

Story by Fuse, Illustration by Mitz Vah

伏瀬 イラスト／みつばー

転生したら スライム

That Time I Got
Reincarnated as a SLIME

11





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伏瀬 イラスト／みつばー

Primordial Demons

rouge
Guy Crimson

bleu
Rain

vert
Mizari

Noir
Diablo

jaune
Carrera

blanc
Testarossa

violet
Ultima





*<<Warning. Target possesses a material body.
Abnormal power detected—limit is similar to
the power of individual 'Veldora'.>>*

Standing there was a peerless beauty.
Stark naked like a newborn, her eyes were closed
as she stood silently.

Her long, silver-black hair drifted down her head,
whilst she was surrounded by shimmering light.
She had a beautiful body that was the stuff of
dreams. I couldn't help but be mesmerized.

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Volume 11

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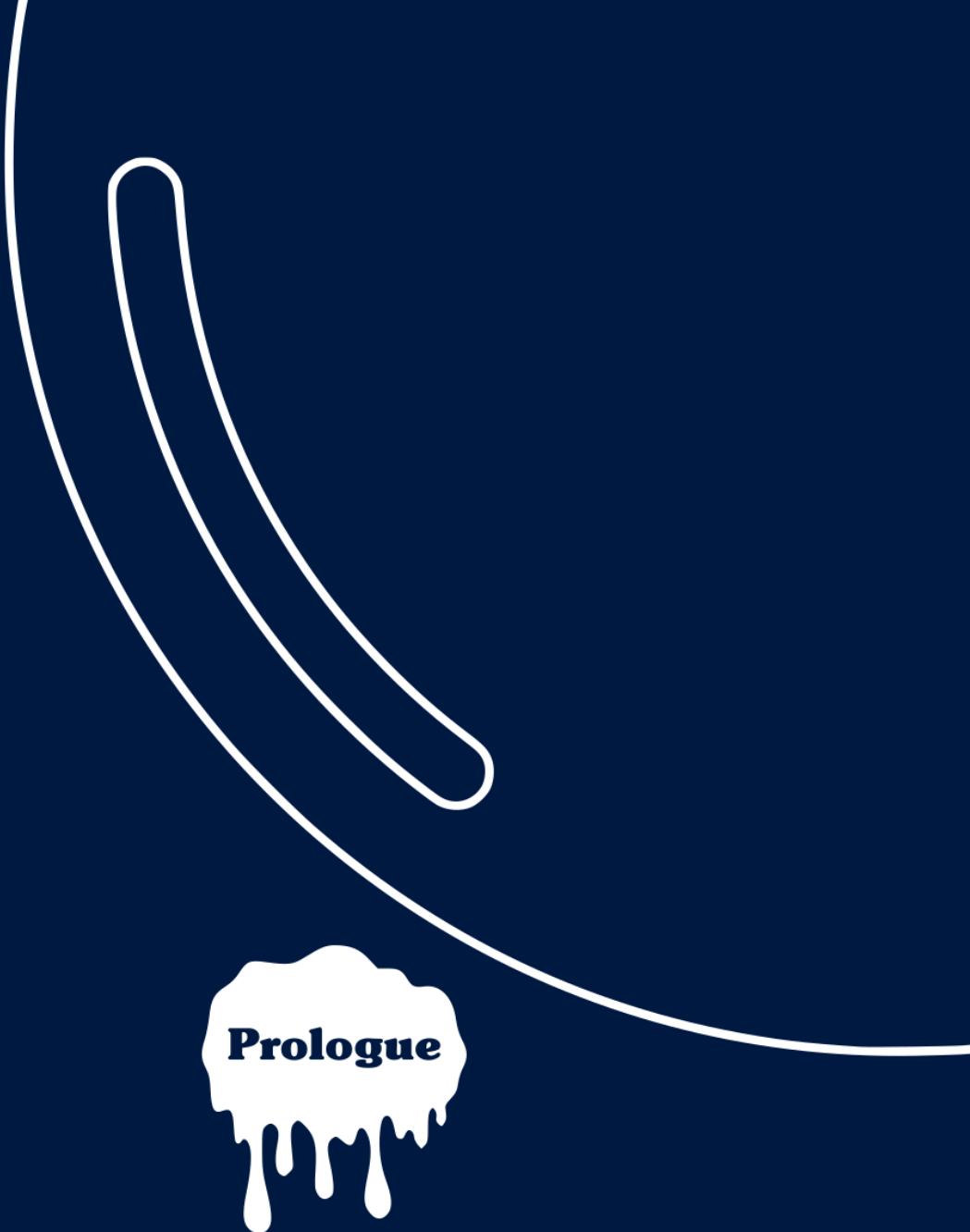
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Prologue



The Golden Melancholy

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Prologue

The Golden Melancholy

It was a pure white mansion. There were blossoming flowers of all kinds in the garden. A young girl smiled as a young boy observed her.

That was a happy time in the past, and the memory of it hadn't faded one bit. His one goal in life had been to retrieve such happiness. Yet, it was a task harder than traveling to the moon.

The mansion—the golden city that he had built. There was also a beautiful garden, like a paradise in heaven. It was far more luxurious and grandiose than the one in his memory. Yet the most important aspect, the key to his memory just somehow couldn't be found.

Even after he had become a force to be reckoned with in this world, he was unable to find his beloved young girl. And without her, he could never find his smile.

All of this had been prepared for his beloved young girl.

His name was Leon Cromwell. One of the demon lords, known as the "Platinum Saber." And the girl that Demon Lord Leon was seeking was—

This was the kingdom that Leon ruled—the Golden Valley El Dorado. The royal castle, in the shape of a spiral, towered at the center of the kingdom. The location was the meeting hall of the royal castle.

Leon exuded an air of majesty on his throne as three suspicious individuals kneeled before him. They were garbed in all black and adorned with rain hats, a rather bizarre look. Their outfit looked the same as that of the weapon merchant Damrada. It went without saying that this was Laplace's party.

“—You again. Isn't this the second time?”

“Yes. To have the honor of being recognized by His Majesty Demon Lord Leon, we are most grateful. However, we regret to inform you that we will be suspending the transaction of the confidential merchandise this time.”

It was Teare who answered Leon in a rather serious tone. It was an attempt to make them seem more appealing by letting the female Teare do the negotiating.

This was also going to be their last engagement. They had decided to follow Yuuki's plan

and pause all activities in the Western Nations.

Misha of the ‘Cerberus’ organization would continue to act as a correspondent to the Rosso family. While they proceeded with their prior transactions, Yuuki’s party would move their headquarters to the Eastern Empire.

In addition, losing Mariabell also greatly reduced the Rosso’s strength.

In truth, the supplier of their top-secret merchandise was the kingdom of Siltrosso, and right now the Rosso family didn’t possess enough power to conduct any more summonings.

Moreover, now that Tempest had joined the Western States Council, the Western Nations would be under the influence of Demon Lord Rimuru. Their surveillance would be tighter than ever.

Laplace and the others all agreed that it was time to leave.

“Ho, that’s quite bold of you. Unlike Damrada, you wish to raise the price with me so soon?”

“No no no, you have misunderstood. As His Majesty Leon is probably aware, Demon Lord Rimuru has cemented his place in the Western Nations. He’s rather displeased with the summoning of otherworlders and strictly forbids it. We believe that it wouldn’t be easy to continue the trade under these circumstances,” Teare answered smoothly.

Hearing this, Leon thought to himself—*as I suspected*.

He had sent some of his men to blend in within the Western Nations, and they reported the same things. Leon himself thought that things would develop in that direction sooner or later.

Honestly, there was too much uncertainty with this method. The rate of success was astronomically low. It was an approach that was unlikely to work from the start.

After all, this was about summoning a specific individual to this world—

He had ordered his subordinates to do the summoning countless times. It took more than thirty summoners working together in the span of seven days of rituals with detailed procedures to do the summoning to Leon’s specific criteria.

Yet the rate of success was less than one percent. Moreover, it would take some time for the same person to conduct the summoning ritual again, and the number of times a person could attempt the ritual was also limited.

From the start, the rate of success was close to zero.

Even Leon himself had conducted many summons, yet they all ended in failure. His last summon called upon Shizue Izawa, and tomorrow, it would be sixty-six years since she was summoned. If he wanted to narrow down the conditions into the summoning rituals, the interval between summons would be even longer.

The next summon was not worth looking forward to, either. That was why he devised the ‘Incomplete Summoning’ rituals. It was a young girl that Leon was looking for. That was why the incomplete summon, which had a higher chance of summoning children, should raise his rate of success, even though it would be barely noticeable in the grand scheme of things.

He planned to spread the method among the Western Nations, thereby increasing the chance of success by raising the number of summons attempted and thus gathering more children...

—Yet to this day, it had been a complete failure.

There was no other way, and he could not think of any other alternatives.

That anxious uneasiness weighed heavily on his heart. Regardless, Leon spoke in his usual cold monotone: “—Rimuru you say? We have not signed an agreement nor asked for any aid. But in the end, he became the hindrance. Still, that’s something that can’t be helped. However, what did you mean by our trade will be suspended? Even if the West has fallen, wouldn’t the East still be operating?”

Leon’s sonorous voice echoed in the meeting hall. There was an intense pressure in his voice. Teare couldn’t help but feel numb after being hit by his voice head-on.

They were on different levels.

A half-baked majin would have problems just standing still in front of a demon lord. Even for someone as strong as Teare, it was difficult to deal with Leon.

She was not alone here, however.

“Allow me to explain,” Laplace interjected. “Things are heating up in the East, actually. They seem to be secretly preparing for war, so their mages are quite occupied. That’s why it’s not as easy to gather people needed for conducting rituals.”

Leon squinted at Laplace after listening to what he had to say.

How annoying, he thought to himself.

He didn’t care about what happened between the Western Nations and the Eastern Empire; but if the war were to be lengthy, it would impact Leon’s goals. If this were to be the case, he would need to re-examine his plans.

With that being said, these thoughts were all in Leon’s head. He was still sitting on his throne with a cold expression, silently glaring at Laplace.

His gaze made Laplace rather uncomfortable.

This guy is definitely a pain in the ass to deal with. He’s nothing like the fake demon lord I killed. The real deal really is different, no? Just like Boss said, it’s not gonna be easy to seek revenge against this guy directly...

Due to Yuuki’s orders, they had been keeping a low profile. So even with the person who killed Kazalim standing in front of him, Laplace didn’t have the slightest intention to take on Demon Lord Leon. He was doing so to live up to Yuuki’s trust. He wanted to do his job well.

But, even if that were to be the case—with their archnemesis in front of him, he could still try to measure his strength and find his weaknesses. Even in Laplace’s eyes, Demon Lord Leon was a monster. If he were to battle against him seriously... There was no telling who would come out on top. Perhaps he would win, perhaps he would lose. Even if the trio of Teare, Footman, and Laplace were to cooperate in challenging him, the winner would still be up for debate.

That was why Laplace had been entrusted with the job this time to try and negotiate with Leon. He had also guessed Yuuki’s intentions for letting them handle this task.

Boss wanted us to take a look at this man. It’s important to learn about our enemies. Like with that Mariabell, Boss would’ve had a hard time fighting her straight on. Demon Lord Rimuru is a monster beyond belief, that’s why Mariabell failed. That being said, it’s impossible to see

how strong Demon Lord Rimuru is.

Mariabell failed because she misjudged Rimuru's strength. In the first place, it was a miscalculation of Mariabell, who was better at scheming, to have attacked directly. This was not just Laplace's analysis, but Yuuki and Kagali's as well.

What Mariabell was thinking—what she was afraid of—was that the longer she waited, the more disadvantageous the situation would have been for her. That was why she decided to place her bets on a high-stake gamble. It was something an outsider such as Yuuki could not have predicted.

Moreover—

The culprit that led Mariabell's thoughts in that direction, now that there's no need to hide the truth, was Yuuki himself. Indeed, Mariabell believed too much in her power, but it was Yuuki who intentionally designed it so that Mariabell believed she could defeat Demon Lord Rimuru. In addition, he had mixed in false information to disrupt Mariabell's plan.

Yuuki wasn't sure that Mariabell would have lost, either. His goal was to let the strong fight among themselves so that he may observe and confirm their strengths. In the end, Demon Lord Rimuru emerged victorious.

Mariabell, who even Yuuki thought was difficult to deal with, was dead. And her source of power—Unique Skill 'Greed'—also recognized Yuuki as its new master.

That had been Yuuki's true goal. Laplace was shocked after hearing about this. You couldn't just rob someone else's Skill; but according to Yuuki, he had thought that he might be able to.

How reckless. Mariabell sure was unlucky. Her opponent was our Boss, after all. She was too naive and too confident in her skills. The power of information definitely is amazing. This goes with Leon as well. That's why even though I'm furious, I shouldn't take this guy on when I don't have a good shot at winning. That's the smart thing to do, Laplace concluded.

Suspension of all engagement and focusing on expanding their influence as well as gathering intel—this plan remained the same. Now that Yuuki had achieved his goal, there was no reason for them to stay in the Western Nations.

This was the reason why they wished to avoid provoking Leon and instead proposed to suspend their trade.

It was no use yielding before Leon's intimidation. Laplace decided to finish his sentence.

"We are not saying that there will be no more dealings from now on. When we can conduct summoning rituals once more, we shall contact you, but please be patient until then. Furthermore, our information network spans the whole world. If there were to be any stray otherworlder children, could you permit us to take care of them first?"

"—That can't be helped then. I'll let you handle that. But I have one question."

"What's that?"

"Why is your tongue so loose?"

"Eh?" Laplace replied with confusion, confronted by Leon's question.

He was calling him loose-tongued, yet Laplace didn't even know what he said wrong.

What did I let slip? Never mind that—if he wants to pick a fight, we'll give him a fight all

right.

Laplace wasn't nervous in the slightest. You gotta enjoy every situation you were in, or else you'd be a sore loser. Even if he failed, it was fine. He would just see what to do later on.

He hid his killing intent and quickly made his resolve. Yet Leon followed up, ignoring Laplace's conundrum: "Is it really fine for merchants who are sensitive to profits to reveal something as important as war so casually? If this were the previous handler Damrada, surely he wouldn't have done something so foolish."

"T-that's..."

Now that he pointed it out, even Laplace thought he had a point; but Yuuki had ordered him to say this to decline Leon. Moreover, Yuuki had revealed other information to him. Now that Laplace recalled it, he began to connect the dots.

What Leon would probably say next was—

"Are you trying to hide something? You seemed to want to keep my focus on the war. In case you haven't noticed, that's a foolishly naive thought," he threw his doubt at Laplace.

We've seen through everything. Laplace finally regained his cool, but also felt annoyed at the same time.

Seriously, Boss has got me totally beat. He's even foreseen how things would develop here.

Leon overanalyzed Laplace's words and twisted his meaning, thinking that he was hiding something. It was because the demon lord knew the great value of information that he misunderstood, thinking this was all Laplace's tactic to distract Leon from other goals.

That wasn't the case at all in reality.

Laplace and his companions were merely following Yuuki's orders. They didn't put much thought to it, but it wouldn't be helpful to tell the truth now. Leon would probably think that he was just making up excuses. This was all part of Yuuki's cleverly crafted plans. In other words, there were great schemes behind what he had done.

Naturally, Laplace needed to give a hint regarding their ace in the hole.

"How impressive, as expected from Demon Lord Leon-sama. Actually, this would be the last of the top-secret merchandise. There were five more. The children who were taken in by Shizue Izawa, to be more specific."

"—Umm."

Yuuki wanted to leak the information about the children under Rimuru's protection from the start. However, it would have raised Leon's suspicion about their devious intent if they told him directly. Therefore, Yuuki had reminded Laplace time and time again that he should only bring up the children at the end.

Depending on how the negotiation went, there was no telling how things would develop. Yet Yuuki saw through all of this with ease, which was why he was so terrifying.

Apart from feeling terrified, Laplace continued to say the words he had been ordered to relay to Leon.

"There were three boys and two girls. They were all otherworlders as ya'd ordered. But therein lies the problem: We can't get them out."

“Shizue Izawa... Shizu, huh? In that case, they are in Tempest?”

“Yes. It’s a real pity. We’re merchants too, so we don’t want to get ourselves in trouble. By the way, the children’s names were—”

“Ken Misuru, Ryozeiki, Gail Gibbs, Alison, Kroba Hale.”

The one who spoke in Laplace’s place while he was trying to recall the names was Footman, who had stayed quiet until now. The others figured that Footman wasn’t the best communicator, so they only let him memorize the names of the children.

“Right, right. But since the merchandise can’t be obtained, surely Demon Lord Leon wouldn’t have any interest either,” Laplace uttered with a smile.

Yet Leon still scowled.

“Your pronunciation made it really hard to tell. Are you sure it is Kroba and not Chloe?”

Footman remained silent even though Leon asked in a rather annoyed tone. If he were to respond without thinking, Leon would probably be so infuriated as to pick a fight with him. Footman, by virtue of being here with his group, was putting everyone else in danger. It was the right choice to have had him remain silent; otherwise, Footman would, no doubt, have only further aggravated Leon.

Teare apologized in his place.

“Please forgive us, His Majesty Demon Lord Leon. The names of the otherworlders don’t translate well in our tongue. As a result, our pronunciations are not very accurate. Also, we heard that you didn’t particularly care about the names of the travelers. We truly apologize.” Teare bowed after apologizing. Laplace and Footman also bowed dramatically to apologize.

“Indeed, names do not matter. It is your miscalculation that the merchandise was taken, but it didn’t violate our contracts. The information about the upcoming war would suffice as your apology, I shall accept it.”

Leon swallowed his emotions and announced with his usual attitude.

And with that, the meeting concluded.

Laplace and the others took the payment for the merchandise and safely left El Dorado.



“All right, what to do next...” Leon muttered to himself after Laplace’s party had departed.

The long hair by Leon’s nape gathered neatly together as if it had woven itself into a single brilliant strand of golden light. In sharp contrast to the radiance, his long and slanted eyes were a shade of melancholy.

A knight stood ramrod straight next to Leon. He was the silver knight Alrose, one of Leon’s top lieutenants, as well as the person he would often confide in.

“Should I eliminate those people just now? How dare they displease Leon-sama like that.

I think there is no value in having them live.”

Umm—that was the sound that Leon made as he was pondering Alrose’s words.

Compared to their predecessor Damrada, those three were more than just suspicious. It was questionable whether they were really merchants at all. Frankly, Leon never trusted merchants from the start. He simply wanted to avoid antagonizing the secret organization ‘Cerberus.’

Leon’s subordinates had integrated into human society as well, but they were nowhere near this enormous organization based in the ‘East’ that had even exerted influence on the ‘West.’

We should use them while they are still exploitable—Leon judged calmly.

Especially with the ordeal of finding ‘Otherworlders,’ as opposed to having monsters searching for them, it was more appropriate to have humans handle the work. In order to achieve his goal, assistance from humans was necessary.

“Let them be. More importantly, the problem lies with the information those guys just leaked. If the Eastern Empire really were on the move, it would lead to a real world war. I’m not sure what the other demon lords would do, but if the world went to chaos, there is no way that we would not be affected.”

“It is as you say,” Alrose affirmed in agreement. “El Dorado is under Leon-sama’s protection, but other places may be subjected to the massive scale of war. We must arrange preparations for it.”

Leon’s ruled territory, El Dorado, lay on a different continent across the sea. This continent was larger than the country of Australia on Earth. All of it was under Leon’s rule.

There was a large active volcano in the center that erupted all year round. Yet the volcanic dust was blown away by magic-controlled wind and never once fell over the beautiful capital city. There were also all sorts of ore deposits near the volcano that could be processed into valuable magical metals. In addition, the high yield of gold made it possible for Leon to conduct secret trade with humans.

The city was extremely prosperous. The kingdom was protected by magic. This was the golden valley of El Dorado under Leon’s rule.

There was no way that this prosperous kingdom would be affected and subjected to the ugly wars of humans—this probably was not just Alrose’s wish, but the wishes of all of Leon’s subjects.

“Then we should cast defensive magic for emergency use; enter a high alert state.”

“Very well, we should do just that. But it is beyond my control.”

“...? What is?”

“The war. If many were to die, it may bring those troublesome creatures to the world. I recall that the Yellow Primordial slumbers within this land. But it probably wouldn’t be enough to grant it a new body...”

Leon was truly annoyed by the idiocy that was being committed. He had no idea what the Eastern Empire was planning, but death always accompanied war. If large amounts of blood were spilled, the seas of blood would awaken monsters. It may just cause those dangerous demons to be awakened and rain catastrophe upon mankind.

Leon had a very special standing in all this as an ex-Hero. To him, such a move was extremely foolish.

However—

Now that he had become a demon lord, he simply felt that it was rather saddening. Even though he pitied the humans outside, it wouldn't really hurt him, regardless of what would happen to these outsiders.

Leon had only one thing on his mind. He feared about the possibility that the girl he was finding might be harmed by this whole ordeal.

“We shall let them witness our strength by that time!”

“Very well. I look forward to your performance. In addition—”

“Allow me to send members of the Blue Knight Order to his kingdom.”

Leon nodded steadily to Alrose.

There was no need to give orders in detail, Alrose knew what he meant and had put it into action.

“I'll leave it to you,” Leon declared, then calmly closed his eyes—

As his subordinate left, the meeting hall fell back into silence.

Leon's slanted eyes opened and gazed into the empty space.

—Speaking of which, did he just say Kroba Hale? I shouldn't expect much, but is it seriously that similar? Perhaps it's a trap.

No, it didn't matter if it was a trap or not.

Demon Lord Leon's primary goal was to find her, after all, that girl. His playmate when Leon was a kid, the girl that he was supposed to protect—

—Her name was Chloe Aubert.

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Chapter 1

Observation and Research Results

Chapter 1

Observation and Research Results

In the corner of a luxurious villa, a group of strange men were resting on sofas surrounding a table. This was one of the western bases of the secret organization known as ‘Cerberus.’ The villa was owned by one of its leaders—Misha the Lover. Her personal maid served tea for everyone before bowing and promptly left the room.

And so, the meeting began.

“I see, it appears that everything has been going smoothly,” Yuuki Kagurazaka said happily after hearing the report.

“Everything was just like the boss predicted! I was starting to suspect that Laplace had failed.”

“Hehehe, Laplace is always cautious. But he’s not good with negotiations.”

“Eh, hold on. I’m way better at that than ya guys!”

Teare and Footman were tacit under these circumstances, to which Laplace voiced his complaint. It wasn’t actual complaining, but more like friendly banter between close friends.

“Don’t be mad; it’s not that bad. I’m glad about the fact that you were all able to hold back when facing Leon,” Kagali admitted.

“Right. To be fair, I also prepared a mental note for myself in case you guys did lose control,” added Yuuki, smirking as he finished.

If that were to really happen, they would need to see how things developed. At most, they would only lose a way to communicate with Demon Lord Leon. Now that they’ve decided to no longer operate among the Western Nations, it was no longer that big an issue.

“Yer truly ruthless. By the way, did ya have something planned when ya let me tell Leon about the kids?” Laplace asked, sounding resigned.

“No, there was nothing too significant behind that. To be honest, Leon’s goal of gathering these incomplete summons was probably to expand his military force. On the other hand, I *am* concerned about whether or not he has some other intention,” Yuuki replied with a wry smile on his face.

“So that’s why you revealed the truth and told him about the five children under Demon

Lord Rimuru's protection..."

"There's more to it than that. After all, what Leon did with those children is only based on our assumptions. By design, incomplete summons—children—would inevitably die. Demon Lord Rimuru saved those kids and granted them the power of spirits. Leon didn't know about it. I'm more interested in what that guy will do now that he's learned about the existence of those children who are supposed to die soon."

"I see. That is certainly intriguing. We can see the reason behind Leon's actions by simply observing his reaction."

"That's true. After all, there haven't been that many clues, so we need a stimulant of some kind."

"Don't we now? But for the most part, I just did it out of curiosity. I'm always very mindful of details."

After listening to Yuuki's explanation, Kagali and Laplace both understood what he meant. Indeed, perhaps just as Yuuki said, this was him erring on the side of caution. He wanted to explore Leon's intentions, but more importantly, the deliberate leaking of information had some significant meaning behind it.

What if Demon Lord Leon decided to take action?

Leon wouldn't go to war with Rimuru for the sake of adding a mere five soldiers. The risk of antagonizing Rimuru far outweighed the benefits of his attempt at increasing military strength. Leon wasn't stupid enough that he'd fail to realize this.

Under normal circumstances, he would write off the loss of those kids, but if Leon took actions regardless of the cost—

Then they could come to the definite conclusion: Leon had some other motive.

"But—they're just a couple of kids. I don't think Demon Lord Leon will take any action," Kagali remarked.

Laplace frowned. "Seriously? We even had to leak information about the war just so we could mention those kids. My nerves were killing me after he became suspicious. It took a lot of effort to work that out."

Things would undoubtedly get interesting if Leon were to respond. But the probability of that happening was very low.

Both Kagali and Laplace felt that Yuuki's idea, while intriguing, would eventually fail.

Seeing his companions' reaction, Yuuki could only reply with a wry smile. "I told you guys it's my fault. If you guys didn't go in that direction, revealing the children's information would just seem unnatural. Also, if you revealed it from the start, with your acting skills..."

Yuuki tried to play dumb.

He didn't plan on finishing his sentence. Laplace and the others knew all too well themselves with what he wanted to say.

Teare put it plainly for everyone. "While regretful, it's something that can't be helped. Footman's not good with making speeches, nor is his temper. Laplace's arrogance makes him suspicious. And since I was on my own, I couldn't pull it off without making any mistakes, no

matter how hard I tried.”

Laplace was left dumbfounded whereas Footman looked all pissed off. It was a pretty common sight. But to their surprise, Teare followed up on her words as if she had come up with something at the last minute.

“Boss, you can call me paranoid, but there’s something bugging me.”

“Oh—what is it?”

“Here’s the thing. When Footman was reciting the names of the merchandise, Leon—”

“What did Leon do?”

“He kept asking about the names afterward. When Footman mentioned ‘Kroba Hale,’ Leon asked back ‘Are you sure it is Kroba, not Chloe?’ even though he said it himself that the names didn’t matter. That was the only reason why we weren’t careful about names.”

“That man looked a bit sensitive; no doubt he cares about little details like that.”

“Hehehe, that guy was really pissing me off. He was probably making fun of me for my pronunciation.”

Laplace and Footman’s feedback was just complaints.

But Yuuki and Kagali glanced at each other.

“What do you think?” Yuuki questioned.

“If he actually wasn’t interested, then surely he wouldn’t have such a reaction,” answered Kagali.

“But… No no no, it can’t be… Can there really be a coincidence like that?”

“If there are things such as causality, we can’t say for certain that ‘there is absolutely no coincidence’…”

“Now that you mention it, it may just be…”

“Yes, Demon Lord Leon’s goal is most likely that kid named Chloe.”

“It can’t be.”

Yuuki was shocked. If they were somehow right about Chloe, then they just accidentally threw away a trump card against Demon Lord Leon.

Kagali was more frustrated than Yuuki.

And if that honestly were the case, then maybe they wouldn’t have lost Clayman—she was infuriated by this knowledge.

“Eh, EH!”

Seeing that her words had inspired such an unexpected possibility, even Teare couldn’t hide her surprise. If their hypothesis turned out to be true—reality seemed all too cruel and unfair for them.

“Oi oi, were ya’ll joking just now?”

“Are you both serious about what you said?”

Laplace and Footman were both taken aback. Yuuki and Kagali were indeed good at strategizing, but it wasn’t like they were able to foresee everything. Failure didn’t matter; they would always come up with a second or third backup plan. They could always calm down and develop a scheme to handle any situation. Laplace knew this all too well, but he genuinely thought the two

were stressing too much this time. Footman nodded heavily as well, seemingly in agreement.

“Regardless, there is still the chance we may be wrong. We can’t ignore the possibility at this point, but we also can’t say if we’re correct for sure,” Yuuki admitted.

“I suppose what Boss did out of curiosity paid off after all!” cheered Teare.

“No no no, this is no ordinary pay off. This could prove to be a huge bomb shell,” speculated Laplace.

Kagali thought to herself for a bit. “You have a point. Although I won’t put too much hope in it, it will certainly be interesting if that’s how things really turn out. We can utilize this to our advantage if things progress well and let the more difficult demon lords fight among themselves. Perhaps it will help us with our revenge too.”

Teare voiced her opinion. “Umm, it doesn’t matter which side wins in the end. Right, we’ll just treat this as more playtime.”

“Hehehe, I still think you guys are just worrying too much, but it’s of no loss to us,” Footman reassured.

“Anyway, just don’t get ya hopes up. Things probably won’t go that easily after all.”

Realizing that everyone was cutting Yuuki some slack, Laplace reminded the folks to have some reservations. They were all aware of this, and the conversation came to an end.

It was then that Misha had the maid refill everyone’s tea.

“By the way, how are things going on Boss’s side?” Laplace asked after drinking his tea.

In response, Yuuki took a sip of black tea from his cup and nodded to Laplace. “I’m still a bit mindful of the whole thing with Chloe, but I think I will analyze it carefully later. Let’s cut to the chase now.”

A smile broke on his face as he started to recall what he had been up to. While Laplace and the others were busy confronting Demon Lord Leon, Yuuki was in the midst of a major engagement.

Their contact was some ruler behind the scenes of the Western Nations.

They were negotiating about how to deal with the aftermath of the mess created by Mariabell.

“As you all know by now, I was acting as if I were manipulated by Mariabell. So naturally, she took the fall entirely afterward.”

“Was that the thing Boss had to deal with?”

“That’s right. Since I was being ‘controlled,’ there was no way I could just run off to the Eastern Empire.”

“Well, you have a point.”

“That’s true.”

“Umm, it would definitely be suspicious.”

“By the way, the power of ‘Greed’ was a real gambit when I tried seizing it. But I had the more important goal in mind of killing Mariabell. With her out of the picture, it wouldn’t seem strange if I roamed freely now. Apart from solidifying my position, I also got to negotiate directly with the Great Elder Granbell of the Rosso family.”

Indeed, Yuuki's goal had been Mariabell.

In order to avoid completely losing his foothold in the Western Nations, he had to deceive Mariabell. The fruits of his labor led to the chaos that happened some time ago.

With Mariabell taken care of, Yuuki was free once again. Even the worst of his misdeeds were ultimately pushed onto Mariabell's plate. He simply claimed that they were her orders.

Things were going the way that Yuuki had planned. Mariabell had lost, and Yuuki gained even greater power. He also successfully negotiated with Granbell. There was something interesting that he heard during their discussion, which was the reason why he gathered everyone today.

"Then, let me get to the conclusion first. There is one more job we need to finish before heading east."

Everyone seemed to be stunned at the news. Glancing around at his audience, Yuuki switched to a more serious expression.

"Listen up now. I'm going to explain this in detail from the start."

After he finished, Yuuki began sharing the contents of his meeting with Granbell.



How peaceful.

I've been busy every day now that I returned to the capital of Tempest, or more commonly known as 'Rimuru.'

I knew for sure that Mariabell was dead.

When the dust had settled, I ordered people to head down the ruins and investigate, yet no body or items of value were found.

She probably died from the explosion when she self-detonated that engine reactor like Yuuki claimed, or maybe it was all smoke and mirrors.

Regardless, every problem had been resolved regarding the issue.

Mariabell was the princess of the Kingdom of Siltrosso. The princess attacked us in the ruins—if we were to publicly announce this bit of news, it would only make matters worse. That was why we secretly contacted the Kingdom of Siltrosso and regarded the matter as an "accident" that unfortunately occurred.

The fact that we were able to negotiate at all was because neither country wanted the incident to be in the public eye. We were both well aware of the ramifications, hence the open cooperation. There were always plenty of "accidents" when it came to royalty with deep, historical roots. We quickly reached an agreement and did not escalate further conflict.

Their king and queen appeared to be very cruel and ruthless.

With parents like that, it was no wonder Mariabell wanted to rely on knowledge from her

previous life.

If she had the chance to happily live out a brand-new life as a naive child, would she have turned out any differently? With that being said, that was just an afterthought.

Let us check on the Five Great Elders now.

The head of the Five Great Elders, the one that instigated Mariabell, was the leader of the Rosso family, Granbell Rosso. I put myself on guard thinking that he would be plotting something, but it was surprisingly not the case. I suppose that was the right move. It would've been a public acknowledgement of their illegal doings had he acted in some way. As long as we also stay quiet, they wouldn't be able to do anything.

In fact, more than a month had passed since the incident. Granbell had been completely quiet the entire time.

This brief break still gave us plenty of time.

We effectively utilized information collected by Souei to gain intelligence regarding the underbelly of the Western Nations. We realized that there was no bigger threat than the Rosso family.

For instance, their friendly relationship with the mercenary band ‘Apostles of Verte,’ but we also discovered several organizations that we had to keep our eyes on. However, it was still unclear as to whether my policies and interests had any direct conflict with them.

Unless they openly declared a hostile attitude towards us, we had no reason to retaliate. I didn't want to stir up trouble myself. For now, we only needed to observe their every move.

Furthermore, we were on good terms with the Freedom Association. We also had the Western Holy Church as our benefactor. It wasn't unreasonable to say that there shouldn't be a single organization out there that would dare to oppose us. As a result, Tempest became the largest faction within the Western Council.

It was now a peaceful early afternoon.

As per usual, we organized a meeting among the executives.

In a short period of time, we had virtually replaced the Five Great Elders. Probably that was why a whole new set of problems suddenly appeared, most likely a direct consequence of their absence.

The Western Council undoubtedly played an important role in directing the decisions of the Western Nations.

Inside the council, the councilors of each nation would cast their vote to decide whether a motion passed or not. The diplomatic weight of a nation's words corresponded to the number of councilors they had. Since we learned about the weaknesses of each nation in the council, our councilor will have to take on the role of mediator.

As our influence on the Western Nations gradually grew, complaints and petitions from other countries inevitably increased.

It was like they were saying “It won't cost you your life just by expressing your opinion,” which emboldened people to give us all sorts of requests.

That was why conquering the world was nothing but a fool's errand.

Being a ruler was definitely not easy. It was no wonder why the other demon lords weren't interested in other people's territories at all.

If they accidentally received a tract of impoverished land, they would have to figure out a way to alleviate the local populace's dissatisfaction. Reducing the wealth gap was easy to talk about in theory, but for the person actually handling the mess, it was a difficult job.

Each region's total capital was made up of their inherent resources and labor within. I believed the proper way to resolve the wealth gap issue was to cut down on costs, calculate the resulting profits, and redistribute them.

On the other hand, we needed to be cautious with subsidizing local regions.

If we didn't handle the matter appropriately, it would become a breeding ground for grievances.

Now that our nation was the largest faction in the council, we were expected to behave accordingly. While organizations that opposed us were being contained right now, it was only a matter of time before they began rising up again.

Then there was the problem of who we should send to the council.

This person needed to be socially adept and possess a certain degree of charisma.

But at the same time, when conflicts arose, they also needed to be intimidating enough to keep others from talking back...

"First things first, I want to apologize for having to turn down this task," I announced.

After all, the early bird gets the worm.

It was rare that I considered myself to be devious, but even I didn't want to take the initiative on this hot mess.

Benimaru followed in my footsteps. "Me neither. The last meeting made me realize that my personality is not suited for trying to probe other people. When I am not on the battlefield where my martial prowess can be displayed, I won't be of much use."

While he sounded too modest, what he said probably was genuine too. Indeed, those sly nobles would be too much of a hassle for Benimaru to handle.

Likewise, Souei also rejected the job. "My duty is to collect information. As the 'eyes and ears' of Rimuru-sama, I'm afraid I can't abandon my position right now."

Well, I somewhat guessed that already. I didn't want to send Souei as well.

Geld wouldn't do either.

Although he had good morals and was a very reliable man, the current work assigned to him was more important.

Due to the large number of construction projects that were lined up, he had no free time on his busy schedule. I figured that Geld would be perfect at handling the councilors, but right now, I definitely had to remove him from the list of potential candidates.

In that case...

"W-will you be sending me?"

At that moment, I glanced at the source of the question and saw Gabil, who was attending the meeting with a serious expression on his face.

He's surprisingly self-aware, so he probably wouldn't turn down such an important role.

...No, I should say that I felt pretty uneasy, but I couldn't think of any other suitable candidates.

I already made Hakurou our military advisor and asked him to train our soldiers.

As for Shuna, while having her as our councilor was a possible solution, doing so would doubtlessly have a negative impact on the overall affairs of the country.

Based on the same rationale, I naturally couldn't send Rigurd and the other Goblin chiefs.

As a newborn nation, we needed to draft our laws and negotiate with other governments. There were also other problems such as managing an increasing population. The chiefs would handle these challenges first, but without the support of Shuna and Rigurd, all of these affairs would sadly have to be put on hold.

Even though they were the ones nurturing the next generation, there was always room for improvement and development.

"I-I want to tame the wyverns that were captured and use them as mounts in order to strengthen our air force. This training would require a huge consumption of all sorts of potions, so I still want to continue collecting data..."

Umm—that's right.

As the saying went, 'the right person for the job,' I believed that Gabil's talents were a perfect match for what he had suggested.

As opposed to forcing him to attend the council, I would rather have him focus on raising wyvern troops.

"All right. Gabil, you should continue to handle the matter."

He gave an expression of relief. "Yes sir! Understood!"

It's no good forcing tasks down other people's throats, which was why I thought this was the correct choice.

But even so, the growth of our domain was too fast. It was a bad idea to expand our reach before we've even nurtured our talents, but the number of jobs we had to deal with was increasing at an unstoppable rate.

It was very troubling.

It can't be helped, I guess. Let's try to think of other alternatives.

—Just when I was starting to brainstorm.

My gaze suddenly locked onto Shion, who was staring at me with sparkling eyes.

"Rimuru-sama, I—"

"No!"

I immediately cut Shion off.

She was probably trying to toss her hat into the ring, but Shion was definitely not up for discussion.

"Why?!" Shion asked with a surprised look.

Jeez, I'm the one who's surprised by your reaction.

"Let's think of a scenario. This is only an example, but let's say you're a councilor. There's

a lascivious old man with a big belly in front of you. He's a councilor, too. And then, that old man gently places his hand on your shoulder like he's a very close friend. Now, how will you react?"

"It's obvious. I grab that man's neck with my left hand, lift him up, and punch him without hesitation! I gotta hit him!!"

'I gotta hit him!' isn't the answer!!

That's why Shion was out of the question.

Although Shion's growth was an indisputable fact, there were still many parts about her that I couldn't feel relaxed about.

Like what happened a few days ago—

When I went inside the restaurant, Shion was there, looking at me with a huge smile that covered her whole face.

Next, she held out the plate that was in her hands.

"Rimuru-sama, I have been waiting for you. I finally made a cake with my own hands as well! Now, please try it! It tastes exactly like what Shuna-sama makes, but the portions are several times larger. Don't be shy, please eat your fill!!"

What I felt right then was definitely a bad feeling.

But Shion had learned to brew a delicious cup of black tea. Because of that knowledge, I let my guard down.

"O-oh. Thank you. Then let's try it."

After saying that, I accepted it without much thought.

It was a mistake.

On the plate was a big chunk of what looked like a Konjac.

I suddenly became grave.

Eh, what cake...?

After looking at that object, I glanced around for help.

Nobody was there. Did they all run away?

No, Gobichi was lying down in the kitchen. He was definitely a victim.

I realized that I had come in at the worst possible time, but it was already too late.

"Oi...is this a cake?"

"Yes! The taste was perfectly reproduced!"

The taste is perfect?

Doesn't that just mean everything else is awful...?

Shion was very confident. And looking at that pleased face only caused my uneasiness to increase. While regretting my own foolishness, I decided to take a bite. I took a spoonful and brought it in my mouth. I didn't need to say much more about the results.

I thought I was going to throw up.

The texture was Konjac. But the taste was sweet cake.

It had a gray color, and just like its appearance, it felt as if I was chewing on Konjac.

It was then that I realized how important visual information was with a cake.

No, it wasn't something limited only to cakes. With cooking, appearance was also essential to enjoyment. Even if the ingredients are served as is, they do not look delicious.

"How is it? Doesn't it taste good?"

I was annoyed looking at Shion's proud face, as if she wanted to declare, "It's perfect, right?"

From the beginning, Shion didn't know the basics.

The very first step—"What is cooking"—she had made zero progress on this rudimentary stage.

"Sit down. Sit there for a moment. I have to scold you a bit!"

"Huh?! It can't be, why...?"

Shion went from being all smug to teary-eyed in an instant. She was taken aback and didn't know what to do, but I didn't care and started lecturing her.

For about thirty minutes, and in earnest.

I talked to Shion about what cooking really was so she could understand. And Shion seemed to be reflecting on it. She promised me that she would definitely talk to someone from now on, and take their opinions to heart.

—Something like that happened.

Then, I remembered something after I scolded Shion. When Shion was trying her hand at making black tea, Diablo was with her. Diablo commented something along the lines of how he thought his body was going to be destroyed just from taste-testing black tea. Thanks to his sacrifices, Shion was able to improve.

If Shion practiced alone, she wouldn't realize what was wrong herself. It was a mistake we couldn't ignore anymore. Shion always tried producing results by only relying on her skills. It was hard to improve yourself like that.

We needed someone to act as a chaperone for Shion.

