali's Ruin Scepter glowed in gold—

“I won’t just sit here!!”

Laplace was about to give up on everything when a figure suddenly appeared out of nowhere and pushed him away.

The person then flicked the destructive golden ray with her sword.

“Who the hell are you!?”

“I don't have time for formalities. But I'll tell you anyway. I am Silvia. I'm a very strong helper, so don't worry and leave this to me!”

It was beautiful woman with long and braided greenish silver hair.

The thin dress with a silky sheen was made of a special material from the Monster Kingdom that could be used in battle. Her milky-white legs glimpsed through the slit. But if you looked closely, you could see that she was also wearing denim shorts.

That's wrong.

It might have been intended as a precaution in the event of a fierce battle, but if that was the case, why not wear pants in the first place?

Her fashion sense was the embodiment of selfishness, showing her strong will to not give up fashion. Even from that one thing, he was able to catch a glimpse of her personality.

The woman called herself Silvia.

She was Leon's master, the one who had been called upon as a trump card.

Laplace felt nostalgic when he saw Silvia.

Laplace was an undead elf created by Kagali.

Perhaps it was because he had been a Chosen Hero before his death, but although he was never controlled by Kagali, almost all of his memories had been lost.

That's why he did not remember that his real name was Sarion Grimwald, nor did he realize that Silvia, the woman who had just saved him, was his wife.

Nevertheless, he instinctively knew that Silvia was an important person for him.

“I don't know about you, but I'm a real man. I don't want to be so pathetic as to leave this place to you all alone!”

Laplace was back on his feet.

It was such a sudden turn of events that it had made it difficult for him to grasp the situation, but that was always the case.

So, as always, he would just have to get out of this situation no matter what.

“You guys, if you're still alive, then get out of here. You look like you've been beaten to a pulp by Tear and Footman, and you might die, you know?”

Keeping his eyes fixed on Kagali and Yuuki, he called out to Alrose and Claude, who were lying in the corner of the room.

They had managed to endure with recovery medicine, but the contents of their space-expanding waist bags were almost completely used up. At this rate, they would not be able to escape, yet they still snickered at Laplace's call.

“Hahaha, don't worry. I've taught my students never to run away in times of trouble. If I don't set a good example, then no one will follow me.”

“Fufu, a knight should never abandon his master and run away.”

Both of them understood that they were already a liability, not an asset. Still, they did not run away because they were ready to give up their lives for Leon.

Believing that Rimuru and the others would soon come to support them, they decided to buy time even at the cost of their own lives.

“You guys are idiots.”

“Hahaha! I never thought I'd be praised by a clown.”

“Claude-dono, I don't think that’s a compliment. But I do envy you that you can still laugh!”

There was a small smile on Alrose's face.

Those who are determined are strong.

Laplace thought to himself, ‘I also can’t lose.’

“Let's start over. If we kill him, the Chairman will be back to normal, right? I'll do my best, too!”

He said so, while glaring at Feldway. He suspected that Feldway was up to something, even more than Michael who was not present.

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Thus, the battle resumed in the audience room.

On one side were Laplace, Silvia, and the two injured knights.

Against them were Feldway, Kagali, Leon, Yuuki, Footman and Tear.

They were outnumbered four to six and were overwhelmingly disadvantaged in terms of strength.

“Silvia-san 106 , can I ask you something?”

“Oh, what is it?”

“Honestly, how far do you think we can go against them?”

“Hmm, yes, well……even if I tell you, it won’t make you happy, will it?”

“I guess so. Wait, don't answer that!”

‘That’s certainly true,’ Laplace laughed.

Silvia felt nostalgic about the exchange.

No, it wasn't the conversation, but the very existence of this man, Laplace, that made her feel nostalgic.

Could it be that we know each other? No, I don't think so. Well, whatever. This is not the time to be worrying about that.

Silvia, with her modest yet graceful chest, was undoubtedly a warrior. She quickly switched her mind and identified the enemy.

Feldway did not move, as if wanting to leave the work to his subordinates.

It was obvious from his attitude that he was looking down on Silvia and the others.

However, in the current situation where she was at an overwhelming disadvantage, perhaps she should be grateful.

I'd like to say that his arrogance will be his downfall, but he's the head of the ‘Primordials 107 .’ I've heard from the ancestor, but this is crazy. He’s stronger than me, to be honest.

The ancestor always had a sloppy personality, so it had always been best to take everything he said with a grain of salt. Silvia had also been deceived many times and suffered a lot.

However, judging from the activities of the Primordials, she never thought they were weak. Even if she only knew half the story, they should be considered as superior to Silvia.

In fact, when confronting them in this way, she could sense that their presence was frighteningly dense.

In the first place, all the people here are monsters.

Even Alrose and Claude are good enough to be called demon lords in their time.

Among them, Feldway was exceptional.

If she fought him head-on, she would be defeated. Therefore, the only strategy to be taken here was to buy time.

Rimuru-kun, who El-chan 108 mentioned, will be here soon, right? I don't know how well he’ll do against such monsters, but he’s already defeated Velgrynd, right? Well, we can only hope for the best.

Silvia was also one of the high-elves created by the ancestor, and she was proud of her abilities. In fact, she had an existential value of just under two million, which was about the same as that of an awakened demon lord. In addition to that, her weapon was a mythical-grade Vajra 109 , which surpassed Leon's in terms of skill. The number of blades was variable, and she specialized in handling it by stretching it like a spear.

Moreover, she possessed the Ultimate Skill ‘Thunder King (Indra),’ the highest of the weather system skills, which made her stronger than Tear and Footman.

But even still, she was not as strong as Feldway.

She was not even close.

Despite her confident assurances to Laplace, it would be difficult to turn the tables. However, as long as Feldway didn't make a move, there was still a chance to win.

