Defeat of the Holy Knights

(Spoiler for Light Novel Volume 7)

Upon arriving at the capital city Rimuru of Tempest Federation, a drastic change in the situation had taken place. There was a sudden surge of fighting spirit indicating a huge battle. One of the parties gave off a rather familiar aura. It belonged to the Holy Knight Order vice-commander Reynald, who was supposed to be defending the nation (Ruberios) while they were out.

This came as a tremendous shock to the Holy Knights, who had just recently gained hope in being able to resolve the conflict with Rimuru peacefully, after weeks of travelling. But regardless of the situation, they needed to go confirm the situation first.

“Let’s go!” Hinata shouted and led the rest of the Holy Knights to the battlefield at full speed. There, they witnessed a one-sided clash on the so-called battlefield. There were five greater majins with overwhelming power next to her. The one that stood out with unparalleled power, it was the majin that resembles a young girl with moon white hair.

That majin was the target of this mission. The leader of the Tempest Federation, newly appointed Demon Lord—Rimuru, that’s it alright.

The proof being that Hinata, who the knights trusted, had since fixed her sights on that majin without moving. It was definitely warranted to be on full alert against against this opponent, even ignoring all the fierce exchanges taking place behind them.

Regarding that incident, the Holy Knights got a good strong taste of reality.

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Rimuru was the first one to speak.

“You sure are bold, Hinata. Regardless of whatever reason you may have, this is still my territory. We could confirm your hostility by this unannounced military activity alone. So I won’t be naïve enough to sit around for you to strike first.”

That’s—a misunderstanding! Arno, one of the Holy Knights, thought. But there’s no way he could have proven it here. Although Hinata had also already realized that, she still wanted to resolve the misunderstanding through negotiation.

But… it wasn’t going as well as expected.

Reynald and the rest are still fighting in the distance, if this is how it would go on, combat is the only way out. Then, what could we do?

Arno tried his hardest thinking about a solution while listening to Hinata’s attempt at negotiations.

We shouldn’t just be wary of Demon Lord Rimuru, Arno thought to himself. The other four majins. Every one of them gave off a fierce aura unique to the strong. Although Hinata mentioned that those are threats of A+ level, her phrasing was likely wrong. Since the only things more dangerous than that are the demon lords and true dragons.

To be specific, even a calamity-level monster—Charybdis—which can rival or even exceed the strength of demon lords, is only categorized as Special Rank A. It is simply a rank made to fill the gap between these vast power differences.

Besides, his comrade Ritase was able to summon a Special Rank A greater Holy Water Maiden Undine. Having said that, if you asked her what her chances were in a fight against Charybdis, the odds would be pitifully low. Even if the ranking is the same, there is still an absolute power gap present.

And then, the majins in front of them…

They weren't joking around, their strength clearly written on their faces. Even though they didn’t stand as tall as something like demon lords or Charybdis, these were still difficult opponents. Two of the Three Beastketeers, who were trusted aides of ex-demon lord Beast King Karion; those two are the strongest individuals within the ranks of the famous Beast King Battalion. Their strengths were no small feat.

And the other two majins had been identified as kijins by Hinata. Those are powerful monsters worshiped by primitive tribes. Between them, especially the red-haired one seemed most unusual. It gave off a special aura among the four.

Even with Arno’s eyes he couldn’t see through its strength.

— This is gonna be trouble. How are we supposed to beat majins with such power? No way we can do it…

The number matches up as well.

There’s no better way to be sure of their strength than confronting them directly. If they are lucky enough, they may even win.

These were resolves held by every one of the Holy Knights, so there was no need to make up their mind at this point.

But this time, victory is not a necessity.

“There’s no need for further confrontations other than against Demon Lord Rimuru,” according to Hinata.

Right now the situation is rather hard to resolve, but if it’s Hinata… She definitely will be able to convince Demon Lord Rimuru—Arno decided to place his absolute faith in Hinata.

Then, what would his duty be? It was to buy time.

Arno was in a party of four.

Same number as the majins they were against. They would more or less be able to buy some time if they took on one each. Arno decided to take action and interjected Rimuru and Hinata’s conversation.

“What are you talking about! If we were to withdraw our forces in this situation, what would happen to Hinata-sama? You are the one who called Hinata here, who’s to guarantee that you won’t harm her!”

Whatever excuse would suffice for now. Arno shouted while thinking that to himself one-sidedly. As expected, one of Rimuru’s subordinates made a move. It happened to be the red-haired one that Arno thought was the most dangerous.

What good timing. Please be my opponent now!

It was a majin worthy of battling Arno, whose strength was only second to Hinata’s within the order.