As a result, there was no way I could appoint Shion as a councilor. If she were to cause a problem at the council, it could harm the friendly relationship we just established with humanity. And if Shion did go on a rampage, the only people who could possibly stop her were limited to those in our country. If such a person existed—one capable of restraining Shion—then having that person as a councilor would be far more effective.

For example, Diablo.

"I think Diablo would do well," I mumbled, sharing my true feelings.

When that happened, the executives all together nodded.

"Hmm, if it is Diablo-dono, then I feel relieved."

"I'm sure he would be able to convince those nobles into doing whatever we want."

"And he wouldn't be strong-armed or bribed."

Rigurd, Benimaru, Gabil all voiced their thoughts, and it was clear they fully trusted Diablo. Shuna and Shion agreed too.

"With his wits and resourcefulness, I think we would be able to progress things the way

Rimuru-sama wants.”

“Although I feel upset, Second Secretary (Diablo) is excellent. And if that interloper goes to the Kingdom of Ingracia, the importance of me, the First Secretary, will increase! There probably isn’t anyone more qualified for the job.”

Everyone seemed to approve of appointing Diablo as our councilor. It felt like Shion had some kind of ulterior motive, yet there was no doubt that she recognized Diablo’s talent.

There were no opposing opinions.

Since there weren’t really any other good ideas, for this case, we concluded with Diablo being the leading candidate.

But he was definitely not going to like it.

“However, keep in mind that Diablo decided to search for subordinates because he didn’t like having miscellaneous work being dumped onto his lap. Maybe he’ll be able to scout and bring someone who’s good at the kind of negotiation we’re looking for. Diablo is the most reliable candidate thus far, but let’s conclude with the reminder that it could potentially change.”

We decided to postpone our meeting.

No, until someone was selected, attending the council would have to be my job. I wanted to make a final ruling on a replacement, and so I hoped Diablo would return soon.



It was an urgent matter, but *I* was the one who was seriously troubled by all this. The outcome depended on Diablo’s return, which meant the meeting had a rather unnoteworthy end.

Peace was the best. Having no problems was a good thing. Being able to enjoy your free time was awesome.

Therefore, I decided to go look for Kurobee. And thanks to recently having some free time, I found something that had been weighing on my mind.

I went into the workshop and called for Kurobee.

“Kurobee-kun! Are you free right now?”

I greeted the disciples, who were bowing to show their respect when they saw me, with a wave and went inside the back room. There, Kurobee had several swords laid out, deep in thought about something.

“Ohh, Rimuru-sama? You came at a good time. I have something to report.”

“Hmm, something to report to me? What happened?”

If it was something he needed to inform me about, perhaps he completed a new piece of work. Kurobee had been bringing my ideas to fruition, often developing them together with Kaijin, so I thought maybe he made another useful thing.

My assumption turned out to be true.

“It’s about the weapon mechanism you requested a while ago. It’s finally complete!” Kurobee exclaimed, pointing at the assortment of differently shaped swords that were spread out in front of me.

Seeing his happy expression, I could immediately tell that this was something truly astonishing.

But what was it that I requested?

There were so many spur-of-the-moment ideas I told him about that I couldn’t pinpoint which exact one he was referring to.

Whatever the case may be, I’d probably find out more if I appraised it.

«Answer. Weapon: broadsword—the classification is unique-grade.»

Ohhh, it’s unique-grade.

This was crafted by Kurobee as well, so it must be of excellent quality. However, I doubted that was the only reason why Kurobee had such a proud expression on his face. With his level of skill, he could have easily made several unique-grade items in the span of a single month. If Kurobee was forging a normal sword, then he only needed a day to finish it.

The average quality was unique-grade, and even if it was a failure, it still fell under the category of being one of the best rare-grade items. If he invested a lot of effort, it would require about two or three days, but in those cases, the classification was guaranteed to be at least unique-grade. I think he’s still far away from being able to complete a legendary-grade item, but since it was Kurobee, I believed he would eventually accomplish it.

Furthermore, if skilled masters kept constantly using the weapons crafted by Kurobee, I had a hunch that they could evolve to become legendary-grade.

It was crucial to start the process off right by carefully selecting materials, like utilizing high purity magisteel. The weapons comprehend and evolve alongside the user’s will, so I thought it wouldn’t be long before we saw the birth of a legendary-grade weapon that Kurobee made. Therefore, I figured that there was no reason for Kurobee to go out of his way to show me a unique-grade weapon, but...

I inspected that broadsword a little more carefully.

A distinctive feature were the small holes—three of them, to be precise—the size of a marble located at the base of the blade.

Apart from that, there was nothing else that caught my eye.

Of course, the quality was fairly satisfactory for a sword. It was a different story had this been the work of a disciple, yet compared to Kurobee’s other works, it didn’t seem very remarkable. It felt a little weird saying this, but it was an extremely ordinary-looking unique-grade weapon.

It didn’t appear to really have any special ‘Engraving Magic’ either... Wait, could this be?

“What is this? Although unique-grade is certainly remarkable, it isn’t rare for you to get that classification, right?” I asked, feigning confusion while I hid my inner agitation.

“Have you forgotten by any chance? Ufufufu, this is an unbelievable thing. At a quick glance, it looks like an ordinary weapon and doesn’t have any magical effects. Yet, it has an

incredible characteristic.”

Even with my—or rather, Wisdom King Raphael’s—‘Analyze and Assess,’ I couldn’t detect anything unusual at all. If this really was what I thought it was, then the possibilities could be truly promising.

In front of me, Kurobee, who could hardly contain his excitement, brought out some kind of glowing ball. He then casually fitted it into a random slot.

“You place the ball like this into the hole on the slotted sword. If you do that—”

«Report. Weapon: broadsword has changed into Magic Weapon: broadsword.»

Ah, I knew it!!

An ordinary weapon had changed into a magic weapon. In other words, it meant that the idea I had been fantasizing about had ultimately come to fruition.

“Woooah!! Is it finally complete?”

“Ufufu, as expected of Rimuru-sama, you’ve realized it too? That’s right. This weapon mechanism is exactly the same as what Rimuru-sama mentioned before!”

That’s right. I’ve definitely brought up that idea in the past.

I knew that Kurobee had been steadily researching, but the thought of him succeeding this quickly never crossed my mind.

You sure are scary, Kurobee.

He was a reserved man who didn’t feel the need to boast about his accomplishments; his work was more than sufficient enough to eloquently describe his prowess. He was a true example of a master craftsman.

“He-hey, Kurobee! Kurobee-chan! You’re really amazing, you know that? This is a really amazing invention!!” I exclaimed to Kurobee, excited.

Kurobee smiled happily, just as excited, and nodded vigorously.

“Mufufufu, I did it!”

He had a smug look.

But it wasn’t often you saw a smug face as handsome as his. Shion’s smugness annoyed me, but unlike her, I honestly wanted to praise Kurobee.

There were several ways of crafting magic gear.

I could utilize the ‘Synthesis and Separation’ of ‘Wisdom King Raphael’ to affix magical effects to equipment. Kurobee could do the same thing; on the other hand, Kaijin and Kurobee’s disciples were not capable of such an overpowered skill.

Then, you may ask, what will they do to achieve the same effect?

Normally speaking, they would achieve the same result by having an engraving mage cast ‘Engraving Magic.’ Dold was a skillful user of said magic and could easily cast it onto weapons.

Engraved magic gear could be infused with mana, and once infused, it was possible to execute certain magic. However, there was a limit to the number of varying magics that could be enchanted. At most, only two types of different magic could be enchanted. Moreover, it was impossible to remove the engraving after enchanting.

I figured that I had mentioned this plenty of times, but there was another method, and that

was through the evolution of weapons. The weapons could be given special properties through the user's mana.

It wasn't an easy thing to achieve, and it usually took an exceptionally long time. However, the growth of the weapons would often develop unexpected power. Thus, this could be one of our research projects to see if there was a more efficient way to cause weapon evolutions.

We had acquired a large amount of unique-grade equipment from the ancient ruins of Amalita and supplied part of them as research material. Research like that would not yield results so easily, so we would have to be persistent on the matter.

Next, let's check out some of Kurobee's work.

These were some products that subverted conventional concepts.

Kaijin, Kurobee and I had been drinking one time when an idea suddenly came to us.

We would use magisteel, since it was a great conductor of mana, to craft hardened weapons. In addition, we also planned to prepare an item that can be used as a 'Core' to cast magic. That way, we might be able to create magic gear that didn't have fixed magic anchored in them.

For instance, what would happen if we fitted a sword with spirit magic stones?

The answer was...the same effect as the slotted swords—those weapons with holes in the base of their blade. And, the slotted swords weren't going to use magic stones, but rather jewels that had much higher purity.

"So, is it close to what Rimuru-sama had envisioned? As you can see, I've managed to craft these slotted weapons. Kaijin-san also discovered a way of condensing magicule concentration in order to craft high-purity magic crystals!"

Kurobee sure had a lot to show off.

It looked like Kaijin really took part in the research effort. While Kurobee crafted the weapons, Kaijin crafted the marbles. It was no wonder how they were able to successfully create something this wonderful since the two of them had joined hands.

"Regarding the magic stones that provide these properties, we've named them 'Spirit Core.' We've also been calling them 'Magic Marble.' When Gabil-san was out catching wyverns, Vesta-san, who was taking a break from work, also joined us. I heard that those two were already researching the power core of the 'Spirit Magic Core.' Basically, they already possessed the technology to enchant magic stones with the earth, water, fire, and wind spirits," explained Kurobee.

I recalled Ramiris mentioning that the 'Spirit Magic Core' was meant to ensure all the spirits were activated at the same time. Kaijin and the others were doing similar research in the past, so crafting a single-spirit magic stone was a piece of cake for them.

All he had to do was adjust the size and power output of the magic marbles. With the properties of the magic power imbued in them, they became 'Spirit Cores,' which could be classified into four elements—earth, water, fire, or wind.

Naturally, the energy of these cores would run out. Once the magic contained within was depleted, they would be no different than purely decorative marbles. However, they could be recycled for repeated use.

“Can we replenish their energy?” I asked.

“We can. Although, we will need to find skillful mages to infuse our magic in it. It’s not something an amateur can handle.”

“I see. Perhaps we could create some new jobs by assigning some workshops to specifically infuse magic for other people, too.”

“That’s right. I think it will be a good idea to prepare as many magic marbles as possible. That way, we could also start trading these marbles.”

That was indeed the case.

I was planning to mix these magic marbles into the items dropped by the labyrinth monsters. With that being said, these marbles could be a sort of new commodity on their own as well.

Yet, Kurobee wasn’t finished. “Nonetheless, it’s best that we be cautious. These magic marbles are still in the experimental stage, and their properties could change depending on their combinations.”

“Combinations?”

What did he mean?

‘Their properties could change’...could it be?!

“Please take a look at this. There are three empty slots on this blade.”

I knew it!

“In other words, if you put two magic marbles with different spirits in them, you would get some unexpected properties?”

“That’s right!” Kurobee agreed with my speculation.

Then that would complicate things.

We would have to experiment more to verify these properties. Such innovative technology should not be published without a second thought.

«Negative. All information used in the labyrinth can be managed.»

Oh, oh oh.

I see how it is now.

This way, we could save the time and effort of experimenting, and in addition, it would eliminate any possible security issues since it was within the labyrinth. Now that I thought about it, the best approach was if we asked the labyrinth challengers for help in order to get a large pool of verified data.

Even if they managed to find some incredible discoveries, the only people capable of recreating this technology were probably from our nation. While I still had my reservations about our technology being leaked, since we planned to commercialize it, then it was only a matter of time. And if that was the case, then the smarter move was to at least carry out the experiment in a venue that we could overlook.

“Right, so what kind of dangers are you expecting?”

“It depends on the number of holes to the number of inserted magic marbles. It’s fine if there is only one slot. However, if you put a wind spirit next to a fire spirit, the overall magic power intensifies. In contrast, a water spirit combined with a fire spirit reduces power. Even so,

one water spirit marble paired with two fire spirit marbles results in a dramatic spike in power. This is not power increasing by a factor of three we are talking about here, but a spike ten times more powerful than the original. That's why I figured we should collect more test results. I've discussed the matter with Kaijin-san too."

By the looks of things, there were plenty of hazardous combinations. Magic marbles genuinely required some experimentation. It would be a huge project.

I should listen to Raphael-sensei's suggestion and carry out the research in the labyrinth.

"Is three the maximum number of slots a weapon can carry?"

"Yes. Regardless of how hard we tried, we could only support up to three for now."

Moreover, the chances of successfully punching three holes was apparently one in one hundred. It was only when Kurobee devoted his entire strength and swung his whole body that the potential of forging a three-holed weapon appeared.

Naturally, it was next to impossible for Kurobee's disciples to craft slotted weapons. Just four of his best students managed to craft a single slotted weapon.

By the way, even Kaijin was limited to a two-holed weapon. This goes to show how immensely difficult it was to successfully create these slotted weapons.

"Right now, we can only craft three-holed weapons. Despite that, with the right combination of magic marbles, they can give off the same power as a legendary-grade weapon," Kurobee proudly revealed.

Under normal circumstances, magic swords were already extremely precious and treasured items. If their properties could be altered at will, such an invention would undoubtedly defy all common sense. If you could switch up the properties of your magic weapon depending on your enemies' weaknesses—then they had honestly crafted something incredible.

Its value was priceless. Just like what Kurobee mentioned, these weapons could rival legendary-grade weapons. Furthermore, with the right combinations, some might really give off the power of legendary-grade weapons. This was truly unbelievable. I gave my sincere praise from the bottom of my heart to Kurobee and the others.

After discussing the matter with him, we decided to prioritize dispatching the completed slotted weapons to the labyrinth.

We also intended to manufacture a large quantity of one-time use magic marbles and scatter them within the labyrinth's treasure chests. In addition, once Kurobee's disciples learned how to craft slotted weapons, then they would be incorporated as rewards for defeating the labyrinth bosses, too.

It wasn't easy making three-holed weapons; however, it might be doable if we loosened the requirements on quality control. We could achieve this by reducing their durability and lowering the weapon grades.

"Would that work?"

"I believe it would. Although, it will definitely be fragile, so I don't recommend using it in actual battles..."

Kurobee didn't seem to agree, as he answered rather timidly.

With that being said, I believed that they would at least be able to endure our experiments.

In my opinion, we merely needed to verify the various combinations of magic marbles. That was why I had hoped Kurobee and his disciples could mass produce two or more holed weapons and distribute them to the labyrinth challengers.

Moreover, those challengers were no fools. Only amateurs would rely solely on unfamiliar and mysterious weapons that they found. There would not be a problem as long as the challengers were able to tell the difference between their main weapons and disposable weapons and use them accordingly. In teams that lacked a mage, these weapons could be a real treasure, which was why they were an important experimental case to study.

“Rimuru-sama, that’s one evil expression you are making.”

“Hahaha, you are overthinking things, Kurobee-kun!”

“Then I shall hurry and teach my disciples the techniques.”

After saying so, Kurobee agreed to my request on increasing the quantity.

The plan was quickly finalized now that he had voiced his support.

Even though the project would consume quite a bit of magisteel, it could be considered a form of training for his disciples. We would be able to test out these potentially battleworthy products.

I decided to make these weapons the official equipment for centurions and higher-ranked officers. By considering their weaknesses and issuing the correct combination of marbles, their combat abilities could be raised.

“I’ll be counting on you then!”

“Understood!”

And so, I left the matter in Kurobee’s care.



“By the way, Rimuru-sama. Surely you have something in mind for me if you came all this way, right?”

That was when I remembered.

I completely forgot about the reason why I came to find Kurobee in the first place.

“The thing is, my sword—“ I began, taking out my straight sword to show Kurobee.

“Are there finally holes on your blade?”

“No, that’s not it. I wouldn’t be as surprised if it were just that.”

“I suppose you have a point...”

My sword wasn’t bent nor shattered, and was completely familiar with my mana.

The blade was as black as the midnight sky.

However, nowadays, if I infused my blade with mana—

Shocked, Kurobee stared with his mouth open. “What! The b-blade is turning golden—no, that’s not the only color. It’s a rainbow. The blade is giving off the glow of a rainbow!”

“Surprising, right? I got quite the scare at first too; that’s why I decided to discuss it with you.”

I had been gazing at my sword back in my room one day when it suddenly started changing hues.

Obviously, I was caught off guard.

The blade was giving off a rainbow-like sheen.

Gold was never used during the forging process, yet it was giving off a shine brighter than orichalcum. That was why I decided to investigate the matter.

«Answer. This is the “Ultimate Metal” hihirokane¹.»

Raphael-san had said that to me.

Apparently, it was some very impressive metal that was superior in quality than the orichalcum I refined. Thus, I came to Kurobee for confirmation.

“T-this…what in the world is this? I can’t even analyze it…”

“I think it is called something like hihirokane?”

“Hihirokane? D-does something like that really exist? It’s said to be a mythical-grade metal that possesses immutable properties. I honestly thought it was something of a fairy tale...”

Kurobee was no longer just excited. He was stunned speechless.

I figured that this change would be powerful, but it seemed to have exceeded my expectations. Afterward, Kurobee and I studied the now hihirokane-comprised straight sword together.

In the end, we discovered that this sword would only respond to my mana.

Even if Kurobee infused his mana with it, the blade would remain jet black, and the metallic reaction at that point was still magisteel. However, it had indeed transformed into authentic hihirokane.

This hihirokane seemed capable of resisting the wavelengths of every single physical property. Normally, it wouldn’t even reflect light because it simply cancelled out the wavelengths within the visible light spectrum, which probably explained why the blade was pitch black. It could mask its unique properties from others as well—even from my ‘Analyze and Assess.’ How impressive.

Only when I imbued it with my mana and entered a state of combat would this sword begin to give off a rainbow-colored shine.

Even though it might be too eye-catching to unsheathe in a public area, as long as I didn’t infuse it with my mana, it should masquerade as an innocuous sword well enough. Moreover, it was also far sturdier than most average weapons, or should I say, its immutable properties meant that “It could not be destroyed.” Even when it was damaged, it could be repaired by saturating it with mana.

I was curious about what would happen if two hihirokane weapons clashed with one an-

¹A metal from Japanese myth

other, but I suppose it was no use thinking about something impossible like that.

There was only one thing I could say for certain right now: this straight sword was worthy of being my weapon, and that it had evolved to outshine the sturdiness of any other sword in the world. With this sword complementing my ‘Absolute Defense,’ I could afford to be a bit reckless at times.

In addition—

This sword was not complete just yet.

In order to engrave it with a magic marble—magic crystals of different spirit properties—I planned on drilling a hole at the base of the blade so that said marble could be inserted.

I was looking forward to the day that this sword could be finally considered complete. It was already quite impressive, but I couldn’t help but feel excited at the thought of its great potential.

“This sword is really something else. Despite the fact that I was the one who made it, the state it is in now is something I could have never imagined...”

“No no no, that’s not true at all. Kurobee is super amazing!”

“Thanks for the compliment. I am truly happy to hear Rimuru-sama’s praise like that!”

The special properties of this sword were only possible because Kurobee, while undeniably modest, was the one that made it. That much was certain.

“Even so, I believe that this sword can triumph Hinata’s saber.”

My sword was Kurobee’s greatest masterpiece, so wouldn’t it be at least the equivalent of a legendary-grade?

I had spoken based on this thought.

Kurobee’s answer to my comment was quite unexpected. “Are you referring to the legendary-grade Moonlight Saber? Hmm... Actually, this should be stronger. Perhaps this sword could possibly be a lead-in to the mythical-grade weapon witnessed by Veldora-sama.”

Mythical-grade—that was a phrase synonymous with the word “ultimate” and “supreme.” There was no such equipment for sale on the market. There was no such record of it in legends and folktales. However, something like that definitely existed.

For instance, Milim’s magic sword, Tenma, was certainly one of them. She had shown it to me before. At the time, even ‘Analyze and Assess’ failed to yield any results. According to Raphael-san, the quality of Tenma was above that of the Moonlight Saber. This sword had become a precious item like Tenma—I couldn’t help but imagine that it had also reached the ultimate realm of mythical-grade.

According to Kurobee, it appeared that my sword, at its present state, was at the level equal to higher-end legendary-grade weapons. In a way, there was a lot to look forward to as it had the potential of reaching mythical-grade quality one day.

We were both mesmerized by the sword for some time.

“Ah ah, it’s such a cool sword—”

“Indeed. Such beautiful blade patterns are truly a rare sight.”

The immutable hihirokane gleamed brightly, adding a beautiful color to the Hamon—demonstrating the very essence of Kurobee’s skilled techniques.

We both couldn't contain our excitement while observing the almost art-like patterns of the blade. Its beauty was irresistible; it was the best sword I had ever laid eyes on. And it would also continue to evolve. It wasn't that far of an exaggeration to say that I had already acquired a mythical-grade weapon.

This unexpected discovery made me very happy.



I heard a flurry of panicked footsteps coming my way.

The person heading for the front of my office had no intention of stopping and immediately burst through the door without so much as a polite knock.

I could tell that it was Milim.

Had anyone else been so rude, they would have met Rigurd's iron fists. If it were Veldora or Ramiris, they would have been punished by having their desserts confiscated. But Milim was a special case, so let's not pursue the matter with her.

After all—

“R-Rimuru! It's hatching, it's gonna hatch!”

—It was because Milim had been holding onto an egg this whole time.

She had refused to go back to her home country, insisting on staying in our nation. She was worried that something might happen to the egg and felt that it would be safer keeping it near me.

Milim looked panicked.

Judging by her demeanor, I assumed that the egg was probably hatching soon. Milim's old friend, Gaia, lived in the egg—the ‘Avatar Core’ was flickering on and off.

It was only a matter of time.

Gaia, a new monster, was about to be born.

“Gyuuuiii!”

A tiny chibi dragon broke from its shell.

Its length was around fifty centimeters. It was hard to believe, given its tiny size, that this used to be the Chaos Dragon.



“—Are you Gaia?”

“Gyuu, Gyuu!”

The young girl and the tiny dragon hugged each other tightly.

It was very moving seeing the two reunited.

Gaia managed to hatch not long after Milim barged in. With the safety of her friend assured, Milim was now at ease. Yet, when I thought that this meant she was returning home, it turned out not to be the case.

“Come on, let’s take Gaia out on an adventure!” Milim proposed excitedly.

—No, I expected her to say something like this.

Naturally, my answer was—

“I mean, Frey-san must be quite worried about you, right?”

Frey-san had become Milim’s guardian. If I played with Milim without giving her prior notice, she would undoubtedly get angry. It would be a different story had Gaia not been born, but seeing how energetic and healthy it was, Milim now had to go back and take care of the work she had been putting off.

“WAHAHAHA, there’s nothing to worry about!”

Nothing to worry about?

Rimuru did give Milim some of his wise advice.

Yet his advice has been completely ignored!

Just kidding.

I mean, since Milim suggested it, I guess I don’t object.

I had been busy dealing with the aftermath of the whole incident with Mariabell, and I’ve only recently started to take a break. It wasn’t a bad idea to have some fun with my friends after working all this time.

“Besides, it’s actually a necessity! Dragons are apex predators and will only eat what they hunt. Even babies are the same, so we need to teach Gaia how to hunt,” Milim smugly added.

I heard that dragons don’t go hungry very easily, and how they could survive on water and magicules alone. The downside was that they wouldn’t grow. If we wanted it to grow bigger and stronger, appropriate workout and hunting monsters as meals were absolutely essential.

That was why Milim sought to adventure with Gaia. My initial impression was that she just wanted to run away from Frey’s clutches, but it turns out that she had actually thought things through a lot.

“Right, then I know the perfect place for that.”

“Uh! Is it the labyrinth?”

“Umm, that’s right!”

And so, we initiated our plan to nurture Gaia.

*

Now that the issue was settled, let's gather everyone here as soon as possible.

I called Veldora and Ramiris, telling them that we were challenging the labyrinth once more. This time around, we would bring Gaia along and form a party of five. Even a newborn like Gaia was safe inside the labyrinth. Compared to bringing him on an adventure in the outside world, full of unknown variables, the labyrinth was unquestionably less risky.

“GAHAHAHA! We are actually quite busy right now, but because it's you guys asking for the favor, we will have to give you our full assistance!”

“Umm umm, you guys can rest assured now that we are here. Have faith that Gaia will grow just fine under our care.”

I suddenly felt uneasy.

—*No, it's all right. I gotta have faith in them.*

Veldora and Ramiris had been maturing, so they should be able to read the atmosphere and act accordingly. Even Milim knew that this was not playtime but educating Gaia. Surely, they wouldn't be selfish and do whatever they wanted.

“Well then, let's go!”

At my command, everyone possessed their monster avatar.

Our adventure had begun.

We went to power level Gaia.

Me, Veldora, Ramiris and Milim.

Besides the four of us, there was Gaia, who was capable of flying, following me. Gaia was a dragon. It was originally the Chaos Dragon that possessed the power to destroy the world.

It shouldn't be weak at all.

And just as I suspected, it was indeed a dignified and very strong creature. It only took a few fights for Gaia to calibrate and get the hang of fighting. Furthermore, it had a wide-ranging dragon breath attack that could take out a whole group of enemies.

‘Chaotic Breath’—a highly concentrated miasma with a curse that corroded any substance it touched. Its effect was similar to the ‘Corrosion’ of my ‘Gluttonous King Beelzebuth,’ and its power was so strong that most monsters couldn't defend against it. In addition, Gaia possessed the ‘Earth’ spirit, a power carved in its ‘Soul’ since birth, which enabled it to control gravity.

Had the unsealed and freed Chaos Dragon retained intelligence—the mere thought of that possibility terrified me. With abilities like ‘Curse Breath’ and super-gravitational waves being thrown around, the number of casualties would have definitely been much greater.

But that was all in the past now.

Nowadays, Gaia was Milim's cute pet and our reliable companion.

We shouldn't be wary of it.

It was then that a Blood boar appeared.

Blood boars resided in the area near the thirtieth floor and were a rank B monster with strong legs. Its head and shoulders were protected by thick bones and muscles, while its skin was harder than steel. With a total body length over two meters, it would charge into its enemies with a speed of around fifty kilometers per hour. No one would be able to withstand that type of attack.

If you encounter it in a narrow passage, the blood boar was an unavoidable dangerous enemy. Yet, even a dangerous monster like that was no match for our team.

Gaia's ability to control gravity meant that the blood boar's charge was unexpectedly dulled. Seizing this opportunity, Milim landed a fatal strike and ended the blood boar's life.

The blood boar, feared for its ability to end up drenched with the blood of its enemies, had become a staple in Gaia's diet. With the outcome of today's hunt, I looked forward to Gaia's growth in the future.

As you can see, our team cooperated very well with each other.

Gaia also had a skill called 'Gravity Barrier,' which was expected to reduce the effects of a physical attack. This, combined with my magic barrier, gave us additional protection against enemies' magical attacks as well.

We learned all sorts of coordinated team attacks in the following days, and Gaia quickly became an integral member of our party. After that, we continued gaining actual fighting experience while at the same time, securing food for Gaia. Eventually, we made our way down to the forty-ninth floor.

Thus, the level boss of the fiftieth floor, who was quite the challenge for us last time, was defeated.

"GA-HAHHAHA! Gozer can no longer stand against us!"

"That's right, that's right! Gozer is not that strong after all!"

"WAHAHAHA! That felt great!"

"Gyuu!"

These guys sure were excited.

Eh? What do you mean we're having too much fun?

Nonsense, all this hard work is for Gaia's sake.

I mean, maybe a little.

We were more or less enjoying ourselves during the process, but it was for Gaia's benefit as well.

With this elegant-sounding reason, we returned to town from the labyrinth.

"Looks like you all had a lot of fun."

A smiling Frey-san was waiting for us, with veins visibly popping across her forehead and a spine-chilling atmosphere surrounding her.

"Eh, EHHH! F-Frey! I-It's not like that. There's a very important reason behind this—!"

I felt a sudden sense of déjà vu.

Why?

What happened next was predictable too, as if I had somehow seen it before.

“Didn’t you promise me that you’d return once Gaia hatched?”

“I-It’s not like that. Gaia needed me!”

“Yes, that’s right, but was that enough to break our promise?”

“B-but it needed education...”

“Just like how Gaia requires education, I think you could use some education too.”

“...?!”

This battle was settled.

Milim couldn’t seem to persuade Frey. Regardless of how desperately Milim tried to deny it, Frey was unmoved.

I, of course, didn’t want to step on the tiger’s tail. And to be fair, Frey was being reasonable anyway. In the end, Milim tried to resist like a spoiled child, crying and causing a scene. However, she stood no chance against Frey’s unfazed smile, and thus Milim was taken away, defeated.

All right then.

It was Milim’s fault to begin with, so it couldn’t be helped. If she had at least contacted Frey first, then she wouldn’t have been so angry, but it was too late now.

“I’LL BE BACK!”

Milim left after saying this, though I didn’t think there’d be a third time...

Even though she hadn’t been given a curfew yet, and I was sure she’d be able to get permission to come visit me regularly, I believed that kind of privilege was in jeopardy at this point. Frey knew that it’d be dangerous if she didn’t at least give Milim some time off, and that was why she had been generous with her. However, I didn’t know what would happen if Milim kept running away from her responsibilities.

But that was someone else’s business, which I preferred to stay away from and rather observe. Although it would probably still be best if she could teach Milim about ReCoCo (report, communicate, and consult).

While thinking so, I saw Milim off.

I was keeping Gaia by my side for the time being. There was an unlimited number of Resurrection Bracelets in the labyrinth for it to use, as well as plenty of food to eat. In addition, we even switched our avatars to automatic mode and let them explore with Gaia together. It was a fantastic way of allowing Gaia to keep on training.

It was still too early for Milim to directly coach it. I anticipated that we’d let him grow its strength to a certain extent before handing it to Milim.

And so, we had a new companion in the labyrinth.

—On a side note:

Eventually, five unique monsters found roaming the labyrinth were deemed as special level bosses, and struck fear into people’s hearts. There were rumors among the challengers—these bosses appeared to have two levels of strength. While they were already terrifying in their normal state, they became extraordinarily powerful in their second state. To put it simply, we

were puppeteering what were viewed as uncontrollable, nightmarish fiends.

But we only learned that later on.



I was afraid of what would happen to me if we secretly played while Milim was absent.

That was because once the automatic mode of our avatars were deactivated, their growth would sell us out to Milim. And even if there wasn't much growth, Milim's keen instincts would probably expose us regardless. Therefore, it was best that we avoid such a dangerous act.

So, I would like to introduce you to my serious work.

Since we would be dealing with the Western Nations, we had to outline laws as soon as possible.

As the ruling demon lord of the Jura-Tempest Federation, I held the final say on all matters. While most of my work could be handled by people like Rigurd to some extent, the important decisions had to be reviewed by me personally.

I had a great deal of authority.

To put it bluntly, I could manipulate the judicial, legislative, and executive powers at will. This was because I held the absolute right to control these three powers—and so, I held absolute power over the nation.

I was even overseeing military command, which could be considered the cornerstone of this nation. I could march our army with a single order. The appointment of any officers had to be approved by me as well.

The word “Federation” was purely superficial; in truth, this was no different than a dictatorship run by me.

But in reality, I just tossed all my work to other people.

Administrative matters were handled entirely by Rigurd, while in terms of the military, Benimaru was acting on my behalf and held full control over it.

We were currently recruiting talents to serve as their aides.

Rigurd was learning about the separation of powers, whereas the former goblins chiefs, Rugurd, Regurd and Rogurd were acting as the head of the Judicial, Legislative and Executive branches, respectively. Nevertheless, there was a slight problem here—separation of powers could not be maintained without some kind of oversight.

Similar to Japan's parliamentary cabinet system, the boundary between the legislative and executive was blurred. It was difficult foreseeing what correct measures I had to take in order to improve this problem.

Anyway, we began setting up the Legislative branch.

Regarding that, our nation settled on creating a Senate and a House of Representatives.

Senators from the Senate would be appointed by me while the representatives from the House of Representatives would be elected through public elections.

The senators would not change. They would be allowed to continue serving forever unless they fell from grace by getting in any kind of trouble.

On the other hand, the representatives from the House of Representatives would be elected by the public. Holding an election wouldn't be easy. It was going to require a lot of trial and error.

The Legislative branch would only be in charge of drafting laws.

Then, the Executive branch would be in charge of carrying out the charted laws and see to it that the nation operated accordingly. I wanted to have someone talented in order to solidify our Executive branch.

Using the Japanese bureaucracy as an example, even with the prime ministers constantly changing over and over, the nation still functioned very solidly.

Although there have been more and more problems in recent years...

Anyhow, we must be practical and push forward our policies gradually. We needed someone who possessed tenacity and diligence so that they wouldn't give up so easily during the execution of our laws. However, long-term plans tended to waste unnecessary resources, and perhaps officials might be bribed to do bad things, so I wanted to prevent this kind of thing from happening by closely monitoring them.

As for the first wave of officials to take office in the Executive branch, I intended to select them from the pool of goblin tribe chiefs in Tempest. The elders, on the other hand, were to be elected by proxy.

In this regard, I believed it would eventually turn into a meritocracy. We were still in the process of reconciling the stakes and rivalries of each tribe, but I hoped that in the future, we would be able to unite together as one. Although it would also take time for us to do so, I wanted our nation to pursue a policy of peaceful reconciliation.

Leaving that aside, there was a problem here.

Those who were good at governmental duties tended to be mostly weaker races, whereas those who were at the top of the militant races were not good with the paperwork.

This was a troubling issue.

Should we focus on the strength within the monster world, or focus on the coexistence with humanity, knowledge, and coordination? It was quite the conundrum.

No matter how strong some people were, I wasn't going to tolerate criminals; this was already well known to us. In addition, the military honestly had bragging rights to the sheer power they possessed. However, that didn't mean they could interfere with the country's operating policy. Depending on the future policies, I was afraid that it might cause discontentment.

Legislation, at its core, was gathering the opinions of the people, drafting them into law, and having it approved by the Executive.

However, at the Executive level, even the weak could control power by using their wits, and the strong could be deprived of their rights.

Wouldn't some people have a problem with that? This was to be expected at this stage. After all, the Executive played an important role.

The Executive branch had the responsibility of managing the national budget, and the vast amount of wealth amassed in Tempest would be put to use by public officials. Myourmiles was our top financial functionary, but he alone could not uncover every single case of corruption and fraud.

Moreover, the division of territories also fell under Executive control. I expected that appointments would be made to develop regions at the appropriate time, but that plan might also become a point of contention. To prevent this from happening, all decrees would be issued in my name.

Finally, there was the Judicial Branch.

The most important work of the Judicial Branch was to try people who had been arrested and charged with a crime.

Police power was vested in the Executive Branch; yet, the power of arrest was not limited to only the Executive, but also to the Legislative and Judicial Branches. The purpose was, of course, mutual oversight.

The judiciary was responsible for sanctioning persons that were under arrest.

It was the Judicial Branch that required the highest regard for impartiality, and to protect the order of law without being swayed by the opinions of the people. Relying on the law to punish without mercy—that was surprisingly difficult.

I was also troubled by the question of how to guarantee a fair and just trial.

In any case, in order to implement the separation of powers once and for all, I was learning alongside Rigurd. The people's voices must be heard, and legislation must be discussed and enacted together. It was essential to establish a transparent political system.

In terms of administration, Rigurd and other talented people were currently being selected as officials and were training to become bureaucrats. In order to strengthen the authority of the central government, it was necessary to create a law enforcement agency as soon as possible.

The military, under Benimaru's direct control, and the intelligence agency "Dark Shadow" led by Souei, would answer only to my commands. In order to prevent chaos in the chain of command, it was decided that they would not listen to any orders from the Executive Branch. Therefore, I was planning to appoint someone quite powerful as the head of the Public Prosecutor's Office.

There was another thing.

The judiciary also had problems.

Conducting trials could easily stoke violence and resentment on all sides. This demanded not only smarts, but a certain amount of adroitness to get the job done.

Of course, judges needed protection, but that thought alone was disturbing.

Purposefully attacking a judge for the sake of revenge was absolutely intolerable, and was grounds for an immediate death sentence. However, we couldn't rule out the possibility of someone being aware of the consequences and still committing a crime like that.

Unlike humans, monsters were tough. No matter how discrete the security was, officials were susceptible to ambushes. That was why we wanted our judge to have some personal physical strength.

“Uh—in that case, relying on Rugurd alone is rather concerning,” I admitted.

Rigurd agreed with my view. “Right. Even though he is my close lieutenant, he’s not as strong as a centurion. If we switched to Rogurd however, he wouldn’t lose to any average youngsters...”

Rugurd had a deep and ruthless side, but could deliver an honest verdict. Good for a judge, but not powerful enough to protect himself when things went wrong.

Rogurd was a strong man, and can take on a thousand captains one-on-one. However, he was spearheading all the ministries and departments in the Executive Branch in place of Rigurd, and therefore it would be difficult for him to transfer over to the Judicial Branch.

I pondered for a bit. “I would like to set up a prosecutor’s office within the Executive Branch. If it’s a domestic crime, Gobta and the security force will be able to stop it, but when it comes to cracking down on executives and lawmakers, it’s too much of a burden for those guys, isn’t it?”

“Indeed, you’re right. All sorts of monsters, even named majins, may come to our nation. In addition, people confident of their own strength from various countries will also gather here due to the influence of the opening ceremony. It’s not surprising that there’s going to be a lot of commotion.”

While most of the effects of the Founding Festival were positive, due to a certain event that occurred, it’s also begun to attract strong characters. In a way, it was what we wanted, but some fools simply couldn’t be satisfied by the labyrinth, they had to go to town and make a mess.

With Gobta’s return, the security force had been strengthened significantly. But Rigurd didn’t think that was enough.

“There are still A-ranked majins, aren’t there?” I asked.

“Yes, although the numbers are small. They haven’t shown any outward signs for wanting to rampage, but I thought it would be prudent to stay vigilant.”

Just like Rigurd said, preparedness was very important.

There was a huge difference in the fighting abilities between each individual, so it was smarter to be proactive rather than reactive when dealing with majins.

“Hmm, the Public Prosecutor’s Office and the Judicial Branch. There’s also the matter of sending someone to be our diplomat in the Western Council. At the moment, we all have our own jobs to do, so it doesn’t seem like a good idea to make any personnel changes...”

“It would be more confusing.”

Hmm...that was going to be a headache.

The system was being established, the laws were beginning to be enacted, but the necessary resources for actually executing them was still in its infancy. There were many vacant positions that needed to be filled.

That was the downside of rapid growth, and it was something we could not avoid. I could

only sigh at our lack of manpower...



It was no use ruminating over not having enough personnel.

I decided to lighten my mood by inspecting the construction sites.

Geld was building a new capital on the ruins of Beast Kingdom Eurazania.

The construction was going smoothly and the foundation work had been laid out. We laid the foundation all the way down to bedrock, and magical high-strength concrete foundations connected by steel and rebar proved to be an excellent base. By using stones with mana as the building material, not only were they sturdy, they would give off an unique magic wavelength that repelled low level spells.

The downside was that we could not use magic to reduce its weight during transportation, but the positives outshined that, so I suppose it was good enough. By the time this giant castle was completed, not only would it be capable of defending against an outside attack, it would also block magic being used inside as well.

We were even able to create magic rocks that were several hundred times harder than concrete. After polishing it, a towering pillar rose from the center, supported by the foundation, and seemed to almost reach the sky. Using the pillar as support, the outer walls were being erected next.

I should mention that the scale of this project was simply enormous. The pillar alone was a spectacle. Below, people were bustling around like busy ants. It was certainly a strange sight to behold, but it was also evidence of just how massive the building was.

“Ah, it’s Rimuru-sama. We welcome your presence,” Geld greeted as he happily ran up to me.

Not wanting to bother everyone working, I came here using ‘Teleport’ from my ‘Spatial Domination.’ But it appeared that I was discovered by Geld in the end.

“Hey, Geld. Long time no see. It’s great seeing you guys progressing so smoothly.”

“Hahaha, thanks a lot. Surely everyone will be delighted to hear Rimuru-sama’s praise!”

Geld gave off a bright laughter, which brightened me up as well.

He wouldn’t be reacting this way had the operation not gone smoothly.

The cheerful atmosphere at the site was what made the work enjoyable.

“No no no, I really mean it. You guys seem to be doing a lot better than I anticipated. Will you guys be finishing soon?”

“Indeed. It is thanks to everyone getting along so well.”

According to Geld, he thought a lot by himself after his talk with me. He then went on to have open conversations with the captives majins, lending his ears to their complaints.

There was no way that he could move the hearts of those who were completely unmotivated to work. With that being said, Geld did not rely on strength to rule, but by understanding others' viewpoints.

"They were all afraid for their future circumstances. They were scared that they would be executed due to their past conflict with Rimuru-sama," explained Geld.

"Huh? Why would I do something like that?"

"Of course you wouldn't. We all know that Rimuru-sama is not a ruthless demon lord. But these people are new around here. They do not know Rimuru-sama's character, and consequently, they couldn't completely shake off the feeling of fear. That's why I decided to share my own experience with them—"

Geld retold the story of the duel between the Orc Lord and me, the outcome, and the fate of the orcs. The majins were only half convinced, despite the large group of high orcs right in front of them. Those that were involved backed up Geld's testimony, and as a result, few people doubted his story.