The possibility of Leon being manipulated had also been taken into consideration. She had told him how to separate his mind from his Skill, and believed that Leon was still desperately trying to regain his ego.

Incidentally, if he did this, there was a very high possibility that he would lose his Skill. This is exactly what Obera did, and it would be a huge loss in terms of strength.

In the first place, it was not that easy, so she taught it to him as a last resort.

Well, it’s all up to Leon-kun. He was a very good pupil, but I think it's still a 50/50 chance whether or not he will succeed…

She was not very optimistic, but there was still hope that Leon would return to the front.

It was a pretty bad wager to find a way out of it, but there was no other way. If there was nothing she could do but complain, then she would just have to be prepared and do her best.

“You two, stick to supporting me! And the clown (Pierrot) over there! Your opponent is—”

“It’s me. If I don't work once in a while, I'll lose my reputation.”

Silvia's comment was interrupted by Yuuki, one of the enemies. Without saying a word, he launched a kick at Laplace.

“Eh, Wait!! Are you serious, boss!?”

Laplace, even when starting the battle with no questions asked, did not forget to introduce himself.

“I am a clown, but my name is Laplace.”

While dealing with Yuuki, he shouted it back at Silvia.

“You're still dangerous, Laplace. There's still plenty left in you, so I'll be your opponent as well as Yuuki-sama.”

While saying that, Kagali joined the fray.

“That's not fair! I mean, are you trying to make me cry!?”

Even Laplace had become desperate.

Even if it was just one of them, it would be difficult.

But now that both of them were coming at him at the same time, he couldn't even afford to make fun of them.

At this point, Leon made his move.

“Well, it looks like you're my opponent, Master Silvia. But I don't want to point my sword at you. Won’t you come to our side?”

Leon made such a suggestion in a gentlemanly manner.

Even though he was being manipulated, his memories were still intact. If Michael or Feldway ordered him to kill, there was nothing he could do, but otherwise, he could get some control.

However, betrayal is absolutely impossible. Simply asking this proposal was the best concession Leon could currently make.

“You know, Leon-kun. You were the one called me here, remember?”

“Yes. So, by all means, become an ally—”

“I don't think we should talk. Because I don't want Leon-kun to resent me. If I cooperate with Leon-kun now, he'll complain about it later when he comes to his senses.”

Silvia laughed in reply.

She knew what Leon's purpose was in life, and what he had lived for. That is why she could not betray Leon's true feelings.

However, Leon could not understand his feelings.

“—?”

Leon also had memories of Chloe.

He still felt that Chloe was important to him, but that did not take precedence over his “orders.”

“You have a girl you like, don't you? How do you think she’d feel if she saw Leon-kun right now?”

Leon's heart wavered when he was asked that question.

However…

He quickly calmed down and regained his usual coolness.

“That's a silly question. After Feldway-sama's wish is granted, I will have what I want. And I'm sure she'll be waiting for me until then.”

“Um, are you sure about that…?”

Silvia asked quite seriously.

Based on what she had heard from Elmesia and the others, It was clear that Chloe's attention was not on Leon.

If Leon didn’t launch an onslaught from here on, she didn’t think Chloe would be waiting for him.

But that was Leon's own problem.

It was not for her to interfere with, so all Silvia said was, “Oh well. Just don’t cry if she rejects you.”

When Leon heard this, he twitched, but no one noticed it. And so, the battle between Silvia and Leon began.

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Laplace was the strongest majin in the Moderate Clown Troupe.

He possessed a vicious power and could even be called an uncrowned demon lord.

He was reborn as an undead elf by Kagali's hands, but his experience and abilities as an ex-Chosen Hero had remained intact. In addition to that, Laplace possessed two Unique Skills.

The first was the Unique Skill ‘Falsifier.’

This ability, which was able to interfere with an opponent's perceptions, helped him to launch illusionary attacks.

Disguising one’s weapon is a useful skill.

A spear in his hand could appear as a knife to his enemy.

He could make a knife appear out of thin air when one thought he had nothing in his hands.

Or, it could also be a bomb disguised as a knife, making it the perfect tool to play with the enemy.

And with this skill, it was also easy to pretend to be dead and make an escape.

That alone was heinous, but there was another skill that was even more so.

The power of foresight, the Unique Skill ‘Future Vision’—this was Laplace's trump card.

This ability allowed Laplace to see a few seconds into the future.

Because of this, he could clearly see whether or not his ‘Falsifier’ skill would work against the enemy.

This is why Laplace was always able to fight without being caught off guard.

He had high physical ability and a good sense of combat.

Along with his perfect prediction of the future and a thousand different ways to attack, Laplace was invincible. He claimed to be the vice-chairman of the Moderate Clown Troupe, but in terms of simple combat ability, he easily surpassed the chairman, Kagali.

It was precisely because of this that Laplace had remained undefeated for so long after becoming a majin.

Besides, even running away was one of Laplace's tactics, so it was a rare event for him to admit defeat.

But even that Laplace admitted defeat to the boy standing in front of him—Yuuki Kagurazaka.

But that was a while ago…

“Footman, Tear! Support Leon. And while you're at it, take care of those deadbeats!”

That was Kagali's order.

Laplace launched a counterattack as there was no way to run away.

There were two opponents. Moreover, they were both as strong or even stronger than him.

Actually, the boss is probably most dangerous one, since Kagali-sama, for all her strengths, is not good at close combat.

Laplace had known Kagali for a long time.

He was familiar with Kagali's strengths and weaknesses, and judged that he could handle her, even if her presence was different from that of Kazaream.

In fact, Kagali's physical strength had increased, making it more difficult for her to fall. Her strength had increased, her destructive power has increased, and her speed had increased all by an order of magnitude—but her overall ability had not changed. That is why it was possible to respond sufficiently by increasing the speed of reflection and anticipating her moves.

Even for such a Laplace, he still thought that Yuuki would be a bad match-up for him.