Regrettably, if it comes after anyone else, they probably wouldn’t even be able to buy time.

Arno pulled out his sword and prepared a swing at the redhead.

“No killing intent, I see? Good call. Just now if you intended to kill me, you would be lying on the ground by now.”

Of course. Arno had no intention to kill the redhead in the first place, he only wanted to distract the majin away from Hinata.

But what he said upset Arno. Sure, Arno recognized the redhead’s strength, but he was upset that he dared to treat him as some lower existence and made such an arrogant remark.

But I wouldn’t know what would happen without a fight.

“I wouldn’t want to get in the way of Hinata-sama’s negotiation,” he retorted, his eyes fixed on the redhead. “So I decided to make some threat and got this reaction. But it would be rather boring if I’m just misunderstood like this.”

But the redhead really wasn’t taking Arno seriously.

“You are the one who’s misunderstanding.”

He seemed to have little interest for Arno while saying so. That attitude was starting to piss Arno off.

If our strength is similar, victory would depend on luck, Arno thought to himself. He won’t go down without a fight against such an arrogant opponent, even if they are strong.

“Huhu, then let’s have a little chat somewhere further away.”

“Very well.”

Since we are going to spar one on one, the outcome would be the same even if our intents differ. With that thought in mind, Arno decided to get a little more serious with the redhead.

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Arno had left.

The two Beastketeers took the initiative to act next.

“Aren’t you guys feeling bored as well? If you don’t want to get into Rimuru-sama’s way, we could go for a little spar.”

“Ah, ah. The power of the ‘Ten Great Saints’, that’s what I happen to want to get a taste of.”

They made their proposal to Fritz and the others, showing their beastly teeth with a provoking smirk.

Good grief, I understand what Arno is planning now. He’s trying to distract the majins to battle in order to let Hinata focus on dealing with Demon Lord Rimuru —

Saint of Earth Bacchus correctly interpreted Arno’s thoughts.

So had his companion Fritz, who arrived at the same conclusion.

“Well then, allow me to oblige,” Bacchus responded.

“Well, it can’t be helped, I’ll join you then,” Fritz added and stepped forward.

As expected of Fritz. Even if he likes to talk nonsense most of the time, he’s definitely reliable under these circumstances, Bacchus thought to himself. But he became speechless once he heard Fritz’s follow up line.

“Neh neh, big sis, aren’t you a lovely lady? Lucky day for me! Ah, my name is Fritz, what about you? You have one, right? Won’t you tell me now?”

He couldn’t believe Fritz addressed the Beastketeers like he were flirting with some girls on the street.

I-idiot! How could he do something… Actually, hold on a moment?

At first Bacchus had been rather confused by his colleague's frivolous attitude, when he suddenly realized something. Although he was pretty confident that they were indeed from among the Beastketeers, they hadn’t announced their names to confirm it yet.

He is trying to get the identities of the opponents, I see now. You really are a clever man, Fritz.

But that was probably just a misinterpretation on Bacchus’s side. He decided to play along after recognizing Fritz’s “wit”.

“Ladies, I apologize for my colleague's intrusion. Sorry for the late introduction, my name is Bacchus. As you may have inferred, I am one of the ‘Ten Great Saints’, and the captain of the Holy Knight Order. I would be looking forward to our duel, but before that could you share your names with us?”

Bacchus asked for the opponents names, subtly following Fritz's lead. The one who responded to his words was the beauty with devilish straight white hair and cat-like eyes.

“Fufu, interesting. My name is Suphia. White Tiger Fang Suphia! As you may have figured out, I am one of the three Beastekeers. Let me have some fun with you now, Ten Great Saints Bacchus!”

Suphia introduced herself while stepping in front of Bacchus on her elegant limbs.

The tiger has chosen her opponent.

Bacchus grasped the situation and tightened his grip on his holy battle pole infused with magical power.

“It would be great if I could meet your expectations.”

“He, he, no need to be modest now. I’ll even spare your life if you could satisfy me. So how about showing me what you’re made of?”

“Cease your howling. I’ll have you taste the strength of humanity’s guardians,” Bacchus shouted.

At the same time—

Of course it’s just as Hinata-sama has expected. It would seem Demon Lord Rimuru’s party has no intent to confront us.

He suddenly realized it. In addition to an overwhelming sense of reassurance, his resolve as a Holy Knight burst out of his heart. Since the objective was to buy time, there’s no need to fight to the death.

However, it is precisely for that reason, this moment—now—he should fight with all his strength, Bacchus thought.

“Servant of the Western Saints Church, the Holy Knight Order—Saint of Earth Bacchus—here to receive you!!”