"Some of them were calling Rimuru-sama naive, but I replied with 'So what?'. I asked them, 'Are you really going to try and rebel when even I can't win against him?' That shut everyone up," Geld recalled, chuckling. If it was Shion or Diablo, they probably would've lost their nerve and killed the misspoken majin. Once again, I was reminded of how kind-hearted Geld truly was.

And just like that, Geld managed to unravel the minds of the captives.

He would also invite them out for drinks every week and treat them to delicious meals. Nowadays, they had been completely won over by Geld's masculinity and were willingly assisting us.

More importantly—they felt that they could be of help to other people; having their efforts recognized must have filled them with pride. Not only were they laboring hard to be freed of their captive status, they were also experiencing the fun of working. This was far more efficient than forcing them to work. In some sense, our effective approach was to be expected. And so, these higher majins' support became a great help to us.

We resolved the lack of manpower issue while at the same time, work became more efficient. Naturally, with this improved efficiency, construction was progressing far better than I hoped.

In fact, in contrast to the progress of construction sites in my previous world, it was quite shockingly fast. Honestly, the two could not even be compared in the first place. And keep in mind that construction was proceeding entirely by hand, since heavy machinery didn't exist.

People might be dubious at this comparison, but when they see the construction in person, surely these doubts would be blown away.

After all, these majins could not be seen as natural or human.

Some were able to lift up several tons worth of material by themselves.

Some could obliterate junk and rocks in the way with their bare hands.

Of course, some of them could fly, so their safety standard for working several stories in the air was different than humans.

No wonder they're so fast—I nodded with a serious look on my face.



There were construction projects at several other locations as well.

If this was war time, it was a bad idea fighting on several battlefields at the same time, but with construction, it was a different story. Construction could be carried out with different phases of planning to maximize efficiency. Furthermore, this was a fantastic training opportunity for our field engineers, which was why we arranged field officers to lead each team and let them give orders at their discretion.

To be more specific, there were four locations with construction occurring—the outskirts of Dwargon, Ingracia, Eurazania and Sarion.

The one near Dwargon had already been connected with a highway, with inns lining it. The goal of the current project was to widen the road and lay down tracks, specifically for the magitrain. We also hired adventurers as paid labor. Because of the job offer, it had quite the surge of popularity. The site was full of energy.

On the Ingracia side, it was just like Dwargon's route. The difference was that the one in Ingracia was already broad enough, so we could start laying down rails directly. It wouldn't take too long before it was finished.

The one leading to Eurazania was next. For now, we had everyone working on jobs such as widening the road while preserving the natural environment. The wood cut down from the process would be transported to the new but still under construction capital. That was why we had been making arrangements so that the supplies could be shipped out at a faster pace.

The road leading to Sarion, on the other hand, was not progressing so smoothly. We initially began with cutting down forests, but it was taking more time than expected. The main workforce there consisted of high orcs. They could use 'Stomach' to transport material. As they were the most skillful of workers, the task of widening the road should have posed no problems.

However, they were also required to transport the wood they had cut down. This type of work required more manpower, which would only be sufficient by the time the operation in Eurazania was complete and the two construction crews rendezvoused.

First, our workers needed to be able to traverse the forest. After which, we planned to gradually build and then pave the road. We would only start drilling the tunnels and laying down tracks after everything was complete.

This was the current situation on our four main fronts.

Some people were against the idea of running the magitrain to the Armed Nation of Dwargon. They claimed that predicting the movements of the Eastern Empire was impossible, and that there was a possibility of information leakage.

Furthermore, they were afraid that the Eastern Empire would steal the magitrain and repurpose it for military invasion. In that way, the magitrain tracks we went through all the trouble of laying down could turn out to be a double-edged sword.

Others were also worried that the route was going to be sabotaged.

Some even suggested that “We should build a fortress to face the Empire.”

The inn town near Ameld river had a large residential area. They were arguing to settle at the location and turn the town to a strategic fortress city. I had considered the proposal, but ultimately decided against it. I thought it was meaningless.

Right now, we still had no idea what the Eastern Empire would do. The thought of adding more to our growing pile of work definitely put me off. Even though we had more manpower these days, there were still a ton of things that needed to be done.

However, this did not mean that we were being careless.

It wasn’t that we were sitting idly by with the assumption that the Eastern Empire wouldn’t launch a preemptive strike, but rather that if the other side did seriously attack us, then we would simply do our best to crush our enemies. I did not want to continue dealing with them with a facade, and it was incredibly foolish maintaining a high level of vigilance all the time.

It depended on how the Empire came at us, but we intended to meet their challenge with full strength and force a short yet decisive victory. Among our ranks, some of our lieutenants also agreed to this more direct approach.

By the time the war began, the train tracks, among other things, that we spent so much time putting down would likely be destroyed. However, even if that turned out to be the case, we could always construct them again. We should not delay the progress of our development just because we were afraid of something that might happen in the future.

The same goes for the angels’ invasion.

No matter who our opponent was, we would not back down.

We will roll with the punches when the time comes.

We would simply have to rebuild what was ruined.

While it was crucial to think about how to protect these things, people were more important, not objects. As long as we protected the craftsman, then everything would turn out fine.

With this resolve in mind, the construction and development of the projects were carried out at an incredible pace, thanks to sheer determination and planning.



The last location I visited was the Kingdom of Farmenas.

Following our agreement, Youm found some workers to handle the preparation duties tied to the opening of the magitrain. We received reports that they had completed both selecting an

initial route for laying track and the subsequent site surveys.

This was progressing faster than I had anticipated too.

I thought they would only handle the matter after the farming season, yet Youm—or rather, Myuran—seemed to prioritize the train tracks.

“It’s only rational. If the agricultural products of our nation can be exported to other nations, then that means the foreign currencies earned will enrich our nation. I’m well aware of this. In addition, it’ll make it easier for ration support to arrive should there ever be a famine. When this wonderful magitrain is complete, I will not allow our nation to be ill-prepared and lack the necessary infrastructure,” Myuran declared with a smile, clearly more concerned than I was.

Despite the fact that she was now the queen of the Kingdom of Farmenas, she still very much cared about the nation’s policies.

“Hahaha, I am honestly useless these days. Rommel was good at these things, so I sent him to supervise the field operation.”

With a wry smile, Youm introduced me to a man named Rommel.

I recalled seeing him before in the past. He was Youm’s mage companion during his time as an adventurer.

Rommel nervously reported the current situation to me.

Scrolling on a precision map that was the equivalent of national secret, he pointed out specific locations to pass the road and rails through. The map also clearly indicated the results of each detailed survey, just as I had instructed.

We all agreed that I would finalize the measurement in the end, which was why I headed immediately to the construction site.

I then used the rest of the day to double check all the information.

“While there is still room for improvement, everything seems to be in order. Did you assign someone to keep records of each region?”

“Yes, everything has been completed according to your arrangement.”

“Then, please inform the person in charge that they need to resurvey this section here, here and here again.”

It looked like they were doing a good job nurturing new talents. The accuracy of the schematic that had been drafted was within the margin of error I had permitted. While some teams seemed to have exceeded this margin, it showed that they had been undoubtedly studying very carefully. Although I asked them to reevaluate their surveys, they should be able to find the mistakes themselves. While it might be harsh, we couldn’t let this go that quickly.

It would be meaningless if I were the one finishing all the work since I had incredible precision. I hoped to encourage the new talents by having them finish all the procedures by their own hand. Considering their present skill level, this minor investigation shouldn’t take long.

We might even begin the construction early, so I’d have to inform Kaijin and the others to prepare the automatic, barrier-producing magic generators beforehand. They had a proven track record. Thanks to the magic generators, the roads connecting our nation and the Kingdom of

Blumund were safe and sound. The stone tablet would also glow after reacting with magicules, meaning they could be used as landmarks in the dark. Both travelers visiting Tempest and the patrolling soldiers gave high praises to the invention. Here in the Kingdom of Farmenas, the magicule concentration was lower than that of the Great Jura Forest, but I still planned to deploy some generators here.

That day, I received a grand welcoming ceremony by Youm and the others.

“To be honest, I never expected you to come here by yourself. Young Master is just as easy-going as usual. I’m really jealous.” Youm, who had been drinking quite a bit, expressed his envy of me.

But he was mistaken.

I was not by myself; I brought Ranga with me.

“Ranga is here too.”

“Do you require my service? Master!”

Responding to my words, Ranga extended his head from my shadow.

“WOAH! So you were there, gave me a good scare...”

“Of course. Even though there shouldn’t be anyone bold enough to challenge a demon lord, protecting my master is my duty as a subordinate. Please have this understanding when you act as the ruler of a nation.”

“I’ll pass. When Edgar can stand by himself, I’m getting rid of this boring king role.”

Edgar was the son of the former king Edmalis. He seemed to be a pretty clever lad and his royal bloodline was irrefutable. Youm thought his usurping the crown did not have a justified enough cause and wanted to have a proper member of the royal family act as the heir to the throne.

However, Edgar, the person in question—

“Your Majesty Youm, please don’t speak of nonsense like that! Now that Lady Myu is pregnant with the heir to the crown, it’s only natural for him to inherit the throne! My dream is to serve that person in the future, so please don’t say something that could be taken for unnecessary dispute!”

He didn’t seem to want to be king as he rejected Youm’s words.

As opposed to that—

“Eh, hold on a second! Didn’t I just hear something important?”

I was in the middle of passing a drumstick over to Ranga when I froze, and instead asked Youm what was on my mind.

‘Lady Myu is pregnant with the heir to the crown’—doesn’t that mean Myuran is pregnant?

So a greater majin could have a child with a human that easily...

“Could it be that Your Majesty has not told your benefactor, Rimuru-sama, about the heir?”

“Well, it was too embarrassing to reveal—”

“I felt it was a bit awkward to bring it up...”

Edgar appeared quite baffled as he inquired, whereas Youm and Myuran answered almost simultaneously.

You guys are seriously a match made in heaven.

Speaking of which, I recalled that when monsters gave birth to children, they would be weakened. Would Myuran really be all right?

“It should be fine. I was originally human, so even though my strength will weaken some, it won’t matter too much these days. With my knowledge of magic and skills, I shouldn’t be inconvenienced too much.”

My concerns were quickly soothed.

“By the way, regarding Grucius, he seems to have been hit rather hard by this news. He hasn’t been himself ever since...” Youm mentioned sadly.

No wonder.

I had been planning to ask why I hadn’t seen Grucius since my arrival.

It’s all right, I’m sure he’ll find his other half.

But that was not something I would know.

I couldn’t get a girlfriend for the longest time myself, so this was a problem Grucius had to solve himself.

“I’m sorry to hear that. With Grucius in that state, are you sure the knight order is fine?” I questioned.

Likely due to Diablo’s interfering, the thriving insurgency had been pacified, so I figured there shouldn’t be anything to worry about. However, it was still concerning to have the commander of the knight order acting like this, which was why I was afraid there might be problems.

“It’s all right, my companions were within the order too. More importantly, Uncle Razen is amazing. Just like what a living legend is supposed to be, he’s something else.”

Oh yeah.

This nation still had Razen.

I heard that Diablo took him as his servant. He seemed to be working pretty hard for the Kingdom of Farmenas. I mean, after all, Diablo made a pact with him using the Unique Skill ‘Tempter,’ so we shouldn’t have to worry about him betraying us.

“Speaking of this Razen-sama, he’s been energetically overseeing the domestic situation. He would regularly contact us with magic and even assisted us in eliminating dangerous elements across the kingdom!” Edgar revealed with shimmering eyes that only a young boy could have. Apparently, Razen was very popular in this nation.

I had received all sorts of reports about him and thought that this Razen was only involved with immoral and dirty business, but perhaps from the perspective of someone trying to protect his nation, he probably was a very outstanding person.

I didn’t intend to pick a problem with him and instead listened very carefully to what Edgar had to say. With a change of perspective, how you viewed certain things began to change as well.

As the saying goes, history is written by the victors, and the losers lose everything.

In the eyes of this nation’s citizens, King Edmalis and Razen were the righteous ones. Had we been defeated during our war with the Farmus army, we would likely have been known in

history as an evil and vicious band of monsters.

I didn't intend to belittle my opponents with illegitimate means like that, but that was merely because there was no need to do so.

With that in mind, Youm's rejuvenation of this nation was a huge success. He managed to retain the exceptional individuals from the old systems among his rank and as a result, kept the public outcry to a minimum and continued to rule the nation. In addition, they also managed to manipulate information such that harmful comments against our nation were kept from spreading, and instead, we were now considered a friendly country.

At this rate, human prejudice towards monsters would likely soon fade away. Diablo sure was impressive. He was able to understand human nature well enough to bring me the outcome I wished. Everything was proceeding according to plan.

Feeling satisfied, I chatted with Youm and the others for the rest of the day.



During my absence, Ramiris and Veldora seemed to be hard at work too.

After having inspected all the major construction sites and returning home, the two came out to welcome me.

Is there a problem? Or do they have something to show off?

It was the latter.

“Great news, Rimuru! The prototype is finally finished. If the test run is successful, we begin producing actual models en masse!”

“Umm umm, I’m very confident this time, come check it out!”

Urged by the two, I followed them as they hurried along.

Right now there were several research facilities within Tempest. The one open to the general public was the smithing workshop used by Kurobee and his disciples.

The technology there couldn’t be pirated or immediately learned.

While the special weapons I asked them to craft were mainly kept secret, other armaments and gear were displayed to the public for advertisement purposes. And by using methods such as displaying newly crafted items, we hoped to build brands around Kurobee and Garm, respectively.

However, what came next was the real deal.

These research facilities had their location kept strictly confidential from the public. We wanted to construct these institutions in locations that were difficult for any average person to enter, but at the same time, could defend easily. Based on these criteria, we ultimately decided to build them inside the underground labyrinth.

At one hundredth floor stood the research facility for me, Veldora and Ramiris’s personal

usage. Gabil was appointed as the director of our nation's official research institute. In addition, a forest was already growing on the ninety-fifth floor, and so a large research facility was established there as well. Since all of the beastmen refugees had already left for their home country, it was an empty, spacious area that we promptly utilized.

Alchemists from Dwargon, magic researchers from Sarion and Vampiric researchers from Lubelius, who allegedly had been bored out of their minds, all gathered here in our country, and thus required a large-scale research facility. The researchers sent by these nations were experts in all kinds of different fields.

The alchemists from the Armed Nation of Dwargon were experts in spirit engineering. The 'Magic Armored Soldier' scheme that Kaijin and Vesta were once involved in was essentially an inquiry into that type of research.

In this world, people believed that natural phenomena were directly related to the power of spirits. There was a total of five traditional spirits: earth, water, fire, wind, and space. Furthermore, there were also the three greater spirits of light, dark and time. The science that utilizes phenomena caused by these spirits, and the subsequent technology related to them, was known as spirit engineering.

It was one of the most well-known fields of research in this world.

The magic researchers from Sarion, on the other hand, studied the more secretive field of 'Magic Science.' It was a realm that only those who had mastered magic could reach. It was said that the basic theories were first proposed by a genius elven researcher, Sarion Emperor Elmesia's mother. There seemed to be fewer and fewer people who were able to inherit the knowledge contained within this field.

To what extent could the world be changed by manipulating the laws of magic?

I heard that even philosophy was considered to be a part of this field's study.

I felt that it was something Diablo would love to look into.

The fundamental theory of 'Magic Science' seemed to infer that by forcefully altering phenomena, spirit engineering can be developed. The difficult part was that the theories could only be understood by mages that have mastered elemental magic. However, the practicality of this unique theory was also obvious. It was no wonder why Sorcerer's Dynasty Sarion declared it to be a national secret and forbade anyone from leaking it to other nations.

The last batch of researchers were vampiric. I took them in as a result of my agreement with Luminas. They were called 'Surmounters,' a group of strong people, each equivalent to a Calamity-class threat. The problem was they were all oddballs, but luckily there weren't a lot of them. At first, I thought they'd be a headache for me if they were to start causing trouble, but I quickly realized that I was worrying too much.

"Yo—Rimuru-sama! Moi is most interested in fun stuff!"

The leader of the group was a very bright and easygoing guy that quickly broke the ice. They were simply people that wanted to explore and learn new things. They didn't mind if their colleagues were humans, elves, or dwarves. Their priority was to sate their curiosity.

Although, there were indeed some arrogant individuals.

However—

Veldora and Ramiris were the ones supervising things. Even though Ramiris herself was not that menacing, her assistant Beretta and Treyni-san would not sit still to any rudeness directed at their master.

The arrogant ones' demise was truly tragic.

"Oi, where's my tea?" a certain annoying dragon demanded.

"Yes—right away...!"

"Ahh, what a rough day. My shoulders are so stiff," a certain annoying fairy sighed.

"Please allow me to give you a massage...!"

What are these 'Surmounters' even...

"Oh, these stupid idiots, you're useless!" the leader of the vampires lamented, but at least he didn't complain about this to Veldora or Ramiris.

And so, they had a surprisingly smooth time integrating with everyone.

What they were researching was even more interesting. The vampires' research was the polar opposite of 'Magic Science.' Luminas labeled their research as "useless," but I disagreed.

The research the vampires were undertaking was exactly the same as 'Engineering Physics' back on Earth. It was devoid of any magical components and instead tried to discover the laws of the natural world. By jotting down detailed records of natural phenomena, they would then turn them into physical laws. This was the essence of their study.

They always wound up obtaining the same outcome, regardless of who the researcher was at the time.

In some sense, it was to be expected, but there were also many variants due to the many magical phenomena in this world. In a way, this field of study could be considered unorthodox.

Luminas didn't seem to like it, but I believed it was quite interesting.

To be honest, the recording of data was a means to kill time to the vampires, but this huge collection of data was significant. If we were to use this data as a foundation, we could investigate the influence of magic on the world much more easily.

A breakthrough in science often came from the accumulation of small, minor discoveries over time. Therefore, what they were researching should not be underestimated.

And so, we managed to bring scholars of varying fields to our nation.

The knowledge they carried over was immeasurable, and the research findings as a result of this academic exchange would prove to be invaluable. We needed to ensure the personal safety of every researcher, in addition to keeping the outcome of their research confidential. That was the duty our nation had to uphold.

The researchers working here were wearing specially-designed bracelets. It was a fine gadget that Ramiris made, which removed the numerical limit on the traditional Resurrection Bracelet. It also included functions such as communication and teleportation within the labyrinth, though the preset teleportation destinations were only the surface and the research facility.

Since the researchers had to keep all sorts of secrets, we had to inconvenience them on some

matters. Based on these considerations, we gave away these items for free.

They could only access the predesignated locations and couldn't move between floors or teleport to other areas. Moreover, once they teleported, relevant data about the user would be recorded to prevent any information leak.

Although, they still had other means to move around; for instance, asking the dryads to help teleport them. In that regard, they needed Treyni-san's direct approval. All in all, there shouldn't be any way to conduct espionage activities within the labyrinth.

Technically speaking, however, the 'Surmounters' might have other methods of breaking these restrictions, but doing so could be dangerous for them. Even I had no idea the exact types of traps that were set in the labyrinth, so it wouldn't be easy for these vampires to try and break through them.

Furthermore, all of their activities were being monitored, so if they were up to some dishonest activities, we could immediately pursue them. And if they got stuck in parts of the labyrinth, we could easily apprehend them.

There were reasons for such strict regulations.

I had been informed that highly developed civilizations tend to attract attacks from the angels—and that was the main reason why we had prepared so thoroughly.

In that regard alone, there was no safer place than Ramiris's labyrinth.

Inside there—specifically, the ninety-fifth floor of the labyrinth—it should be possible to stop even the angels' invasion. Ramiris bragged that if anything were to happen, she could switch the floors instantly, exchanging floor ninety-five for floor ninety-nine.

This deep city within the labyrinth was likely the safest place in all of Tempest.

In order to prevent secrets from leaking, this place was completely isolated. On top of that, the labyrinth also provided the perfect environment for the welfare of the staff, including health care, so the labyrinth was a great living environment too.

The ninety-fifth floor had some of the most luxurious service facilities in our nation, so I figured that would be enough to satisfy the researchers.

By the way—

While the sealed cave was considered as a major research site in the past, it had been shut down. The prolonged planting of hipokute herbs caused the concentration of magicules to drop drastically within the cave. Therefore, even though the concentration was still relatively high, the product yield would naturally not be as ideal. That was why we decided to move the hipokute plantation to a different location.

With that being said, we had already planned to transform the flower field on floor ninety-three to a special zone for growing hipokute herbs. We would merely increase the magicule concentration on the floor in order to mutate the weeds.

Gabil and the others' research facility was moved underground to the hundredth floor too, since one of the reasons why the plantation moved was for conveniences' sake.

The sealed cave was excavated all the way to the back of the mountain and became a residence for the wyverns. Since that was considered a military secret, we had completely shut

down the location, preventing any ordinary citizens from entering. All vital research would be conducted within the labyrinth in the future.

As I suspected, the two were bringing me to the ninety-fifth floor's research facility.

The fact that we weren't heading to their private chambers appeared to suggest we were reviewing the results from our joint research agreement. They did mention a prototype, so it seemed that the research was going smoothly.

It looked like our key item would be ready just in time for the railroad tracks to open.

The ninety-fifth floor, which I hadn't visited in a while, had gradually become a forest-type city before I knew it.

In this beautifully maintained park, the cityscape seemed to mesh perfectly with the surrounding trees.

I always wondered how they managed to erect such a large city, but considering some of the elves had once lived in the forest, this was probably the manifestation of their wisdom.

The treants seemed to have also helped build this wonderful place.

Naturally, the challengers who only briefly visited the labyrinth were barred from entering this hidden town. Only those who had challenged the labyrinth under official rules earned the right to enter the city.

I stopped by the elven cabaret quite often myself, but I seldom visited them in the morning. That's why I didn't expect this place to change so much.

I had been leaving everything in Veldora and Ramiris's hands, and this result was very interesting. The other floors seemed to have undergone drastic changes too. I couldn't help but anticipate a more casual trip to the labyrinth in the future.

With that in mind, I continued to follow the two.

Soon, I laid eyes on the research facility in the center of the park. The building was constructed from reinforced concrete, so it was rather jarring. There were also many large buildings adjacent to the main facility. We also had a dormitory for the foreign researchers to sleep in. For some reason, these supposedly brand-new buildings built under my supervision looked a bit ancient. However, it did give off a rather unique air, so I guess that was okay.

"It's so quaint with all these trees nearby," Ramiris gushed.

"Right? A research facility obviously needs an aura of mystery!" Veldora declared proudly.

What 'aura of mystery' are you talking about? They're like a bunch of kids joyfully building their secret base. Where did you learn all this bizarre stuff?

"Everyone's getting along well, we were even thinking about forming a secret society!"

Secret society?

What the hell have you guys been doing here?!

"Hehehe, wasn't Rimuru the first one to reveal everyone's research results? Some people originally wanted to steal other nations' technology, but because of what you did, they were finally able to turn back on the right path."

I never expected this.

There were huge barriers between nations, and researchers from different countries were no

different, since they all had contrasting opinions. Each had their home nations' best interests in mind, and some planned to absorb the technology of others while keeping their own hidden.

I figured this joint research wasn't going to work if that happened, and so I decided to expose everyone's technology in one go.

In the eyes of Raphael-sensei, there was no such thing as "secret technology." I summarized everything so that it was easy to understand, like some kind of official manual, and handed everyone a copy. I had generously used up all the expensive paper that Yuuki helped prepare for me. Although it was a little wasteful, I deemed it a necessary loss.

As opposed to parchment, I wanted to record information on paper that was made from plant fibers. The paper given to me by Yuuki appeared to be manufactured by the Empire, though its quality was almost the same as paper produced on Earth. I was sure everyone saw my seriousness after using all this valuable paper. After the incident, the researchers became very open with one another. Everyone was cooperating out of pure desire to fulfill their intellectual curiosity.

"Ohh, you compiled confidential information from every nation involved and made it into a data book so everyone could read it, didn't you? Even though people were very vocal about it at the time, I thought it would lead to new technologies being developed."

"Umm umm, we share just this thought with Rimuru! We later held a recognition-of-service party and everyone found a kindred spirit in each other," added Ramiris.

Consequently, researchers gave up on trying to hide their technological secrets and began cooperating with each other; strangely enough, an unusual sense of solidarity quickly developed within the research facility. It seemed that everyone was no longer just thinking about their home nation. Even the 'Surmounter' vampires had become companions that considered themselves to be our equal.

Things were getting interesting.

This was good.

Yet despite this fantastic outcome, there was a problem.

The researchers gradually formed the structure of a community, which was led by Veldora and Ramiris. That might be the reason why an independent organization was formed.

That's right.

It was like some sort of evil secret society, where everyone could enjoy researching the things they truly liked. It was quite the mysterious environment. Ramiris was especially interested in the various fields of research. She eventually became the group's mascot and idol. Veldora, on the other hand, became the evil ringleader.

These guys seriously did this while I was gone... With that being said, I figured if I were here, they would probably do something *even more* outrageous.

—*No, that can't be true.*

With that thought in mind, I continued my conversation with them.

“So that's why the place now looks like this.”

“How about it? Isn't it cool, having an evil secret base?”

Ah, just as I suspected. It really is a secret base.

Veldora's source of information was mainly reproduced from my memories. That explained why the research facility looked the way it did, straight from manga and other sources. As a result, my intuition regarding the reasons behind his actions was often the right answer.

"Tsk, you guys sure were having fun by yourselves."

"GAHAHAHA! It's nothing really. What comes next is the important part. We will need your wisdom in the future."

"That's right, Rimuru! You always give us a scare. Now it's our turn to surprise you. Take a look at our research first before you share your opinion."

Hearing the accidental slip of my genuine thoughts, Veldora laughed out loud while Ramiris tried to comfort me.

I shouldn't sulk after what she said.

I regained my composure and followed the two into the facility.



A group of men clad in white coats were working tirelessly.

And in front of me was a moving miniature train.

This was what you called a "model train," though it was still large enough for an adult to ride on it.

"Yo, Young Master! Did that surprise you?"

It was none other than Kaijin. He was acting chief director, and he had on a rather unfitting white lab coat.

The hall was roughly the same size as a university auditorium, and the ground was marked with railways, making it impossible for people to stand around.

There's models of mountains, valleys, and tunnels here were...made for aerodynamic analysis?

"Indeed. As expected from Young Master to have seen through their purposes right away. Honestly, the impressive thing here is all of the talented researchers that have gathered in our nation. They managed to build such an amazing facility with ease."

Indeed, Kaijin had a point.

It was thanks to the engineers' collaboration that this groundbreaking facility had been created.

This three-dimensional model was created using magic. Kaijin made the masterpiece of a prototype train, currently running along on the track, and it was one of his best works yet.

"What's powering this train?"

I could have deciphered it using Raphael-sensei's 'Analyze and Assess,' but I asked about

it on purpose.

“Steam,” Kaijin replied with a grin.

I nodded in response. It was just as I thought.

Right now, horses provided the physical power for trains operating within our nation. These horses would pull the carriages as they slid along the track. Naturally, the total load capacity was about the same as horse-drawn carriages. Although it improved stability and helped reduce traffic, overall efficiency hadn’t improved a significant amount.

There had been proposals for either golems or monsters to drag trains around, but these proposals ultimately could not solve the root of the problem.

The key was to develop a locomotive.

And its primary source of power was the steam engine.

Of course, it wouldn’t use old world technology like burning coal. Rather, we tried to create an engine that utilized both the strengths of magic and science.

This was why we named it the magitrain.

The concept behind the magic engine was using magic to convert magicules into an energy source, which then provided the combustion energy that gave rise to steam—this was the basic magical mechanism. Perhaps this prototype could be called the ‘Spirit Magic Core.’ Even though it was a simple design, it still required sophisticated magical technology.

The laws that magic obeyed were drastically different than those that governed the natural world. It was difficult trying to observe any patterns from the former, due to its ability to grant effects purely by imagination.

For instance, let’s say there was a lit candle inside a transparent glass container. The enclosed space would quickly consume oxygen and produce a high concentration of carbon dioxide. However, if the fire were made by magic, it would continue to burn regardless. As long as the mage’s mana and the necessary magicules were still there, the magical fire wouldn’t disappear. Naturally, the mage’s mana had a finite limit, so the fire couldn’t burn forever.

Through this experiment, we could see that magical flame was governed by laws different from that of the chemical reaction behind combustion. Therefore, even if you tried to apply the same phenomenon for another purpose, the reality was that it wouldn’t work. Consequently, hardly anyone correlated magic to the laws of physics in this world.

With that being said, the magic here purely referred to elemental magic.

Spirit magic, which could be cast by borrowing the power of spirits, would not be manipulated by a mage’s imagination. In other words, it was a magic that delivered the power of a spirit—a being whose existence was based on natural phenomena—in its original, purest form.

This meant that the fire caused by spirit magic would consume oxygen and generate carbon dioxide.

By the way, during my battle with Ifrit in the past, ‘Great Sage’ had warned me about causing a steam explosion. The reason why it could have potentially worked was because Ifrit’s flames obeyed the same properties as fire in the natural world. Had it been elemental magic, which alters the laws of physics using magicules, my strategy undoubtedly wouldn’t have worked.

This was the same reason why I could use spirit magic while inside the ‘Holy Purification Barrier.’

There was one more thing.

In order to illuminate the cave inside, I once used ‘Engraving Magic’ to heat up metal, yet the light generated proved insufficient. Thus, I had Dold work on it and he changed it to another spell. Apparently, he devised a method of directly converting magicules into light by applying elemental magic.

Thanks to magic, there were some processes that could be completely bypassed for results. Yet, the downside was that there wasn’t much interest behind analyzing the natural phenomenon in this world.

In order to recreate the technology of physical phenomenon, it would be better to utilize spirit magic, which also relied on the same type of physical phenomenon. And that was how I came up with the idea of incorporating spirits as the power source for the magic engine.

Kaijin was very impressed. “Sometimes, we would boil water with the excess heat from the fire at the smithery, but we never knew we could use steam this way.”

I was more shocked at their technological capabilities as they were able to recreate steam engines solely from my explanations.

“All in all, there are a lot of methods to power it. For instance, using pistons, turbines, and steam—basically, it’s using thermal energy to do either mechanical work or converting it into electricity. That will be our field of research in the future. It appears that the research in the piston mechanism is going rather smoothly,” I commented.

“Ah, you’re right, Young Master. If we can figure out how to work with electricity, then we can produce a great deal of power,” agreed Kaijin, turning to the small train.

I have had discussions regarding electricity with Kaijin and the others before. They seemed to have done plenty of research since then, and now possessed some level of understanding.

I was starting to think that they knew more about it than I did.

Kaijin was gazing at the locomotive that had six trains attached to it. Each one was carrying some iron ingots. If this was the real deal, then it was capable of transporting a huge amount of weight efficiently.

“In this lab, we can recreate all sorts of different environments. We are currently in the tropical rainforest, but the room next door is the desert region. The room next to that is currently simulating a snowy region. We collect data individually from each room so that we can design trains for each environment,” Ramiris, who at some point had flown onto Treyni-san’s shoulders, described with a smile.

Even one of the vampires, with his shiny fangs, nodded vigorously after hearing this. “It’s truly wonderful that moi and the others are of some help. Moi loves these types of experiments.”

This happy go lucky guy was a bit of a weirdo. Rather than saying he enjoyed experimenting, he was more like a mad scientist who had no interest in anything else. But they genuinely had been of great help.

He handed over his very neatly written notes. It was full of detailed remarks that filled up

every single page.

By the way, the paper was made of plant fibers.

We could get more supplies if we started trading with the Eastern Empire, but right now, we did not have any trade interaction. Under these circumstances, I had asked them to start by researching paper.

Gabil's subordinates were very good at monotonous work like that. And so, I assigned it to them, and they immediately developed a low-quality paper prototype made out of wood fibers. After that, they were on their own, but through a lot of trial and error, the paper quality quickly reached a good standard. Even though they did have physical samples, as well the necessary information about the steps to produce paper, this was still very impressive work.

I immediately praised them afterward.

Back to the topic of the important notes I was given.

There were a lot of questions, proposed solutions, experiments, and their subsequent outcomes. It was all very intriguing.

There were passages regarding motive power, and the required amount of magicules for generating it; a record of how long the engine managed to run and the accompanying deterioration; the estimated load capacity and the load conditions on the cargo bed. This allowed us to calculate the stability of the interior train, and even the extent of the train's acceleration.

All of this data could be used as reference when we eventually built a full-scale locomotive. I hurriedly sped through everything, and it seemed that all the relevant theories had been completed.

Given the aforementioned information, we could actually start crafting a prototype—eh, could it be?!

“Oi, Veldora, when you mentioned ‘prototype,’ could it be that you weren’t referring to the model train, but something else?”

“Kukuku, how impressive. You really know your stuff to have noticed that,” Veldora laughed happily.

Ramiris, now sitting on *his* shoulder, had a smug look as well.

I glanced around the room and realized that all the researchers, Treyni-san and Beretta all had the same expressions.

Before I knew it, they had gathered and lined up next to a certain door.

In that case...

Kaijin began to explain as he slowly walked towards that door. “We went through a lot of trouble making it. Turns out summoning a fire spirit in the engine alone was not enough. We needed to control the power output and had to have actual workers stationed nearby. Therefore, each locomotive would need to be staffed with a qualified mage. We could start to train mages based on the number of trains planned for manufacture, but it would take too much time. That’s why we decided to build and install magic circuits in the train to automatically regulate it. The fire spirit, which is the engine’s ‘Core,’ and the control panel engraved with ‘Engraving Magic’ that controls it; everything came together to give you the finished product.”

He offhandedly mentioned about summoning spirits, but the process proved to be a major hindrance. Because lower spirits lacked enough power, mid-tier spirits, such as fire salamanders, had to be summoned at the very least.

A salamander's power could reach up to rank B-plus, which was impossible for any average person to summon.

Is it because Ramiris is here after all?

It likely had to do with the fact that she used to be the Queen of Spirits. It seemed that anything spirit-related was a piece of cake for her.

As I was left shocked, Kaijin put his hand on the door handle.



“Oh oh, this is...”

It was past the door.

It had a black, shiny, and somehow majestic appearance. It was clearly made of magisteel, but at the same time, it looked like a steel monster that gave off a dangerous aura.

While feeling impressed, I heard Vesta's proud declaration. “This is the culmination of our technologies, Magitrain Zero!”

I was under the impression that it was still in the experimental phase, yet there it was, completed. And even if it was just a prototype, this was the train that I dreamt of.

We managed to take one big first step forward.

“We will likely be testing the durability of the train's body. Not only do we plan to make freight cars, but also passenger cars, resting cars and dining cars.”

“Honestly speaking, even the locomotive itself isn't finished yet. I'm trying to refine certain details and make it more complete.”

Vesta and Kaijin were both filled with motivation as they spoke.

All the researchers were ardently gazing at Magitrain Zero, so I guess there was still room for improvement.

“There's also the electricity Rimuru mentioned; that one was a bit difficult. I had a wind spirit summoned to generate electricity, though we weren't able to use that energy directly...”

That was to be expected.

While electricity was indeed a versatile resource, it was also exceedingly difficult to control.

“First, we will need to develop batteries. Once we succeed, we will be able to utilize the locomotive's excess thermal energy to generate electricity. If we manage to do that, it will broaden the possibilities to make the train ride more comfortable. It's definitely worth trying.”

While I barely understood anything on the matter, Raphael-sensei had translated my memories of technological textbooks from Earth into the local language, and then transcribed every-

thing for me. I then handed the consolidated book to Vesta, assured that he was going to put them to good use.

It felt like the secondary use of it through magic, but it was very convenient.

“Indeed, that’s how it is. I wanted to bring this up when you mentioned electricity back there, but in the end, I decided to do it after you saw it for yourself. After all, ‘Seeing is believing.’ Let’s take a look.”

Could it be that they’ve already put electricity to practical use?

With this thought in mind, I followed Kaijin.

I climbed in and was immediately met with surprise.

The inside of the locomotive was enveloped in a gentle halo of light.

I turned to Kaijin and conveyed with my eyes, “What’s this about?”

“By the time Young Master handed me the data, I had already made my decision. Didn’t you too, Vesta?”

“Of course. When Rimuru-sama handed the research regarding the application of electricity to us, Kaijin-dono and I studied the materials in detail. Even though there are still parts that I don’t understand, with all these researchers under one roof, we were able to utilize everyone’s wisdom.”

“Well, that’s right. Everyone helped answer our questions and doubts. And, when I saw the Elemental Colossus of that little girl there—Ramiris-sama—I was truly surprised. A working product of our abandoned ‘Armored Soldier Project,’ right in front of me,” Kaijin recalled.

Indeed, that was the case.

If you had the real thing right in front of you, obviously you would get a better understanding of how it worked.

Right now, another Elemental Colossus was being built and was supposed to become a subject of research.

“Exactly. As I read that book and heeded varying opinions, I realized that we had a serious misinterpretation. Back then, we experimented under the belief that elemental magic and spirit magic were the same kind of magic. That was the source of our mistakes—”

“—So then, we deduced what we were lacking by investigating with the Elemental Colossus in front of us.”

What became clear with those results was that the law of magic completely changed depending on the magic.

As for Ramiris’s Elemental Colossus, instead of spirit magic, the summoned spirit itself was being used. Because Kaijin and the researchers tried to move the ‘Spirit Magic Core’ with elemental magic, they failed to initiate a chain reaction and thus wasn’t operating properly.

“—And yet, I ended up increasing the magic output. The result, the magic heat had nowhere to go, eventually grew out of control, and the experiment ended in a failure.”

I see, it was that kind of thing.

In Ramiris’s case, there was a possibility that she simply couldn’t use elemental magic, and thus her Elemental Colossus reflected that. But, as a result, that became the key to success. The

Elemental Colossus's power reactor was the 'Spirit Magic Core,' but as engineers gathered en masse, they seemed to have found a way to fully realize its performance capabilities. And by analyzing my 'Master Core,' the original 'Spirit Magic Core' was completed.

"I feel both happy and frustrated."

"Yes, I wholly agree. To think that the theory we once gave up on was only due to a misunderstanding..."

Despite how much research they conducted, they couldn't even see any signs of success with just the theory, but as soon as they clarified and fixed their mistake, they were able to finish and obtain results right away. It was so ridiculous, Kaijin and his team couldn't help but laugh.

"What? If we have the 'Spirit Magic Core,' we could convert magicules into energy. Well, there are different types of energy, so it's kind of hard to explain."

"This locomotive is converting magicules into heat in order to turn the turbines. Thus, we can also generate the electricity that Rimuru-sama mentioned before, and illuminate each car like this, too."

I was surprised.

No, I was genuinely surprised.

In other words, this train was powered by a fully completed 'Spirit Magic Core.' By giving magicules to spirits of various attributes, they would then convert the magicules into a more easily usable energy. Furthermore, they had the ability to circulate energy as well. They could send electricity made by the turbines to the 'Spirit Magic Core' and store it safely. Although the spirits were capable of directly generating electricity, Vesta and the others said that the method would be too difficult to control. Therefore, they decided to use the electricity generated in the steam engine instead.

After all, electricity wasn't that great if it was high voltage. Not only did we need power plants, but also substations and a battery storage facility to actually hold the charge.

To think all that such a complicated process was handled solely by the 'Spirit Magic Core'...

Moreover, with magicules already in the atmosphere, fuel wasn't that big of a concern. If the concentration wasn't high enough, all you needed to do was prepare magic stones, which were simple enough to carry around.

The continuous operating time was determined by the presence or absence of magicules.

If the locomotive were a place where magicules were always present, and as long as it doesn't do anything strenuous, it technically could—maintenance definitely required—operate forever.

It was like a dream come true.

"Come on, Rimuru, aren't you surprised?"

"We're like this when we get serious!"

Although it irritated me seeing Veldora and Ramiris brag like that, what they had achieved was admittedly astonishing. For now, let's just honestly praise them.

"No, it's amazing. Keep up the good work!"

"Hmm. Leave it to us!"

“Mhmm mhmm, just relax!”

I could understand Veldora and Ramiris's feeling of wanting to boast because I, too, felt like boasting to someone.

The day that trains began running through our country was drawing closer, and it wouldn't be long before the magitrain spread across the world. I couldn't help but feel excited.

“So, sir, I have one thing I wanted to discuss with you...”

“Yes, what is it?”

“No, you see, I wish to organize a little get-together to celebrate the completion of Magitrain Zero. So, you know...”

I see, it's a get-together in name, but what you really want is to eat, drink and play to your heart's content, right?

I couldn't exactly say no, so we wound up at one of my favorite nightclubs.

Well, whatever.

“All right! Let's drink the night away!”

“Thank you so much! That high-class bar is a place that your honor manages, so I couldn't just rent it out as I want,” said Kaijin, smiling with anticipation.

That place certainly wasn't the kind of establishment where we could visit in large groups and make a lot of noise. But even before that, we wouldn't have been able to fit this many people inside anyway.

For Kaijin, it wasn't about the money either.

“I'll have them get you a seat outside the restaurant as well. We'll turn away the other customers for this evening and hold a recognition-of-service party for the research employees here.”

We had known each other after all this time. There was no such thing as a “get-together.” I had decided to hold a recognition-of-service party, with me paying for everything, as a token of my gratitude to everyone.

Or rather, if I had to be honest, I didn't care what the name was.

Alcohol was best for celebrations.

Whether it was a get-together or a recognition-of-service party, as long as you had a good time, it was all the same.

Thankfully, this was a city of elves famous for its pleasure gardens.