Yuuki's strength appeared to be the same as before, but that assumption was dangerous. Therefore, Laplace decided that he should be more cautious of Yuuki than Kagali.

“No hard feelings, Yuuki-san 110 (Kansai)!”

He shouted and threw a knife at Yuuki. But it was shown in ‘Future Vision’ that they would all miss.

Unperturbed by this, Laplace made his next move.

Aiming at Yuuki's evasive maneuvers, he threw knives one after another.

He did not forget to check Kagali.

On the surface, Laplace was aloof, but he was quite desperately trying to use his two powers.

Even so, he was unable to reach Yuuki.

No way! Even with my ‘Future Vision,’ I can only see the future where everything will be wrong…

A few seconds in the future was meaningless.

In the first place, 'Falsifier' did not work on Yuuki. This was the same opponent that Laplace was unable to defeat in the past, and it seemed that it would be difficult for him to win this time as well.

But that’s still not a reason to give up, is it

If he had wanted to admit defeat so easily, he wouldn't have gone to such a dangerous place in the first place.

Laplace was also someone who had believed in Yuuki's words.

“Boss, you're the one who said it! You said you were going to take over the world!”

“Hahaha, you're an idiot, Laplace. Do you still believe in that nonsense?”

“Of course I do. I'm persistent. I've decided to give up when I die, so I'll keep believing in you while I'm alive!”

Yuuki laughed mockingly at Laplace's desperate shout.

“This is ridiculous, Laplace! Just because you're a clown doesn't mean you can't have a funny laugh.”

With that condescending remark, Yuuki closed in on Laplace. As the two of them approached, Kagali, who was about to unleash the ‘Golden Destruction Ray’ from the Ruin Scepter again, came to a halt.

Laplace, however, was having none of it, and was desperately trying to block Yuuki's attack.

What a heavy fist! Is this guy really human? There are so many different types of otherworlders, it's scary. However, even so…

There was something that bothered him.

At first glance, Yuuki's attack seemed harsh, but in fact, the hit were slightly off the mark.

It was not due to Laplace.

It was Yuuki's intention to do so.

At that moment, Laplace realized.

Eh? Wait a minute...This signal, could it be—

He remembered the pattern of the faint vibrations he felt whenever he parried a fist or blocked a kick.

It had also been used to communicate with Clayman, and was encrypted so that no one else could decipher it. And the only people who knew the code were the people he trusted.

In other words—

Uh, let’s see……“Hurry and figure it out, idiot! When you notice it, work with me”—was it?

Eh, really? Although Laplace had his doubts, the possibility that this was a trap felt slim to none.

Even without Yuuki having to go through such trouble, Laplace would have eventually been defeated.

So Laplace did as he was told and tried to team up with Yuuki.

“I'm more powerful than you!”

“Let’s test it.”

And, well, he was immediately grappled and thrown off in an instant.

It was real!

It was not a trap, but a way to entrust a message for what was to come.

While pretending to roll on the floor—or rather, it actually really hurt—Laplace read the message.

The fact that they had fought each other for a short period of time, instead of just a moment, gave him a good amount of information this time. And it revealed Yuuki's current situation.

Boss, you've come to your senses!!

In this desperate situation, it was good news.

Laplace, hiding his joy under his mask, read the information further.

Well, what is it? We're going to keep pretending to fight and restrain the Chairman, right? If you're leaving the rest to me, does that mean the boss has a plan? All right, let's do it!

Without hesitation, Laplace takes action.

He made it look like he was going to attack Yuuki, but instead he grabbed Kagali.

“—!?”

“Alright—now ‘Skill Steal’—!!”

“What the—”

Kagali fell to her knees.

Laplace held her up.

“A-Are you okay, Chairman?”

“Eh, Laplace? Um, what about me—Wait, no way…my skill—‘Domination King (Melchizedek)’ is gone!”

Kagali looked confused, but in an instant, she grasped the situation.

“Fall back, Tear, Footman!”

She shouted to protect herself, which was quite a feat. Even Kagali could not hide her surprise. Even so, she understood from the bottom of her heart that the situation had changed drastically at this moment.

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Silvia, who had been fighting Leon, was having a difficult time.

Leon was her student, but he had a talent that Silvia recognized.

Even when he had been assimilated into the Spirit of Light and was active as a Chosen Hero, his skill with a sword was on par with Silvia.

Moreover, he now had the Ultimate Skill ‘Purity King (Metatron),’ and was one of the demon lords as an unparalleled swordsman.

When Leon got serious, he would unleash a ‘light speed slash.’ Although he did not actually reach the speed of light, it was called as such because his sword line would shine like a flash of light.

And the power of the Ultimate Skill ‘Purity King (Metatron)’ turned it into something quite vicious.

It is the ultimate power of the holy attribute.

It is an extraordinary skill that gives one the ability to freely manipulate the most powerful holy magic, ‘Disintegration.’

By controlling the 'Purity King (Metatron)' Leon deployed spirit particles around his body and sword, turning himself into an ‘incarnation of destruction,’ disintegrating everything he touches.

Leon was undefeated with the combination of his ultra-fast swordsmanship and the power of absolute destruction.

Silvia was no slouch either.

Her Skill, ‘Thunder King (Indra),’ was an ability to control lightning, the strongest power in nature.

The power of her lightning strikes was perfect, but the true essence of ‘Thunder King (Indra)’ lied elsewhere. Silvia had turned her own body into a lightning strike, enabling herself to attack at divine speeds.

For this reason, Silvia was feared as the “Thunder Emperor” since ancient times.

It was precisely because of this that Silvia was able to deal with Leon's attacks. She changed her vajra to suit her needs and fought fluidly with her sword.

Silvia, who had maintained her reputation as a master in this way, inwardly felt a sense of crisis.

I knew you were strong, but I didn't expect you to have grown so much....I'm happy to see my students grow, but it also depends on the time and place…

Those were her true feelings.