“Come at me!!”

Bacchus engaged in combat with Suphia the Beastketeer—

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Fritz tried to confront the fear that had arisen in his heart.

This is bad. Bad, bad, horribly bad. It’s Really bad. This is really overwhelmingly horribly bad!!

He had to move out since Bacchus already took action, but should he leave Hinata or not? Fritz faced a dilemma.

His feeling upon seeing Demon Lord Rimuru—fear.

Impossible, at a glance he could undoubtedly be categorized as among the strongest. Arno’s faith being as strong as steel, he still believed in Hinata’s victory.

Of course, Fritz also had faith in her. But even so, his instinct told him there was no way things could be easily resolved if Hinata had to fight that demon lord. Without much proof, Fritz’s sixth sense often came to be useful in situations like this.

He could understand Arno’s thoughts, but now since Bacchus had gotten involved, Fritz’s course of action had already been decided—to fight one Beastketeer and buy time.

Arno confronted the redhead whose threat was only second to Demon Lord Rimuru.

Then…

The rest of the majins should have been on equal terms against Fritz and the other members of the ‘Ten Great Saints’.

Although the blue-haired majin, who had little presence among the rest, had caught Fritz’s attention for a while—he possessed the least amount of magicule among them.

So it’ll be fine. If it’s Ritase who can summon spirits, she would have an advantage when fighting by summoning Water Maiden Undine. At least she won’t lose. And with Fritz and Bacchus, it would at least be a draw against the Beastketeers. The problem is whether Arno—no, it’s no use to think this hard right now. Arno is stronger than me so it won’t be of help even if I worry. Instead I should think of a way to deal with the situation…

Fritz was thinking really hard. He had faith in his companions, so he would instead prioritize how to achieve victory himself right now. At that moment, Fritz had an epiphany. This was no place to hesitate. Fritz made up his mind and spoke to one of the Beastketeers with a sarcastic tone.

“Neh neh, big sis, aren’t you a lovely lady? Lucky day for me! Ah, my name is Fritz, what about you? You have one, right? won’t you tell me now?”

The vulgar greeting that Fritz came up with—it was to confuse his opponents. Then he would be able to distract them and make his first strike count.

Even if he was called despicable, as long as he wins it counts. Fritz had his own style, taking all factors, not only strength, into account in an attempt to turn the tide for himself. But he wasn’t attempting to identify the opponents like what Bacchus thought. It may seem frivolous, but Fritz had no time to consider that. That’s how Bacchus, unbeknownst to him, decided to lead the conversation under the impression that he was taking care of Fritz.

Sorry for the trouble, old man. But does it make me more idiotic this way?

Fritz’s chances of victory increased despite it not being his intent. Bacchus then began to fight fairly as a Holy Knight of the church. The opponent must’ve been expecting the same from Fritz because of that.

“The name is Alvis. Golden Snake Horn Alvis. Sadly you’re not my type.”

“Ayyy, that’s a real shame. Then, what happens now? Should we begin?”

Fritz sighed as he gazed at Alvis, a seductive beauty with golden and black hair floating around her head. Although her eyes were beautiful like jewels, deep down that snake’s pupils seemed to hide a bottomless abyss. Fritz was disappointed that Alvis had not let down her guard one bit. The air surrounding her was cruel and cold, and she didn’t make a single move upon hearing Fritz’s words.

But it’s only natural; this is after all a monster who commands the Beast King’s army, no way that it will become careless that easily…

That strategy may have failed, but it was nothing to worry about. The scheme to distract an opponent is multifaceted; Fritz had prepared a set of tricks he could link together—but while considering his next move, he experienced a sudden burst of incredible magicule. He turned his eyes wide towards its source; an earth-shattering shock wave hit him at the same time.

“Ara ara, that’s Shion-sama. She’s as reckless as always…”

Even though he heard Alvis’s words, Fritz did not feel there was any time to be concerned about such issues.

“Y-you’ve got to be kidding!? T-that’s Gerald’s ‘Inferno Spirit Flame’!”

Fritz’s ‘Magic Perception’ sensed the casting of his colleague’s most powerful magical attack. To his complete surprise, the majin named Shion was able to endure it completely.

Or rather, she straight up cut it in half.

Fritz froze in shock at the abnormal sight. That was tactical nuclear strike magic—something more powerful than even ‘Heat Disintegration’, that’s likely one of the most powerful magics doable by humans, and even stronger than ultimates of elven magic…

However, such an act appeared to have been handled with ease by a majin who wasn’t even a demon lord.

That’s something Fritz’s common sense couldn’t process, an abnormal situation. Yet, such unrealistic sights continued. The sounds of fierce clashes between weapons filled the air. The strong wind invoked by the battles decimated the nearby vegetation.