Let's all share the joy we feel and nourish our spirits for the future.

“KUA-HA HA HA! The conversation is flowing well!”

“ “ “Thank you for the food, Your Majesty Rimuru!” ” ”

Going along with Veldora, who was in a good mood, the researchers promptly showed their gratitude with a bow. It was such a unified movement that it made me wonder if they had regularly practiced it. Also, the vampires apparently didn't need fresh blood, judging by the fact that they were enjoying the alcohol too. They took part in it like it was natural.

And apart from that—

“This is exciting! I, too, get to drink alcohol for free today!”

“Oh my, that’s great. But please be careful not to drink too much—”

“No, Ramiris-sama. I have been ordered by Rimuru-sama to prohibit children from drinking.”

Attempting to use the hustle and bustle as a distraction, the little fairy tried to sneak a drink, but was prevented in the end, of course.

ROUGH SKETCH



**Chapter
2**

New Companions

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Chapter 2

New Companions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

the Dwarven Kingdom and went south to Eurazania via Sisu Lake, which was ruled by the lizardmen...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pretty incredible stuff, not gonna lie.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Umm, sorry for the trouble!”

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



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

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

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

Then came post-work break time.

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

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

Suddenly, I heard a knock on the door.

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

“Come in,” I responded while posing stylishly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nothing to worry about.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, it sounded as fake as it could get.

Both of us fell silent.

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

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

“Huh?”

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

Oi, oi. Are you really a demon lord?

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

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

I must not show any weakness or compassion.

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

“—EH?”

“‘Eh’ what?”

The room fell silent again.

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

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

“No, but you can get a job.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He suddenly started spewing out some nonsensical crap.

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

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

...

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

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

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

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

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

“Guy—that red-haired man said this?”

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

Uhh—he didn’t seem to be lying.

Guy probably did suggest something like that.

But why me...?

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

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

“Ah, right, Guy had a letter for you,” Dino said as he handed over a folded sheet of paper that was sealed with youki. It was indisputably laced with Guy Crimson’s aura. The piece of paper contained only one scrawled sentence: “Take care of Dino for me.” It looked rather authentic.

Since Dino had the letter, he really must have gone to ask Guy for help. It was undeniable at this point.

This was like someone just forcibly gave me the joker card in a game of old maid².

“See?!”

‘See?’ my ass!

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

So my only option is to accept the proposal?

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

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

I cracked an evil grin after settling on the idea.

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

“What are you babbling on about?!”

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

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

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

“Ramiris? That gal is also here?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

²In this card game, having the joker card makes you lose.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

“We are...friends. Good friends.”

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

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

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

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

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

Can you not make it sound so easy—this was what Dino implied as he feverishly questioned

me. Even if what he said were true, it still wouldn't change anything. And that was a fact.

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

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

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

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

"Weren't you the one who was just complaining about how selfish he was?!"

Eh, did I say that?

«Answer. Yes, you did.»

I-I see.

"Selfish as he may be, he's not that unreasonable. And concerning the whole deal with controlling his youki..."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Veldora wasn't the only selfish one, Milim also—"

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

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

I ranted on and on.

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



And so, I brought Dino to our research facility.

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

"V-Veldora is working...?"

"See, told you."

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

The same applied to my requests as well. Ultimately, he would agree to help out. After all, if he weren't easily instigated and manipulated, I wouldn't have nicknamed him Gullidora³ for nothing.

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

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

Is he all right? I was kind of worried.

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

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

"Ahh, Rimuru-sama's come to see us."

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

"I'm fine is what I really want to say...but researching down here has been bad for my health..."

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

³Volume 8 reference, Rimuru's name pun for 'Gullible Veldora.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beretta’s schedule was already packed.

Treyni-san was in charge of managing the labyrinth and taking care of Ramiris’s daily life. Veldora didn’t carry out the aforementioned job, which was why Ramiris chose Vesta.

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

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

I see, that does sound very sensible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Eh...”

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

“But I’m a demon lord, you know?”

“So what?”

“What do you mean ‘so what’...”

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

“Please hear me out. It doesn’t matter if you are a demon lord or not here. As you can see,

Veldora-sama and Ramiris-sama are both enjoying their work.”

“Yeah, it does seem that way, but—”

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

“—Okay.”

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

I prepared one thousand growth capsules. When I had finished assembling them, I suddenly realized it would have been much more convenient to simply build one thousand dolls from scratch—well, don’t sweat the small stuff. That was my belief. The point was to be romantic enough⁴. After all, I was delighted to have worked on my project and had zero regrets.

The hall was now filled with growth capsules. Magnificent.

In order to spawn monsters, specific conditions must be met first—it was thanks to our recent research that we had discovered this fact. Otherwise, no matter how many magicules we

⁴Refer to volume 10, ‘pursuit of romanticism’ in Japanese fiction.

pumped into the filled capsule, no monster would spawn. However, if you were to combine certain factors, then you attained the ability to spawn strong monsters as a result.

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

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

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

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

"Well then, how's progress coming along?" I inquired.

"Quite fine! I've also been doing a lot of research lately!" Ramiris cheerfully replied.

"Ho? Then I'll be looking forward to—eh, what the hell is that?!"

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

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

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

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

At least that was how I initially envisioned it...

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

"This is..."

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

In layman's terms, it was already very difficult to prepare one thousand 'Spirit Magic Cores.' It wouldn't take me too long to craft them, but with a lack of interest and passion, I considered it a chore and didn't have the motivation to make them. That was why I wanted to resort to

something simpler. Yet, Ramiris was apparently too stubborn to compromise. Looks like she did the work the traditional way to prepare the portions for one thousand bodies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ramiris and Veldora were visibly pleased with themselves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I can’t allow her appearance to deceive me.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

These guys are up to no good.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

come.

Will this really work?

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

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

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

"How strange? It seems different from what I expected..." Ramiris said, perplexed.

Well, that was usually how scientific experiments went.

The material that made up the skeleton could no longer be classified as magisteel. We didn't mix any rare elements like gold or silver in, so it was neither orichalcum nor mithril. However, in terms of yield and tensile strength, while it was not as strong as the ultimate metal, Hihirokane⁵, it was strong enough to rival orichalcum.

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

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

I see.

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

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

"W-wait a second, mentor! Stop, stooop!"

"Huh? WOAHHH, there's a crack in the capsule!"

Ramiris and Veldora both exclaimed with consternation.

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

"What are you two doing?"

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

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

"Tsk, we were just about to get to the good part..." Dino complained.

"Ah, so you don't want your cake? Then I'll give your share to Ramiris—"

"Sorry, I was just joking. No, wait. Even though what I said were my genuine feelings, it

⁵ヒヒロカネ, the author is referencing a Japanese mythical metal that is said to be harder than diamond.

was just a slip of the tongue.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is imperative to enjoy your work.

Next—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ramiris was quite embarrassed as she answered.

I could empathize with her motivation. The dryads could move freely around the labyrinth without a body, whereas the treants couldn’t. Although treants retained the ability to reposition near where they were rooted, they couldn’t possibly leave the forest and enter areas without

soil. Essentially, without a body, their mana would steadily dissipate over time, which was detrimental to their well-being.

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

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

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

"Can we really?" Ramiris excitedly inquired.

"Of course."

"Thank you, Rimuru!"

She flitted around me, overjoyed.

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

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

As for the dryads—

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

"Huh?"

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

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

"Can we do what?"

"That—evolving them into dryas doll dryads⁶. But won't that take a lot of work?"

⁶This race is first mentioned in volume 6, for Yenpress LN readers, they mistranslated this to 'Between the dryas,

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

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

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

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

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

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

She nodded happily.

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

But I’ll just pretend I never heard that.



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

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

“Understood, Dino-sama.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

the doll and the dryad.’

“Umm, the thing is—”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“No. Unfortunately—”

“Hold on, hold on, hold on—!”

I was interrupted yet again.

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

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

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

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

Huh? How did Veldora befriend Ifrit?

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Hmm...”

“S-so that’s a no?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Oi. Seriously?

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

“Were you just talking to Ifrit?”

“Yeah, I can do anything.”

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

I see how it is.

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

I suppose I will put my faith in Veldora.

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

“All right, just leave it to me!”

“This is great, Mentor!”

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

“Then let’s—”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I began to execute the conversion without hesitation.

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

The operation was completed in an instant.

As expected from Raphael-sensei, how masterful.

The next moment—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Please ask away.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Are you referring to this look...”

Upon saying so, Ifrit suddenly sighed for some reason.

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

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

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

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

“—Understood.”

Ifrit’s reply sounded rather forced.

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

“Hmm?”

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

«Report. Correct.»

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

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

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

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

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

“Do you not hate me?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ifrit sure was serious.

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

And so, I decided to accept Ifrit.



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

What is it again?!

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

“What is it, Veldora-kun?”

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

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

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

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

due to good luck.

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

Hmm, that would indeed be safer.

«Report. Please leave it to me.»

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

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

“Oh, I knew you’d say so!”

And so, Veldora named Ifrit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Raphael-san dutifully notified me.

A flame lord, you say?

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

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

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

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

So it was his fault, after all.

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

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

Veldora’s jokes were so lame.

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

“How are you feeling?”

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

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

“S-such tremendous power...”

He was taken aback by his own power.

“Kukuku, you got that right.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“No, but—Vesta-san?”

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

“But, that’s...”

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

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

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

No one was against the idea of evolving, either.

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

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

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

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

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

“Thank you, Rimuru-sama!”

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

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

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

I told her to notify me should any problems arise.

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

For one, I had to attend daily meetings with Rigurd and Myourmiles to make executive decisions. Even criminal trials required my verdict now. It was also my duty to mediate disputes

between my lieutenants. I genuinely wanted to help out with the research here, but reality often intervened. I desperately needed to scout some talent that would alleviate my workload—that was my task at hand. I could still find time for my hobbies since I technically didn't require sleep, but sometimes you just wanna slack off for a bit, ya know? And I thought I was all mouth and no trousers, but it looked like I was really diligent after all.

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



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

The long-awaited news had finally arrived.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When I entered the guest room, the attendants brought out tea and desserts. The preparation

was flawless. As I thought so, someone approached the room.

“Rimuru-sama, I have returned!”

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

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

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

Three females followed Diablo in.

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

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

“Are these girls your old friends?”

They don’t look particularly strong—

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

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

—*Eh, did you just say archdemon?*

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

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

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

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

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

“Kufufufufu, as expected from Rimuru-sama. I told them to try their best to hide their race,

yet you saw through it with such ease.”

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

“And the others?”

“Only seven were worthy—”

Yeesh. This guy was a bit too harsh.

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

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

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

Ah, so there were more.

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

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

“Nice to meet you, Rimuru-sama. I feel greatly ashamed to meet you as a nameless one. I hope to be in your care. I’ve heard that Noir-chan⁷ highly admires you, which, to be honest, was hard for me to believe at first...but now I can see why.”

“Is that so?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

And so, I greeted everyone here.

The three ladies and their two hundred subordinates each.

⁷She calls Diablo ‘Kuro’ (Black), which I believe it’s a more intimate way of calling him Black Primordial (Noir), to not confuse the readers I’ve decided to just go with Noir-chan.

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

I never expected him to prepare an actual army.

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

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

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

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

“Is it going to be long?”

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

Diablo was ready to start his lengthy brag post.

I stopped him immediately.

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

Although there wouldn’t be any chances like that.

Diablo froze up on the spot in shock.

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Should I say that this was to be expected?

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

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

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

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

Moreover—

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

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

Is that so?

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

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

Furthermore—

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

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

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

There were those who had lived for over four hundred years or more—the medieval species. There were those who had lived for around a hundred years—the early modern species. There were those who had lived for only around half the lifespan of most humans—the modern species.

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

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

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

Thanks for the detailed explanation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In short, Diablo was concocting fables again.

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

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

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

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

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

*

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

The method was simple.

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

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

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

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

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

“Could you really?”

“That would be great.”

“Then, please indeed help us with it.”

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

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

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

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

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

Seeing how happy they were, I felt decidedly satisfied as well.
And so, my work here was done.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Eh...?”

“Did you make a mistake somehow?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Kufufufufu, as expected from Rimuru-sama. What you meant must be ‘It didn’t matter

how long they've lived, but how they've lived'?"

Eh, Eeehh?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Isn't he always like that?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And just like that, we called it a day.

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

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

Moss.

Veyron.

Agera.

Esprit.

Zonda.

Cien.

Venom.

As such, I named the strongest ones first.

Testarossa's lieutenants were Moss and Cien.

Ultima's lieutenants were Veyron and Zonda.

Carrera's lieutenants were Agera and Esprit.

The demon that piqued Diablo's interest was Venom.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We now had seven hundred new subordinates that surpassed rank A⁸. While it might sound weird coming from me, this excessive addition to our military force was quite frankly ridiculous. Some of them even evolved to archdemons.

I might have just overdone it again...

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

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

This was the best way to maintain a tranquil mind.

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

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

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

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



While Rimuru was escaping reality—

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

“Mhm, what an incredible character.”

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

Testarossa, Ultima, and Carrera noisily chattered.

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

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⁸The phrase used here is A ランクオーバー (A rank over), it’s not an official ranking, just a phrase used for ranking between Special A and A, not sure why author felt the need to highlight this.

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

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

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

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

The other servants were no simpletons either.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Testarossa's white cheeks blushed as she muttered, enthralled, "Ah, how interesting. As opposed to constantly playing the same game of corrupting nations, or fighting for supremacy

⁹Kanji: Black Corps

with you guys, it's so much more fun observing that lord.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Me too,” Ultima chirped.

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

Diablo smacked his mouth anxiously in response.

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

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

“Mhm!”

“Just like what I said before.”

The three ladies nodded almost simultaneously.

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

“‘You are the one who can’t be helped!’ is what should’ve been my line. I suppose this is

returning the favor for introducing us to Rimuru-sama.”

“Fine, I don’t object.”

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

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

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

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



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

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

“Uh-oh.”

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

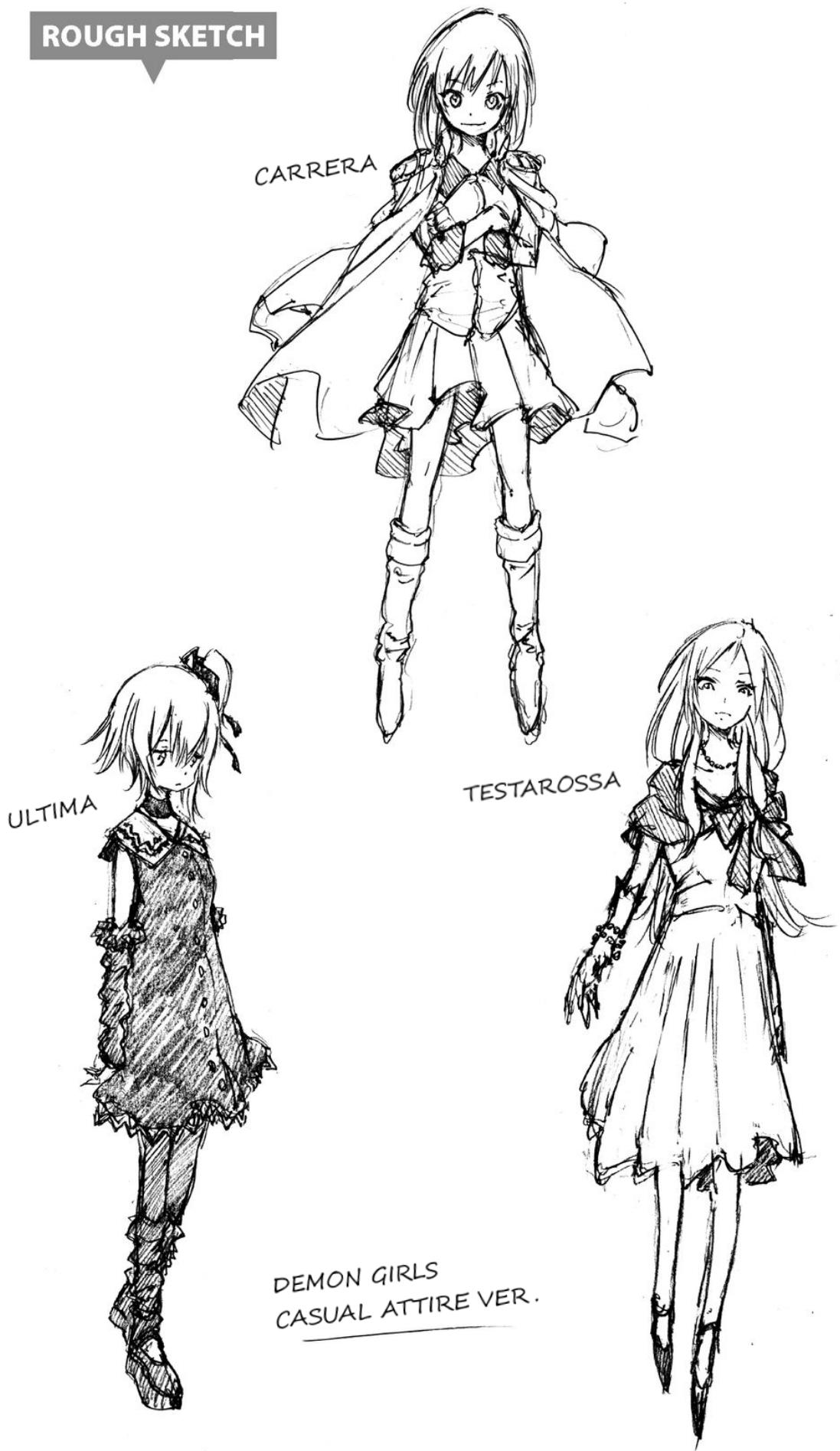
Well, there was no point in crying over spilled milk. All I wanted was to be happy and have a nice, peaceful day. And now he’d dumped this unnecessary problem onto me. I was looking forward to new companions, you know…

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

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

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

ROUGH SKETCH



That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Chapter 3

Signs of Unrest

Chapter 3

Signs of Unrest

I wasn't expecting such a drastic boost to our military forces, but at the same time, I was genuinely glad at the prospect of more companions joining our ranks.

I urged Diablo to discuss new work arrangements for the demons. The three demonesses were in attendance as representatives of the new personnel. I was interested in hearing their opinions as well.

"Right now, there are three vacant positions I want filled as soon as possible. There is the military attaché who will act as my plenipotentiary, the chief prosecutor of the public prosecution office who will seek out any great evils (unlawful activities) within the nation and bring forward charges, and the chief justice officer of the supreme court who will judge the fairness of tribunals. Since there's three of you here, do any of you wish to fill in these roles?"

It felt as if I was forcing the girls to accept, but I casually brought it up as an option, nonetheless.

The jobs weren't as simple as they seemed. If they were to take them, then there might even be backlash from my executives. However, that would be Diablo's problem to deal with.

You also needed to refrain from committing illegal activities, such as accepting bribes, while on the job. That was why I wanted to appoint trustworthy people close to me, just in case. If these demons wound up doing anything illegal, I would naturally ask Diablo to purge them. Things would be quite straightforward that way.

"Then, please allow me to act as the military attaché."

"A greater evil than me? This gets my blood pumping!"

"I shall judge with utmost fairness. I hope to meet my lord's expectations!"

Testarossa, Ultima and Carrera declared, respectively.

Oi oi, why are you already agreeing without even listening to the details of these positions first?

"Can you guys really? The tasks involved with these jobs could be very challenging..."

"Please leave it to us."

"Mhmm! I'm really good at detective work!"

“Allow me to grant them the fair verdict of death.”

Hold on a second. Something is off here, especially with that last one.

Their answers filled me with an eerie sense of unease.

I turned to peek at Diablo. He had a smug grin plastered on his face. No matter how you looked at it, his facial expression all but screamed: “It’s so good to be free from such troublesome duties!”

Ah, I supposed that would be the case. Diablo would, surely, have rejected the offer of military attaché.

“Listen now. As the military attaché, you will act as a representative for the Western States Council and speak on my behalf. Not only that, if we are to deploy military forces to foreign nations, you will also be responsible for commanding those armies. It’s a really important job.”

“Yes, I understand,” Testarossa replied with a gentle smile, promising that there would be no problem.

“Testa is a smart woman. I can assure you that she will never make any decisions that aren’t in Rimuru-sama’s best interest,” Diablo reassured.

Uhm, aren’t you saying that because you don’t want to do the job yourself?

Although Diablo’s guarantee was in no way reliable, Testarossa may very well be highly intelligent.

“By the way, you’ll also need to familiarize yourself with our nation’s laws, but those aren’t set in stone yet. Furthermore, you will also be responsible for informing other nations about them—”

“Please rest assured, Rimuru-sama. I have memorized them all.”

As if to back up her claim, Testarossa immediately began to recite the experimental decrees of our nation, even going so far as to point out some problems she found with them.

“Hired! You are, without a doubt, hired. Sometimes, you may find yourself thoroughly pissed off during the council meetings. However, you must keep in mind that you are carrying the honor of our nation. Remember, never act on impulse. I’ll be counting on you.”

“Please leave it to me. If anything were to happen, I will make sure to destroy all evidence of my involvement.”

No no no! You’re looking at this completely the wrong way!!

But then again, Testarossa *did* make the impression of being capable enough. I couldn’t find any other suitable candidates and, given my unruly behavior during the last council meeting, I was better off not casting stones in a glass house.

We will see how it plays out.

Even though Testa was the one who got the job, that didn’t mean the other two were unqualified either.

“It’s my turn now!” Ultima shouted, and also effortlessly started to repeat the major codes of law as if she were reading from a script.

Similar to Testarossa, she appeared to be pretty sharp.

“My liege, we are a race that holds contracts in the highest regard. We are well versed in the craft of exploitation, so there is no way we’d lose to foolish mortals. You can also rest assured that we won’t fall victim to bribery. One can only bend us to their will through a clash of strength. Even among the demon lords, there are only a few that could stand against us.”

—Well, she didn’t say *no one* could stand against them.

Given that to be the case, there probably *were* demon lords stronger than them. It was presumably that guy—the red-haired one. Well, that was none of my business.

After all, the important thing was that Carrera would take on the role of chief justice.

“Then, I shall hire you all. Ladies, I will be in your care from now on!”

“ “ “Please leave it to us!” ” ”

As provisional personnel, I decided to hire the three demonesses.

It proved to be the right call. The Tempest Federation would later become a state featuring a legal system like none other. Its legal structure would be esteemed throughout the generations that followed.

By the way, I wasn’t above the law. I gotta be more careful so I don’t end up being arrested for bribery.



Our nation finally possessed the framework of a constitutional country. Even though we were still in a trial period, we had the foundations for a system with separation of powers.

Ultima and Carrera were both extraordinarily diligent workers, though, perhaps I should also give credit to their many outstanding employees. They all got along and worked together, which enabled them to demonstrate their full potential as a team.

Ultima was assigned to learn from Rogurd. She would always call him ‘Uncle Rogurd’ and listened to whatever he had to say. Rogurd would then call Ultima ‘missy.’ He cared for her like she was his own daughter.

Although, Rogurd was unaware of Ultima’s true identity. Rogurd may have been bold, but had he known that Ultima really was a demon peer, he would definitely have been far more reserved around her. With that in mind, I only told him that she was one of Diablo’s recruits and nothing else. At the end of the day, it was her work performance that mattered, so there shouldn’t be any problems.

Chief Justice Carrera was also handling her new responsibilities well. Rugurd was the attorney general and had since returned to the executive branch’s legal department. The judicial department was now officially its own independent branch, separate from the executive branch. However, this didn’t mean the judicial branch had free rein. The judicial, legislative, and exec-

utive branches would all monitor each other.

Rugurd was responsible for observing and supporting Carrera, whom I had appointed. From his report, her behavior notwithstanding, she was doing an excellent job. She would not yield to violence or bribery. Rugurd seemed to approve of Carrera.

This was fantastic.

There was no such thing as a perfect political system, so we'd just have to wait and tackle problems as they arose.

And so, all that remained was to send out the drafts of our legislation to the council.

"That's everything. Testarossa, have you prepared everything properly?"

"Yes, Rimuru-sama. Moss handled all of the procedures."

Testarossa was resting elegantly in front of me. She had personally poured me a cup of black tea. It was delectable.

Shuna's black tea was superb, and Shion's black tea was nice too. While their teas were exquisite in their own right, Testarossa's black tea was no slouch either. The fragrance was profoundly sophisticated, and it lingered in your mouth. It didn't even leave the slightest trace of a bitter aftertaste. There was also a hint of sweetness despite its lack of sugar. Overall, it made for a very refreshing drink.

Diablo stood behind me, eyes wide. "Testa, I never imagined you would personally make tea for others. How surprising."

"Hehe, indeed. I obviously need to give Rimuru-sama special treatment. And of course, there's no tea for you."

"—I don't mind. As long as you treat me as your superior, I can turn a blind eye to things like these," Diablo responded, preparing some black tea for himself.

I couldn't tell if they were close or spiteful of each other. Although the air wasn't tense, they didn't appear cordial enough to be labelled 'friends.'

"By the way, the reactions from the nations were rather intriguing too," Testarossa suddenly divulged. "Some nations want to get on our good side, while others are trying to exploit us for their own benefit. About half of the nations are welcoming, and it seems that the majority of them are still paranoid."

Her tone implied as if she had seen this for herself...

"Where did you obtain this information?"

"My apologies, I ordered Moss to investigate a little in order to be of help to Rimuru-sama."

Moss again. It looked like he had some outstanding talents. I recalled that he was a powerful individual whose strength was second only to the three demonesses. He was also one of the demons that evolved to become a demon peer, and he seemed to be stronger than the other demon peer, Veyron.

So this Moss was even capable of collecting intelligence.

"How accurate is this information?"

Did he acquire it using magic? Or did he see and hear things for himself?

It'd be great for us if the information were reliable. However, if it wasn't, then we'd have a bunch of other problems on our hands. With that fact in mind, I questioned Testarossa.

"Moss holds a special ability which enables him to split into multiple small 'Clones' and travel to different locations. Acquiring and analyzing intel from various places at the same time is a piece of cake for him."

That would make him truly impressive. I was quite glad to have gained such fortuitous talent.

"Then that's really convenient. I'll introduce him to Souei next time and let him help with information gathering. They may have different suitabilities, so hopefully they can complement each other."

"Ara, how I yearn for such praises from Rimuru-sama. I am almost jealous of Moss," Testarossa commented, cracking a smile when she finished.

"S-surely you jest..." behind Testarossa was Moss himself, who was standing by, previously unnoticed due to his weak presence. As he spoke, a cold sweat suddenly ran down his cheeks.

Veyron had the appearance of an old gentleman with a handlebar moustache. Moss, on the contrary, looked like an adorable, run-of-the-mill young boy. From appearances alone, he seemed to be in fifth or sixth grade of elementary school. I saw no evidence of him being strong; was he really that exceptional?

"Is Moss's information valid? We did eliminate a couple of hostile councilors recently. It'd be reasonable if people were paranoid, but are there really nations still trying to exploit us?"

While it was sort of bold for me to say this, our nation was quite the dangerous one. And just what type of overly optimistic leaders would want to exploit a country this unbelievably dangerous? It was only natural to doubt the accuracy of Moss's intel.

"Moss, explain the situation to Rimuru-sama."

For some reason, it was Diablo that gave this order as opposed to Testarossa.

"Y-yes sir. The nations neighboring the south of Tempest, centered around the Kingdom of Blumund, were all in favor of our nation. Yet, relevant knowledge of our nation has not yet spread to the northern realm. It seems that many noblemen there are skeptical about the rumors. As for the now decommissioned councilors, their words, regardless of their veracity, lack credibility. Although this part was purely speculation from said rumors, it is difficult to determine the authenticity of the matter. With that being said, among several kingdoms, some of their royal family members undeniably hold ill intent towards us."

On a side note, Moss's power allowed him to directly eavesdrop on the conversations that he wanted to hear. That explained why it was up to the receiver of the information to determine its legitimacy. Nevertheless, his power was quite handy.

"If we can detect suspicious activities ahead of time, we can plan accordingly before anything bad happens."

"Indeed."

"Testarossa, can I trouble you to take care of the matter?"

"Most certainly. Regarding the method, however, should I destroy their entire nation?"

No no, that won't do.

"That'd be overkill! Just make sure to hold the people in charge accountable."

"Understood."

"Remember to avoid methods that will lead to casualties."

"As you wish. At the very least, I will not do anything that results in the world condemning Tempest," Testarossa promised, smiling brightly. Despite that smile, I found her terrifying. I was kind of worried about whether or not it was really okay to let her handle it.

But hey, there's a first time for everything.

After all, you couldn't run a country by always sucking up to other nations. This was an irrefutable fact. If other nations looked down on us, it would only lead to unnecessary complications.

"Good! You must work hard towards those goals without damaging the reputation of our nation. However, should the need arise, you should also be prepared to show off our might."

And so, I saw Testarossa off to the council.



Now that the major problems were resolved, from today onward, I could throw away the worries I had in the past few months and live a peaceful life.

Eh? You're telling me that not everything was stressful since I was actually enjoying the research?

Well, you're right. Though I did have to occasionally act as if I was trying my best, lest I be viewed as a slacker. This was what we called adults' art of socializing. It was never a good idea to invest maximum effort at work. If you were to do that, then the amount of work you did would be viewed as the norm. Naturally, it would seem as if you had no problems with it, and thus you would be prone to be assigned more responsibilities.

A capable man must be able to distinguish how much work was suited for the amount of effort devoted. At the end of the day though, what mattered most was enjoying your work.

—Despite framing it in such flowery language, ultimately, that was just idealism at its finest. After all, I was satisfied with where I was now. Working under these circumstances made me realize again just how fortunate I was.

In any case, I planned to inspect the newly constructed school today. The children I brought from Ingracia were studying here too.

I mentioned this once while chatting with Yuuki: letting the children socialize with each other would be the fastest method for them to learn human common sense. In a school filled with only monster kids, there was a possibility that they would never learn about the norms of

human society.

Be that as it may, you wouldn't have to worry about such things at this school. Many adventurers and migrant laborers, family in tow, had immigrated to our town. Naturally, there were many children among them.

In this world, it was the norm for children of low-income families to be part of the labor force. However, our nation had laws prohibiting child labor. After all, a kid's job was just to have fun and enjoy their childhood. Anyway, they only needed to study things they were interested in.

Both humans and monsters would be subject to the same standards of education. Surely, they would grow a sense of camaraderie this way. That was the objective.

By the way, the students in this school weren't limited to just children. Adults would come here to learn writing and mathematics, too. Mastering these subjects was essential, so they were eminently enthusiastic to develop their skills. The lack of these skills would no doubt close many doors for them. They may also make simple mistakes that could trouble their coworkers. Since the adults were all evidently aware of this, they had been studying hard.

Not knowing whether or not anything you learned would be applicable to the real world was probably one of the biggest reasons why people were never motivated to study. However, that wasn't a problem here. Furthermore, the hard work of the adults would inspire the children to put in similar effort towards their studies.

With that being said, putting aside mathematics, the focus was mainly on reading and writing. To be honest, even I considered the curriculum difficult, and Masayuki was of the same mind. Being proficient in reading and fluent in conversing was one thing, however—writing was the difficult part.

In my case, I could rely on the automatic translation of Wisdom King Raphael to bypass the issue. Without that, even I didn't have the confidence to score full marks on a language exam administered here. I figured that as long as it didn't cause any problems, I could simply play dumb about it. Although, this *did* feel like cheating.

Getting back on topic, the children were excelling in their studies. Serving as a wonderful incentive to boost their eagerness for learning, I had translated manga into this world's language. It was a huge success. It seemed like everyone in the school was a fan of the manga, to the point where some even carried it around with them, apparently turning it into a highly coveted status symbol. Kenya, being both adept at combat and a holder of manga, somehow became the boss of the school.

“You stinky boys! Stop playing all the time and help clean the classroom!”

Ah, Alice just lost it.

She was shaping up to be an extremely competent class representative.

“Huh? Why do we have to bother with that—”

“Wait Ken-chan, we'll be in a world of hurt if we make Alice angry!”

“Shut up, Ryota! I'm gonna beat Alice today and become the real boss around here!”

Such a brat!

—Hold on. I guess they *were* still just kids.

I realized that Alice was the real boss around the class, not Kenya. Were they fighting because of this? Kenya wouldn't want to admit it, which is perhaps why he wanted to fight Alice.

So, that's how it is, huh?

A boy would intentionally infuriate the girl he liked to make her look his way. However, this tactic wasn't always effective in reality. Besides, it was liable to mess up and cause the opposite of the intended effect. It was best to treat the girl you admired gently.

Kenya was still too naive and thus presumably lacked this insight. Fighting Alice wouldn't win her heart; instead, it would doubtlessly serve to only piss her off.

“Didn’t I say this already? I’ll show you how scary I *really* am!”

Alice was no different, showing not a single shred of femininity. She may have seemed mature, but that couldn't be further from the truth. But to be fair, Alice *was* only eleven years old. Didn't all sixth graders behave this way?

Everyone else's reaction implied that they were accustomed to this scene.

“Oi, who do you think will win today?”

“Of course it'll be the Empress.”

“I suppose so. She’s our empress, the youngest and the strongest. While Kenya is strong too, he’s no match for her.”

“It’s because he’s in love with Alice; that’s why he can’t win.”

They were all adding their own two cents.

“Oi, Gail! Don’t talk nonsense!” Kenya complained.

“That’s right! How could Kenya have a crush on me? Is your brain fried or something?” Alice, on the other hand, laughed it off as the ramblings of an idiot.

Gail had very casually revealed Kenya's secret.

Uhhh—looks like it's too early for these kids to get in any sort of relationship.

That was okay in my book.

Both the monster and human kids found the two interesting. Everyone knew that they weren't really on bad terms despite what appearances suggested.

Gail was the oldest boy and seemed to be covertly monitoring the two, ready to intervene if any real problem were to arise.

It would have been interesting to continue observing this silently, but today was not the day. Hinata was due to come by later.

“All right, that’s it! No fighting in the classroom!” I scolded as I entered the classroom to greet the kids. At that same exact moment, Chloe jumped in from the side and latched onto me.

“Sensei!” Chloe joyfully exclaimed.

I somehow didn't sense her aura, which suggested that Chloe's skills had improved dramatically. Moreover, it looked as if she knew I was coming very early on.

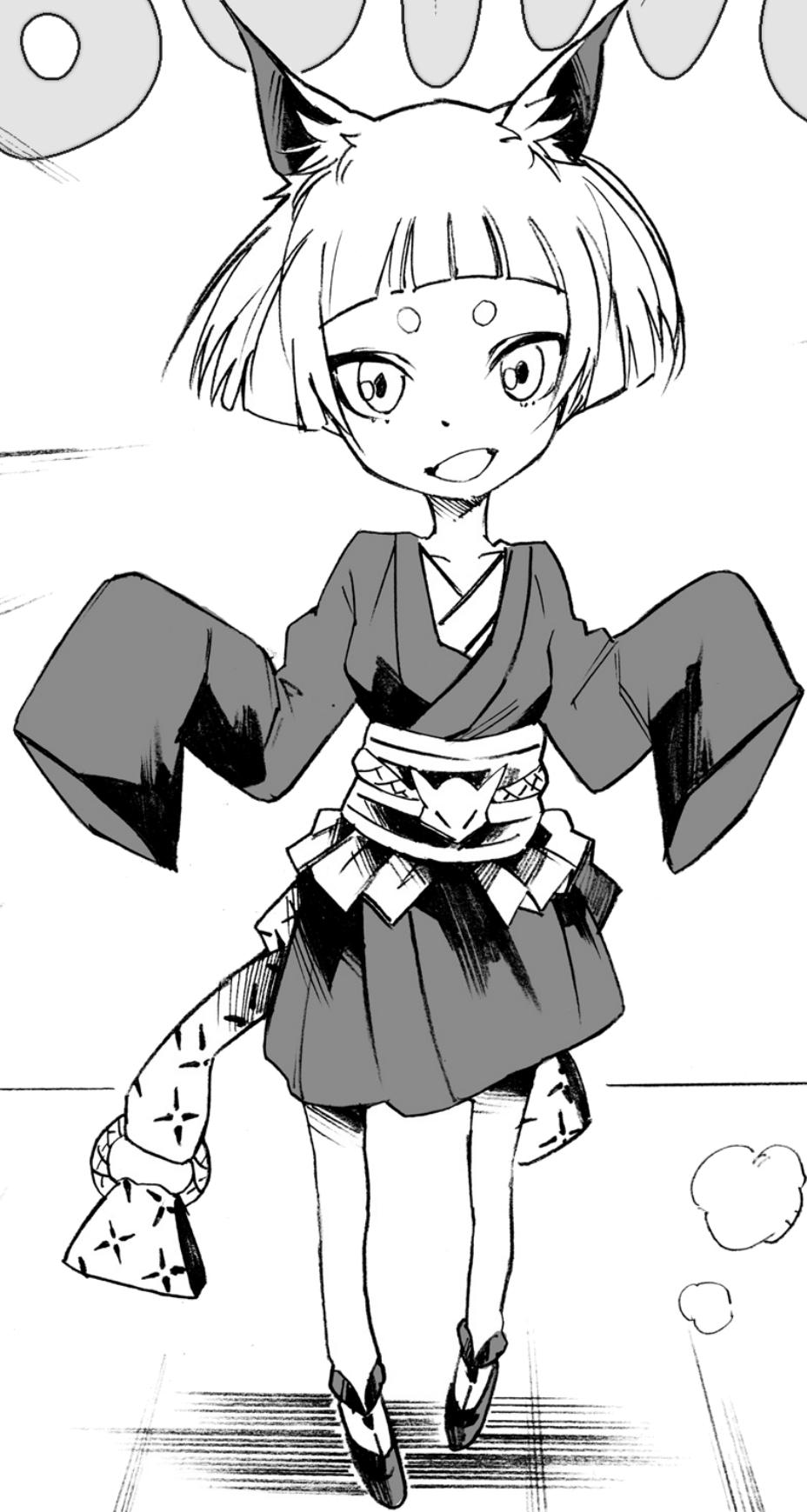
“Ah, Rimuru-sensei?! Chloe, that’s cheating and...and cunning!” Alice protested, but wasn’t one to be outdone. Just like Chloe, she came running and hugged me.

Mmmhmm, cuteness is truly the best.

Someone emerged from behind them, exclaiming: “Rimuru-sama, long time no see arinsu!”

A cute girl with the cliché bob haircut jumped in front of me. She was wearing an elegant kimono and appeared to be a little girl around the same age as Alice. Her most eye-catching features were her fox ears.

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Hmm—I didn't remember seeing a beautiful little girl like this...but I also felt like I'd seen her somewhere before.

Could it be—

“Are you Kumara?”

“It is me arinsu!” the young girl with the bob haircut energetically replied—I mean, Kumara replied.

Right, Kumara was a high-level monster. She had successfully evolved, after I had bestowed a name upon her. That must be why she had a human form.

I recalled that I left her in Hinata's care along with the rest of the kids. Once the school was constructed, Kenya and the others began walking to and attending classes. I had always thought that Kumara was staying in the labyrinth all this time. But to my surprise, it seemed that she was going to school with the children as well, and even made some friends. I believed that this was a good thing.

“Eh, Rimuru-sensei has come—”

Kenya and Ryota's reactions were slower than the girls,' as they only noticed me just now. However, their words were overshadowed by the cheers of the other students.

“W-WOAH—Rimuru-sama!”

“It's actually him! Awesome!”

“I'm gonna brag about this to my dad later!”

And so, a commotion broke out in the classroom.

Catching wind of the excitement, the teachers that came to investigate soon formed a crowd of their own.

“H-His Majesty himself has graced our facility?! Had you contacted us first, I would've shown you around!”

“What silliness is that?! I am the vice-principal, I should have been the one to show His Majesty Rimuru around!”

“Nonsense! You are just a mere vice-principal, begone! His Majesty Rimuru has granted me the position of principal, I should have the special privilege!”

They were getting riled up as well.

We hired teachers by paying monthly salaries. They were retired adventurers, merchants from the Kingdom of Blumund sought through Myourmiles's arrangements, and more.

The principal of this school was a chief from one of the goblin villages. Even though he couldn't teach, he was able to promptly handle any conflicts that broke out. He could also keep an eye out and prevent monster children from being discriminated against.

Other than the principal, the rest of the staff were all humans. The Holy Knights acted as special lecturers, taking turns to hold classes; Hinata would spend time with the children when she could as well.

Everything was going very smoothly.

At first, the Holy Knights all seemed rather confused, but they didn't treat the monsters any

differently. Rather, they gave the same level of care and guidance to both humans and monsters. They genuinely helped out a lot.

“Ahh, don’t worry, I just snuck out on my own today. I actually have something to discuss with Kenya and the kids.”

“I see, then please visit and observe the children’s progress next time!”

“Indeed, if you inform us of your arrival, we shall present you with the perfect learning conditions!”

The teachers and children simultaneously nodded in agreement.

But hold on a second... What the hell did ‘perfect learning conditions’ mean? *Wouldn’t you guys be guilty of trying to deceive me?* Didn’t that make the whole visit meaningless to begin with?

“Oi oi oi, His Majesty Rimuru is really troubled by this,” we were interrupted by Holy Knight Fritz, who was handling today’s lecture. If he hadn’t, this commotion probably would have continued for a while. Speaking of which, having a commander of the Holy Knight Order as their lecturer was honestly incredible.