And the reason for her sense of crisis came from the fact that she felt Leon was not yet serious.

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As his master, Silvia knew that Leon had a weakness.

Leon was too naive.

If there were allies nearby, he would not fight with his full strength. Such kindness was a virtue, but on the battlefield, it was only an opening.

The ideal Chosen Hero was one who’s ‘desire to protect became power,’ but that was only in fairytales. In real life, that was just a bit too naive.

Silvia knew.

Silvia knew that this city had been created by orphans and oppressed majins saved by Leon. Elmesia had also provided financial support, but Silvia was the one who helped establish the city.

He was often misunderstood because of his deceitful words and actions, but the real Leon was truly a kind man.

When a girl named Shizu went out of control and sacrificed her friends, he was heartbroken and lamented that it was his fault. He left her in the care of the Chosen Hero of that time, thinking that it would be better for her to live in the human world than to be raised by a demon lord like himself.

She knew that he had been watching over the girl and, as a result, had been the first to detect the existence of Demon Lord Rimuru.

It was just a coincidence that Elen and the others had become acquainted with the girl—Shizue Izawa—but Silvia, through Elmesia's connections, had tightened her surveillance even more than Demon Lord Leon.

That’s why she had been frustrated by the reality of multiple misunderstandings and dismayed by the awkwardness of her apprentice. However, she did not meddle unnecessarily.

Given Leon's unlucky nature, she judged that doing would only lead to complications.

It was frustrating, but she could only watch over him.

But this time, he had finally asked her for help.

That’s why she came to him, hoping to respond to his request, but the situation was very unfavorable.

There was one reason for this.

Leon's weakness had disappeared.

Leon's kindness had always prevented him from being serious, but now that Michael's dominance took precedence over everything else, he would use his skill to the fullest under the right circumstances.

The dreaded ‘Purity King (Metatron).’

Leon always had it under control, using it with minimal power. However, the true nature of the ‘Purity King (Metatron)’ is that it was a power specialized for mass annihilation.

This was also the case with the ‘Thunder King (Indra),’ so Silvia's sense of crisis was very great.

If Leon-kun were to get serious…

What would happen if Leon activated his power without caring about the damage to his surroundings?

If Leon got serious, this country would be annihilated.

Silvia was determined not to let that happen.

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A fierce sword fight ensued, and the battle continued back and forth.

In the aftermath of ultra high-speed combat, the audience hall was being destroyed to the utmost limit.

Worst of all, the ‘magic transfer circle’ had been destroyed. Even though that magic circle had been made of magisteel and was extremely durable, Leon's stray bullets had destroyed it.

It was no longer usable. Not only would she be unable to escape, but Rimuru and the others would not be able to come.

Silvia felt sorry for herself, but Leon was not a man who she could fight while protecting something, so she gave up.

Alrose and Claude were not able to help Silvia either.

“Wha-What a terrifying battle…I can't even see it. I can't even tell with my own eyes who is in the lead.”

“Don't worry—I know it sounds strange, but I am the same, Claude-dono. I thought I could keep up with the real Leon-sama, but it seems that I've been conceited.”

“Hmm. That's true.”

Although they didn't know Silvia's true identity, they knew that she was no ordinary person. However, when they saw that Silvia was more powerful than they had imagined, they could not help but be amazed.

The same could be said for Tear and Footman.

“Oh man. That Leon guy is even stronger than I thought.”

“Hohoho. It's would be too difficult to interrupt that fight! So then, what can we do?”

“Yeah, yeah. Then we’ll just have to hunt down the small fry!”

The two clapped their hands together.

Then they turned their sights on Alrose and Claude.

“Damn, they've set their sights on us…”

“Even if it’s just  one, let's show them the pride of a knight!”

“It’s suicidal. However, it's the only thing we can do here.”

Alrose and Claude had made up their minds.

As the proud leaders and instructors of the Magic Knights, they had decided on the place of their death.

Their lives were gravely in danger, but then suddenly, a voice rang out.

“Fall back, Tear, Footman!!”

Kagali had come to her senses just in time, and Alrose and Claude were lucky to survive the crisis.

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Feldway was confused.

Something incredible had just happened, right in front of his eyes.

For tens of thousands of years, nothing had ever gone wrong with his plans.

But lately, everything had been falling apart.

It all started with Cornu's blunder.

The loss of the army had been unthinkable. The Underworld Gate leading to the world in question had been closed, and the details still remained unknown.

The next shock was the return of Velgrynd.

Having been banished to the other side of the world, Velgrynd was supposed to be left to disappear in the world beyond.

However, she somehow returned to the Cardinal World, and on top of that, had completely annihilated Cornu.

It was an unthinkable event.

However, he had had no choice but to admit that it was the reality.

That is why this time, he made a plan for the perfect situation.

And yet, here they were.

Not only had Yuuki, who was supposed to be under his complete control, regained his freedom, but even Kagali, who received an angelic skill, had come to her senses.

“—What did you do? You, how did you escape the Regalia Dominion?”

Feldway asked Yuuki in a voice that sounded as  if it was coming from the depths of hell.

He wasn't expecting an answer, but it was Yuuki.

He smirked and replied in an agitating manner.

“It's simple. I'm a genius, and I felt that this ‘Regalia Dominion’ thing was dangerous, so I substituted with the strange will that was growing inside of me.”

“—A ‘strange will,’ you say?”

“Ah. Perhaps it is the ego of the Ultimate Skill ‘Greedy King (Mammon)’ that I had acquired? The Greed instinct was something I took from Mariabell. It was a little creepy, so I didn't trust it.”

He didn't trust the ‘Greedy King (Mammon),’ even though he had used it a lot. This cautiousness was probably the reason why Yuuki was Yuuki.

‘I had a hard time,’ Yuuki continued.