At that moment, Arno of the Holy Knight Order had been dominating the red-haired majin with his swordsmanship.

And he very much should be.

“Ah, Benimaru-sama is truly magnificent. He’s so eager to study, even about that person’s sword art.”

“Huh?”

Fritz heard the whisper of the seductive woman, Alvis, in front of him. He couldn’t understand the meaning of her words. The red-haired majin, Benimaru, could only defend against the barrage of elegant yet furious sword slashes. Yet Alvis was watching Benimaru without worrying about his chances of triumph.

“What are you talking about? It’s obvious that it has been Arno’s one-sided attack no matter how you look at it.”

Learning about sword art? There’s no way he has that time to spare. He won’t come out in one piece if he looks down on a genius such as Arno like that.

That’s how it should have been.

But the problem for Fritz was Alvis’s silence. She only responded to him with a cold glance. The sword and tachi came in contact without a moment’s break. As the weapons danced back and forth, sparks flew as the two blades clashed.

Alvis simply watched the spectacle in silence. Before Alvis turned her eyes back, Fritz couldn’t move, his hands tightly clasping his sword. In hindsight, she was full of openings, but Fritz’s sixth sense warned him that it was obviously a dangerous temptation. As long as he could buy some time, there was no need to rush an attack.

Fritz’s head was spinning; he decided to simply accompany Alvis in her observations. Moments later, Alvis, who’d been staring at Benimaru’s battle, suddenly seemed to have lost interest and set her eyes back on Fritz.

“The battle is over. Of course that man couldn’t rival Benimaru-sama.”

“No, that would mean Arno’s strength in—”

Arno should have had the upper hand. Yet even so, Alvis announced Benimaru’s victory herself. Fritz was enraged by this and barely managed to contain the anger in his heart when responding to Alvis. Yet he was stopped by Alvis with a raised hand.

“You are wrong, that’s simply how it looks. The battle won’t last any longer, and surely you won’t be satisfied with just arguing. How about you and I just spend the time together seeing Benimaru-sama’s battle to the end.”

Even though Fritz still couldn’t accept what she had said, it was his intent to request that as well. He only said this partially out of anger and partially to provoke his opponent: “Well, it won’t matter since Arno will definitely come out on top. Is it alright if the tide turns on onee-chan like that?”

Yet Alvis laughed at Fritz’s provocation, Then—

“Benimaru-sama, as a matter of fact, could incinerate the whole area here. Right now he’s only sparing you all for the convenience of his sword practice. If he were to fight seriously, your friend Arno-kun would likely have been wiped off the face of the world already.”

She wasn’t saying this to mock Fritz, he realized they were words of pity. It began to dawn on him… He had the illusion of cold sweat flowing down his back. His heart was ensnared by fear.

That’s just fear-mongering—my usual tactic. To make me lose my cool and fight without my full strength… I’ve heard rumors of Golden Snake Horn Alvis being an intelligent strategist. It wouldn’t surprise me if she were to use psychological tactics to shake me…

Even if it was a lie, Fritz convinced himself to believe it. There’s no way he could’ve admitted that someone would go easy to avoid casualties when confronting them, the strongest existence among men, the Holy Knight Order. It was Fritz’s sincere conviction.

Yet the ruthless moment of truth finally arrived—

Fritz didn’t know whether this majin named Benimaru was actually good at using flame or not, but his swordsmanship was definitely on par with Arno. He was able to evade every fierce attack by Arno’s sword using his giant tachi.

“Fu, fufu, it surprises me you are able to evade my attacks to this extent, neh. And deflecting all of them, it’s almost as if you are slashing down water.”

“That is only natural. My master in sword art taught me the ultimate zone is detecting the “flow”. If you carefully listen to your sword’s sound and become one with the sword, you can see that flow as clear as day. I’ve yet to reach that realm, but I’ve seen through your sword style.”

“Dreadful, truly horrifying. It doesn’t seem that you are bragging either. If that’s the case, I’ve also made up my mind. Behold, I shall demonstrate why I am called the strongest among the Holy Knights—”

The fight between Arno and Benimaru entered its climax under Fritz’s and Alvis’s observation. Fritz had only heard of Arno’s secret technique, he never had the chance to witness it in real life.

The invisible sword technique that is said to be able to cut down any monster in one slash. It is the strongest sword technique wielded only by Arno, the one adored by five elemental spirits, and whose strength is only next to Hinata.

“Behold the magic purifying shine and etch it onto your body. Take this, Five-elemental Spirit Sword—!!”