“Is Fritz-san the lecturer for today?”

“Oi oi, please stop with the ‘san,’ Your Majesty Rimuru. You can drop the honorific.”

“Ah, really? In that case, Fritz, drop the ‘Your Majesty’ too.”

“That would be inappropriate.” Fritz smiled and added, “please allow me to call you Rimuru-sama at the very least. Or else, every citizen in this nation is going to look at me differently.”

This guy seemed to be someone that wasn’t mindful of social statuses, yet he was still cognizant of the fact that he couldn’t directly address me by my name. To be fair, I would’ve acted the same way if I were in his shoes. Unless a person had some respectable background, to call another kingdom’s ruler by their name directly would take a really pure-hearted moron.

“You have a point. You’ll need to wait until you’re out of the public eye in order to relax honorifics. It’s a bit inconvenient here.”

“Thank you for understanding,” Fritz said with a wink and gave a somewhat playful smile.

You shouldn’t be happy seeing a man wink at you, but it felt like Fritz was somehow naturally affectionate.

“All right, putting that aside, thank you so much for assisting the school activities.”

“Please don’t say that. Seriously, compared to the rigorous training assigned by Hinata-sama, a mission like this is honestly heaven. You get food until your tummy is full and, more importantly, the children’s respect. All the knights have been fighting over the gig.”

I see.

I caught wind of unexpected hardship.

Fritz’s straightforward attitude naturally made him exceptionally affable, but I didn’t want to be oblivious of the time and place as he, unfortunately, had been. After all, my ‘Magic Perception’ was sending me feedback.

“Ho, con-gra-tu-lations then, Fritz. Was my training *too* rigorous, hm? I fine-tuned the training based on your strength, but apparently it is getting in the way,” a cruel voice drenched Fritz.

Hinata entered the scene. Suddenly, the whole area was filled with a tense aura. The children, and even the adults that had gathered, all straightened their backs and didn’t dare to move a muscle.

The teachers had the same reaction; I wasn’t sure whether to laugh at this or not. It went without saying that Fritz was tonight’s biggest loser.

“E-eh—H-Hinata-sama?! Misunderstanding...yes, it’s all a big misunderstanding! That was just bureaucratic talk...”

Fritz tried his hardest to save himself given the conversation, yet I could already tell that he was irredeemable at this point.

That’s why Rimuru here is to remind all readers that it is very important to ensure the safety of your surroundings.

I hurriedly made myself scarce and sought refuge; hopefully Fritz wouldn’t suffer any ill fate in the future.



We went inside the labyrinth. Hinata joined me, coupled with the five children and Kumara. As for Fritz... Ehh, best not to disturb him.

“I have been awaiting your arrival, Rimuru-sama and Hinata-dono,” Hakuroou came out to welcome us.

“My,” Hinata exclaimed, “you look as lively as ever, how wonderful.”

It appeared that the two of them had formed a friendship before I knew it. The two greeted each other amicably.

“My apologies for asking you to come out here when you are already so busy,” Hakuroou admitted.

“Not at all, not at all. The major issues have all been resolved,” I reassured.

“I see, have you decided who to send to the council?”

“Yes, a newcomer recruited by Diablo. I named her Testarossa. I’ll introduce you two next time.”

“...Named her?” muttered Hinata. “There’s a lot I could say to that, but it’ll take forever, so I’ll do it another time.”

“I-I see.”

“I know you like to drop your head out of the loop, so I won’t bother anymore. Besides—”
I’ll just get a bigger headache listening to you explain—she quietly complained.

It was best to pretend that I didn't hear that last part.

"The reason why I invited you today was to show you the progress of the children's growth. Hakuro-dono and I both have been instructing them, so I wanted to update you on their current situation."

Uh... I didn't quite get what was going on, but I figured the conversation should continue first.

"Since you said it like that, they have grown a lot?"

"Grown a lot"? I guess. You'll find out when actual combat starts. The labyrinth is really convenient. You can fight at full force with no risk of actually dying," Hinata reminded with a smile, terrifying as always.

She had the dark aura of a sadist around her.

"I get it. Then I'll use my 'Clones' as their opponents," I suggested, splitting my slime body from my main body. The slime looked like a knock-off version of me, but it had the actual me inside. My humanoid body on the other hand would be handling the battle trial.

"YEAH! I haven't fought against Rimuru-sensei in forever!"

"This is awesome. Sensei, please observe how much I've improved!"

The bellicose couple Kenya and Alice rejoiced at this news immediately.

The normally reserved Gail started to warm up to the proposal as well. Ryota resembled his usual fussy self, though his eyes were glittering with light that conveyed his anticipation. Since he hadn't called quits yet, it meant that he had acquired a level of confidence already.

Now the other two, Kumara and Chloe.

"Then I shall go first arinsu!"

"Ehh? But I want to fight Rimuru-sensei as well!"

They were both particularly enthusiastic.

"I see that everyone is full of energy. It's fine if everyone comes at me at once, but since we are training, we should try one-on-one fights."

Hearing this, everyone gave a smile. They seemed to be looking forward to dueling with me. It wasn't a bad idea taking them on occasionally.

With this naive thought, I began to battle the kids in a simulated arena.

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—One hour later—

"Y-you guys, haven't you gotten a little too strong?!" My voice echoed throughout the labyrinth.

Kenya had indeed become more powerful than the average Holy Knight. He synergized beautifully with the light spirit. Using bizarre stances that you would only see in manga, he brought out these phantasmagoric sword techniques.

Ryota's swordsmanship was not as strong as Kenya's; despite that, he could use both water and wind 'Spirit Magic' strategically.

Gail, conversely, was well balanced. His cautious personality made him focus more on defense, and he utilized his shield and sword cleverly. He also incorporated earth elemental ‘Spirit Magic’ to make his defense almost indestructible.

While the boys surprised me, the girls were even more impressive.

First, Alice. No wonder people called her Empress. She pulled out a number of dolls from thin air, which were made of magisteel like Beretta. They snarled at me as if they were alive. Her puppeteering skill was getting stronger, and this time, the puppets were no play dolls. If she had faced anyone else, it could have been dangerous.

Moreover, Alice had one more card up her sleeve. There was a massive number of swords floating in midair that targeted me constantly throughout the battle. *Scary*. There was no pattern to their trajectories. If I didn’t have ‘Predict Future Attack,’ I probably would have taken a couple of hits. In a few years’ time, she may be able to rival a Holy Knight commander.

Let’s not forget about Kumara.

“Come out everyone, demonstrate your power before Rimuru-sama arinsu!” she shouted while unleashing her power.

Her nine tails began glowing golden and twisted behind the cute girl. The next instant, her tails turned into beasts.

Eh, I should have seen this coming, but the creatures that flew out startled me, nonetheless. As expected from Clayman’s ace in the hole. She was already tremendously tough with the beasts summoned from her two tails—and there were eight of them this time. Her ninth tail seemed to be her own, while the rest were all magical beasts. Each creature was over rank A. An average Holy Knight, in all likelihood, wouldn’t even be able to touch one of them. They could also share their combat experience, making their coordination flawless.

Based on what I saw, she had the potential to beat Fritz and the others. This little girl was on par with the ‘Ten Great Saints.’ I know it may sound like I was joking, but I was telling the truth. Once the beasts from her tails gained more combat experience, she would definitely become an unbelievable force. She may eventually live up to the name of the ninetieth-floor guardian.

The last one was Chloe.

“Hiiyaaaa!”

Her yell was very cute, whereas her sword was not, even in the slightest. She was faster than Kenya. In fact, much more than that. I battled against six people in total this time; however, Chloe was the only person that I fought seriously.

Actually, I was treating the situation too lightly. Chloe was so strong that had I not fought her earnestly, I honestly would have been in danger. Obviously, I wouldn’t have died even if I had gone easy on her, but it was definitely humiliating if I lost in front of the kids.

I really didn’t want to embarrass myself here. That was why I had to fight seriously—please don’t call me childish. I would never hold back to preserve the little dignity I still had.

“I can understand your feelings.”

“Indeed, I was just like Rimuru-sama. I needed to show everything I had battling against

lil' Chloe."

Seriously...? Even Hinata and Hakurou, who were both more skillful in swordsmanship than me, had trouble fighting Chloe?

I was genuinely shocked. Knowing the innocent Chloe was so powerful made me shiver.



"Ahh, you guys are so good!"

"Right? Hearing sensei say this fills me with confidence!"

"But Chloe-chan was the really strong one. Even though everyone calls me the Empress, I've never won against her."

"Yeah, Chloe is so different. She looks so gentle at first glance, but she's super scary when angry. An angry Alice isn't scary at all, but when Chloe gets angry, we have to pray."

Alice jumped up, furious, and shouted, "What did you just say?!"

Ryota and Gail simply nodded in agreement.

It looked like the boys were all on the same page.

"Kenya was quite strong as well," I remarked. "Although, your stance and swordsmanship could use some work, consider them your weak points. If you can refine those, you will move even more fluidly."

His moves felt like they were inspired by manga. Although they looked wonderfully dashing, it was detached from traditional swordsmanship, and he made many unnecessary moves. If he could fix this, Kenya would become stronger too.

"That's precisely it. No matter how I teach him, Kenya just won't budge..." Hinata sighed, baffled.

She had noticed it as well.

"I can't help it either! That pose was taught by Masayuki-san himself!"

Huh?

Did that idiot have to teach Kenya such superfluous sword techniques?

I mean, it did look pretty cool in hindsight, so it wasn't *entirely* useless...but knowing Masayuki's actual skill, it suddenly made me think that such a stance was completely trivial.

No wonder the stance looked like it came from manga—it clearly was.

"All right then," Hakurou interjected, "there's no use talking. I shall instruct you personally to remove your bad habits. I'll train you well and make your movement as smooth as flowing water."

Hakurou's method was different from Hinata's in the sense that he wasn't entirely faithful to traditional swordsmanship. It seemed that he was keeping some of his more heretical techniques to himself, which was why if he found some skill useful yet non-traditional, he would focus on

refining those techniques in secret.

Thankfully, it appeared what Kenya learned was not entirely wasted. I left the rest to Hakuroou.

As opposed to that—

“Chloe’s swordsmanship was quite similar to Hinata’s. Your moves were very beautiful and effective.”

Chole smiled happily at my praise.

“Yeah! It looked just like Shizu-sensei’s, that’s why I have been working hard to imitate it!”

“Even though you call it imitation, it’s not that simple to learn. It may be a different case if you learn by using Skills like I do, but you’ve mastered this entirely through your talent and hard work. You should feel proud!”

“Indeed. I have had all sorts of disciples in the past, yet I’ve never seen anyone rivaling the talent of this young girl. Your future is very promising.”

Hinata and Hakuroou were both rigorous teachers, yet they were both praising Chloe.

It sounded like she was extraordinarily talented. Considering how young she was, there was no telling how much she would progress if training continued. On one hand, I was looking forward to it, but on the other hand, I couldn’t help but feel a tinge of fear.

All right, back to the focus of today.

Hinata seemed to have other goals during her visit here.

“The reason why I called you here, for one, is that I wanted to show you the progress the children have made. These children are all very adept, but they are still young. In order to prevent them from straying off the right path, I hope you will get to know about their current states.”

It went without saying that I had been keeping an eye on the matter as well. Nevertheless, I decided to heed her advice. Hinata was treating these children, who were previously tended to by Shizu-san, as her siblings.

“I understand. Hakuroou will take care of them too, plus there are a lot of seniors who can help them in this town as well. I will do the same so that they won’t go down the wrong paths in life.”

“Hehe, I knew you’d say so. I brought up what I said just in case.”

This gal really worries too much.

Hinata really did have a gentle side despite her usual, frigid demeanor.

“Well then, what were your other reasons?” I asked Hinata while peeking at the children who were in a group fight against Hakuroou.

“Well actually, the main reason why—”

Hinata paused upon saying so and turned her eyes to the children.

Even though this was Hakuroou, taking on all five of the children at once was still tricky.

Although he could see through the children's intentions, if he had reacted just a tad bit slower, he would have sustained a fatal injury.

If just considering their constitutions, the children completely outmatched Hakurou. Naturally, he could not be careless.

By the way, Kumara did not participate. Had she joined and fought seriously, they would have won against Hakurou with sheer numbers. Nonetheless, the team had Chloe right now, so the children had the upper hand. I thought they had wonderful team composition. It was as if they were putting on a martial arts performance. It honestly was captivating.

"She's so young yet so strong," Hinata muttered, her eyes fixed on Chloe.

While Kenya, Ryota, Gail and Alice were also very strong, Chloe was abnormally powerful. If she were absent, Hakurou could have ended the battle already rather than being in knee deep mud right now.

And soon, the simulated battle ended.

The children were all catching up with their breaths as Hakurou began doling out advice. It was no wonder why the children had all grown so fast if the training was this harsh every time.

Hinata returned her attention to me and got back on topic.

"I got mesmerized by their fight halfway through our conversation. Have you scheduled the music exchange that Luminas-sama has been pestering for yet? I knew she'd be interested, but by the look of things, she seemed to really enjoy it. That's why I came to bring the matter to you."

How surprising—but I had been swamped with work, so I was planning to postpone it.

"Oh, I guess Luminas genuinely liked our concert. I told Takt and the band to continue to practice, and as a result, the number of pieces they can perform has also increased."

"Your memory in that area is really amazing. I can't even read music notes, and writing scores from memory was obviously impossible."

Ahh, so there *were* things that even Hinata wasn't good at. She hadn't been all that interested in the concert either; she was probably terrible with music.

I enjoyed a momentary internal feeling of superiority. With that being said, I had to rely on Raphael-san too.

"Then, please anticipate our visit soon."

"Very well. Moving a whole band *is* a huge project, so allow us to send our Holy Knights as escorts. We will use Elemental Magic 'Warp Portal' to send them in groups."

"Wonderful. Since there's going to be a lot of luggage with so many people, I figured that going there by horse-drawn carriages would be a hassle."

I recalled that Lubelius was protected by a 'Barrier,' meaning we couldn't just teleport there. This was why we needed a more comfortable method of transportation.

The problem would be resolved when the train was complete. But that would be a long time away from now. You couldn't ask for things that didn't exist yet.

Transporting the whole band wasn't only about moving the performers themselves. Each

player had to carry their own instrument for the performance, which was quite cumbersome. If we were to travel by horse-drawn carriages, we might be forced to go down some unfinished roads as well. Riding on roads that were in poor condition could damage the instruments, and we wanted to avoid that type of situation.

I was super envious of the dragon ship owned by the empress of Sariom. Traveling by train might be fun, but in order to reduce the travel time, aircraft were obviously more convenient in that regard.

You could navigate by sea or land for logistical transportation, but for sightseeing or other purposes, air was the fastest and comfiest method.

This was the reason why Hinata's proposal was very beneficial to us. I promised that I would help too, and so we worked out the detailed matters regarding the travel plans.

As I was halfway through my discussion with Hinata, the children, who were on break, gathered together.

"Rimuru-sensei, where are you going with Hinata-oneechan?"

Since Chloe had inquired, I explained the music exchange that would be held at Lubelius to everyone.

"I want to go too!"

"Me too!"

"I might fall asleep during it, but since Chloe and Alice are going, I'll go too!"

"Yeah me too!"

"In that case, I'm going as well. The fact that these guys are coming and the possibility of them causing problems is what worries me."

Because of Chloe's words, Kenya and the others began clamoring about wanting to go to Lubelius.

Uhh—what should I do?

It was good to let them see more of the world as a form of social experience. But if you were to ask me whether there might be danger or not, I couldn't confidently rule that out.

Raising her head to look at my troubled expression, Kumara opened her mouth and timidly said, "I-I wish to go too arinsu..."

Kumara's presence was needed as the guardian of the ninetieth floor. The way she spoke indicated her regret; it appeared that her senses were telling her not to beseech such a request from me. But as a child, she naturally yearned to go on a trip with her friends. It went against my way of doing things if I were to turn her down.

"You don't have to be so courteous. If it's only a tiny, selfish request, ask and I may just approve it."

It was gonna be a headache if she were to grow up to become as stubborn as Milim, but that was better than losing her innocence as a child. Based on these considerations, I told her my thoughts while patting Kumara's head.

Similar to her small fox form, it feels smooth and fluffy. Her warmth seems to have nothing

to do with her human or monster form...

Ehh, Kumara had gone through transforming into a humanoid being; what happened above was purely sensible imagination conducted by yours truly, Rimuru.

“Awesome! Now we can officially travel and skip school!”

“But you always looked happy at school, Ken-chan, did you really want to skip classes?”

“Idiot! Attending classes is fun, but if we get to play while everyone else has to study—how should I say this—it makes us really special.”

“Kenya, I understand what you mean, but I don’t want to get corrupted by your mindset. On the other hand, I feel very excited too.”

“Right? That’s exactly it!”

The children were all fired up about going before I had even given them permission. They even went on to declare something about skipping school. It wasn’t like I didn’t understand their feelings. And although I could sympathize, I would never put such a thought into action...

“Right, it won’t matter. Instead, please have the teachers assign them more homework.”

“Eh! How can you do this, sensei!”

I ignored Kenya’s cries.

Everything doesn’t always go your way, and many things in life were ultimately unfair. I intended for them to learn about this point while they were still young. This was a demonstration of my fatherly love, and they would surely grow stronger from the experience.

This was definitely not me picking on or punishing them. Hopefully, the children would come to understand my justification behind it.

“I just want to be with sensei.”

Chloe, who started the whole thing, seemed rather satisfied.

All right, I suppose it’s fine as long as they make some good memories together.

“Your heart goes soft so easily.”

“Ah, could it be that Hinata-san is against the idea?” I retorted and signaled with my eyes—‘You are so cold.’

“Tsk—“ Hinata clicked her tongue “—I never said that,” she answered with irritation. But she didn’t appear to object.

Then we are all good to go.

And so, the plan was settled.

We would be attending the music exchange in Lubelius. The day that we sent out our band, the children would tag along as well.



We arrived at the Holy Empire of Lubelius.

On our tour through the city's streets the children were overcome with curiosity as they took in all the sights with wonder. On the contrary, Takt and the band members were practically shaking in their boots.

Diablo was by my side, acting as my secretary. Shion was here as well. Since I had let her guard our town last time, I decided to bring her. Instead, Veldora would be keeping guard.

You have an important task as the master of the labyrinth—I convinced him with this line. That was why he didn't follow us during this expedition. It might have been a different case if we were heading to another country, but it was simply too dangerous to let Veldora meet with Luminas.

«Warning. Probability of problem occurring—100 percent.»

I also received such advice from you-know-who.

It was an obvious landmine to avoid—one that **must** be avoided—at all costs.

Our guide was Hinata herself.

“Welcome to Lubelius. His Majesty the Pope welcomes you all too,” she introduced in a tone that sounded remarkably disrespectful towards the pope. Although I was aware of the secret that the pope was merely a role Louis played, Takt and the others knew nothing of it. This was, of course, highly classified information. Obviously, I couldn't tell the children, nor could we tell the members of the band.

I gave an improvised response and confirmed our later schedule with Hinata.

“First off,” she announced, “tonight, we will be hosting a banquet to welcome everyone. Tomorrow, we will invite you all to complete soundchecks. The following day is scheduled for rehearsal and the concert will take place in three days' time.”

“What do you think, Takt?”

“Y-yes sir! There's no problem, Rimuru-sama. Even though we require magic to transfer the instruments, I don't think it will affect them very much. We will need to make slight adjustments depending on the size of the venue, but since there are bands here as well, I don't think there will be a problem.”

Then it was okay to perform.

“You only have one day to rehearse though.”

“Hahaha, that is indeed true. However, we've been practicing every day back home for this concert. All of the members can guarantee that we will not disappoint.”

Excellent!

It must be thanks to their diligence that they possessed such conviction. Despite the fact that hard work was sometimes unable to measure up to natural talent, it was still a reliable method. With hard work, you could build up confidence that subsequently made your heart stronger. Plus, this newfound resilience would also prove itself useful in all manner of other everyday activities. If you persevered every day, you would obviously be confident in your work.

I gave full marks to Takt's answer.

Now, I am very much looking forward to the concert—I thought to myself, nodding with

satisfaction.

Fast forward to later that night.

The members of the band were being treated like nobility. But this only made them more confused and nervous.

“M-may I ask, Rimuru-sama? We are mere common citizens of the Tempest Federation. Are we really allowed to stay in such luxurious rooms?”

This great expedition involved more than one hundred participants, yet each person was assigned their own room. They also got a personal maid, who was on standby next door, to respond the moment they were called.

Moreover, there was a bar that even rivalled ones in a five-star hotel. You could access it regardless of species, human or monster. This, nonetheless, made everyone rather nervous.

The banquet was excessively grand as well. They continuously served bite-sized appetizers, which were both delicious and arranged to be aesthetically pleasing. While portion sizes weren't too large, the flavors more than made up for that deficiency. Furthermore, the dishes were extraordinarily creative in order to satisfy everyone's varying palates.

In the beginning, the children were complaining about the small portions and appeared unsatisfied. But, by the end of the banquet, they all seemed quite full as they patted their round bellies.

Since I was a slime, it was impossible for me to be “full” by any measure. The children's stomachs, on the other hand, had their limits. Regardless of how small the portion of each serving was, if they ate a bunch, then naturally it would eventually add up until they couldn't eat another bite.

In contrast to the innocent kids, the band members' feelings were a lot more complicated.

There were many delicious cuisines in Tempest as well, but none of them were like this—made with extreme attentiveness and served exclusively to nobles and royalty.

Not only had they never tasted such luxurious dishes, they also received accommodating services that they had never experienced before. It was unreasonable to expect them to not feel skittish.

“In any case, don't be so constrained. This is all a token of appreciation from Lubelius for your performance later.”

I was tremendously grateful that I didn't have to perform.

I hadn't shown dedication like they had, yet even if I did and was in the same position as Takt and the band members, the crushing performance anxiety would've been enough to drown out my enjoyment of the dishes. Not being able to savor delicious food was a huge loss in the pleasures of life.

That was the main reason why I hoped Takt and the band members would appreciate it as much as they could.

The banquet soon ended without a hitch, and the band members made their way back to

their rooms.

The children went to sleep too. They were quite excited after spending the entire day seeing new and interesting things. They were undoubtedly exhausted after all the fun they had.

Everyone quickly fell asleep, leaving me the only one awake. I was planning to use my special skill of sleepy boi, but apparently it wouldn't be necessary.

Knock, knock—I heard the door being gently rapped on.

“My apologies for disturbing Your Majesty at this hour, but our master would like to invite Your Majesty Rimuru to join her. Is it convenient for you to convene?”

Someone ran up to me almost silently. It was one of the attendants that served Luminas—a ‘Surmounter.’ Unlike the ones who came to our research facility, the attendants appeared to be very outstanding individuals. Although I was under the impression that Luminas would not show herself this time, the attendant’s presence suggested that she intended to meet me.

I accepted the invitation without hesitation.

I only brought Shion and Diablo along, and we had the maid guide us to the venue.

“Long time no see, Rimuru. I see you did not bring that evil dragon with you, that’s commendable.”

I figured that “evil dragon” was referring to Veldora. Considering all the bad stuff that guy caused in the past, Luminas definitely had a right to call him that, but I thought she was being a little too harsh.

Nevertheless, it was none of my business.

“Indeed, it’s been a long time. Obviously, I wouldn’t bring him along. That guy’s a walking troublemaker. Letting him come to an event such as this would only give me a headache.”

“Kukuku, so you do understand.”

With just a short exchange, I suddenly got the feeling that Luminas and I had a lot in common.

It turned out Veldora *could* be useful on occasion.

Three people, including Luminas, were waiting for me in this opulent room. Gunther, with the appearance of an old butler, stood to Luminas’s left while Louis the Pope stood to Luminas’s right. Since Roy, who was acting as Luminas’s body double, had died, all that remained of the ‘Three Archdukes’ were gathered here.

I was somewhat perplexed by Hinata’s absence on this occasion.

“Aren’t you going to call Hinata?”

To my question, Gunter and Louis helpfully replied.

“I was planning to. Even though she’s evolved from a sage to a ‘saint,’ she was still human once. While she doesn’t need to sleep anymore, she apparently could not get rid of her old habit as a human.”

“I went to call her, but she mentioned something about how insufficient sleep would be bad for skin and some other bizarre things...”

Indeed, it was already past midnight, which explained why they didn’t drag Hinata along.

As I was going to take their word for it, Luminas cracked a small smile and told me something unexpected.

“Ara, her bodily structure has evolved close to that of a spiritual life-form, so there’s no way her skin could get worse. But Hinata does require sleep. Even though she’s a ‘saint’ now, her body is still the same as when she was human. It will take a long time before her body fully evolves as well. This has been a misunderstanding, Hinata is not some superwoman,” she smiled again upon finishing her explanation.

Humans were different from monsters in the sense that their bodies would not change drastically like the latter’s—that was the gist of her description. In other words, Hinata still retained all of her human qualities, and in a way, that could be considered her Achilles’ Heel.

I noticed the way monsters evolved was quite beyond common sense too.

Incidentally, this went without saying, but Diablo didn’t need any sleep either. And while Shion still required some rest, she only needed three hours each time. She could also go without sleep for more than seven days straight. Benimaru and Souei were the same, which was perhaps a sign that monsters had stronger adaptability to different environments.

If Hinata wasn’t here, I just had to accept it. As the one being invited, it wasn’t something I should be worrying about anyway.

“In that case, I have a gift for you guys. This is a new dish made by Shuna and Yoshida-san: brandy apple pound cake,” I offered.

Since Hinata missed out on my donation of this delicious dessert, she would no doubt complain. But snacking on sweets at night was probably bad for her beauty. Hinata enjoyed eating this type of stuff, but since she was oblivious of this fact, she would not have hesitated for a single moment to eat it.

How caring of me.

“Your courtesy impresses me! You are a smart one after all,” Luminas praised aloud.

It was thanks to Shuna that I could bring these gifts. The two people who claimed to be my secretaries, on the contrary, were not nearly as considerate. Diablo was definitely the most careful when it came to behaving around me, but he didn’t seem to focus on anything else. A lot of the time, it was like those two had a screw loose somewhere.

Putting that aside for now, I asked, “Right, so why did you call me here?”

“Umm, I was deliberating over whether I should tell you this or not, but now I’ve decided to share this information with you. Granbell has been planning something sinister. I am looking forward to the concert in three days and don’t want anyone to get in the way. That’s why I want your help.”

She cut to the chase without skipping a beat.

Shouldn’t you stop eating cake when discussing something serious like this—I really should have mentioned this to her.

Shion nodded as if she had a clue of what was going on, yet my intuition immediately told me otherwise.

Diablo was giving off a “It’s none of my concern” vibe, probably thinking along the lines

of “Just kill the enemies when they come.”

Well, to be honest, I felt awfully conflicted.

It might be a different case had this land been under my administration, but this was another person’s entire nation. Even though I could summon Souei’s subordinates and scatter them around the continent, along with some demons, I did not want to stir things up too much.

That was why:

“If it’s something so important, shouldn’t you call Hinata?”

Indeed, this was the time for Hinata to shine. Compared to us, who were merely guests here, she was more qualified to uphold the security of this nation.

While I thought this was a sensible approach, Luminas wouldn’t buy it.

“Hmph, don’t you look down on us now! Even if those trash come and instigate a fight, Lubelius’s defense is indestructible. We’ve completely fortified our borders to fend off that evil dragon. However, no matter how flawless our defenses may be, intruders could still sneak in by utilizing secret tunnels that we are unaware of and launch an attack.”

I could see glimpses of her confidence from what she had said. The city was an iron fortress even against an entire army. That was to be expected of a city built to withstand attacks from Veldora. A ten thousand strong army, in all likelihood, wouldn’t be enough to conquer it.

Even so, this was not what Luminas was worried about.

“Secret tunnels that even you don’t know about... Right, I recall that Granbell Rosso was the head of the Seven Luminary Clerics...”

“You are correct,” added Louis. “They’ve been operating behind the scenes on this land for a long time. Surely, he had prepared one or two secret passages. Humans are exceptionally skillful at such trickeries.”

“The most unfortunate thing is that man used to be the Hero of ‘Light,’ and even fought against Luminas-sama in the past,” continued Gunther. “If he were to hide his aura, we wouldn’t be able to detect him.”

Their eyes glimmered as they spoke.

This sounded like a challenging task to handle. Isn’t this what you’d call an “inside job”? Granbell knew better than anyone else about this nation’s composition and geography. He had previously proven his strength as well. I heard that he was stronger than Clayman, and therefore could not be underestimated.

That was how I saw it.

“How boring. Please don’t trouble Rimuru-sama with menial chores like that,” someone suddenly interjected, disgusted.

It was Diablo.

Just when I was thinking he had been behaving nicely, he abruptly interrupted with this line. Seriously, couldn’t he be more mindful of the time and place?

Louis and Gunther’s expressions darkened drastically, but fortunately, Luminas’s laughter made the two hold back.

“Kukuku. Black Primordial, Rimuru has truly made you quite the obedient pet. It’s still

rather unbelievable despite witnessing it with my own eyes.”

Luminas sure was odd to laugh under these circumstances. But thanks to her jovial reaction, the atmosphere smoothed over once more.

“Please don’t call me that. Rimuru-sama has already given me a wonderful name—”

“Back off, Diablo. Luminas and I have already established an alliance, and I intend to keep it that way.”

I publicly rebuked him, partially to apologize to Luminas.

“Apologies for my intrusion.”

Diablo did not challenge Luminas any further and instead remained silent at my command. It looked to me that he was simply putting on an act. Seeing how he had apologized to Luminas and the others, I’ll let it pass. Luminas had some requests for us guests, and I didn’t want to make the scene any more awkward...

“No, that guy—Diablo—has a point too. It’s not very courteous of me to ask a favor such as this from you. On the other hand, I still wish you will agree since I have good reasons.”

Luminas sure had a big heart. She even considered Diablo’s feelings and directly called him by his name.

...Even though she addressed him without any honorifics.

Luminas wouldn’t get mad over trivial things such as these. Thus, she calmly revealed why we had been invited.

“I brought this up when I mentioned that Hinata needs to sleep, but when humans evolve, their bodies won’t adapt right away. It takes a long time before they can mature.”

From a sage that possibly rivalled a ‘Demon Lord Seed,’ a human could grow to become a ‘saint’ which was the equivalent of an awakened demon lord. Yet, if this evolution required some time to activate before coming into effect, then a newly risen ‘saint’ would not pose too much of a threat. Even if they gained enormous power, it was still meaningless if they couldn’t properly command it.

Hinata’s control over her powers was masterful; unfortunately, it relied entirely on her techniques. It wasn’t something as natural as breathing, so it would burden her body and mind.

Speaking of which, why did Luminas bring this matter up when Hinata wasn’t around—ah, I understand now. It was actually *because* Hinata wasn’t present that she found the confidence to discuss the topic.

Humans would evolve over eons. Could it mean—

Luminas continued with her explanation:

“Regarding Granbell, he is not a ‘saint,’ but ‘A Bearer of The Hero’s Egg.’ When the hatchling grew its wings and left the nest, even I have no idea just how strong he has become.”

Didn’t this imply he was a legitimate Hero?

The term ‘Hero’ was used here and there, but had different connotations to it. Some would proclaim themselves to be a Hero, but only people bearing the ‘Hero’s Egg’ were acknowledged by the world. In other words, the latter were the real deal, possessing sufficient strength to even seal away Veldora.

Just like how ‘Demon Lord Seeds’ were still considered demon lords, ‘Hero’s Egg’ bearers would be considered Heroes in conjunction. Their sources of power were very similar. ‘Heroes and demon lords are bound by causality’—this saying really hit the nail on the head. And deducing further from this knowledge, I could tell that Granbell’s power was presumably on par with an awakened demon lord.

“—Could it be that he is more powerful than Hinata?”

“When I heard that Gran was killed by Nicolaus alone, I thought I had misheard. ‘Disintegration’ is truly the strongest magic spell, but Gran would not be stupid enough to take a hit like that head on. And, to answer your question—”

Luminas stared straight into my eyes.

I see, so that's why she didn't call Hinata.

“—You are correct. I tried convincing him to join me, which is why I fought against him in the first place. As a result, this is why I can confidently declare him to be stronger than even the older demon lords,” Luminas concluded without hesitation.

Not only me, but Luminas’s servants, Louis and Gunther, were shocked by her words. It was likely due to the fact that they had always looked down on Gran in the past.

“Indeed, we’ve never challenged Gran head on before...”

“Is he really that strong?”

“Certainly. The reason why I allowed Gran to do as he wished was so that I could have him in the palm of my hand. We did not have any conflicts of interest, and I only proposed a deal with him out of curiosity. I allowed him to create the Seven Luminaries and granted him the highest authority. If I had to justify why, I wanted to make him one of my trump cards,” Luminas reluctantly admitted.

Yet this trump card backfired before it could be exploited.

Did he become a hostile dagger at her throat?

On one hand, this was her miscalculation, but on the other, I was also partly responsible. However, no matter how you put it, my role was simply a small percentage of the cause and therefore shouldn’t be held accountable.

“The girl was precious to the Rossos. This is all happening because that ‘Mariabell’ died,” I quickly surmised.

For Granbell, who was constantly cautious, to act now during these turbulent times, that must have been the reason.

“Was it the little girl I saw during your nation’s founding festival? I did not know her either, yet I could tell she was a remarkably strong foe. If Granbell treasured her so much, then she might have been the key to his ambition.”

Mariabell was indeed tough to deal with. She definitely would have continued deviously planting seeds for even more trouble in the future had she not revealed herself and her underhanded scheming.

In contrast to enemies you can face head on, it was the hidden villains that were so much harder to eliminate.

But now that she mentioned it—

“By the way, what is Granbell’s goal? He hadn’t made any moves until now, so it doesn’t feel like he is exposing himself just to avenge Mariabell...”

“It could be—no, it’s nothing.” Luminas swallowed her words. She closed her eyes and pondered for a few seconds before calmly explaining, “That man has always dreamed of bringing peace to the human world in the past. He battled vile fiends and eliminated vicious beasts in an effort to safeguard humanity. Furthermore, this stubborn guy fought me several times until he learned that I had no intention of killing all humans, but instead wished to coexist in peace. Afterwards, we created a pact, and the Western Continent became a place of peace and prosperity. Various kinds of families united together, and nations were founded. Some smaller countries flourished and became larger. Gran manipulated these nations from the shadows, eventually spurring the birth of the Western States Council.”

Listening to this firsthand, I realized that Granbell—Hero Gran—seemed to be a bona fide legendary figure. He justified his decision to remain the holder of the head position of the questionable Five Great Elders as a way to protect humanity. Putting the morality of his actions aside, judging from the results alone, humanity was given a thousand years of peace because of Granbell...

“Sarion, led by the ancient elven tribe, lacked the ambition to expand their territory. While ‘Continent’s Wrath’ Dagruel and ‘Storm Dragon’ Veldora fought on the land, us in Lubelius handled the defense. The demons from the frozen realm of the north attempted to invade several times, but they were merely toying with us. If Guy were serious, this world would undoubtedly have already perished. And in that case, there would only be one more human circle left. To prepare ourselves for such a possibility, we allied ourselves with the dwarves and had merchants gather information for us. Granbell had been handling all this by himself the entire time,” Luminas finally finished.

Upon learning these new details, I couldn’t help but think that Granbell was quite impressive.

No, no, this is no time to resonate with Luminas’s words.

“And so? If Granbell-san is this powerful, what is he attempting to accomplish?”

“Kukuku, don’t get so hasty now. Gran has no reason to antagonize me—although I wish I could boldly claim that, actually, I thought of one possible goal he might have in mind. However, I do not intend to tell you about it.”

Ah, just as I thought.

She was trying to avoid giving too much away, so I half guessed this outcome.

“Regarding his motivation, there was one piece of information that concerned me. Have you ever heard of the name Yuuki Kagurazaka?” inquired Luminas.

“Yes. Didn’t you say that he had an ominous aura around him? Not only did he instigate the Kingdom of Farmus to raise arms against my nation, but the late Demon Lord Clayman was also doing his bidding.”

“Ara ara, so you noticed that as well. Good, then it’ll be easier for you to understand. You

see, this Yuuki had contacted Gran in the past. The two appear to have interacted with each other and even formulated somewhat of an agreement.”

It's Yuuki again, huh? Enough is enough. I'm getting pretty tired of being jerked around by that guy...

Had it not been for Raphael-san, I would have been easily fooled by him again. If I were to allow this individual to continue his pernicious acts, then there would be a ton of problems to deal with in the future. Perhaps it was time that I confronted him directly.

“Could it be that Gran was operating due to Yuuki’s manipulation?”

“Indeed, I am afraid a part of their plan is directed at you.”

I see.

They must’ve thought that now was the perfect time to strike since I was away from Tempest.

“I get it,” Shion suddenly interjected, “that brat’s goal is to make Gran and Rimuru-sama fight each other!”

I was so shocked that my eyes automatically focused on Shion. And here I thought she was ignoring the meeting because she didn’t understand. Turns out she understood everything just fine.

“Kufufufufu, he thinks that just because we left the country with a few guards, this is an opportunity that can’t be passed up? How naive. There are two Heavenly Kings guarding Rimuru-sama; no matter what he is planning, it will be meaningless.”

Diablo was up to his usual antics.

Please stop. I felt tremendously embarrassed every time someone mentioned the Four Heavenly Kings.

“In any case, as a precaution, we should stay alert. There are three more days before the concert, and after those three days, it won’t be a problem of yours anymore. Just like what I said in the beginning, I merely wish to enjoy the concert.”

Luminas wasn’t shaken either. While she labeled Gran a threat, she still prioritized her entertainment.

I wanted to learn from her how to be this calm and collected.

On that thought, the secret meeting deep into the night concluded.



Next, would we see if Granbell really took action? Would Yuuki take advantage of this as well? Despite our worries, the second day of our visit to Lubelius began.

Today, we were preparing the venue. We moved around the instruments and started setting them up.

We were led to the cathedral. This was an enormous building that could hold a large number of believers and, at the same time, a major structure that was the vital point of defense for the path leading to its interior.

I didn't have anything in particular to do. Tasks like tuning instruments were best left to the experts. I would proceed with the schedule as planned and bring the kids on a field trip.

Of course, as Luminas made abundantly clear, it was important to remain vigilant. To that end, we summoned Diablo's direct subordinate, Venom, and brought him along as a bodyguard.

Venom must have been quite shocked since he was summoned without any prior warning.
“Diablo, you will be in charge of supervising the band members' work—”

“Rimuru-sama,” I was interrupted mid-sentence by Diablo, “please wait a moment. I knew this would happen, which is why I've already made arrangements last night.”

This guy just *had* to eliminate all possibilities of us being separated. I suppose this was the reason why he had called all his subordinates here, though I couldn't necessarily blame him for doing that.

Diablo even threatened Venom with “Show up within ten minutes.”

It was one thing for Venom to actually carry out the order, but for Diablo to demand that without batting an eye, it just proved his heartlessness. Oh well, he wouldn't have a heart to begin with. He was a demon after all. While impressed by Diablo's efficiency, I also felt sympathy for his subordinates with how tiresome his orders must have been.

Before I could blink, the one hundred demons under Venom's command had already begun helping the band members. These majins were all over rank A, and Luminas's subordinates would also stay alert. Now, I could rest assured that the bodyguard detail was flawless.

Under Hinata's guidance, I toured around the city to examine Luminas's legacy. And taking it all in, I felt that the Holy Empire of Lubelius was the direct antithesis of the Tempest Federation.

This was not to say, however, that they didn't have their merits. Although the citizens lacked freedom, it was a blissful society because the people here didn't compete with each other. The only work they needed to do was to follow the procedures already set for them by their superiors.

In a sense, everyone had essentially relinquished their independence, but in return, they would never experience hunger or pain. Those who couldn't bear such a society had already left the country, whereas the remaining people had all adhered to these rules since birth. Naturally, this would seem unbalanced to a bystander.

Ignorance is bliss.

People wouldn't be dismayed if they never knew how less fortunate they were compared to others. Conversely, this discontentment could also inspire people to work harder for greater aspirations. After all, a society without competition would become stagnant.

“For some reason this feels really boring,” Alice muttered to herself.

“Yeah” Kenya voiced his agreement. “People our age here are all working. Aren't there

any schools?"

While the rest of the children did not speak, they still remained confused at the bizarre sight in front of them.

"There are no schools in this country. Everyone is under someone's command. Everyone is equal under the glorious name of God. People come to this nation to enjoy peace and prosperity," Hinata said proudly.

But I had to wonder, did she really think that was the right thing to do? Did they have no qualms about the fact that the upper echelons of society had monopolized all luxuries for themselves?

But on the contrary, she still had a point. It didn't feel right to teach the unknowing commoners about luxury when they didn't need to know anything about it in the first place...

"No matter how hard one tries, there will always be some things that are impossible to acquire. If people never know about the existence of these things, then they won't feel the need to obtain it and suffer as a result."

"That's true as well..."

Kenya wasn't dumb either. He understood what I meant.

"Living in an extremely regulated society like this, we maintain a high standard of happiness for our citizens. That's why when communicating with other nations, everything must all go through the Western Holy Church first," Hinata explained.

That made sense.

If their people were ignorant of things like luxury, then they wouldn't be allowed to have contact with other nations in fear of them learning about the inequality they were living in.

"They sound like fish raised in a fishbowl."