“I observed the ego of the dominated ‘Greedy King' (Mammon)’ and figured out how it worked. It took longer than I expected, but it looks like I got it right at the worst possible time, so you'll have to excuse me.”

He even winked at Laplace and the others.

This had all been a strategy.

Yuuki had been observing the situation while he was being manipulated and had come to the conclusion that he could not beat Feldway.

Of course, the future was a different story.

He believed that if he continued to get stronger, he would eventually be able to compete with him someday. The reason was that Yuuki's growth rate was extraordinary—though not as abnormal as Rimuru's.

Therefore, he began to stir things up now.

It would be a great success if he could convince Feldway and the others that he had enough time to get them to retreat.

In the worst case, he wanted to at least buy time until Rimuru and the others came to support him. He thought that he could achieve that goal just by continuing the conversation.

Feldway was upset by Yuuki's attitude, but his thoughts were calm. He judged the authenticity of Yuuki's words and saw that they were not lies.

You've seen through Michael-sama's skill, huh? There’s no way a mere mortal could have done that. It's dangerous. This guy is too dangerous…

Feldway narrowed his eyes and identified Yuuki as an enemy.

That  is why he decided to reveal his hidden hand.

I would have liked to keep it under wraps until the last minute, but it looks like there is no other choice. I have to deal with Yuuki here and now, rather than letting him find out what the traitor is up to.

Feldway saw Yuuki as a dangerous foe.

Of course, it was not because he was agitated.

He just could not tolerate Yuuki’s Skill—the 'Skill Steal' from the ‘Greedy King (Mammon).’

If this was left unchecked, not only Leon, but also the others might be freed from Michael's control.

“Now that he had activated the Ultimate Dominion, the trust between them was as good as lost. Therefore, even if it was a small probability, he judged it to be an unacceptable risk.

“As expected of Yuuki-sama!”

“Well, I guess.”

“It’s the boss after all! You're a man who just can’t be taken down!!”

“Well, not really.”

“Right, right! It’s almost like we’ve won now.”

“Hohoho. I don't know what's going on, but I'm sure we've got the upper hand!”

“That's a bit of an exaggeration, but I think we've got a little cushion space now.”

Feldway glared at Yuuki's group with a scathing look.

“Hey, you! I have to ask, can you take away Leon-kun's skill too?”

Silvia and Leon, who had been sword-fighting without regard to the changing situation, paused for a moment to distance themselves. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Silvia asked Yuuki.

Although they did not have time to exchange greetings, Yuuki answered with a friendly smile.

“Unfortunately, I can't right now. I don't have the luxury to accept—”

“Eh, that's too bad. I'll leave you to it then, but don't expect me to help you, okay?”

“You got it. In the meantime, you should take care of Leon.”

“Got it too! I'm going to show him how serious I am as his master.”

Silvia said her words and resumed her sword fight with Leon.

Yuuki focused all of his attention on Feldway, knowing that he could count on her.

What he had said earlier about not being able to take away the skill was true.

The current Yuuki had just robbed the ‘Domination King (Melchizedek)’ from Kagali. There was no way he could take away another skill before he had finished analyzing it.

More importantly, there was a difference between skills that were self-created and skills that were given. In Kagali's case, since the skill was given to her, it was not stable and thus easier to steal.

There was a high possibility that the skills rooted in oneself could not be taken even if Yuuki was in perfect condition.

With the current Leon, whose ego was being manipulated, there might be a chance…but…In any case, it was impossible for now. If he explained that, it would only put him at a disadvantage, so Yuuki muddled his words at the end.

Either way, the enemy will have no choice but to doubt my words.

Yuuki thinks.

If it were him, he wouldn't believe in the enemy's words.

In other words, even if Yuuki said he couldn’t, Feldway had no choice but to act as if there was still a possibility of losing his skills.

That was Yuuki's tactic of exaggerating himself.

Now, the enemy could not move carelessly. If the stalemate continued, the tactical victory goal would have been achieved.

However, it was at this point that Feldway began to laugh.

“Fufufu, good grief. I'm going to have to deal with you here, after all.”

Hearing that chilling voice, Yuuki realized that his plan had gone awry.

Did I stir things up too much? No, even if he gets serious here, we should be able to withstand it.

Even if he couldn’t take on him alone, there were five of them here.

Silvia had Leon under control.

So then, Yuuki and the others could all take on Feldway.

However, a great miscalculation occurred here.

Feldway's trump card came into play in a way that Yuuki could never have imagined.

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“Kill the kid (wake up, Jahil)!” Feldway ordered.

“—?”

Yuuki could not read his intentions.

Leon had his hands full with Silvia, so he was unable to comply with the order. If someone moved, it would be Feldway himself.

What is—

A moment's hesitation would reveal the outcome before an answer could be given.

“So, you called for me, Feldway. I owe you a debt, but it's not nice to be treated like this all the time.”

After feeling a burning pain in his chest, the voice reached Yuuki's ears.

Yuuki coughed up blood, and when he looked down at his chest, he saw a hideous arm growing out of it.



“Footman!! What are you doing!?”

Kagali shouted, and Footman turned around in response to her voice.

Pulling his arm out of Yuuki's chest, he sneered evilly.

And then he replied.

“Shut up, Kazaream. What are you doing, throwing away the name and appearance that I gave you?”

He spoke with a fluency that was unlike the usual Footman.

And that evil presence had grown much larger than before.

“Shit, this is…”

Yuuki muttered and fell to his knees.

As a Saint, Yuuki had complete control over his body as a spiritual lifeform. That's why he was able to stop the blood flow by his own will, but the damage he suffered was not light. A normal person would have died instantly.

“Huh? So you’re still alive, you stubborn piece of trash. Don't bother me anymore!!”

Footman said so and kicked the dying Yuuki away. The extraordinary force of Footman's kick had the destructive power to disable Yuuki with just one blow..