Arno’s beloved sword radiated five brilliant beams of light. Earth, water, fire, wind and air, the spiritual lights of five different elements. These beams combined and unleashed a killing blow that was impossible to defend against.

The shining blade hurtled towards Benimaru.

Is this Arno’s ultimate… Eeh, I thought he would never show that in front of others. Can’t believe he’s been pushed to this point…

Fritz thought so while confirming his friend’s victory.

However!

“Naïve—Pulse Slash of Flowing Water!!”

The majin Benimaru raised his tachi and swung down unfazed. As a result, Arno’s shining blow was received gently by Benimaru’s tachi, flinging his sword into the air with a resounding clang.

Fritz wasn’t able to see a thing, but it was possible to infer what happened. To put it simply, Benimaru’s technique was able to destroy the power of Arno’s attack. Its shock wave propagated towards Arno. He saw it and made the split-second decision to release his sword out of fear that the wave would harm his sword-holding hand.

Fritz couldn’t imagine anything else and had to believe that.

In other words, this bastard called Benimaru even mastered a better sword art than Arno!?

He couldn’t laugh at it even if it was a joke. This was all a nightmarish experience to Fritz… But it was all reality.

“I told you, your technique has been seen through. Your sword art is still amateurish. It’s capable in terms of power, but it is pointless if you can’t hit your target with it. I’d advise you to understand that point,” Benimaru told Arno and sheathed his tachi.

“I-I’ve… lost…”

Arno fell to his knees on the spot after admitting his defeat.

After witnessing the result, Alvis turned towards Fritz.

“Well, I told you so, didn’t I? There is no need to ever question Benimaru-sama’s victory. But your friend did try his best. Then, what do you plan to do now?”

Alvis’s seductive eyes shone with a light of curiosity and intrigue. She asked while observing how Fritz would react. In response, Fritz—

I can’t believe Arno has lost… This is way worse than I imagined. It still depends on how Hinata-sama and Demon Lord Rimuru would resolve everything, but I’d better make up my mind here. These people are not planning to kill us. But since the fight was started by Reynald, there’s no way we could just resume a friendly negotiation. But even so it doesn’t seem to matter much if I begin to fight as well…

Deeply shaken, he observed his surroundings with ‘Magic Perception’. Arno was defeated, just as he’d witnessed. Reynald’s side also seemed to be concluding as more and more Holy Knights had fallen. A complete defeat. Bacchus on the other hand was putting up an equal fight against Beastketeer Suphia.

And Ritase—

She’d been tied up with some unknown things, and her cheeks were blushing scarlet. The blue-haired majin next to her seemed to be protecting her in the midst of some battle. The ones exchanging blows are…the blue-haired majin and Water Maiden Undine.

Could that be the ‘Clone’ skill? If that’s the case, it would make sense why his presence is barely felt.

What surprised him more was the dominance expressed by the majin’s Clone over Undine. Its blows dealt by the hands of the Clone, which should have been constructed using magicule, were effective even against greater spirits that have resistance against physical attacks.

Which means the true body must be even stronger.

It would seem that Fritz had underestimated the threat of this blue-haired majin purely based on the magicule of its Clone. In other words, he had misjudged the majin’s strength from the start, a classic blunder on Fritz’s part.

Has Ritase also been defeated as well? Uncle Bacchus seems to be barely managing a draw. The only one remaining is Hinata-sama—

Her battle with Demon Lord Rimuru was something beyond Fritz’s understanding. Those were speeds unfathomable to a commoner—even ‘Magic Perception’ was meaningless in interpreting the ongoing battle, whose speed had exceeded the processing power of the human brain. Fritz’s concern for her would be meaningless regardless.

I seem absolutely outmatched by sheer strength.

He would’ve probably only hindered Hinata rather than giving her a hand. That being the case, there was only one thing Fritz could do. He spoke to Alvis who’d been awaiting an answer.

“Although I don’t think there’s much use in trying to fight, do you mind spending some time with me? I would be ashamed to see my friends again if that were not the case, wouldn’t I now?”

Fritz had dignity too.

Even if victory or failure pose no purpose, the battle itself may hold some meaning, Fritz thought.

— At times like that you just have to act like an idiot, huh Fritz —

Hinata would probably tease him with such a line.

Yeah, yeah— Yeah, Fritz thought to himself.

But he embraced that part of himself wholeheartedly.

“Fufufu, alright then. You are beginning to impress me, Holy Knight Fritz-dono.”

“I’m most grateful. We have much to learn from each other now, Beasteekeer—Golden Snake Horn Alvis-dono—”

A tiny smile emerged on Fritz’s lips before he dove into the battle against Alvis.