"If they feel like they are happy, then we should not interfere."

"I suppose so. Human happiness cannot be satisfied by materialistic desires alone. A society that pursues spiritual happiness definitely isn't a bad idea either."

Although, I probably wouldn't be able to tolerate it. I believed that my knowledge of these luxuries granted me the right to pursue that prosperity.

A long, long time ago, I used to run around the neighborhood playing hide and seek with friends. Perhaps if it were me from back then, I would have found this society to be very comfortable.

Everyone has a different definition of happiness. You don't have the right to criticize others and call their ideologies false. Think for yourself and do things your own way.

I thought that should be sufficient. Even so, there was something else that I was mindful of—

"—But the people here won't be able to survive on their own. If they are to sustain a life like this, they need protection—"

—Chloe's mutter was just what I was thinking.

Children's observation skills can't be underestimated sometimes.

Her words seemed to have gotten a reaction from Hinata as well, seeing how she rapidly

blinked her eyes a few times.

Looks like she noticed it too.

This society was twisted, in a sense. Without its ruler, its citizens, unknowledgeable of the outside world, were unable to do anything. Losing their personal freedom meant that their lives were entirely in other people's hands. A life like that would be no different from livestock...

“—Indeed. But we have been working hard to improve the situation to prevent such things from happening.”

“Oh—I see. But I still think it's better if everyone can work together. Then they won't just rely on Hinata-oneechan's hard work. Everyone can help out!”

That was an idealistic take because things were not as simple as “working hard.”

Everyone was born with different talents, and so the amount of responsibilities they could accomplish were unequal as well. The word “equality” sounded wonderful, but everyone would still come to experience cruel and unjust reality.

Idealism and realism.

The two locked in eternal conflict with each other. When one of them stands valid, the other will not. So there was never really a right answer. As long as you walk down the path you believe in, that was enough. The unknown was what made life so interesting.

The children appeared to be troubled over something the rest of the day. It made me realize again that happiness wasn't just about fulfilling our material needs. Even though I knew this, I couldn't stop emphasizing it. Regardless of the conclusion, I didn't think the day was wasted.

I suppose that the Holy Empire of Lubelius's approach was another valid method. This diversity allowed for life to have infinite possibilities.

I reflected upon my life again and pondered carefully. I figured not limiting myself intentionally was the correct path for me. I was reincarnated as a slime after being stabbed to death in my previous life. There was no telling what would happen in the future. And if that were the case, not living in the moment would be a shame.

I couldn't help but ponder after considering all these thoughts.

And thus the wheels of fate began to turn...



“Did you just say that the Yellow Primordial has disappeared?”

“That's right. It's honestly baffling, but after we detected an enormous surge of mana, all the dormant demonic aura in the area had disappeared—”

“...Unbelievable.” Having listened to Alrose's report, Leon couldn't help but think he'd misheard.

Leon's domain crossed paths with the spiritual world known as the ‘Realm of Demons.’

It was a land covered in a thick, impure aura of magicules, and powerful demons occasionally roamed the territory. If it were a demon without a host, Leon's knight order could handle them, even if it were an archdemon.

However, they had discovered the presence of some ancient demons dwelling within the area. One of them was an overlord that even Leon could not ignore. That demon was the Yellow Primordial, Jaune. Since she had yet to obtain a physical body, she had a limited range of activity. Consequently, Leon could not leave this land. She was simply too dangerous to be left alone. After all, no one else would be able to handle that vicious demon.

"She's a psychotic demon that fires off nuclear magic for fun. There's no way we can coexist with her. Any attempts at negotiation were ignored as well. If not for Leon-sama's presence, I would not have been able to handle it...yet you say that such a foe has gone missing?"

"Yes, Claude. I couldn't believe it either, that's why I came to verify. I found that the area overlapping the demon's realm was somehow dimensionally modified. The only logical explanation is that someone shut down the 'Gate of Hell.'"

"Is that even possible...?"

Hearing the words of Leon's top knight—Black Knight Claude, the strongest knight of the Golden Valley of El Dorado—Silver Knight Alrose responded with agitation.

Not only Leon, but all of this land's inhabitants were troubled by these demons. The fact that the culprit, the Yellow Primordial, had disappeared was incredible news. It was so unbelievable that they were all in shock.

Moreover, even the 'Gate of Hell' had disappeared. They couldn't help but suspect that this was a prelude to something much more ominous. The 'Gate of Hell' was the door where the physical world and spiritual world overlapped. As a result, demons without physical bodies could still influence the physical world for a short period of time.

In the past, Leon had sent out his knight order several times to try and seal the gate, yet their efforts were foiled by demons on every occasion. There had been regular skirmishes ever since he founded his nation here.

The most frustrating part was that Leon was unable to destroy the source of their problems, thus enabling spiritual life-forms to revive endlessly. For the demons, their battles with Leon were merely to pass the time in their immortal lives, but to Leon and his people, it caused tremendous harm.

For Leon, the ruler of this rich land, demons were the root cause of his worries. Had he been more serious, he probably could have wiped out the demons. The only issue was, if he weren't careful, he could inadvertently wake up the Yellow Primordial.

Actually, even if it were to come to that—

If Leon were to battle an awakened Yellow Primordial, he could still win following a fierce battle. But clashing with her would result in the continent sinking to the bottom of the ocean.

In hopes of preventing such an outcome, Leon avoided conflicts with her.

What the hell happened? Yellow Primordial... According to Guy, she can't be reasoned with like Mizeri or Raine.

Leon carefully weighed the pros and cons of keeping the demons there, and even when sacrifices had to be made, he chose to maintain the status quo as it was.

Yet this threat had suddenly disappeared.

There is no way something this fortunate would happen in this world—this thought weighed not only on Leon's mind, but everyone else's as well.

A clearly shaken Leon received more information:

“I have something to report. There was a total of five kids who were hidden in the Tempest Federation. I have confirmed with sources within Ingracia and investigated further on the matter. Demon Lord Rimuru seems to have made a secret agreement with Demon Lord Luminas to sell the children.”

“Is this true?”

“Lubelius and Tempest both formed an alliance. The two demon lords are on good terms. We deduced that Demon Lord Rimuru might have deceived Yuuki Kagurazaka and made the children, who all possess a large quantity of magicules, his bargaining chips for the alliance.”

The Magical Knight of the Blue Knight Order had been investigating Tempest, and now he shared what he had discovered with Leon through ‘Magic Communication.’

Leon couldn't help but wonder at the surprising news. He had met Rimuru during the Walpurgis Banquet, and he didn't seem to be the type of person who would do something like this.

“Have someone monitor the source of this intelligence. They are likely tied to some other party, or worse, being manipulated.”

“How could this happen...?”

“Could this have been Demon Lord Rimuru's bidding?”

“No, it shouldn't be. Demon Lord Rimuru has no reason to lay a finger on the children.”

“Then what could possibly be the reason?”

“Perhaps they wanted us to fight among ourselves and profit from it. Demon Lord Luminas may have been a victim of this plot as well, or perhaps she was the conspirator herself.”

“—Uh!”

“Who could have...?”

Based on the current situation in the Western Nations, who is the most likely suspect?—Leon pondered silently to himself.

The answer seemed both obvious and obscure.

“—The secret organization ‘Cerberus’?”

The only people who knew Leon was collecting otherworlder children were those suspicious merchants. Actually, there were others, those being the people who originally provided the merchandise with summoning magic.

Could it be that the Rossos discovered the secret behind their summonings? Or perhaps they had secretly allied with the merchants...

Once doubt took hold, it started to rapidly grow. However, based on the new information, it just didn't make any sense. If the situation simply involved five mere kids, then there was

no reason for Leon to act—or at least, that should be how anyone involved in the matter should view it...

For a demon lord, you normally avoided interfering with the affairs of your peers. Moreover, imposing yourself on the affairs of other demon lords when it didn't involve you in the first place would be an extraordinarily foolish act. If you did not tread carefully, you might end up antagonizing two demon lords at once. That was the reason why the smarter choice for Leon was to ignore this information. Luminas might have been up to something, but it was in all likelihood directed towards Rimuru and therefore of no consequence to Leon.

There is no reason for me to act—Leon finally concluded.

Yet this time, it was difficult for him to justify his decision. Likely realizing the validity of what Leon said, his subordinates began expressing their opinions too.

“I see...so someone is trying to take advantage of Leon-sama, no?”

“Shall we eliminate them?”

Leon spoke up to stop them. “No, without concrete evidence, it's not wise to make a move against ‘Cerberus,’ since they enjoy quite the standing with the Eastern Empire. It was probably instigated by those guys, but it might also be the Rossos who betrayed us. Furthermore—”

Leon calmly made his decision and gave his instructions when a sense of unease crossed his mind.

He recalled the name Kroba Hale.

Could it be...

Yes, there was no reason for him to act, and moving now would be the same as stepping into someone's trap. Despite knowing this, Leon was still extremely anxious.



Had the Yellow Primordial stayed, he would not have been able to leave this territory and follow through with such a foolish decision. He probably would have made the logical choice without hesitation.

Yet today—

This is unbelievable, but for some reason, I feel like I must act this time...

Leon had stopped in the middle of his sentence as his subordinates watched on. Alrose and Claude spoke up.

“Your Majesty, we are all your loyal knights. We will heed and obey your every command.”

“Indeed. Even if you were to be more stubborn, we would not have any complaints. Please give us an order. We shall fulfill your wishes without delay!”

“Everyone...”

The rest of the knight commanders followed their lead and voiced their loyalty to Leon.

“—The disappearance of the Yellow Primordial may be purely coincidental, but...” Leon closed his eyes as he muttered.

The next time he opened his eyes, a firm smile had emerged on his face.

“Then I shall heed your advice. I will attend to the matter myself. I’ll trouble you all with the task of staying guard here.”

“ “ “YES SIR!” ” ”

On this land—the prosperous Golden Valley of El Dorado—the situation had changed drastically. ‘Platinum Saber’ Leon Cromwell broke his long-held silence and raised his sword once more—



“That’s it! Demon Lord Leon is on the move. As I’ve predicted, this ‘Chloe’ isn’t just any kid. She might turn out to be—”

Leon’s end goal was not the children, but a specific someone from the ‘Otherworld.’ If this was bound by causality as well, Chloe was most likely the person who Leon was searching for.

“But, Yuuki-sama, even if Leon is going to take action, it doesn’t mean that he will dance to our score. He should be heading to Lubelius now, but I don’t think he’ll believe all the information we’ve leaked. He might get suspicious instead.”

“I thought as much. However, the tradeoff is worth it now that we’ve identified Leon’s target,” Yuuki revealed, seemingly satisfied.

Kagali and the others couldn’t catch up with Yuuki’s train of thought. Unable to figure out his scheme, they were rather disgruntled.

“I agree that Chloe is very suspicious, but do we really have enough evidence to make her

our trump card? It's not really Yuuki-sama's style to wager on such uncertainty."

"Ya have a point. Besides, we had to perform really dangerous acts just to get the words out, ain't that just telling him to suspect us? What's the point in doing that anyway?"

"Right. I wouldn't think Boss would make bad calls, but wouldn't this make Cerberus a public enemy of Leon? How would that benefit us in any way?"

While Footman seemed pretty unconcerned about the situation, Laplace and Teare both expressed their doubts to Yuuki. And even the intelligent Kagali remained silent this time.

Misha, the "Lover" of Cerberus, gave off a frivolous smile.

"It's understandable that fellow members of the Moderate Clown Troupe would find it confusing. After all, such an ordeal promises no benefit for us whatsoever. There's only one reason to do it, which is because we won't be able to trade with Demon Lord Leon in the future anyway—that's why the Boss made his decision."

Upon hearing her explanation, Kagali suddenly understood everything. "So that was the reason! In reality, it's not that we didn't want to trade with him, but rather we can't anymore in the future..."

"What are you on about?"

"W-what does that mean, Kagali-sama?"

"Kukuku, you wouldn't understand even if you asked. We should simply follow orders—"

"Footman, shut up for a second! It's fine if you don't understand, but I still want to ask!" Teare interjected, cutting Footman off.

He seemed a bit upset. Being good friends, Footman was far more affected by Teare's words.

There's no need to listen to all this convoluted stuff, just obey your leaders—in other words, comply with Yuuki and Kagali's orders, and everything would turn out fine. Footman earnestly believed that by doing so, the plan proceeding smoothly was all but assured. However, it seemed that he was the only one holding onto the idea.

While the others had faith in Yuuki and Kagali as much as he did, they wanted to be sure of the rationale supporting their actions before accepting them.

Glancing at his companions, Yuuki gave a wry smile. *Considering convenience alone, men like Footman sure are easy to use. But to be honest, in order to raise the chance of success for our operations, Laplace and the others are the better candidates. Frankly, there aren't that many reasons behind our actions anyway*, he thought to himself.

Thus, Yuuki chose to explain the matter to his subordinates in greater detail.

"It's more than enough that Leon is on the move. Didn't I order you guys to move the top-secret merchandise to him? That's because I no longer wish to make deals with Leon anymore. And that's why I gave you guys the last opportunity to take a look at your archnemesis."

"Eh, but doesn't that mean we could've wreaked havoc while we were there that day and not gotten chewed out for it?"

"Indeed, it would've been okay under the condition that everyone made it out alive, of course," Yuuki said with a grin. His smile was brimming with so much confidence that it

calmed the clowns down. “Even though they are all just children, it’s not easy gathering ‘Otherworlders.’ Do you guys know the reason why we continued selling children to him despite knowing it would only increase his strength?”

Laplace thought for a bit. “Because Boss wanted to stay in touch with him, right?”

“Yes, that’s correct. Then what would be the necessary condition for that?”

“Is it the secret merchandise—the kids from the ‘Otherworld’?”

“Indeed. But right now, we no longer have the means to acquire them. Do you know why?”

“Because the Rosso family is in charge of summoning the kids—eh...I get it, so that’s wha’ it is!” Laplace excitedly exclaimed.

“Eh, what and what is?”

Teare was still very confused, while on the other hand, Laplace seemed to have pieced everything together.

“To put it simply, Teare, we plan to frame the Rossos and let them take the fall for the entire ordeal. Since we can’t acquire merchandise anymore, that also means we won’t be able to make deals with them. That’s why we have to take the initiative. We will stop all dealings with Leon and only contact him when it becomes necessary in the future,” Kagali clarified.

“But even if that’s the case, we don’t have to intentionally do something that suspicious...” Teare mumbled.

“That ain’t the case. It’s so that we could make the Rossos look like the masterminds behind all this. Boss sure is one cruel lad.” Laplace groaned in amazement, as if he had finally noticed the truth.

“Ahahahaha! I’ll take that as a compliment. Laplace is right. I intend to push all responsibility to Elder Granbell.”

“Leon is annoying,” commented Kagali, “but more importantly, he’s extremely cautious. He will definitely suspect us, but he won’t think that ‘Cerberus’ would employ such a crude tactic. Furthermore, he’ll probably clear Demon Lord Rimuru or Luminas of suspicion and wind up with no one to blame. As for the Rosso family, he probably wouldn’t even consider them suspects.”

Yuuki voiced his agreement. “While Leon is indeed cautious, he’s also overconfident in himself. To him, the only value people have is so they can be exploited, and he would never think that they could harm him. That’s why he never investigated the Rosso family in the past. Thus, he probably doesn’t realize that is exactly where the real threat lies.”

“Indeed, the Five Great Elders aren’t really that impressive to be honest, except for those two,” Kagali remarked.

Kagali’s offhand remark confused Teare again. “Two? I thought that Mariabell had already been taken care of. Wouldn’t that leave only Granbell?”

“Looks like you guys didn’t know. Within the Rosso family, there are three people that you cannot underestimate,” Kagali quickly corrected.

Mariabell had died, leaving two remaining. They knew this from information gathered by ‘Cerberus.’

“Well, technically this last person isn’t one of the Five Elders. The rumor is that the Count of the Cidre Border has a subordinate, a real tough character,” Yuuki divulged, smiling wryly as he shared the information with his companions.

The Count of the Cidre Border was in charge of safeguarding the northern realm of the Kingdom of Ingracia. The land had been protected by a guardian for generations.

This guardian wore a mask and armor that covered him from head to toe. No one knew about his true identity, and he was a mystery who answered directly to Granbell. Even though he was not one of the Five Great Elders, anyone who knew about him wouldn’t dare cross him.

Yuuki originally heard about this masked man from Damrada. “Even Damrada said ‘though I haven’t actually fought the guy, I’m not sure I would win.’ It’s quite telling of his strength. After all, Damrada had only spoken highly of Hinata and no one else.”

To Yuuki’s knowledge, there were only three people within the Western Nations that Damrada was wary of: Hinata, Mariabell, and that man.

From Damrada’s viewpoint, compared to the head of the Five Elders, Granbell, that mysterious man was much more difficult to deal with.

Damrada the Gold, was one of the leaders of the secret organization ‘Cerberus.’ Yuuki trusted him as a good companion and leader, so if he said that the man was rather powerful, then they definitely couldn’t ignore him.

Laplace tried to make sense of everything. “What’s the deal with this guy then?”

“I’m not sure. I’ve never met him. But apparently the north is peaceful all thanks to that man. According to Damrada, he had witnessed him fighting against the demons from the northern realm.”

Yuuki’s words shocked everyone.

While Kagali and Misha caught wind of this information beforehand, they still couldn’t help but be shocked, nonetheless.

It was absolutely mind-blowing.

“I heard that that man’s name is ‘Razul.’ Elder Granbell gave him this name personally.”

“You mean Elder Granbell—”

“Named him?”

“Eh, then could it be...”

“Looks like Kagali-sama did not know this either. Indeed, Damrada claims that Razul apparently is not human,” Misha explained.

Yuuki added some more information. “Yup, that’s what Damrada told me. Apparently, his mask and armor aren’t equipment, but his actual body.”

However, this meant nothing to Laplace and the other clowns.

“That really doesn’t matter though. Just to clarify, when ya said demons from the northern realm, you aren’t talking about that demon lord’s lackeys, are ya?”

“R-right, if it’s that demon lord—‘Lord of Darkness’—the western continent would be in ashes already...”

Laplace and Kagali normally wouldn’t look so panicked, but no one made fun of them.

Neither did Yuuki.

“Don’t be so nervous. I guess you are really afraid of Demon Lord Guy Crimson. That aside, regarding your question, the demons from the northern realm are obviously Demon Lord Guy’s men. It seems that Guy has permitted his subordinates to go off and invade human society for their own amusement. To demons, it’s like a game, though the ones being attacked would hardly agree to that sentiment. However, Razul made it so that they were blocked outside Ingracia’s border.”

That man had managed to defeat armies of demons by himself and protected human society.

Listening to just how powerful the man was, everyone went fell silent and still except for Yuuki. “While I also found it rather unbelievable, I still think it’s true. That being said, Demon Lord Guy never fights seriously, which is why the Western Nations are at peace. Regardless, this ‘Razul’ does pose quite the threat.”

“He seems pretty reckless. I’d never be able to do something like that,” confessed Laplace. Everyone slowly started to recover from the onslaught of shocking information.

“W-well, now that we know this guy is strong, what does it have to do with Leon? Are we planning to lure Leon to the north and fight that guy?” Teare asked.

Hearing this, Yuuki smiled happily. “Well, about that, let’s get back to where we left off. Just as I’ve said, the Rossos have always held on to their trump card ‘Razul.’ Since they never knew when the demons would attack, they couldn’t move their pawn away from the north because it was acting as a deterrent.”

That was the reason why Mariabell didn’t account ‘Razul’ in her plan. After all, he was a strategic piece who served Elder Granbell directly. He was not someone that even Mariabell could order around.

It wasn’t like Yuuki had only found out about that man recently. The reason why they didn’t utilize this ‘Razul’ despite knowing his strength was because an opportunity never emerged.

If they were to use him without carefully considering it first, then Guy’s men could decimate the western continent. Yuuki wanted to avoid this possibility and therefore insisted on not doing anything about the northern realm.

However—

The situation had changed.

“Now let’s get to the crux of the matter. I had a meeting with Granbell and made a deal with the old man. I’ve informed you all of what we spoke about before.” Yuuki’s smile disappeared after he finished talking.

Everyone nodded, and Kagali spoke in his place:

“The true identity of that God everyone worships in the Western Holy Church is just who we suspected. Furthermore, Granbell was extremely saddened by the passing of Mariabell. This is why he has decided to collaborate with Yuuki-sama.”

“What a foolish old man.”

“Quiet now, Laplace. Yuuki-sama was asked to do a job, we are preparing according to this plan!”

Yuuki and Granbell's secret meeting.

Its content was—

.....

.....

...

Yuuki informed Granbell of Mariabell's death.

Mariabell attempted to challenge Demon Lord Rimuru and suffered a major defeat. As a last resort, she attempted to overload the magic power core and due to the subsequent explosion, she was killed on site.

It was the same story that Yuuki told Rimuru. He had thought about lying on the matter before, but he figured it was best not to. Since Rimuru no longer suspected him, Yuuki didn't want to accidentally disrupt the status quo.

Even though Yuuki couldn't predict how Granbell would react upon learning of Mariabell's death, he believed that he could still handle him in a fight. Even if Granbell was the guardian of humanity and one of the Seven Luminaries, at this point, he was nothing more than a sad old man drowning in his desire for power—or at least that was how Yuuki saw it. Although Granbell was still a force to be reckoned with, he was a shadow of his former self, someone that Yuuki could defeat.

There were, however, guards at the venue where they met. In addition to that, there were also some otherworlders among them as well. It would be unwise to antagonize all of them. Still, even under these circumstances, Yuuki was behaving very calmly.

Now that Mariabell was out of the picture, he only had to worry about 'Razul.' With all these factors, Yuuki no longer planned to hide his true nature and decided to confront Granbell directly.

"Is that so, Mariabell has died..."

"Indeed. We are quite troubled as well. I was controlled by Mariabell and forced to fight Demon Lord Rimuru. Even though my association is a subsidiary to the council and is run from the council's funds, wouldn't that be a violation of our contract? Honestly, I could demand compensation from you guys for stripping me of my free will."

Granbell completely ignored Yuuki and demanded an explanation instead. "What happened between you and Demon Lord Rimuru?"

Yuuki was expecting this sort of reaction to some degree, so he wasn't too displeased.

He simply shrugged and continued, "Nothing that bad. He might suspect you, but he likely thought everything was instigated by Mariabell. I intentionally created this illusion; I hope you won't blame me for that."

"Hmmm..."

Contrary to what Yuuki had predicted, Granbell looked tired.

He closed his eyes and fell silent for a while.

"—I suppose that's it then, Mariabell is dead. The hope of the Rossos has disappeared. In that case, we must use that lord's secret treasure and seek vengeance against Rimuru."

“That lord”? ‘secret treasure’? I have no clue what you’re talking about. Please do not drag me into this anymore than you already have.”

“Kukuku, now, now, Yuuki. You are a smart man, surely you’ve figured this out already.”

“...Figured what out?”

“Hmph! The God of Luminism is Demon Lord Luminas-sama.”

“Oh...”

Yuuki had more or less guessed that already, but he was still shocked to hear this from Granbell. Moreover, he was curious as to why Granbell would suddenly disclose such an important secret.

“What’s your intention for sharing this with me?”

“My intention, you say? That’s a harsh way to put it,” said Granbell. He rose from the sofa, and speaking gravely, “I am acknowledging you. Now that I’ve lost Mariabell, there’s no better candidate for us to entrust the task of safeguarding the Western Nations and humanity’s future than you.”

Yuuki sneered at his words. There was no way he would buy that.

“What nonsense is this? Even if I don’t do anything, Rimuru-san will certainly figure something out. That man really wishes to coexist with humans.”

Negotiations had failed. However, Granbell wasn’t finished.

“Naive, oh how too naive you are. Mariabell has seen the future, but based on what you’ve said, you don’t seem to have the same foresight. That demon lord—that demon lord called Rimuru—I cannot let him live in this world. Luminas-sama has no interest in the human world, and that’s why she can coexist with humanity. But Demon Lord Rimuru is different. That demon lord will make humanity fall and cast the world into chaos. Much blood will be spilt when that time comes.”

“Wow, what incredible foresight you possess. Do you have any evidence to back up your claims?”

“Instinct.”

“Huh? What a bizarre reason.”

“My instincts as an ex-Hero tells me that I must eliminate Demon Lord Rimuru.”

His words surprised Yuuki quite a bit, causing him to scrutinize Granbell.

Granbell said that he used to be a Hero, yet no matter how you looked at him, he appeared to be nothing more than a dying old man. The luxurious clothes, his sharp eyes; he had an overwhelmingly dominant aura that sent shivers down one’s spine and the charisma of a great leader. Yet, when Yuuki looked at Granbell, he could not feel any ‘strength’ from him that could surpass Mariabell’s.

“You say you are a Hero? You shouldn’t joke around like that, you know.”

“Hmph, believe it or not, just answer me this. Are you willing to eliminate Demon Lord Rimuru?”

“Haha, you want my help? Doing something that dangerous serves no purpose at all. I wish to maintain my relationship with—”

“You fool! Now that Mariabell has died, we cannot afford to dally! Even if we let the Empire handle everything, all their higher-ups are overly mysterious. Even those merchants you associate with have little to no credibility.”

“Oh...”

Who's the fool here—Yuuki internally mocked.

Unlike Granbell, Yuuki never placed humanity as his priority. He didn't mind what human society became as long as he gained everything he desired in the end.

There was something bothering him, however, and that was the ‘secret treasure’ Granbell mentioned. It appeared that he intended to use this to defeat Demon Lord Rimuru. It piqued Yuuki’s interest and he wanted to know what it was.

Granbell didn’t care about what Yuuki was thinking and continued to try to rope Yuuki in further. “I’m not asking you to believe me, but we can form a temporary alliance and fight together.”

“I’ll be honest with you, what’s in it for me?”

“I can give you Luminas-sama’s secret treasure.”

“And the treasure is...?”

“The ultimate weapon that was used to seal Veldora.”

“...UHH!”

This revelation came all too suddenly, and Yuuki couldn’t just ignore it.

“From what I’ve gathered, that person is known as the strongest Hero. I never had the opportunity to make direct contact. However, the person is being protected by Luminas-sama in the ‘Holy Ark.’”

“A demon lord protecting a Hero? What kind of a joke is that...”

“Guhaha, don’t be so quick to judge. I was confused at first, but every few hundred years a great war would occur, and I personally witnessed that person in action—a supreme existence capable of eliminating all monsters.”

“Is this person stronger than you at your prime?”

“I was nowhere near it.”

He sounded genuine. Yuuki thought himself as pretty talented at seeing through lies and knew that Granbell spoke the truth. Moreover, he also had a hypothesis as to why this particular Hero left Shizue Izawa behind.

—That Hero is probably restricted by something. Maybe a limited life span? No, the reason doesn’t matter. If I can take the ‘Holy Ark’ from Luminas, I could control the strongest pawn—

Granbell’s mention of this ultimate weapon implied that the Hero was under the control of Luminas. Thus, Luminas must have used some sort of spell to control the Hero.

If that was the case, then if Yuuki could crack the spell...

“How interesting, but I’m not naive enough to take your word for it.”

“I thought as much. I have a proposal. I shall lead the attack and create a distraction inside the Grand Cathedral. It will probably plunge Luminas-sama’s headquarters into chaos, which gives you an opportunity to steal the ‘Holy Ark.’”

This was quite an attractive proposal.

However, it was way too beneficial for Yuuki, which made it suspicious.

“What do you get out of it then? Isn’t Demon Lord Luminas your master? Are you willing to avenge Mariabell even at the cost of betraying Luminas?” he asked doubtfully.

Granbell gave his response with a chilling look on his face.

“Of course. I used to be on good terms with Luminas-sama, but now she has abandoned me. At the end of the day, our relationship was only maintained because of her agreement with me to never antagonize humanity. If she is to collaborate with Demon Lord Rimuru, then Luminas-sama—no, Demon Lord Luminas is nothing more than my enemy.”

There was a sense of animosity in his words.

Even Yuuki felt that. His resolve was quite impressive.

And here I thought he was just a dying old man, but turns out he is still useful. This proposal may be pretty decent after all...

With that thought in his mind, Yuuki began to analyze the situation.

The condition for this to work was that Granbell had to strike first. Therefore, Yuuki could immediately confirm if Granbell had held up his end of the bargain before acting. As a result, there was little chance of being betrayed. On top of that, he would gain access to the strongest pawn in existence. If Granbell had lied, Yuuki had no reason to commit himself to this operation. He could just flee right away.

The worst-case scenario was that Granbell planned to deceive Yuuki and his men and frame them. But, as long as they had eyes on the battle started by Granbell, they could tell if it was real or fake. If they couldn’t even tell whether Granbell was really fighting or not, then they only had themselves to blame.

“Interesting, this all sounds very interesting. I still have some doubts, but considering the gains from this, I suppose it’s fine to take some risks.”

“Guhaha, I knew you’d agree. This is a temporary alliance, and likely our last act together as well. Can I expect you to put in some work?”

“Of course. Since you’ve made all these grand plans for us, I shall give you some trust. What do you intend to do to start this operation?”

“Well, about that—”

The two began to discuss the plan in detail.

And so, the old man controlling the Western Nations and the majin attempting to rule the world forged an alliance.

.....

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...

In the Grand Cathedral, a battle with the full force of the Rosso family would take place.

This plan included the agents of the Foreign Intelligence Agency of Siltrosso and the surviving members of ‘Blood Shadow.’ Among them were many otherworlders summoned by the

Rosso family. Moreover, ‘Razul,’ would be recalled from the northern border as well.

“I am curious how strong they will be when all of the Rossos move out,” Kagali muttered to herself with an evil grin.

Everyone present wondered the same thing. “Then, Yuuki-sama, do you know where this ‘Holy Ark’ is hidden?”

“Granbell has already given me comprehensive information about it. But considering that he may be deceiving us, we have to be cautious.”

“I’ll take the honor. Although I ain’t too sure about doing this one alone, can I bring Teare and Footman along?” asked Laplace.

“While I want to say yes, I have another job for Teare.”

“All right, Footman alone should be enough, but what do ya want to do with Teare?”

“She has the most important job this time. By the way, avoid fighting as much as possible. Prioritize the goal of our visit,” Yuuki reminded everyone.

“Since there is the possibility that it’s a trap, you must retreat immediately upon encountering danger,” Kagali added, like a concerned mother fussing over her children.

“We ain’t kids, ya know? We got that covered already,” Laplace replied, full of confidence.

Footman silently nodded along, agreeing with Laplace.

“That’s the spirit. Demon Lord Luminas is Demon Lord Valentine’s master. Since Valentine’s power could rival mine, Luminas’s strength goes without saying. She’s probably stronger than I was during my prime. Do you have a rough idea now, Laplace? Our primary goal isn’t to steal the ‘Holy Ark,’ but to gather as much information as possible with the least amount of risk.”

“Don’t ya worry. We don’t owe that ol’ man Granbell anything. He never hired the Moderate Clown Troupe either, so we’ll just do our best within our abilities.”

“You have a point... I’ll be at your aid as well this time. After all, this ‘Holy Ark’ is what Granbell considered the weapon for the final battle.” After Kagali shared her concerns, Laplace and Yuuki quickly reassured her.

“Ya don’t have faith in us? That hurts a bit...”

“No, that’s not what I mean. It’s only natural for the place to be highly guarded and secured with traps. I’m only doing this to be certain.” While Yuuki had confidence in Laplace and the others, he had no idea what could happen this time. If he didn’t strategize appropriately, the entire plan would fail. *That* he could not accept. “I will secretly trail behind everyone. The operation shall commence at your own pace.”

“I see, so we are supposed to stall the enemies! That’s quite smart.”

“Worst case scenario, you guys escape in the midst of chaos while I grab the objective.” At that, Yuuki cracked a smile.

The plan was flawless. He had discussed it with Granbell several times and confirmed that Granbell was indeed serious. This was an opportunity of a lifetime, and they wouldn’t get something like this again in the future.

No matter the cost, we must get our hands on this ‘Holy Ark’—Yuuki thought decisively.

“By the way, is this thing really that good? What even is this ‘Holy Ark’...” Laplace questioned, somewhat dubious.

“Ah, I heard it contains the Hero—the one that sealed Veldora. She is under the control of Luminas, so I plan to analyze the spell on the ark and make her my pawn.”

“Hah?”

“It can’t be... Is this real?”

“Eh, what is this all about?”

“Hehehe...”

Yuuki’s next comment stupefied his audience. “This prize is immeasurably valuable. Now that we have settled on moving to the East, I shall figure out the secret to dominating the ultimate Hero.”

Now understanding just how valuable the ‘Holy Ark’ was, they were all excited. Misha received orders to prepare for their move to the Eastern headquarters, yet even she was flustered at the news.

This was to be expected.

If they could control that Hero, the individual strong enough to seal a True Dragon, the strongest species in the world... ‘Cerberus’ and Yuuki’s ambition—world domination—would no longer be a far-fetched fantasy.

“No wonder Boss is still cautious,” Laplace mumbled.

“Indeed, if that’s the case, please allow me to join you in researching the matter.”

“Haha, you are getting ahead of yourself, Kagali. It’s dangerous to believe everything Granbell says, even if I personally think it has decent enough credibility. Anyhow, failure is not tolerated.”

Kagali was confident in herself. “Yuuki-sama can rest assured; don’t you guys drag him down now.”

“Gotcha.”

“Hehehe, just leave it to me!”

Laplace and Footman knew the full weight of their duty and became motivated. Seeing the two in this eager state, Yuuki felt very satisfied.

He then turned to Teare. “Now, Teare...I didn’t expect Demon Lord Leon to join in on the matter, but it’d be rude of us to not welcome him with a warm gift.”

Due to Leon’s involvement, Yuuki made additional plans to account for this factor. Had Leon not moved out, they would have only observed the situation and made minor contributions to the fight.

But now that Leon was heading to the holy land too, the battlefield would be chaotic.

That was undeniable.

“Since we lured Leon in, we must make him think that the Rossos are using ‘Cerberus’ as well. This way, we can misguide them into thinking that we are trustworthy—”

“And we should go and give Demon Lord Rimuru the impression that Leon is a cruel tyrant that wanted to capture the children?”

“Yep. For that to work, I need the kids that were meant to be given to Demon Lord Leon.”

“Ah! So you want me to handle that?”

“Correct. Although you will have to use your real identity, if it’s you, I’m sure you won’t mess it up.”

“Umm, I got it! I’ll throw Demon Lord Rimuru off with my excellent acting skills.”

Teare was exceptionally enthusiastic, yet Yuuki shook his head dismissively.

“I’ll be looking forward to it, but that alone won’t be enough. Demon Lord Rimuru is extremely calculating, and he has abnormally sharp instincts. He might realize that we were behind all this. That’s why I’ve discussed with Granbell beforehand—”

Yuuki lowered his voice and gave Teare her orders.

The majins’ malice grew day by day.

The day of destiny was closing in.



Not a single shred of light illuminated the room. Deep within it...

“Obviously, I need...I need to eliminate Demon Lord Rimuru, and Demon Lord Leon, and...Luminas-sama too—“ Granbell muttered to himself. His eyes darkened, filled with bottomless hatred.

Granbell dedicated over a thousand years of his life to humanity. Even though his goal in life had changed, aiming to become the ruling class and gain absolute power and domination, Granbell still wished for ‘peace to human society.’ His resolve was unquestionable.

Over time, he had to endure countless betrayals, the deaths of his companions that supported him and endless suffering. But despite everything, Granbell’s tenacity enabled him to overcome every single challenge he had faced in order to protect humanity in this world.

While he had Demon Lord Luminas’s aid, Granbell’s own effort was irreplaceable. In the distant past, he used to talk about dreams and ideals with his companions. Making promises with the people that gradually passed on to the other world.

When the hope of his family, Mariabell, was born, he was just one more step away from accomplishing his dream.

Even then...Granbell had lost hope.

The East and the West.

Humankind needed to stand united against the demon lords, or else, humanity would not survive.

Nowadays, the demon lords had formed the ‘Octagram,’ and their power was at its prime. Although the ‘Ten Great Demon Lords’ were reduced to eight, their power hadn’t diminished

but rather increased instead.

The demons let loose by the ‘Lord of Darkness’ Guy Crimson plundered the northern lands like it was their playground.

‘Continent’s Wrath’ Dagruel had his eyes set on human society as well, because of his ambition for territorial expansion. As of yet, he had avoided conflict with the ‘Queen of Nightmares’ and did not act against her. However, it was unknown how much longer he could tolerate it.

In addition, power beyond human comprehension was intervening within the Eastern Empire.

Granbell suspected that it was the doing of the ‘Sleeping Ruler’ behind the scenes, but he had no evidence to back it up.

Facing against all these powerful beings, Granbell needed to protect humanity from harm.

Yet this wish of his was also—

“That brat had some boring goal too. He could take the reins if he wants. I am already tired...”

Granbell didn’t know how much longer he would live either. Now that Mariabell had died, there was no one qualified enough to take on the role of Granbell’s successor.

Without a mediator, humanity would soon walk the path of destruction. They would show their true nature and desires, even beginning to slaughter each other. That was simply how humans were as a species.

A long, long time ago, Granbell’s wife, who Mariabell resembled a lot, was killed by these kinds of people.

All for the sake of the children who survived, Granbell suffered his pains and sorrows alone this entire time, yet his life was about to come to an end.

“This world has taken everything from me...it is best that it falls—”

His quiet but passionate words were genuine. This was Granbell’s heart speaking without a single false pretense.

He had already been consumed by insanity.

And so, he had made up his mind.

Granbell had gone mad.



That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

**Chapter
4**

**Western
Turmoil**

Chapter 4

Western Turmoil

Demon Lord Leon left to meet with a difficult character, a woman with flowing silver hair and a distinctive pair of long, pointy ears. She sank deeply into a luxurious chair, beautiful like a scene straight out of a painting. She was a high elf and the gorgeous Emperor of the Sorcerer's Dynasty Sarion—Elmesia El-Ru Sarion.

The two of them sat facing each other under the gazebo set in a breathtaking garden. A faint trail of steam drifted from the teacup that had just been served, and its rich fragrance was relaxing. Maids waited by the side to refill the tea before it got cold. The two silently observed each other for a while.

Elmesia spoke first. “As always, you are a man of few words, Leon-kun. It’s been so long since you visited me; it’s gonna be quite boring if you continue being like that.”

Her tone was rather intimate. It was only natural, since Elmesia and Leon had known each other for an extensive period of time. Not only were they close as rulers and important business partners, but as friends as well. The fact that Leon was permitted to enter this venue showed a glimpse of the level of their friendship. He was already acquainted with Elmesia even before he became a demon lord. At the time, Leon was still called a Hero and had operated within this land—within the boundaries of Sarion. The two had been friends ever since.

“I wouldn’t smile considering the predicament I’m in,” Leon said.

“But I seldom see you smile as is.”

“Does that really matter? I don’t have the time for it. We should cut to the chase—”

“Ah, right, right, I got some desserts from Yoshida-san’s shop, do you want some?” Elmesia offered, interrupting Leon. As if on cue, her servants pulled up the dining cart and began promptly serving the cakes.

“I’m not a fan of sweets.”

“Hmm—but this is soooo delicious. Ah, the cookie seems to have tea leaves blended in. It’s not that sweet. I heard they called this a matcha cookie.”

“—Fine, I’ll eat then.”

It’s no use arguing with Elmesia, Leon judged based on his own experience. The same could

be said for Demon Lord Ramiris. Leon felt that all these difficult characters had a common trait: they were all woefully stubborn. And as a result, Leon had given up on them a long time ago. Suppressing the anxiety welling within, he gingerly reached out for a cookie.

“So sweet...”

“Ara? Is that *still* too sweet for you?”

“No, it’s not too bad.”

“Ho—you really aren’t the straightforward type. Anyway, it doesn’t matter. What brings you here today? Are you going to ask me whether or not I’ve seen some kids in Demon Lord Rimuru’s kingdom?” Elmesia guessed.

Leon was relieved. *She’s just like always. I can never let my guard down against this woman. Has she already gotten hold of my situation?*

With that being said, this conversation would go a lot faster. Leon adjusted his approach immediately.

“Yes. Demon Lord Rimuru seems to have a rather strong opinion about me. It’s likely because one of my previous subordinates came into contact with him and got something into his head.”

“I am aware. Shizue Izawa, was it? That champion nicknamed ‘The Conqueror of Flames.’ She is even quite famous in this country.”

“How did you know? My relationship with Shizu should have been highly classified—”

“Oops, how about we get to the real business? Aren’t you short on time?”

Leon felt a little irritated.

And who do you think is wasting my precious time? He wanted to shout at Elmesia but managed to hold back. Leon decided to cut to the chase.

“Right, then, I suppose. I’ve been planning to send an invitation to Rimuru in the near future. I want to resolve our misunderstanding. Moreover, antagonizing that guy would be way too dangerous.”

It was quite rare for Leon to be dragged around the ear like this. He could hold his own in conversation even while confronting Guy, yet he was hopeless against Elmesia.

“Ara? If it’s you, surely you would be able to win against Rimuru, no?” Elmesia asked Leon almost teasingly.

But Leon wasn’t so easily provoked, either.

“It’s not a matter of whether I can win or not; it’s meaningless to antagonize him. There isn’t any benefit to it, and on the contrary, there are way too many downsides.”

Haven’t you come to the same conclusion?—Leon conveyed with a sharp glance.