“Guah!!”

“Yuuki-sama—”

Kagali and Tear went to help Yuuki, and Laplace stood in front of Footman.

“Who the hell are you?”

“Who am I, huh? What kind of lowly scum are you that you don't even know this great magician?”

Yes, that man was not Footman.

The supposedly destroyed Great Magician—also known as Jahil.

“The Great Magician, is it Jahil, by any chance?”

While concentrating on Leon, Silvia maintained a broad perspective and analyzed the battle situation. Naturally, she was also listening carefully to the conversation and reacted to the words “Great Magician.”

“So, you're Silvia, huh? Indeed. I am Jahil!”

At Jahil's declaration, the entire place became tense.

Kagali paled and Silvia scowled.

Kagali, who was Jahil's daughter, and Silvia had known each other for a long time as high elves created by the ancestor. Although they disliked each other and had parted company, they had a high regard for each other's abilities and were on guard against each other.

Knowing Jahil's wickedness, they both understood that his resurrection would be the worst of all evils. And that was Feldway's trump card.

In the land after Milim's rampage, he sought out Jahil, who had lost his body and had become a wandering soul. He protected Jahil, who would not have escaped extinction without him, and let him sleep for a long time.

While Lieutenant Kondou was controlling Demon Lord Clayman, Feldway implanted Jahil's soul into Footman. He thought that Footman, with his weak ego and intelligence, could be taken over by Jahil's power.

His plan succeeded, and Jahil slowly invaded the Footman's body. At first, he had only passed on information to Feldway, but the balance of power was eventually reversed when he inhabited the seraphim, and Jahil took full control.

All that was left was to awaken at Feldway's signal.

Feldway, who had intended to awaken him at the most effective time, decided that now was that  time.

“Come on, Jahil. Use the power I've given you and kill them all.”

‘Useless tools must be disposed of,’ Feldway ordered.

Jahil, along with the seraphim, had been given the ‘Charity King (Raguel)’ that Michael had taken from Velgrynd. He had secretly taken it for himself, owning it as the Ultimate Enchantment ‘Blaze King (Agni),’

“Gera-gera-gera-gera! I've been waiting for this day. Finally, I can use this power to the fullest!”

Jahil laughed evilly.

Footman's huge body was engulfed in flames, and he became a fire emperor who destroyed anything he touched. Jahil, who could control fire at will, unleashed his vicious power.

Footman's “angry mask” shattered and melted.

And the face that appeared was ugly and distorted, as if representing his heart.

“Footman—give me back my Footman!!” Kagali shouted.

But her sorrowful voice only pleased Jahil.

“Gera-gera-gera-gera! You're so weak. I'd like to give you a good beating, but it's just too bad! I'm under Feldway-dono’s orders to kill. Forgive me, you fool.”

With that, Jahil hurled a fireball at Kagali.

While not as powerful as Velgrynd's, Jahil's fire was still powerful. If exposed to its heat, any material would burn up in an instant.

“Damn it, don't ignore me!”

Laplace tried to deflect the fireball with a magic bullet, but it was far too powerful. It was swallowed by the fireball and had no effect on it. The fireball then swelled up and swallowed Kagali, Tear, and Yuuki.

But as the flames subsided, a figure remained standing.

“It's useless.”

It was Yuuki.

Despite his fatal condition, he stood up and blocked the fireball with his ‘Anti-Skill.’

“…Hoh? My flames won’t penetrate. So that’s it. It's not a matter of power. It's nasty. Let's just admit it's a real pain in the ass.”

Jahil's eyes lit up with the light of a researcher.

His mouth twisted with pleasure, as if he were curious about a new toy.

“Boss, are you okay?”

“No, of course not. I'd like to go lie down in bed quickly, but the problem is that the enemy doesn't seem to want to let me go.”

“Well then…What are you going to do?”

“The important thing is—”

The important was to survive.

He understood that, but couldn’t think of a way to do so.

According to Yuuki's observations, Jahil's power was ten times greater than Laplace's. Compared to Yuuki himself, it was certain that his power was five times greater.

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In fact, from a divine point of view, Laplace had an existence value of a little over a million. That strength was unparalleled compared to a demon lord seed, but as an awakened demon lord, it was at the bottom of the group. It was Laplace's experience that allowed him to make full use of his skill and make him so powerful.

In comparison, Yuuki, who was still a Saint and so high up that it would not be surprising if he became a “divine spirit,” had an existence value of about 2 million. However, he possessed the powerful Skill ‘Greedy King (Mammon)’ and the foul ‘Anti-Skill’ that disabled other Skills, so he had a combat ability that could not be measured by numbers.

Tear had an existence value of 2.4 million, which was higher than Yuuki's if one was only looking at the numbers. She had a unique skill called ‘Optimist’ which allowed her to have less desire for herself. Under certain conditions, she could raise all of her physical abilities threefold, but this would only work against lower-ranked opponents.

Since she did not have the same level of skill as Laplace, she was the weakest of the four.

And Kagali was the one with the largest existence value among them.

She was the most powerful among the four, with an existence value of nearly 3 million. In addition to that, she was reinforced with the Ruin Scepter, so her total existence value reached 4 million.

Sadly, however, Kagali was a support-type. She was not that good at neither close combat or long-range combat. It was not that she was of no use, but she was not very promising in terms of combat.

In comparison, Jahil's existence value reached 14 million.

This was the result of adding Jahil's power to Footman's power. And Jahil enjoyed not only magical combat but also close combat for the purpose of taunting the weak.

He could take them all down with pure violence alone if he so wished.

It was, without a doubt, the worst possible situation.

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Despite being a genius, Yuuki was frustrated with himself for not being able to come up with an answer that could get him through this situation.

He wondered if he should have continued pretending to be insane for a while longer, but rejected the idea. That was one way to go, but the best time to get Kagali back had been at that moment.

It was just that Feldway was a step ahead of him.

He had prepared carefully and had taken all possible precautions. The more moves one had hidden, the more advantages they would have.

This time, Yuuki honestly regretted that he had lost.

Even though he had been with Footman for a long time, he had not realized that Footman, who was supposed to be his friend, had any evil intent. Rather than saying that it was his fault for not being able to see it, he should have praised Feldway for making such careful preparations.

It’s always like this. This world is really so unreasonable…

While reflecting on his actions, Yuuki lamented the absurdity of this world.

There was a possibility that Tear might have had something to do with it, and he tried to be wary of it, but soon realized that it was meaningless.

If there really was such a thing, there was no reason to keep it in mind at this time.

Suddenly, he remembered that slime, which seemed to be the embodiment of unreasonableness.

Rimuru-san. If it’s that man, then he would never give up. I'm the one who came here first, but he came later and did whatever he wanted. And that's even better than the ideals I've been trying so hard to achieve, it's really sickening.

That’s what he thought, but he wasn’t displeased.

Rather, it seemed to make him laugh from the bottom of his heart.

“What are you laughing at?”

“No, I'm just remembering something amusing. I thought you were a truly nasty and dangerous opponent, but there is someone who is even scarier than that. He’s the only one who can easily overcome my tricks and still remain aloof.”

“Wahaha, Rimuru-san, 111 huh? Well, that guy really is something else.”

“Right? It's not my nature to rely on others, but I'm willing to do so here. He'll be here soon to support us, so there's only one option to choose.”

Yuuki smiled fearlessly.

“Yeah, that's true.”

Laplace also laughed.

“Buying time. That was the only way from the start, so it's a decision that's a little late coming.”

As if caught up in the moment, Kagali stood up as well.

“Alright, I'll do my best too!”

Tear was also motivated.

Yuuki, Laplace, Kagali, and Tear.

The four of them stood shoulder to shoulder, facing Jahil, who had taken over Footman.

“I'll avenge you, Footman.”

With Laplace's spirited words as a signal, the fierce battle began.

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Silvia, while fighting Leon, observed Yuuki and the others from a broader perspective.

They were outnumbered four to one, but it was Jahil who actually had the upper hand.

Yuuki was half-dead and half-alive.

The hole in his chest seemed to have been filled, but it had worn him down.

Fortunately, Yuuki's constitution was a special one called ‘Anti-Skill,’ This stopped Jahil's fireball, and the fight to the death has been barely maintained.

Yuuki was the key defender, and Laplace and Tear were his guards. With Kagali providing support, they were able to stand up to their formidable opponent (Jahil).

Yuuki-kun, right? If he falls, then the whole thing will collapse…

It wouldn’t just be a loss of their defenses. The mood of the entire party was made by Yuuki's cheerful instructions.

In response, Laplace pushed himself harder.

Tear was just a drifter, so she could be strong or weak depending on the mood.

Kagali, the command tower, seemed to understand the situation—

Well, even if she understands, she can't do anything if she doesn't have help…

In other words, there was nothing they could do.

They were slowly losing strength, and it was now a game of how much time they could postpone until they were defeated.

Stalling.

The answer they came up with was probably the only correct one.

“Damn, that's really bullshit strength. My ‘Anti-Skill’ can ignore all the ‘defensive barriers,’ but his pure durability is too high to do any damage…”

“You're right, his nature is just too different. Even with my prediction, I can't see a future where I can do any damage.”

No matter what they did, they knew it wouldn't work, and it made them feel hopeless.

But there was only one reason why this was not the case.

They believed that Rimuru and the others would soon arrive.

As El-chan said, Rimuru-kun sure is amazing. Even when he's not here, he is still a hope for everyone.

Silvia was also hoping for the best.

“Even for you Master, don’t you think you’re being a bit too lax, looking the other way when dealing with me?”

“Perhaps so. But in a battle of similar powers, the one who is impatient will lose!”

Silvia evaded Leon's divine speed slashes with a flick. They were both owners of the same line of Skills, and of the same school of thought. They knew exactly what the other was doing.

The same was true for Leon, but he was under orders from Michael to defeat the enemy. There was a clear difference between those who could just take their time and those who had to defeat their opponents, and this difference affected the course of the battle.

And there was another reason.

It was Leon's deep psychology.

Subconsciously, Leon was struggling to regain his free will. It was only a minor effect, but it was definitely slowing down his body.

That was why the battle between Silvia and Leon was very stable, with Silvia in the lead.

That’s what Silvia thought.

Even so, why isn't Feldway making a move? I'd really be in a bit of trouble if he joined in here.

On the other hand, Yuuki and the others would be defeated by the imbalance at once.

Why hadn’t that happened?

Silvia turned her gaze to Feldway to find out why.

She observed and made an inference.

He doesn’t seem to be in a hurry. It like he thinks that Leon-kun and Jahil are nothing but pawns. He's going to take our data here and make sure to kill us next time.

Silvia was disgusted by the answer.

He was being overly cautious.

Normally, one would think that it would be more reliable to kill the enemy here. The reason Feldway didn’t was because he was putting his own safety first. That led her to believe that he had more than Leon and Jahil in his clutches.

That was true.

Based on her observations, Feldway believed that he could destroy the enemy with the forces he did not bring this time.

He refrained from making a move here, considering the possibility that the enemy might be hiding some secret technique. This cowardly and morbid cautiousness was the essence of Feldway.

At any rate, Feldway's decision to stay out of the way seemed to accomplish their goal of stalling. But just when Silvia was feeling a little more relaxed about the situation, something happened.

“Oh, yes, I remember now. That ‘Anti-Skill’ was a trait that the Dragon Princess’ pet once had. As I recall, it was a very troublesome constitution that blocked magic and skills, but there are established ways to deal with it. It's easy. If it's pure power that is neither magic nor skill, it can't be repelled!!”