To that, Elmesia agreed, “I suppose. Moreover, forging an alliance with him would be greatly beneficial. Even though I fear the possibility that he would change his mind, I still decided to move forward with the alliance anyways.”

Leon, naturally, would be inclined to see things the same way. He’d guessed that Elmesia would make a judgement along those lines.

“Indeed. I personally would welcome a negotiable demon lord. Considering Rimuru, when

compared to the other demon lords—or rather, when compared to the former demon lords Karion and Frey—he's a better candidate to ally with. However, there is one problem—”

“You mean what you've been doing all this time?”

“...”

No—While that's what Leon *wanted* to say, considering his current circumstances, he couldn't deny it. In reality, Leon indeed had treated Shizu poorly, which led to this rocky relationship with Rimuru.

“Fine, it doesn't matter,” Elmesia continued. “I will make my move on the matter soon. If Tempest were to start a war with El Dorado, we would be very troubled, too. By the way, you were going to ask me about the children, right? I did see them. They seemed to be enjoying themselves during the festival.”

“Is this true? Then—”

“Ara ara, one step at a time now. Mmh, this cake is sooooo delicious!”

Leon almost lost his usual calm demeanor.

That's why I didn't want to come here, Leon cursed internally. But now wasn't the time for that.

“Well then, among the children, was there a young girl called Chloe?”

Asking straight on was a very risky move. Leon had always been very cautious, not knowing whether Elmesia would betray him or not. He always avoided doing things that could expose Chloe to danger. However, Leon also treated Elmesia as a friend. Under these dire circumstances, he didn't want to hold back. With all that in mind, Leon decided to reveal his secret.

“Have you finally decided to trust me? Very well, Demon Lord Leon, since you are willing to believe me, I shall generously offer you a helping hand,” Elmesia announced to Leon, suddenly changing her demeanor.

And so, the two began to exchange their information.

There were five children under the protection of Demon Lord Rimuru: Kenya Misaki, Ryota Sekiguchi, Gail Gibson, Alice Rondo, and finally—Chloe Aubert. The name of the girl Leon had been searching for all his life.

“—Did you know this from the start?”

“You're always a man of few words. Aren't you afraid that people may misunderstand you? You always keep your thoughts to yourself and expect to carry all the responsibilities on your own. Isn't this why even the champion Shizue Izawa never trusted you, ex-Hero-san?”

Had Leon been willing to be more genuine with Shizu, the relationship between the two may have been very different.

Elmesia was being sarcastic about it. In truth, she knew Leon had a kind heart, but knowing this was why she couldn't stand how he had become a fearful demon lord of this world.

“Hmph,” Leon replied, “quit with the boring speculation. I've sacrificed a ton—a shit ton of people for my own sake. If I can save her, I don't give a shit what method I use. I'll take any blame that comes with it.”

That was Leon's genuine thought. This man used to be the Hero who protected humanity. When he realized kind deeds would no longer achieve his goals, he was willing to bloody his hands to get the job done. At that point it was too late to just sweep it under the rug. He didn't say these things as an excuse for his actions, it was simply what Leon lived by, his belief.

"You are as stubborn as a mule. Even Chloe-chan would dislike you being like this."

"Shut up already. Then, does Rimuru do a good job caring for the kids? If so, it seems like there's some dipshit who wants to lure me out for whatever scheme they have."

"Is it the Rossos, or maybe Cerberus? I even have my suspicions on Demon Lord Luminas"—isn't that what you are worried about, Leon-kun?"

"Just *how* much do you know?" Leon muttered, feeling powerless and utterly baffled. Re-confirmed the massive intelligence network Elmesia possessed, he felt it was right to have asked for her help. He genuinely thought Elmesia was terrifying, not in terms of her combat ability, but her political strength. Indeed, anyone who could push Leon against the wall was no mere simpleton.

"Right then, I'll stop teasing you. According to my investigation, Tempest and Lubelius are free from strife. Demon Lord Luminas ostensibly decided to abide by the treaty she made with Demon Lord Rimuru in earnest. That is readily apparent by observing the actions of Holy Knight Commander Hinata. However, it is a lot harder to judge on the side of Cerberus. That organization is a complete mystery, and the higher-ups of it never really worked hand-in-hand either. They seem to have deliberately created this impression for outsiders, so the information I could get from within the organization was limited. Let's reserve our opinion on the matter for now. On the other hand, the Rosso family is certainly bad news. I heard that they've deployed all their reserve forces in the north to plan a secret assault on Lubelius. Even the agents of the Foreign Intelligence Agency of Siltrosso have all come out in full force. The whole area has been in a state of unrest because of it."

The defenses of the Northern countries were stretched thin, and Lubelius faced a war at their doorstep. These were the two major locations Elmesia pointed out. However, the information she just gave Leon had the potential to stir up great amounts of trouble.

"Then Guy would move out."

That being *the* problem in question. To be more precise, Demon Lord Guy wouldn't move out, however, every one of his subordinates under the sun would rampage. If Guy were to move out personally, no matter who confronted him, the world would likely be destroyed.

Elmesia knew this all too well herself. But even if it were just his subordinates, it would still present a major crisis for humanity. The simple reason being that among Guy's subordinates were the Green and Blue Primordials.

"Indeed. This problem has just gotten a bit too scary. If no one were to go and stop Guy's subordinates, the Western Nations may be destroyed."

Elmesia gazed at Leon, looking particularly troubled.

"Oi, I...!"

"Leon-kun, you're back to speaking in your old tone like from before, aren't you?"

“Uh, I was just...”

“You don’t have to act tough and play cool all the time. It’s so cute when you do something like this, but I don’t have the time to tease you right now.”

She even teased him during times like these. Leon was truly amazed by how easy-going Elmesia was.

“Sorry, I’m simply fixed on my goal. I’d like to negotiate with Guy, but that guy’s got a bad temper. If I intervene without careful planning, it may cause the opposite effect.”

“I understand. If we don’t show him that we would fight back with our own strength, that demon lord would likely lose interest in humanity. Right now, the Holy Knight Order is in a bind, so I have no choice but to send the Magus to reinforce the guards of the Northern realm. You can also hop on our dragon ship to get you to Lubelius.”

“...Can I really?”

“Of course, didn’t I tell you to take your time? Now then, you are on a clock, right? Hurry up and get going.”

The situation was more dire than Leon had imagined. Despite how strong he was, he could not teleport to somewhere he had never been before. Moreover, Lubelius was protected by a barrier. If he were to head to Lubelius now, air transport was probably the fastest.

Leon gratefully accepted Elmesia’s proposal with a, “Sorry for the trouble.”

“If only you were always so straightforward. Right right, I think this goes without saying, but Cerberus definitely wanted to drag you into all this. It’s one hundred percent a trap!”

To Elmesia’s warning, Leon replied with two words: “I know.”

Elmesia answered, “I figured as much,” with a tinge of sadness in her smile.

Leon was just like this in the past. Never showing weakness in front of anyone, aiming to achieve his goal no matter what got in his way. That young man had an unbreakable will. He lived his life like a true Hero. It was the same when he became a demon lord.

And he’s just as clumsy. Nothing has changed since back then...

Elmesia had conflicted feelings about him.

Before boarding the dragon ship, Leon suddenly recalled a warning he meant to relay to Elmesia. Turning towards her, he said: “Consider this a token of gratitude from me. The Yellow Primordial has disappeared. So be careful yourself.”

“Huh?!” Elmesia blurted in shock.

Leon cracked up seeing the look on her face.

“Wasn’t your hobby collecting information? Looks like you didn’t know that. I’m happy though, as it seems like I was of some help to you.”

Leaving these words, Leon savored the taste of victory as he left.

After Leon departed—

“This can’t be true, right? Three primordials, and it had to happen when half of the Magus was out. What the hell have I gotten myself into... But, had it not been the case, Leon-kun likely

would not have acted either. I guess I still have to sharpen my observational skills..."

Everyone just does as they please—Elmesia thought to herself, holding her head in her hands.



It was a sunny morning. Relishing the warm breeze, I felt it would be a wonderful day. However, my prediction turned out—

"Th-this is a disaster! Someone has broken into the Grand Cathedral and currently being fought against!" a novice Holy Knight-san barged in, panicked.

My prediction was *way* off.

"Calm down. How many men do the enemies have; how many casualties have we sustained?"

Hinata was having breakfast with me. Her reaction was extraordinarily calm. Seeing her like this made me realize again that it'd be horrifying going against her.

"Yes ma'am! Enemy numbers are unknown, however, it's certain that it is close to a hundred men. They're at least as strong as rank B-plus. Seeing how they were acting, they know the layout of our nation very well."

Nearly a hundred B-plus ranked soldiers were a force to be reckoned with. He also mentioned that they were familiar with the layout of the city—they were most likely Granbell's men.

"—Regarding casualties, several novice knights were injured. There have been several deaths and wounded among the Pope's Imperial Guards. Fortunately, no civilians have been harmed," the envoy answered swiftly, describing heavy losses.

Had this happened in my nation, I would have lost my mind (again). But since I was a guest here, it would be best that I stayed out of other people's business. That sounded quite cold, but this wasn't my country to run.

"Is that so? Then our enemy must be the head of the Seven Luminaries, Sun Priest Gran and the Rosso family under his command. We must not underestimate these enemies, I'm sure their combat strength is far greater than they let on. Inform the Holy Knights awaiting orders to prepare for a full-scale assault."

The enemies reportedly sustained a number of casualties too, a lot more than Lubelius. However, Hinata did not dare lower her guard.

That's the Hinata I know, I thought to myself, and impressed as I was, I asked the burning question that was on my mind this whole time.

"By the way, you mentioned it happened in the Grand Cathedral, is that the place where we set up all the instruments?"

If that were the case, we would have a *big* problem.

Yesterday, the band members set up their instruments at this Grand Cathedral and did a rehearsal. I figured that there weren't exactly *a lot* of Grand Cathedrals in the nation, so I had a bad feeling about this. And yet it was in times like these that my prediction—

“There is no other facility called the Grand Cathedral except for that.”

—Tended to come true...

I mean, it was infallible.

How annoying, I thought to myself as I turned to Diablo.

His smile was unfazed, indicating “No problem” to me. Diablo seemed to be contacting Venom through ‘Telepathy Net’ as soon as the envoy had arrived. Truly competent in every sense of the word.

Venom’s response was perfectly prompt as well. The members of the band were already inside the Grand Cathedral; however, the defenses around them were flawless. No suspicious individuals had been able to approach them, and they carried on their final rehearsal, as planned.

“With all hell breaking loose around them, those guys sure are bold.”

“Kufufufufu, that’s only natural. If they couldn’t even handle something this trivial, they wouldn’t be qualified to be my subordinates.”

This man’s confidence was something I could only hope to attain.

“Never mind that, let’s not idle here and head to the Grand Cathedral at once,” I said with a pretentious air.

I opened a portal to the cathedral using ‘Spatial Domination.’ I had gotten pretty good at using it, so even when I was here—inside Lubelius, which was protected by a holy barrier—I could still use it without a hitch. It was probably because they didn’t put up barriers that would prevent teleportation inside.

“—Phew, I don’t even have the energy to mock you anymore, just take me there too,” Hinata-san said, looking exhausted.

Why are you so tired this early in the morning? Although I felt like I’d get scolded for saying so, possibly even considered a creep, so I decided to just keep quiet. I wanted to make strides in improving myself too and outlive the days of being called an air-head.

A man named Nicolaus came along as well. The fact that he was preparing breakfast for us led me to believe that he was a servant at first. As it turned out, he was the high cardinal of the Western Holy Church. He was wearing some sort of a high-class robe beneath his apron, so this guy was legit. But why was such a big shot character serving Hinata? I felt that there were more and more mysteries as we spoke.

—Uh, but they probably weren’t that important.

The children were in the Grand Cathedral as well. They were very energetic this morning, so I let them go first. Even though the defenses were thorough, this world was full of surprises and I had no way to predict what might happen. I adjusted my mood a bit and headed to the Grand Cathedral in a hurry.



A cacophony of intense fights could be heard outside when I arrived in the Grand Cathedral, and quickly spotted the frightened band members.

At that moment, Shion raised her voice and shouted, “Don’t worry! Have you all forgotten what Rimuru-sama said? He said he would guarantee your safety, that you shouldn’t worry and should just focus on your performance. Didn’t Rimuru-sama say that? Yet you guys are not continuing your practice, how is that fair?”

Eh...can't you cut them some slack?

Shion-san, have you not realized this is a battlefield? Telling the non-combatant members of the band to not be afraid, no matter how I see it, that’s too harsh—

“Shion-sama, my apologies, looks like I was panicking a bit.”

—Eh?

Takt, after being scolded by Shion, regained his composure out of nowhere. He turned his eyes to the band members and raised his conductor baton.

They seemed to have noticed my presence as their eyes found me. Not sure if that was the reason or not, but the band members were seemingly at ease and calm again. There were even smiles on everyone’s faces.

“Then let’s get back to practice!”

It looked like Takt wasn’t worried at all whether the other members would object or not. He began to practice again; the rest of the members followed almost as if nothing had happened. And then, with fine coordination, beautiful notes of music began to fill the air. It was a powerful and intense performance which overshadowed even the sound of the fighting. I couldn’t help but feel proud of the band members. Fighting with a score in the background; it almost felt like a stage drama.

But it went without saying that this was authentic combat.

I found the children and told them not to run around.

“You have me here arinsu?”

Kumara was filled with fighting spirit, but I told her to calm down. Right now, Kumara only had one tail, so she was by herself. She was just like the kids; it was too soon for them to engage in actual combat.

I ordered Shion and Diablo to protect the children together.

“What does Rimuru-sama plan to do?”

“Me? I’m gonna get rid of the troublemakers. Hinata and her men seem to be fighting against the guys behind all the plots, so I’m going to help kick them out.”

Even though we were guests here and shouldn’t intervene, seeing how hard-working the

band was, I wished to ensure the success of the concert tomorrow.

“—Understood.”

“Hmm?” Shion looked at Diablo in shock. “Second Secretary, what happened? You actually obeyed Rimuru-sama’s order, that’s surprising.”

Umm, I’m quite surprised myself.

I thought Diablo would say that he was coming with me. That said, this would be better since it would avoid spreading the commotion.

“I’ll be counting on you guys here then!”

“Very well, may you triumph in battle,” Diablo cheered.

“Ah...” Shion seemed to want to object but wasn’t able to say anything in front of Diablo’s face.

Seeing this as an opportunity, I turned a blind eye and headed straight into the battlefield.



The fighting was chaotic at the entrance of the Grand Cathedral. The entire gate was wrecked with nothing left. There were over a hundred people fighting. The most eye-catching part of the fight was the person that Hinata was confronting.

It was an old grandpa, yet his back was ramrod straight and maintained a beautiful stance. He was wearing what seemed to be a very fancy suit. His eyes were sharp and had an aura that showed he was no average person. He was neither monster, nor human. Seeing the dominating aura coming off him, I could tell he bore unusual power.

“Who is that man?”

“Granbell Rosso. That old man is the head of the Five Great Elders, leader of the Rosso family.”

“So that’s who he is...”

I suddenly realized upon hearing the explanation.

“Maria, go find Luminas-sama and bring her here. If she resists, it’s fine to kill her.”

In response to Granbell’s words, a woman came out. Her appearance was reminiscent of Mariabell, a woman in her prime. The two seemed to be related by blood, but I’m not sure whether they were mother and daughter.

«Answer. Based on genetic analysis, there is no evidence of them being blood related.»

How can you tell that just by looking... Never mind.

If it weren’t coincidence that she looked so much like Mariabell, the problem would be how strong this woman called Maria was. She didn’t look strong enough to fight against Luminas; was Granbell serious with his command?

“Understood. Executing order.”

This woman called Maria didn't even turn her head at us before leaving straightaway. Her reaction was very robotic, and it was obvious that she was different from a normal human being. I wasn't sure whether she really was as strong as it seemed, but I figured Luminas would be the one to test that.

I just wanted Granbell to leave soon. If we could end this with just a conversation, then it'd be fine. But if I couldn't convince him, I'd take care of him quickly.

"Granbell-san, nice to meet you, I am Demon Lord Rimuru." You gotta start a conversation with a greeting. It was hard to build a good relationship at this point, but I still approached in a friendly tone.

"So you are Demon Lord Rimuru? How dare you kill my Mariabell..."

"Oi oi oi, it was you guys who—"

Ah, I see; I was indeed getting flack as well. But Mariabell's death was purely an accident, and it didn't seem right to blame it on me. Yet if I told him that I didn't mean to kill Mariabell, it would probably sound like an excuse. To be fair, had Mariabell not picked on me, it would never have happened.

With that being said, Granbell probably wouldn't hear me out. Yuuki likely already got to him. At this point, I knew the guy was deceitful, so I could imagine what he would say about me. This was no time for us to negotiate and make peace.

«Report. Deduced that either way, the two sides are incompatible.»

All right, that was the case.

Mariabell was one such example, and I thought this Granbell would be hard to coexist with as well. If that was the case, then I could only use strength to make him yield.

"—Will it even work trying to explain this to you? Let's use strength to decide which side is right!"

"Kukuku, you talk tough. But by the looks of it, you are nothing more than a newbie demon lord, do you think you can win against me? I'll take care of you later, meanwhile just stay put there and watch your friends get beaten down."

Did he seriously just call me a newbie demon lord?

Wasn't he Luminas's subordinate? This man had quite the ego. Right, I supposed he had a point. A monster's strength varied depending on the amount of time they had lived...but shouldn't you at least be a *bit* cautious against a demon lord? I guess this grandpa was a lot more conceited than I expected.

Some people ran out to challenge Granbell.

"There is no need for Hinata-sama and Demon Lord Rimuru-dono to strike. Head Priest Gran, we shall be your opponents!" Nicolaus shouted.

Wasn't he some big shot higher-up—ah, now I remember. Cardinal Nicolaus was the one who set the trap to capture Granbell and used 'Disintegration' on him. No wonder why he was self-assured.

Someone responded to Nicolaus's call; it was the three captains of the Holy Knight Order.

They were Vice Commander Leonard, Captain Arnaud, and Ritase. Fritz and Bacchus were currently away, training in the labyrinth. Had I known that something like this would happen—ah, I forgot that I wasn't one to be dishing out judgement here.

"Hinata-sama, please sit tight and watch me in action!" With Nicolaus's order, Leonard sprang into action. In addition, Arnaud and Ritase began assaulting Granbell at the same time. Were the three captains buying time for Nicolaus to cast the deadly 'Disintegration'?

This attack plan seemed a bit over the top, but that probably just meant that Nicolaus was on maximum alert against Granbell.

Leonard was using his elegant sword arts to distract Granbell. Arnaud understood right away and cooperated with Leonard's strikes. Ritase was on the side, providing support for the two.

Under normal circumstances, with these three coordinating attacks, it'd be a guaranteed victory. Yet when pitted against Granbell, he seemed to be handling it all with ease. What's worse was that Granbell seemed uninterested in interrupting Nicolaus's chanting, and instead, used smooth and almost ballet-like strikes against the three. There was not a shred of panic on his face. He barely broke a sweat taking on the three's attacks.

He is on a completely different level—I thought to myself.

Nicolaus's chanting had entered its final verse. He used the chanting to interfere with the physical world and expanded layers of magic circles. Trapped in a prison of light formed by magic circles and mantra, Granbell remained completely unfazed.

When the casting of 'Disintegration' was complete, there was no way anyone could defend against the beam of light. The beam would shatter even the soul of the target at lightning speed.

Or at least, this was how it should have worked.

Yet this common sense was shattered.

"Mmmh, very fine chanting. Perhaps this is the best example of one's understanding of the flow of magic." Granbell said in an incredibly cruel tone. The arrogance in his tone sounded like something a teacher would say to a student.

And then—

Hearing his words, Hinata's face turned pale as she muttered, "Could it be..." She seemed to have realized something but wasn't quick enough to inform Nicolaus.

"Die! Disintegration!"

A beam of light flashed and went straight for Granbell—but to everyone's surprise, its trajectory changed and was absorbed by the sword in Granbell's hand.

It happened all too fast. Even with senses accelerated to a million times greater than normal, one would still have a hard time capturing this detail.

Yet I knew. I knew full well what had just happened... Because I had seen that same exact technique used before. It was the ultimate holy sword art, 'Melt Slash'—the strongest technique developed by Hinata.

"—Everyone, spread out!"

Heeding Hinata's order, the combatants reacted quickly. The swiftness of their actions did

not dishonor their titles, yet they were still too slow. Granbell struck with ‘Melt Slash.’ This act alone sent out a fan-like shockwave.

Hinata dashed out at that instant and blocked Granbell’s sword in front of him. Her movement was impressively fast, but that alone was not enough to block Granbell’s attack entirely.

Hinata took the ‘Melt Slash’ head-on and was sent flying into Nicolaus. She was fine herself, but Nicolaus sustained heavy injuries. Had Hinata’s sword not been the legendary-grade moonlight rapier, both of them would have been obliterated.

The three captains were sent flying away by the shockwave as well and had been lying on the ground since. It looked like that hit knocked them all out.

“Are...are you guys all right?!” Hinata shouted.

It went without saying that no one responded.

Hinata glared at Granbell while some anxiety showed on her face. Even the usually calm and composed Hinata didn’t expect Granbell to be so strong.

The one to answer her question was Granbell, who was meant to be her opponent.

“Huh, it seems that I didn’t manage to kill anyone. Looks like my skill has weakened over the years. You should thank that demon lord too.”

“What? What are you talking about...”

Hinata turned her eyes to me and regained her cool upon realizing something.

“I see, it was you who saved us. Thanks a lot, Rimuru.”

You’re welcome—I nodded slightly to Hinata.

Indeed, it was thanks to my help that the captains were only knocked out. When I realized what was coming, I activated ‘Absolute Defense.’ Otherwise, the three would probably have been obliterated. I thought that I could block the attack perfectly, but that turned out to be wishful thinking.

The ‘Absolute Defense’ of Ultimate Skill ‘Covenant King Uriel’ could block any attack. Although, there were exceptions; for instance, Yuuki’s ‘Anti-Skill.’ I couldn’t get overly dependent on it, though its defensive properties were high enough to be trusted. However, even when it was a perfect Skill to use on myself, when applied to someone else—in fact, multiple other people—its precision took a hit.

For me, it was okay even if some attacks landed, since I had my ‘Infinite Regeneration.’ Any injuries would be quickly regenerated, meaning I could achieve perfect defense.

But it was different for the three captains. This small amount of shockwave that slipped through my ‘Absolute Defense’ sent them to death’s doorstep. It was an extremely close call.

“I never expected anyone other than me to master ‘Melt Slash.’ That was surprising.”

“Heh, what an arrogant thought, Hinata. With enough time and practice, many can reach your level.”

I mean, I could use it too.

Although it was thanks to Raphael-san’s liberal use of ‘Analyze and Assess.’ By the way, the condition for utilizing ‘Melt Slash’ was to first master ‘Disintegration.’ If there truly were several people who managed to reach that level, then I would have to be impressed by humanity.

Actually, now that I thought about it carefully, there was indeed a possibility. There was the Hero who managed to seal Veldora. Therefore, there was nothing strange about the existence of powerful humans. Now that I had become a demon lord, it was best that I watch my back around them.

But now wasn't the time to have idle thoughts.

"And to the Holy Knight captains: you are a bit too useless, ending up on the verge of death after that weak of an attack. In any case, you guys cannot even begin to compare to the master swordsmen of the past, much less stand against me," Granbell proclaimed, sounding like he was convinced about his words. In essence, he declared in front of Hinata that she wasn't on his level.

"What a pathetic joke. I'll trouble you to be my opponent now," Hinata sneered in reply.

Apparently, she'd gotten serious as well. I wouldn't have a chance to take the stage—or so I thought, but I was once again caught up in wishful thinking.

A huge explosion went off inside the Grand Cathedral.

"Is that Razul? I ordered him to destroy the Grand Cathedral, and it looks like he's doing it rather flamboyantly."

"What? You bastard..."

The children and the band members were all inside the Grand Cathedral. Even though I ordered Shion, Diablo, and the other guards there, if they were to start fighting inside, some people may be affected as a result. I wanted to take care of Granbell as soon as possible, and to do that I'd need to get rid of these hindering enemies first.

After settling on the idea, I decided to 'Teleport' back to the Grand Cathedral.

Yet I was interrupted by Granbell, "Demon Lord Rimuru, these people shall be your opponents. Some of them may be your countrymen, but do enjoy yourself now."

Several individuals under Granbell's command showed up.

The word "countrymen" was a bit too worrying; I immediately caught on what he had meant. Their ages varied and consisted of different ethnicities too. At first, the composition seemed to be disorganized, but they all shared one common point in core, and that was that every single one of them possessed a magicule content far exceeding the average person's.

"Otherworlders, huh? I see, no wonder some of them may be Japanese like me as well."

Uh, there's no time to idle around—since more than ten otherworlders were charging at me simultaneously. It looked like they were controlled by a curse like Glenda. Even their free will seemed to have been deprived. Under this state, even if I were to break their curse, they probably wouldn't stop, either.

But...

"Kukuku, do you truly intend to fight them? These people are only being manipulated by me, you know?"

What a cunning man.

He told me this deliberately, probably thinking it would keep me from making a move. While I didn't want to give up like this, I had to admit that it was a very effective method.

“I heard that you go soft very easily. Are you hesitant to extend your killing hand to the innocent? Or will you see this as warfare and choose to defend yourself? Either way is fine.”

Granbell merely considered the summoned otherworlders as his weapons. In truth, they were just like simple consumable items to him. Even if I were to kill them all, he would probably act just like how he proclaimed, completely untroubled. What a very difficult opponent. He had done some extensive research on me.

If he were to run into people like Diablo or Shion, they would have cleaned house without hesitation. Considering from that perspective, I wasn’t sure if it was good or bad that the one facing these enemies was me.

“Ahhh, dammit! So troublesome...!”

There was no time for complaints. If I didn’t act fast enough, the children would be in danger, and the casualties would increase too.

At this point, there was only one way out. It was complicated, but I could manage—dispelling their curse one by one and knocking them out non-lethally.

With that, I was roped into battle as well.



A fellow Japanese person launched an attack at me.

Some of these otherworlders might actually not be from Earth; was it possible that they came from some other planet or dimension? Perhaps these thoughts indicated that I’d regained some of my cool.

Otherworlders had very strong constitutions, and they may possess some unknown special abilities. It went without saying that they were dangerous, but they posed no threat against me right now. Even if I were completely unguarded, they wouldn’t have been able to harm me, even if they sent that Glenda. That’s just how overpowered when ‘Absolute Defense’ was combined with ‘Infinite Regeneration.’

While they were difficult to handle, they were just that. I could probably manage to paralyze them all given some time, and without harming them during the process. I wasn’t underestimating my enemies; this was just my genuine thought. After all, I had Wisdom King Raphael-san. I wouldn’t have the chance to underestimate my enemies.

Considering this, I invested a part of its impressive calculation power to observe my surroundings.

First was Hinata who was fighting not far from me. Granbell wasn’t talking anymore, but was locked in an elegant sword fight against her. Just like Hinata, he was only using a rapier. His right hand held the sword while his left hand was held behind his back. It seemed like he would only use his left hand when casting magic.

“Tsk, have you been holding back your power as the Master of Sun? I recall that you were known to be best at fighting with bare hands in close quarters, turns out your swordsmanship was masterful as well.”

“Hehe! I have mastered all weapons. I merely did not need to use them in the past.”

“Ara, I see. Then allow me to wipe that casual look from your face.”

Hinata wasn’t holding back from the beginning. It was very obvious considering she was using her Moonlight Rapier. What was curious was Granbell’s sword. It was already unusual that he had a sword that could rival Hinata’s.

«Answer. Regarding the grade of the sword… Analysis failed due to interference. Deduced to be above legendary-grade.»

The analysis result was rather surprising. Lately, Raphael-san had been entirely reliable; I was rather taken aback by this turn of events. I might have underestimated Granbell a little too much.

I never expected it to come to this—could even Hinata lose to him?

No, that can’t be…

There was no way that could happen. However, the terrifying thing was that I couldn’t say for sure. Even Wisdom King Raphael-san couldn’t see through the abilities of the enemy.

While Hinata and Granbell’s duel was concerning, there was another fight that caught even more attention. There was some intense fighting taking place in the Grand Cathedral. I raised the precision of my ‘Magic Perception’ and focused on the situation.

There was a man in black armor. Shockingly, when faced with Shion and Diablo, he wasn’t even fazed. Ah, no wonder. This guy’s magicule content was more than Shion and Diablo’s combined.

“This is insane. Oi, what kind of a hidden trump card is that? He’s stronger than an average demon lord.”

“That’s only natural. In order to combat the army of demon lords and the monsters hostile to humanity, no amount of trump cards can be reassuring,” Granbell replied to my rambling.

I was surprised he even had the time to do that while fighting against Hinata. What an opportunity presented itself, since he had answered, that I might as well get more detailed information from him. It could also distract him, killing two birds with one stone.

“That guy seemed to be a lot stronger than the demon lord imposter Roy, but isn’t he stronger than you too?” I asked Granbell in a rather provoking tone.

“His name is Razul. A friend that I’ve known for thousands of years,” Granbell calmly answered.

Hinata did not speak. She probably had understood my intention and didn’t want to interfere. I continued with this plan.

“So you are friends. But Razul-san doesn’t look very human.”

“So what?”

I didn’t know what to say upon getting the question thrown back so abruptly. Even though

I really wanted to figure out his true identity, learning that he was not human was a gain of sorts.

“No, it’s nothing...”

I seemed to have killed the conversation. I kinda regret my choices now.

“Razul is a race that enjoys longevity, my close companion during my prime. He’s a lot stronger than the Holy Knight captains, so your subordinates may have a hard time fighting him.”

Granbell was right. Shion and Diablo were indeed in a tough fight. And here I thought that there was no need to worry when Diablo was around, could that thought have been too naive as well?

No, the way he was fighting didn’t look right. For some reason, Diablo didn’t seem to be focused.

«Report. Unusual spatial distortion detected. This is an indication of someone using ‘Spatial Movement’—»

Raphael-san’s warning suddenly rang in my head.

Had it not been urgent, it wouldn’t have warned me. That’s why the situation must’ve been dire. If that was the case, I shouldn’t hold back either. Diablo probably noticed this anomaly too, that’s why he wasn’t concentrating on the fight.

⟨Ranga, are you there?⟩

⟨I’m here, Master!⟩

Got it!

He was sleeping in my shadow.

⟨I want you to support Shion covertly!⟩

⟨Understood!⟩

Ranga used ‘Shadow Step’ to stealthily enter Shion’s shadow.

Now that the preparation was complete, I gave my next order.

⟨Diablo, was your mind on something else?⟩

⟨My apologies, Rimuru-sama. To fall into a hard battle should be considered a misconduct of mine. In truth, this individual is far stronger than I expected. He is a rare insect type monster, and what’s more, he’s in his complete form. They are like a natural enemy to us demons.⟩

According to Diablo, the insect type monsters were magical beasts from a different dimension that possessed the power of spirits. They sometimes would show up in this world. It was extremely rare for one to evolve to humanoid form.

With that being the case, Diablo still had a chance to win, however, he had yet to defeat the enemy. In other words, the *reason* Diablo had been so concerned with was far worse than Razul. The thing that was distracting him had arrived through ‘Spatial Movement.’ I could only hope that Diablo would handle whatever it was.

⟨Shion, you heard us. If Diablo is finding excuses, the situation must be dire.⟩

Upon saying so, I sensed Diablo’s guilt internally. He would never find excuses under normal circumstances, that’s why I could tell if he was hiding something right away.

In order for Diablo to move freely, I’d have Shion and Ranga hold the ground here.

«Right now, Ranga is hiding in your shadow, I want you two to cooperate and beat that insect type monster—Razul.»

«It goes without saying!»

«I will not let down Master's expectations!»

Shion also seemed to realize that Diablo was acting strange. Even if I hadn't given the order, she would probably have done the same. However, for Shion alone to handle the powerful Razul, she would fall in crisis. It wasn't that I lacked confidence in Shion, but rather that I wanted to find the safest solution possible. While two on one may be dishonorable, we should always fight with the hope of a one hundred percent chance of victory.

«Diablo, go and handle what's on your mind. Also, you should trust your companions more and learn to rely on them sometimes.»

«....! Kufufufufufu, understood. Looks like I can be a little pretentious at times. Very well, I shall resolve the problem right away!»

Not just a little, *too* pretentious, to be honest. But at least this helped him get his usual pace back, how wonderful.

«Then, let's get moving!»

«Understood!»

I gave the order, rather out of practice, as the three replied in high spirits.

I just needed to believe they would bring me the best outcomes.

I focused my attention back on paralyzing the otherworlders.



“Kufufufufu, Rimuru-sama has seen right through me. He's seriously unparalleled.”

“That goes without saying, Second Secretary. Don't mind that for now, go and resolve what's on your mind!”

“Of course. You must have noticed too, that man called Razul is stronger than you. Are you sure you will be all right, First Secretary-dono?”

“Fufufu, I never expected you to worry for me, Second Secretary—no, Diablo. I admit that you are strong, stronger than me. That's why you need to defeat whatever enemy that stands before us to avoid trouble for Rimuru-sama! Isn't that your duty?”

“....! Kufu, kufufufufu, I never expected you call me by my ‘name’—”

“Get going! Leave the rest to me.”

“Even if Rimuru-sama didn't give the order, I would still have faith in you from the bottom of my heart, Shion-dono.”

Shion shuddered. “Just call me Shion. Honorifics coming from your mouth give me the creeps. It sounds so disingenuous.”

“Kufufufufu, then Shion, I wish you victory in your conquest.”

“You too, Diablo.”

Shion and Diablo didn’t exchange any looks, but acknowledged each other with a few words. Both of them had very strong egos, but they had also recognized each other’s strength from the start.

Diablo walked away without even turning his head. He gave an order to his lieutenant coldly.

“Venom, even if you die, you need to—actually, it’s okay if you die, but you must protect these kids.”

Speaking of which, Rimuru’s order never included what to do with Diablo’s subordinates. Therefore, there wasn’t much to be worried about here.

The important things here are the children and the band members—Diablo judged calmly.

“Ah, yes sir.”

I honestly hoped he would care for us more—Venom thought. But he wasn’t dumb enough to say that out loud. If he had, he would probably have been taken out by Diablo before he could be killed by the enemies.

Moreover—

It’s fine, Shion-sama and Ranga-sama seem to be handling that tough guy. If it’s only protecting these people, even we would be more than sufficient. It’d be easier than fighting Diablo-sama—were Venom’s genuine thoughts.

“I wish you glory in your conquest, Diablo-sama!”

“Shut up, it’s pointless for you to worry.”

As Venom sent Diablo his regards, he was scolded coldly by Diablo.

Never mind, that’s just how our lord is...

A flashback of him being forced into subordination crossed Venom’s mind. He quickly shook off these thoughts. Had he run into Diablo looking all displeased like this, there’s no telling what would have happened. Venom changed his mood and focused on the mission.

Diablo, having entrusted the tasks to his companions, left the battlefield. He teleported at the precise location of his target. The place was a bit far from the Grand Cathedral, located in a wasteland outside Lubelius.

A blue-haired beauty in a dark red maid suit was there. Several Holy Knights laid by her feet. These supposed one-man armies of human guardians didn’t stand a chance against her.

“Long time no see, Noir, I was getting impatient since you’ve taken your time getting here.”

“I could feel such a fierce killing intent, it’s just that I couldn’t withdraw myself for a few minutes until now. By the way, please call me Diablo, Blue Primordial—excuse me, you’ve already gotten the name Raine.”

The blue-haired beauty, Raine, smiled with satisfaction to Diablo’s response.

“Indeed, the strongest among us primordials, Red Primordial, the great Guy-sama has given

me the name; unlike the name given to you by some cheap shot demon lord of unknown origin.”

“Huh? Do you have a death wish? Actually, you are asking to disappear from this world, no? Kufufufufu, allow me to grant you your wish.”

While a smile still hung on his face, the smile in Diablo’s eyes dissipated completely. The red pupils of his golden eyes turned thin, locking Raine as his prey.

“Let’s go then, Diablo! Ah ah, how exciting. Ever since I learned that you fought against the White Primordial on the eastern continent, I wanted to duel you.”

“How boring. If you think you are qualified to fight against me, you are sorely mistaken.”

“Let’s confirm that after our battle!”

As she finished—actually, before she finished—Raine was on the move. Her knife-like hand was faster than the speed of sound. Yet, it was easily swatted away as Diablo raised a hand.

Raine rejoiced. She could finally put her body to use and fulfill her thousand-year wish.

Yes, this is it. I’d be really troubled if it were finished instantly. You were always too free-spirited, even though we are all primordials. No faction, no sense of duty, even when all demons craved a body, you sneered at the idea...

You could say that Raine was jealous of Diablo. The lifestyle that he had chosen was unbearable to Raine, who valued law and order. Moreover, Diablo also—

Unforgivable, he even reached a draw with Guy-sama. This idler who never sought to become stronger! The demon race should follow the natural order of things, acquiring a body and considering evolution as their goal!

In order to relieve her dissatisfaction with him for over thousands of years, Raine had gone all out as she closed in on Diablo.

Diablo—the Black Primordial Noir—was a special demon. During the ancient era far, far in the past, Rouge and Noir fought for the throne of the strongest. They ended up in a draw, yet what happened later to the two differed greatly. Rouge was brought to the physical world and acquired a body as well as immense power. However, Noir, almost as if he had denied evolution, remained unchanged over the years.

Blanc, Jaune, and Violet on the other hand, were under rather unavoidable circumstances. These three had always hindered each other’s evolutions. The three powerhouses were evenly matched amongst themselves, and that power balance was never broken.

The Black Primordial wasn’t limited by such things; however, he seemed to treat the other primordials like fools and found pleasure in going his own way. And so, tens and thousands of years passed.

This was why Raine couldn’t forgive Diablo. His contrarian, free-spirited, carefree lifestyle, as well as being recognized by the strongest primordial, Guy— Raine couldn’t stand all these things about Diablo.

“Ahahahaha! Just as you always say, running away all the time isn’t real combat. Looks like you are really only good at running away.”

“Kufufufufu, I will be straight with you, don’t get mistaken now. Against someone like

you, I wouldn't even need to use my full power. Moreover, I never intended to run away.”

“Gonna be a sore loser now, eh? I figure that you probably can't use all your power with your newly acquired body. You know you can't use that as an excuse.”

Raine began to launch magic missiles with her fists. The magic missile interfered with the world's rules and was turned into the nuclear magic ‘Nuclear Cannon.’ Raine could cast magic without chanting.

However, Diablo had expected this too. He calmly dispelled all the vicious nuclear magic strikes. Layers and layers of magic barriers and counter-attack techniques were applied. They each tried to break through the other's defenses and land a fatal shot. This was how high-level demons fought against each other. There wasn't any time wasted on chanting, both of them put forth extremely masterful spells.

As time passed—

“U-unbelievable! D-did you manage to draw that while fighting with me?”

“Indeed, Raine. Fighting you is like doing paperwork; a fight in which I could see the outcome is so boring, that it's not even entertaining as a game.”

Raine was extremely shocked. Yet the victor had already been decided. Around Raine were layers of magic circles formed by glowing mantras. They appeared out of thin air as Diablo snapped his fingers. Being caught in the magic circle, Raine didn't dare to move a muscle. If she were to move, Diablo would trigger the magic.

And the spell was—

“T-this is multi-stage ‘Disintegration’…? B-but that spell is a hard counter to demons and is extremely dangerous. You could end up dying using it, why would you use that…?!”

Diablo glared coldly at Raine.

How can you not even know this—He thought to himself as he pitied her with a cold heart.

“How boring. If your faith in your master is strong enough, you can even control spiritrons. It's common sense.”

“Are you out of your mind?! What kind of common sense is that…?!”

“Doesn't matter. It's time to send you on your way. I shall let you suffer the most painful death for foolishly daring to insult my beautiful master, Rimuru-sama. Reflect well on your crime now.”

Seven beams of light began to shoot out. While one beam of light contained forces of destruction that defied any attempts to counter it, all seven beams came from all directions and viciously made their way to Raine—



Luminas was genuinely irritated.

It just so happened that when she invited Demon Lord Rimuru to attend this musical exchange, the traitor Granbell decided to ravage the land. Such a miscalculation had been a first since the founding of Lubelius.

She wanted to head directly to the Grand Cathedral and decimate all those trouble-making enemies. But out of her instinct and reason, she did not. Seeing how much of a wreckage the enemies were making, it must have been a distraction.

Louis and Gunther stood by Luminas's side. Neither of them dared to make a sound, fearing that it would further infuriate their master. Yet even when surrounded by serenity—just like Luminas, their hearts were anxious. However, they were not stupid enough to make the wrong judgement of what to prioritize.

If Granbell was handling the distraction, what would his goal be?

If it's that man, he must know of my treasured Holy Ark. Then it's not impossible that he's thinking of liberating 'Her'—

The Holy Ark was Luminas's secret treasure. However, there was an even larger reason as to why she had to protect the Holy Ark at all costs. Granbell was among the people who knew the reason, so it was unlikely that he would target the Holy Ark. But even so, Luminas decided to trust her instinct.

And she guessed right.

In that deepest room, found within a tomb that nobody else should have known even existed, some unwanted guests showed up.