Jahil may be evil, but he was also a top researcher. As a high elf of the Ancestor, he had a proven track record, and his eyes were very reliable.

That's why he saw through the correct answer.

The ‘Anti-Skill’ had also been passed down to Milim’s pet Chaos Dragon at the end it’s life, but Milim's power had defeated and succeeded in sealing it.

Jahil, who was unaware of this example, changed his attack method without hesitation, as if he was confident in his answer.

In other words, simple violence.

Using his own body as a weapon, he attacked Yuuki.

“Gera-gera-gera-gera! You're too weak!”

Jahil smiled broadly and beat Yuuki to a pulp.

From that point on, it was completely one-sided.

Yuuki barely managed to fight back with his physical skills, but the difference in strength was insurmountable. It didn't take long for the three of them to fall to the floor together, as Laplace and Tear were lightly dealt with.

“Jahil—!!”

In a fit of rage, Kagali activated a spell, but it was blocked by the fighting spirit surrounding Jahil's body. Then, Jahil's fist plunged into Kagali's stomach. It was a pure difference in power that decided the outcome in a brutal way.

“Gera-gera-gera-gera! Do you understand the folly of challenging me? So, Feldway-dono, are you sure you want to get rid of them?”

Jahil asked for the final confirmation.

He may have intended to kill them from the start, but at least he was making his boss look good.

“Do as you please.” Feldway replied succinctly.

Hearing this, Jahil laughed evilly.

“Kazaream, my son. It's a shame. You were a good test subject. But rest assured, I will soon have a new toy to replace you right away!!”

Jahil declared and began to squeeze power between his outstretched hands. Then, the pure fighting spirit swirled and condensed, transforming into a vast amount of energy that could distort even space-time.

The atmosphere crackled and burned.

This was neither magic nor skill, but pure destructive power. Not only was it enough to destroy Yuuki, but it was so powerful that it might even damage Jahil himself.

Silvia looked at it sideways and paled, thinking that this was no good.

All the power was concentrated in one point, creating a destructive force that went beyond nuclear magic. If she took the hit seriously, she’d probably end up disappearing without even leaving her body.

Realizing that this was truly dangerous, she put up a ‘defensive barrier’ with all her might. Leon must have also made the same decision, because he stopped his attack on Silvia and went to defend Feldway.

Yuuki was trying to defend himself with ‘Greedy King (Mammon),’but he seemed to be running out of energy. Kagali's ‘Barrier’ with the Unique Skill ‘Schemer’ was the only last resort.

Although she had lost the ‘Domination King (Melchizedek)’ to Yuuki, Kagali had once reached her ultimate level. Therefore, her skill, 'Schemer', was unique but had grown to a level of performance comparable to an ultimate skill.

But it was not enough.

In order overturn the overwhelming difference in power, Kagali alone was inadequate.

I can't do it with just this. I can't withstand it…

That was Silvia's intuition.

Jahil's attack was two-tiered. The energy of pure destruction was wrapped up in the ‘Blaze King (Agni).’ After Kagali's ‘Barrier’ was blown away by the fireball, the real attack would be waiting.

This was all because of Jahil's absurd amount of magicules. It was an inconceivably dense mass of energy, several times denser than Silvia’s. Even if the current Silvia had joined in with the others, it would still be impossible to prevent this attack.

Wasn’t there anyone else who could prevent this?

Thinking so, she looked around at the four frozen people.

Kagali was doing her best, but to no avail, and Yuuki was running out of steam, as mentioned previously.

So, what about the other two?

Tear didn’t have an Ultimate Skill, and her ‘defensive barrier’ was probably not enough to stop anything.

In that case, there was no choice but to hope for Laplace, the last one.

With that in mind, Silvia turned her gaze to Laplace and saw something surprising.

Eh? That face—No way, that person is—

Underneath Laplace's shattered mask, there it was.

It was a very familiar face.

She thought she had long forgotten it, but just one look was enough to fill her with memories.

Silvia couldn't help shouting involuntarily.

“Run, Sarion—!!”

But it was too late for that advice—

“Well, goodbye. I'll break your soul into pieces and wipe you off the face of the earth!”

Jahil's words signaled the end.

True to his words, he caused a great deal of destruction.

There was a flash, and then an explosion.

Leon's castle was blown to bits.

A great ball of fire raged wildly, spreading heat waves and flames as it disappeared—

Notes:

[101]

Like with the peerage of England: Archduke > Duke > Marquis > Earl > Viscount > Baron.

[102]

A “bastard sword” is actually a type of longsword (somewhere in between a two-hand and one-hand sword and between the length of a short or longsword) from the 15th-16th century. It comes from the French word “épée bâtarde” and had the general feel of ‘an irregular sword’ or ‘a sword of unknown origin.’

[103]

A medieval club-like weapon consisting of a shaft connected to a round spiked ball. Like a mace.

[104]

A giant shield that the person’s whole body can hide behind—any “Bofuri” fans out there?

[105]

This translation was confusing. The MTL was “Kill each other more,” but there was also an “ai” in parantheses in the middle which means “love.” So it’s like she’s blurring the lines between killing and love I guess.

[106]

Laplace actually says “Silvia-han insead of -san. It’s the same thing, but the -han is just the Japanese Kansai dialect.

[107]

“Shigen (始原)” Like the Seven “Originals/Firstborn” Angels.

[108]

Elmesia – Silvia’s daughter.

[109]

A ritual weapon from Hindu mythology that is meant to symbolize the properties of diamond (indestructible) and a thunderbolt (overwhelming force). It was said to be the weapon of the Hindu thunder deity Indra which makes sense considering Silvia’s Ultimate Skill (Thunder King Indra)

[110]

Again, Laplace uses the Kansai dialect -han – “Yuuki-han”

[111]

“Rimuru-han” (Kansai dialect)