“Wha’ the hell, our infiltration has been compromised! Or maybe the security here is too tight?”

“Hehehe, how regretful, but looks like we have interesting prey here. Maybe we can make a bit of fuss?”

“Why not, but ya gotta be careful. That babe over there ain’t normal, I’m guessing yer probably Demon Lord Luminas-sama?”

Two intruders broke in and dropped some fighting words. They were Laplace and Footman.

Luminas was laying elegantly on a couch before the Holy Ark she was guarding with her life. Her guys were fixed on the two intruders.



These two men at first glance were no match for Luminas, but the aura they were giving off was something that she could not underestimate.

While hiding her strong emotions, Luminas solemnly spoke, “—I shall permit you to announce your names.”

While the clowns were surprised to find that their intrusion was expected, Granbell did mention the possibility. With that in mind, he had sent someone to tag along with them. That person had helped guide the clowns to make it through multiple layers of defense before reaching their destination safely.

“Nice to meet ya, I am ‘Wonder Pierrot’¹⁰ Laplace, Vice-Chairman of the jack-of-all-trades ‘Moderate Clown Troupe.’ This here is Footman,” he introduced himself in a teasing tone before signaling Footman with a gesture.

“Hehehe, I am ‘Angry Pierrot’ Footman. Even though I don’t know you too well, I’ll be in your care,” facing Luminas and her servants, Footman wasn’t shy in the slightest. His idea was pure and simple. Defeat his enemies—that was the only thing on his mind. He waited quietly for Laplace to give the green light.

“Oh yeah, there’s another one, com’ on in,” as Laplace called out, someone else appeared by the entrance. A blonde beauty showed up.

“...”

“She ain’t a big talker, but I think her name is—”

“I’ve met you in the past. Yes, you are the woman Granbell loved so deeply—Maria Rosso.”

“Right right right, that Maria! My my, so Luminas-sama knows her already?”

Hearing this, Luminas had a disgruntled expression.

“You there, quit acting all friendly. Self-introduction is over, so there won’t be any regrets now. The time to talk is over, we shall commune with our fists.”

Luminas’s tolerance was nearly depleted. She only held back knowing that someone was hiding, when the *last person* showed up, she couldn’t take it any longer.

“The hell, ya got a real short temper, no? We did finish our introduction; there’s one more thing though, Granbell wanted us to give ya a message.”

“Ho?”

“Then I’m gonna give ya the message: ‘I’ll be waiting for you on the ground, come and fight me. If you don’t come fast enough, the people you value are all gonna die.’ That’s basically what he said. He’s probably fighting that monster—Holy Knight Commander Hinata right now. I wonder who’s gonna win—”

Laplace went on and on before Louis shut him up with a sharp strike, one that Luminas had ordered with a wave of her hand, commencing the attack.

“Are you the one that killed my brother?” Louis demanded.

“Tsk, ya gotta hear other people out before doing this! Right, never mind. By the way, to answer yer question. Yep, that’s me, I was the one that killed that Roy guy that looked exactly

¹⁰The Kanji of Laplace’s nickname is hard to translate 享楽の道化 means that he’s a clown who seeks pleasure, a hedonist.

like ya!"

"Umm, I have no interest in revenge; but this is a rare opportunity. I'm going to prove here that I'm stronger than my brother," Louis fixed himself on Laplace as he finished.

"Then your opponent shall be me. Don't bore me now, young man!"

"He-HEHEHE! That's my line!"

Gunther and Footman exchanged looks before rushing out the tomb to duel. They were completely absorbed in their duel, disregarding the amount of damage done to their surroundings.

"Louis and Gunther sure give me a headache. They are usually so level-headed but get riled up in combat. But I'm the same way. Granbell, just you wait, even with your final trump card, you cannot stop me!"

Luminas was just like them; her sharp gaze fixed on the silent, frail-looking Maria.

"A dead person—perhaps not. Has Granbell still not given up? Maria has already passed on, it wouldn't work even with my God's Miracle 'Resurrection.' Lost souls cannot be saved, yet he..." Luminas muttered to herself calmly.

Indeed, the woman in front of her was not Maria. It was merely something that resembled her.

"Very well, I must perform the last rites over you."

With burning youki surrounding her, Luminas stood up. She then began to fight against Maria at a speed no average man could see. Would the victor be Luminas, or the unknown entity that resembled Maria?

Only the Holy Ark remained in the tomb. Mindful of causing damage to their surroundings, everyone had moved outside. Predicting this, a young man emerged from the shadows.

"Ahaha, I never expected this plan to be so simple. But it's true, just like Granbell said," Yuuki sneered.

While not completely convinced by Granbell's information, he hid his presence completely and followed. He was so well concealed that even Luminas was fooled.

Yuuki usually made sure to give off some of his aura so that he could completely conceal it during an emergency. Most people facing an opponent with a noticeable aura would get the impression that they were the stronger one, which made them more susceptible to getting careless. Knowing this, Yuuki had made sure to exploit it whenever possible. During important occasions that practice came in handy. This time was no exception. With little to no effort, Yuuki acquired his target item.

"So, this is the Holy Ark."

He put his hand gently on the icy coffin to feel its surface.

"Ah...that's what it's made out of... An entity purely composed of holy particles. So things like this actually exist..."

It's so fortunate that I tagged along—Yuuki thought to himself.

The others probably wouldn't be able to even touch the exterior. It would likely burn up all

their mana, yet with ‘Anti-Skill,’ it had no effect on Yuuki. He was the only one with the means to steal the strongest Hero.

And so, he broke the coffin without hesitation. The secret treasure Luminas had tried so hard to protect was destroyed so easily. A beautiful young girl was sleeping inside. She had to be the Hero Yuuki came to seek.

“Oh, this girl’s body is sealed too. Well, not that I can’t dispel it, but... Maybe I’ll just do it later.”

The security measure sure was tight. Yuuki gave off a wry smile internally. A ‘Barrier’ stronger than the Holy Ark covered every inch of the young girl’s skin.

I suppose I’ll take my time decrypting them at the base.

Coming to that conclusion, Yuuki’s eyes fell on the girl’s face.

“Who is this girl? I feel like I’ve seen her somewhere—uh, there’s no way.”

Her age was around sixteen. Her long, dark-silver hair covered up her private parts. She was like a newborn, naked with not a single piece of cloth.

“Uhh—I’ll probably be accused of sexual harassment for doing this, but there’s no time,” Yuuki muttered before picking up the beautiful teen.

“I got the Hero, now it’s time to bail.”

As he finished, Yuuki cracked an evil grin and left the scene.

—*Why was the Hero sleeping in the Holy Ark in the first place? Is it really the weapon for the final battle as claimed by Granbell? Regardless of all that, what was Granbell’s true intention?*

Yuuki was always skeptical, but perhaps because he had always found great success in what he did, he had grown pretentious, thinking that he could solve any problems that came up. This was probably why despite the doubts in his mind, he still cooperated with Granbell. Yuuki couldn’t begin to imagine the consequences of his action right now.



The otherworlders charged at me like zombies. I carefully paralyzed them one by one without killing anyone. Based on my current power level, even when faced against one hundred of such opponents, I wouldn’t have a hard time. At most the process of dispelling the curses would be troublesome.

Speaking of which...

These otherworlders were really something else. I focused and observed them carefully to discover that they all possessed a large quantity of magicules. Their constitution was strong as well, with some even showing strength that matched the level of rank A. However, for some

reason, I didn't feel that they lived up to the rank. At first, I thought that it was because of the difference in our strength, but it wasn't the only reason: their free wills had been taken by Granbell. Moreover, there was also—

«Answer. During this battle, none of them used their Unique Skills.»

Ah, that's it!

I get it now, so that's how it is. None of the people I had been fighting launched any special attacks, that's why the task of paralyzing them was so monotonous. In other words, even though there were so many otherworlders, none of them had a Unique Skill? Were they all holding back against me? No matter what the truth was, it felt strange. Anyhow, no matter what Granbell's goal was, it'd all be resolved when I beat him.

After settling on the idea, I approached the last otherworlder. She looked rather young, around ten. She was probably old enough for magicule to settle properly inside her body. The child only wielded empty power, nothing challenging. I undid the curse skillfully. Everything proceeded smoothly. When she regained her consciousness, she seemed confused at the situation. I didn't have the time to explain everything in detail to her, so I quickly knocked her out and let her lie down with the others.

There were several kids like her, so it was really difficult for me to handle them. Granbell didn't seem to care about them at all, but I still managed to figure out a solution. His goal was probably to win some time. Had I been serious, it wouldn't take much time to kill them all. It looked like Granbell achieved his goal in that regard.

But with this, all the otherworlders fighting me had been paralyzed. I didn't know why he wanted to stall time, and truthfully, I didn't really care at this point. I simply wanted to finish this battle as soon as possible.

Judging so, I turned to the battlefield to get hold of some information.

The children were all fine, so I could rest assured for now. Even under these circumstances, the band members were still practicing with utmost effort. Should I call them bold? Perhaps it was a good way to reduce stress by focusing all your attention on something.

Hinata and Granbell were both standing their ground in the duel; as expected from masters of combat. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that the two were fighting at ultra-high speed. They were exchanging blows in a brilliant display of their masterful techniques, where a single mistake could not be tolerated. A misstep on my part might throw out the current balance and lead to either one's swift defeat. I figured it would be best if I focused my attention on them later.

Shion and Ranga were being suppressed by Razul; however, his advantage wasn't enough to guarantee victory. Shion allowed Razul to land his blows on her since all of her wounds could automatically be healed. 'Ultra-Speed Regeneration' was really a cheating Skill. No matter how vast the difference in strength, she could still rely on this Skill to get an edge.

Ranga, on the other hand, focused on landing attacks. He hid in Shion's shadow and targeted Razul's blind spots. He was also casting magic attacks such as 'Death Heralding Wind' and 'Black Lightning.'

The clever method of combat was impressive. The problem was, however, that none of

these attacks were working on Razul. In fact, he was very different. I recalled that Apito and Zegion were both insect type monsters like him. Their compound eyes could apparently watch their blind spots clearly, therefore he even evaded Ranga's sneak attacks with ease. Basically, unless it was a powerful attack, it wouldn't work on Razul.

The thing that looked like black armor on him was his exoskeleton. It was harder than steel. He could block Shion's odachi with the shell of his left hand alone. It was ridiculously tough; therefore, nothing would work except an attack to the joints. It could also deflect Ranga's magic, so the surface of his exoskeleton had an effect similar to 'Magic Interference.'

If that was the case, no wonder Diablo had a tough time fighting. He excelled at using magic, so Razul would be his natural counter. With that being said, Diablo probably had other means to defeat him.

With advantages in both physical and magical defense, this Razul was something else. To think that such a formidable guy would have no ambition and serve Granbell... Never mind, even if Shion and Ranga were having a hard time fighting him, I would probably have been able to take him down.

On that note, I decided to take care of Razul—

I swung around to the entrance of the Grand Cathedral. I couldn't help but immediately tense for a fight. Not only me, even Hinata, Shion, and the others were surprised. It was only natural.

After all, Demon Lord Leon, who wasn't supposed to be here, was standing right there. Under his white robe was a high-quality knight uniform and golden armor. As always, he was a real handsome dude, though he seemed to be in a terribly foul mood. Leon was not alone; several knights were behind him. They all gave off a powerful aura. It looked like he only brought his lieutenants.

What is he doing here? Is he a friend or foe?

I figured that it was impossible for us to be on the same side, but I didn't want to make Leon an enemy at this point.

"You have come, Demon Lord Leon-dono. Also, Hinata, since you are looking away while fighting against me, you must have plenty of strength to spare."

Wouldn't the one with strength to spare be Granbell?

He wasn't fazed by what happened, yet he didn't take the chance to attack Hinata either. He looked all calm and casual. That said, even if he had taken advantage of the situation, the opening shown by Hinata might have only been a trap. At the high level they were dueling at, only an honorable win would be recognized.

All in all, Granbell seemed to have known long ago that Leon would come. The suspicion was confirmed by the way he spoke. In other words, the two were on the same side.

"Don't act all familiar now, who are you?"

"Oh yeah, this is our first time meeting. As a matter of fact, all the children you bought in the past were gathered by me. I must apologize to have troubled you to come here personally

for the delivery this time.”

“...”

Maybe they weren’t together?

It looked like Leon and Granbell were just meeting for the first time. But it could’ve all been an act too... Now that they had mentioned it, most of the otherworlders beaten by me were not adults yet. They were mostly kids around the age of middle-schoolers. Could it be that Granbell was referring to—

“What are you talking about? I didn’t come to see you. The reason I am here is—”

“Ahh, I summoned children with the technique you taught me. Are you going to claim you knew nothing of it? Don’t you just want to fortify your forces with these unstable ‘Otherworld’ kids and make them into spirit-wielders? So you can build strengthened warriors like that Shizue Izawa.”

It almost felt like I’d been hit on the head with a stick.

Hinata wasn’t striking anymore either, but had her eyes glued on Granbell and Leon.

«Report. Danger detected. Suspicion that individual ‘Granbell Rosso’ is trying to use rhetoric to turn Master and Demon Lord Leon against each other.»

I got the feeling too.

No matter how you see it, it was a horrible move to antagonize Leon now. So I couldn’t trust Granbell’s words. With that being said—

“How many failures do you think I have sacrificed so you can summon who you want? The people here are the answer,” Granbell finished.

I could no longer ignore it now. Shizu-san was summoned by Leon and abandoned by him. Not only so, Leon seemed to have summoned other kids too. Such an evil deed could not go unpunished.

“Is all that true?”

“Of course it’s true, Demon Lord Rimuru. Where there is demand, there is supply. Us merchants were happy to provide.”

How infuriating. I wasn’t asking you, Granbell.

The supplier should have a moral code too. To push all the responsibilities to the consumer is against my philosophy. But compared to that, I wanted to confirm something else.

“You...it was not just Shizu-san, but other children as well?”

“Yes.”

“Even when you knew that unstable children wouldn’t survive for long?”

“That—”

As Leon was about to say something, a thunderous laugh rang out at the scene, interrupting him. It was Granbell.

“Kukuku, ku-HAHHAHAHA! How funny, Leon. Wasn’t your request for us to provide ‘Otherworld children under the age of ten’! As opposed to performing stable summonings of otherworlders and commanding that, why not ‘rescue’ unstable children and do them a favor? And then manipulate them to make them your weapons, didn’t you?!?”

These were incendiary words; Granbell's goal was obvious. He knew that I was soft-hearted and wanted to exploit that trait. In other words, he wanted to provoke my sense of justice and turn me against Leon.

However—Granbell's words actually had very high credibility. For the spirits to possess the children, the summoned ones needed to be in the so-called ‘unstable state’ Granbell mentioned.

Is it really the reason? Is this why all Leon's subordinates are shrouded in the auras of spirits?

“...Is this true?”

“Yes. But I have my reason—”

“Shut up! So this really *was* your doing!” I shouted and went straight for Leon.

I couldn't relinquish my anger without punching the guy in the face. Even knowing that it was Granbell's scheme, I couldn't dismiss my anger towards Leon. We'd talk about reasons later, I had to relieve some of my hatred first.

And so, I used all my force to punch Leon. He didn't move. He stopped all his subordinates trying to protect him and looked straight into my eyes.

Did that mean it'd be simple for him to take care of me? Or was it—

My fist was rapidly closing in on Leon's face, faster than my accelerated thoughts could follow.

Leon didn't even flinch.

«—Subject displays no signs of evasion, brace for impact.»

There was no trap. The next second, my fist connected with Leon's right cheek.

“—You got it out of your system now?”

I struck with my full force, yet it didn't cause a lot of damage to Leon. His lip seemed to be split as he wiped the blood from it with a handkerchief, yet he didn't move an inch.

Tsk, even though I hadn't applied any Skill with the strike, clearly, I underestimated Leon a bit. It was with that punch that I realized something. I felt that this guy—Demon Lord Leon—was a lot kinder than I expected. The proof was that he took the hit when he was completely unguarded, even though, by any reason, he didn't have to let me do it at all. While his demeanor always gave an impression of cruelty, he wasn't that bad a person at heart.

Shizu-san didn't hate Leon. She wanted to hate him but could not do it no matter how. She wanted to check Leon's genuine thoughts—that was Shizu-san's dying wish.

There was no need for Raphael-san to give me any advice. I was calm from the start. I had made a promise with Shizu-san. As she had regrets before passing, I would find her justice with Demon Lord Leon. To fulfill that promise, I made use of this situation.

There must have been reasons behind Leon's action. I'd decide whether I should forgive him later. During such chaotic circumstances, antagonizing Leon would undoubtedly be suicidal. This was no time to judge based on emotion.

Leon wasn't on my side, nor was he the enemy—knowing this, I gave my answer.

“Not enough. Even though I've conveyed Shizu-san's feelings, my feud with you hasn't been resolved yet. About that, we are gonna have a nice *chat* about it now?”

Now, did he get what I meant?

Leon's eyebrow twitched slightly. By the looks of it, Leon was no fool either; now I was reassured. Then let's have a nice chat—about how to handle Granbell.

On that thought, I raised my sword and pointed it at Leon.



He looked just like a young Shizu. No pigmentation of any kind, his skin was tender and meticulous. His hair was smooth, every strand was glowing. It was no longer the appearance of an asian person. While he kept Shizu's form, his beauty was on a different level.

As his golden eyes gazed at Leon deeply, he opened his pink lips and said, "Not enough. Even though I've conveyed Shizu-san's feelings, my feud with you hasn't been resolved yet. About that, we are gonna have a nice *chat* about it now?"

While Rimuru said this, Leon immediately caught on to the meaning behind his words.

I see, so he wants to utilize this situation? In other words, even though he doesn't know me too well, he decided to trust me, nonetheless? This guy is surprisingly bold.

Leon didn't dislike it.

Rimuru appeared to be doing things based on emotion, but in hindsight, all of those things must have been calculated. It was to differentiate who was friend and foe under these chaotic circumstances.

I thought that I shouldn't lower my guard against this guy, but with everything that's going on, he turned out to be quite reliable.

While thinking so, Leon drew the sword by his waist and assumed a combat stance.

Earlier, aboard the dragon ship on his way to Lubelius, Leon received an emergency message via 'Magic Communication' from the secret organization 'Cerberus.'

The message stated that one of their intelligence personnel lost contact, likely due to his real identity being discovered by someone. This *someone* could be Demon Lord Rimuru or the Five Great Elders. There was also the possibility of it being the Holy Knight Order. Since the person in question had lost contact after being captured, it was only natural to be suspicious of anyone.

However, Leon was not dumb enough to trust the words of Cerberus. This could be a well-drafted plot aimed at deceiving Leon. There was only one thing he was sure of—heating to the holy land now would mean entering a trap voluntarily. But even so, it wasn't enough to shake Leon's resolve.

It doesn't matter if it's a trap, as long as Chloe is there—no matter what danger lay ahead, Leon didn't care.

Fast forwarding to the present, Leon had finally calmed down as he drew his sword against Rimuru. He began to observe the surroundings and tried to get hold of the situation. The battlefield was in a shocking state of chaos. It was difficult to even tell friend from foe.

The Magic Knight Order elites who were protecting Leon somehow got mixed in the fight as well. They were cleverly lured into battle by someone and started fighting with the local forces at the holy land.

«Continue to defend, you must not kill your opponent.»

«Understood!»

Leon gave his order to Silver Knight Alrose. Even though he used an encrypted channel, the presence of eavesdroppers was to be expected. He had already prepared himself for that and only gave orders that were intended to avoid future problems.

Since no matter how you saw it, Leon's presence here made him seem like a troublemaker. To Demon Lord Luminas, Leon was definitely an unwanted guest. It wouldn't be strange if she retaliated against him. Under these circumstances, in order to ensure the situation favored his side, Leon wanted to lower the human casualties to the minimum.

Speaking of which, where did that Luminas go?

Near the entrance to the Grand Cathedral, Leon and Rimuru fought. Holy Knight Commander Hinata was dueling against Granbell not far from there. Behind them, Shion and Ranga, who both participated in the Walpurgis Banquet, fought the insect type monster, Razul.

There was no way that Demon Lord Luminas, the ruler of this land, would allow such a thing to happen, yet there was not a trace of her to be found. If someone as strong as Luminas was getting stalled—no matter how you saw it, the situation was extremely abnormal.

To Leon, the situation was all too strange, though based on his previous assessment, the goal of this trap was rather obvious. While he did not know the perpetrator, the goal was to have Demon Lord Rimuru fight against Leon. However, while it was a miscalculation to this unknown perpetrator, it was good luck to Leon—that being Rimuru easily seeing through the trap.

And Rimuru was trying to make use of that to control the situation. Right in front of Leon, Rimuru signaled his eyes to Granbell.

I see, so that's the guy behind all this? Very well, I shall put my faith in you for once.

It was truly rare for the usually cautious Leon, as he decided to open his heart and trust Rimuru.



Leon was not the only one stuck in a state of confusion. Hinata was baffled by the continuously shifting circumstances as well. More importantly, Granbell, whom she was dueling, gave off an

ominous aura, it was very eerie.

“Are you wondering why you can’t rob any techniques from me?”

“...?!”

Being exposed so promptly, Hinata couldn’t help but express her shock visibly.

“Hmph, don’t be so surprised now. Do you really think I wouldn’t discover your secret? I merely had to observe it to guess. That’s why I had the other six fight you first.”

“So that’s why...”

Hinata’s Unique Skill ‘Usurper’ had an absolute advantage against people stronger than her. Yet the analysis result of Granbell in the past was ‘not applicable.’ By any logic, Granbell should’ve been stronger than her. That’s why Hinata tried using ‘Usurper’ on him during their training sessions until it returned ‘successful’ in robbing Skills from Granbell. She could not rob them completely, at most copying them...

“You can rob Skills and Arts from your opponent through some means, can’t you? But You can only use that little trick on the same person once, and haven’t you already tried robbing my Skill before? That’s why you won’t be able to do it again.”

“How can that be...”

Granbell’s words were met with an involuntary response from Hinata. She quickly realized she had thought out loud.

“Kukuku, so that *is* the case. Hinata, you are the most talented disciple I’ve taught. You were good at scheming, cautious yet cunning. In the history of the order, there were very few who have reached your level. You should be proud of that. Yet you are still too young, too amateur fighting against someone on your level.”

“Don’t you ever shut up?!” Hinata, seemingly impatient, shouted back at Granbell.

However, Hinata knew that she was getting baited by Granbell. Because of her accidental reaction, she admitted to the fact that she could rob other people’s abilities. Granbell had his suspicion in the past but was probably not one hundred percent sure. He managed to get it out of Hinata by her own mouth.

Just who is more cunning!

Even while he was going all out against Hinata, Granbell kept on talking.

That composure—that was what Hinata could not tolerate.

“Even if I’ve robbed your Skill in the past, I still have other ways to do this. Don’t you look down on me now.”

Hinata’s hostility towards Granbell was on full display. Indeed, Hinata still had her trump card ‘Forced Usurpation.’ It wouldn’t be copying this time, but completely robbing his Skill. By doing this, Granbell would run out of tricks to use and Hinata would achieve victory.

Observation ends here—seemingly implying this, Hinata proceeded with a flurry of attacks. Each of her swings held deadly power. At the same time, she consecutively activated ‘Usurper’ to weaken Granbell’s strength.

However—

How is this possible, my Skill should be taking effect...?!

Yet the analysis result was still ‘not applicable.’ It meant that Granbell’s strength was indeed weaker than Hinata’s. Indeed, she was much more powerful than before and it wouldn’t be strange if she had surpassed Granbell, therefore this result would be sensible.

The problem was however—

Even when she was using her most reliable ‘Forced Usurpation’ to rob Granbell’s Skills, Granbell was still using the same Skill the next second, the result was the same no matter how many times she had repeated. Hinata’s anxiousness was written on her face. She did in fact rob Granbell of his Skills and Arts, but they were useless to Hinata. You couldn’t rob an already robbed Skill, there was no use in piling up more.

However, it could prove to be useful if she managed to rob Granbell’s ace in the hole...

Why is this happening? Perhaps Granbell knew someone may try to rob his Skills and had made copies beforehand?

It was a possibility.

While the average man wouldn’t be able to handle it, Granbell was an ex-Hero. A trick such as this wouldn’t be a problem for him.

“What is it, Hinata? You don’t look so good.”

Granbell gave off a mocking smile. It looked like he’d seen through Hinata’s mind—that was the source of Hinata’s irritation.

“Huh, based on your looks, you don’t know what I’ve done. There’s nothing more important in combat than to observe your enemy carefully. Could it be that you thought I wouldn’t prepare any countermeasures? If I am right, then your thoughts were honestly too naive, Hinata.”

“Tsk, you sure talk a lot of nonsense.”

“I can tell from the way you fight. You are good at fighting against opponents stronger than you. In contrast, you seemed to rarely rob Skills from opponents weaker than you. But to have done that in the past, nonetheless, must imply you have some special means. However, doesn’t it exhaust you quickly as well?”

“...”

“You don’t have to answer. Based on your current state, I can confirm my speculation.”

Hinata was shocked that she had been completely seen through. She always thought that Granbell was an old-timer and held a sense of disdain against him. Right now, she really wanted to punch her old self.

“Uh...indeed. Looks like it’s meaningless to continue like this.”

Activating her ‘Forced Usurpation’ from here on would be pointless, she concluded, as she distanced herself from Granbell for a moment. She adjusted her breathing and took note of the beating in her chest. Her heart rate had reached record-breaking pace. Sweat was pouring down her forehead at an increasing rate.

Thump—Deep inside Hinata’s chest, she felt a light sense of pain.

—What was that? No, it’s probably because I burnt more stamina than I expected to. But maybe it’s not a calculation error, maybe it’s the effect of some sort of attack...

Looking at it objectively, she found that she was getting tired a lot faster than usual. Even

with her consecutive use of ‘Forced Usurpation,’ Hinata shouldn’t have consumed as much stamina as she did now. Just as Granbell had pointed out, Hinata had exhausted herself to the point that she could no longer ignore it either.

“You look rather confused, Hinata. You are indeed strong. But against my more dishonorable way of fighting, you don’t really have enough experience.”

“What are you talking about?”

“It’s very simple. All of my moves were calculated so that it would waste as much of your stamina as possible. Little by little, you tired yourself out every time you thought your attack would pull through if only you could muster that tiny bit of extra strength. Heed me now, if you are fighting against someone on your own level, you’d snatch a ticket to victory by tiring out your opponent. Once their judgement becomes dull, they will show bigger openings, just like what you are experiencing right now.”

“...!”

Hinata could not deny Granbell’s words even if she wanted to. She had analyzed her battle calmly with her Unique Skill ‘Mathematician’—or so she thought. Yet Granbell was clearly ten steps ahead of her. She had thought she was cautious enough against Granbell. While she had looked down on him in the past, she had never dropped her guard.

By the looks of it, this man is stronger than me, is that it? Yes, that’s it. I guess this is the resulting difference between technique and experience.

That was the honest, logical explanation Hinata deduced, she couldn’t help but admit. Her ‘Usurper’ was unable to rob combat experience.

“I understand the situation. I must really go all out in order to beat you then.”

“Correct. Now show me what you’re really capable of, or else you can keep dreaming about surpassing me.”

Shutting out all unnecessary noise, Hinata focused herself entirely on Granbell. In a world of silence, the two of them were isolated.

“Here I come, Elder Granbell!”

“I shall dance with you then, Hinata!”

As it stood, the battle between Hinata and Granbell raged on, fiercer than ever before.



Diablo’s multi-stage ‘Disintegration’ gradually broke through every defensive barrier of Raine’s. The last beam pierced cleanly through her chest.

Everything had gone according to Diablo’s plan. Raine was still breathing, which Diablo had also accounted for.

“Kufufufufufu, how weak. Fighting you felt more boring than fighting Testarossa before

she evolved.”

“Te-Testarossa?”

“That’s none of your business. Compared to that, why have you come here? Tell me the reason.”

“Do you honestly think I’d...!”

While Diablo asked arrogantly, Raine didn’t feel the need to obey. She refused without hesitation, much to Diablo’s displeasure.

Despite having just defeated her, he was not relaxed. The fully evolved insect type monster was left for Shion and Ranga to deal with, that thing was no joke—the natural enemy to the demon race.

It was a life-form from a different dimension, living inside the crevices of the physical and spiritual world. They were semi-spiritual life-forms and upon entering the physical world, they would naturally gain a body and become a challenging invader. If there were a large group of them, they would be extremely dangerous. Such dangerous species must be discovered early on and eliminated as soon as possible.

Essentially, it was extremely rare for these monsters to evolve into humanoid forms. They usually couldn’t adapt to the physical world and would be stuck at a certain level of evolution. Yet that insect type monster called Razul somehow evolved into its final form. Diablo thought that even Shion and Ranga combined would have trouble dealing with it.

To be fair, Shion-dono is Rimuru-sama’s subordinate, after all. She is capable of committing horrors that may potentially turn the table entirely, despite the difference in strength. With Ranga-dono at her side, they probably won’t lose. But even if that’s the case—

Diablo could win against Razul. He thought that eliminating uncertain factors like that from the battlefield would serve Rimuru-sama’s interests. That’s why he wanted to head back quickly to finish off Razul...

And yet, another thought crossed his mind.

Diablo suspected that Rimuru was being intentional when he assigned Shion and Ranga to the task. It was true that Diablo was shaken. He felt the presence of Raine closing in and didn’t want *them* to disrupt the battlefield. That was why Diablo couldn’t focus on his fight.

And I was so pretentious to think I should have taken out Razul fast...

But was this really better?

Perhaps Rimuru-sama wanted Shion-dono and Ranga-dono to fight against a powerful foe in order to gain experience. Then I would only get in the way by defeating him... Diablo thought.

This was the train of thought one would expect from a battle maniac. Normal people wouldn’t come to a bizarre conclusion like this. Diablo was an absolute believer of Rimuruism, which meant that any action taken that was not according to Rimuru’s will would run afoul with him.

Just win against your enemy—Things were not that simple.

As Diablo passed the opportunity to fight against a rare powerhouse to them, he had also genuinely hoped they would win against this opponent and turn them into their useful experience.

I really have to take it slow and be careful with my judgement in this kind of situation.

And so, Diablo's thoughts derailed far into the land of misunderstandings. While someone as masterful in combat as Raine was right in front of him, Diablo's mind was in turmoil.

Of course, Rimuru never considered any of this. He merely wanted the whole thing to end smoothly and ensure the safety of the children and the band members. Having Shion and Ranga gain combat experience was something that didn't even cross his mind under these circumstances.

Diablo's mind had sailed in a completely wrong direction. And based on this absolutely wrong judgment, Diablo's plan took a huge turn.

"I was planning to kill you, but I guess not."

"What are you saying...? Was that a threat—"

"No, it's enough. You don't have to act anymore, just come out already," Diablo said in the face of Raine, who had a huge hole in her chest.

She didn't seem to understand what he was saying, but her expression gradually turned to one of agitation. Unlike the pale face from before learning she was defeated, her expression now looked quite complicated, a mixture of chagrin and hatred.

"Noir...you, you only managed to evolve to demon peer recently—"

"You are as much of a blockhead as always. Strength is not a matter of magicule content alone, it's about your techniques. Just as my senpai once said, 'A difference in magicule content does not equate to a difference in strength.'"

"How dare you say something so arrogant..."

Raine's voice slowly dissipated as her body disappeared. She turned into ashes and vanished. In that moment, a beam of light pierced the sky, and as the light faded, two figures emerged.

They were Bleu and Rouge. The one who was kneeling was Bleu—Raine. The one standing majestically was Rouge—the strongest, Demon Lord Guy Crimson.

"Hey, long time no see, Noir."

"Hmm, Rouge—no, you are now Guy Crimson. So you were here."

Diablo had been keeping his guard up for Guy from the start.

To Diablo, Guy began to talk in a reminiscing tone.

"You've realized from the start that it was just Raine's 'Mist,' haven't you? If that was the case, why did you still make use of such a powerful spell?"

Diablo frowned in disgust at the question.

Basically, he had pretended to not realize Raine's 'Mist' from the start. According to Diablo's original plan, he was going to mislead Raine's actual self and Guy, who were watching over him to get the impression that "This guy's not that strong after all." Had they seen Diablo act all pretentiously and left after beating Raine's 'Mist,' Guy would've probably been disappointed in Diablo. He would lose interest and leave right away.

This way, Diablo would have been able to hide his ability from Guy and win some time to help Shion and the others. Yet this plan was forced to be terminated. This was out of Diablo's

own pursuit.

You don't have to act anymore—This line was meant for Diablo himself too.

“Wouldn’t it be impossible to beat us primordial demons with just ‘Disintegration’? A trick like that couldn’t even be called a trump card.”

“Ho, you sure talk big. Even I wouldn’t be able to stand unfazed if shot directly.”

“If I took a direct hit, I would disappear too; that said, I’d first need to be hit directly.”

“Kuku, AHAHAHA!”

“Kufufufufu.”

Guy laughed with satisfaction hearing Diablo’s response. Diablo continued with this calm attitude as he stood his ground against Guy. During this, Raine was treated like air.

“Oh by the way, why did you wait until now to evolve? Aren’t you different from those three and didn’t want to draw anyone back?”

“Umm, while those three might seem to be dragging each other back, the truth is that it was their way of entertaining themselves. But it is true I had nothing to do with them. Guy, I wanted to ask you something too. Do you think that there could be people stronger than us in this world?”

Diablo responded to Guy’s doubts with a question, similar to the one he had asked Tes-tarossa. Such a statement was common sense among the primordial demons, Guy being no exception, so it was easier to get a response.

“Probably no—if I had to give an answer, probably ‘True Dragons,’ but they are more like natural phenomena.”

Even ‘True Dragons’ would not be a threat to Guy. It may be different had ‘Star King Dragon’ Veldanava been resurrected. Considering the current state of things, Guy wasn’t wrong.

“Indeed,” Diablo nodded, “we are the strongest. However, evolving even knowing this, wouldn’t it make fighting others boring since it’s a one-sided slaughter?” he claimed with a smile on his face.

This was another mindset one could expect from a battle maniac.

“So that’s how you see it.”

Guy understood it now too. Even though they wouldn’t admit it out loud, the two had very similar personalities, and they were surprisingly tacit in times like these.

“Did your view change because of that slime?”

“He is called Rimuru-sama, please don’t call him a slime.”

“...Got it. So the reason why you evolved was because of this Rimuru, right?”

Diablo had always lived life on his own terms, at his own pace, which pissed Guy off a bit. But complaining now won’t help things progress. While playing along would still piss Guy off, he cooperated with Diablo and rephrased his question.

Right—Diablo continued: “Rimuru-sama’s growth so far has been most astonishing. What he has achieved was truly worthy of the name evolution. He’s also incredibly adorable in appearance, his soul is filled with noble spirit, moreover—”

“Are you gonna go on with this for a while?”

“...?”

That goes without saying—Almost as if saying this, Diablo returned a sharp look at Guy.

“Let’s stop with Rimuru for a while and talk about you?”

Diablo was a little displeased, but he suspected the situation was rather dire and decided to follow Guy’s suggestion.

“Tsk, can’t be helped then. Let me cut to the chase, the companions of Rimuru-sama have also been progressing at an extraordinary pace every day, and I, too, was inspired by such an atmosphere.”

“...Oh, how surprising.” Guy looked a bit exhausted, but he still tried his best digesting Diablo’s words.

“Yes, if I live too casually, I may eventually get left behind. There is no reason for me to limit my growth living in that kind of environment.”

So that was the reason. Now Guy understood.

Guy finally picked up his pace.

“Rimuru seemed to have dominated the Western Nations,” Guy told Diablo, then cracking an evil grin, “but unfortunately, my subordinates should be wreaking havoc over there.”

In Guy’s view, it was simply a prank he pulled on the humans. For Rimuru, on the other hand, who wanted to have a friendly relationship with the humans, the situation was a lot more severe.

That was the reason why Guy said this. Trying to create trouble for Diablo was a fool’s errand, so instead he targeted Rimuru, catching Diablo in the fallout. That was when he recalled that his subordinates were starting a rampage in the Western Nations, so he decided to exploit the situation a bit.

Diablo, who used to be able to rival Guy, suddenly acknowledged someone as his master, and Guy was not amused by it. That’s why he decided to provoke Diablo and try to start trouble.

Without Razul guarding the northern realm, the Western Nations were lacking in reserve. Just as Guy said, the place was probably a living hell now. Considering the current circumstances, Diablo would not be able to do anything about it. Even Rimuru would not be able to react. Or so Guy thought.

Upon hearing that, Diablo continued to laugh in his usual *kufufu* manner.

“You think Rimuru-sama has not expected that? He has already made arrangements. Rimuru-sama’s magnificent mind could perceive and foresee all things in life—”

And Guy thought Diablo would be shaken a bit, yet he was completely unfazed. Worse than that, even under these circumstances he was still singing Rimuru’s praises.

What a nutjob—Guy couldn’t help but realize.

“...Oh, he does seem very interesting. I suppose that guy has exceeded my expectations?”

“Yes, that is only natural. It is only natural to Rimuru-sama.”

Diablo would continue to provoke Guy, big time, during the absence of Rimuru. Had Rimuru known this, he would have shouted “What the hell are you doing!”

Raine bit her lips regretfully hearing their conversation. Yet Guy and Diablo continued

completely ignoring her.

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It was during which—

The Western Nations were experiencing an unprecedented crisis. The main defense force of the Cidre Border region, who were in charge of fending off demons, had disappeared for reasons unknown. Due to their inability to defeat the regularly invading demon armies, they requested emergency support.

“How can this be! You said that the demon army is coming down south?!”

“What the hell is the Count of Cidre Border doing!”

“There’s no time for pointless squabbling. All nations should be assembling their armies and setting up defensive positions at important junctions! Or else the Capital of Ingracia will also fall prey to the invasion of the demon army!”

The delegates of every nation had gathered for an emergency council meeting and were quarreling endlessly without a solution in sight.

The Western States Council was an organization formed by delegates of its member states. Even though the council’s decisions held great weight, it would also waste a lot of time in following procedure during emergency situations. This was the biggest weakness of a democratic majority vote system.

The defense of the northern realm was handled alone by the Count of the Cidre Border in the kingdom of Ingracia. Around half of the total military strength of Ingracia was deployed in the north against Guy Crimson. Moreover, several Holy Knights were dispatched there as well, alongside several rank A adventurers from its subsidiary organization, the Freedom Association.

That was how important the land was as a strategic location. If it were to fall, it would be a matter of life or death for humanity. No wonder why the councilors that had gathered were in such a panicked state.

Right now, the final line of defense was barely holding on as the Holy Knights and adventurers stationed there were taking the brunt of things. Based on the dire situation that was unfolding, they needed to send reinforcements immediately.

However, there wasn’t enough time.

While this might have already been accomplished with authoritarian states, since the decision was made by a league consisting of independent entities, they needed to request approval from their respective home nations first. The quickest solution right now was to issue an emergency request to the Freedom Association.

A solution for the Kingdom of Ingracia, the host nation of the council, was to mobilize their military reserve. On the other hand, since it would likely weaken the defense of Ingracia’s capital, they definitely would not approve of this decision.

Speaking of which, the responsibility of defending the northern realm had always been managed by Ingracia, so it wouldn’t be unreasonable if they were to request additional troops

from other nations. Just like what one of the unnamed councilors had already shouted, it was more viable to form a coalition army.

Even so, there was a catch: the soldiers dispatched by various nations would be led by the newcomer—the Jura-Tempest Federation.

The motion had passed with unanimous support, so one would expect zero complaints. Yet, to the councilors, willfully handing over their nation's precious military to monsters was a hard pill to swallow.

“Please remain silent!” the Speaker of the Western States Council shouted, trying to restore order in the hall.

The eyes of the other councilors fell on the Speaker as he addressed his audience. “Right now, we are faced with an unprecedented crisis. Rather than arguing, you should try to establish contact with your home nations as soon as possible and order their troops here. We have the delegate from the Tempest Federation, appointed by Demon Lord Rimuru-sama, present. She—Testarossa-dono—knows her way around military strategies. Since Rimuru-sama has entrusted her as his proxy, she should be worthy to lead the coalition army.”

While some were against the Speaker’s view, they weren’t bold enough to voice their protests. And because there weren’t any alternative solutions, complaining here would only worsen the situation.

At this point, every councilor’s eyes were fixed on Testarossa. As the council summoned their army, executive military control would ultimately fall to Testarossa. It was, to some extent, normal that everyone would simultaneously begin to assess her.

Among the councilors, Testarossa was an unusual sight—being a young woman, not to mention gorgeous looks on top of that as well.

There are so many beauties from Tempest—many councilors couldn’t help but think. But no one was stupid enough to say it out loud. Everyone was wondering why this woman, this “Testarossa,” had so much power.

While it might sound like an exaggeration, the success of this whole affair was not only tied to the councilors’ fates, but also the fate of humanity.

One of the councilors braced himself and asked Testarossa a question. “T-Testarossa-dono, uhh—I understand it is rude of me to ask this, but do you really know how to command the army?”

With a bewitching smile, Testarossa replied: “Please rest assured, everyone. My master Rimuru-sama has given the order to protect every nation that is a member of the Western States Council. My subordinates have already departed to each nation. Also—Moss.”

“Yes ma’am. According to the information I just received, reliable reinforcements have reached the northern defense.”

This young boy, Moss, must be Testarossa’s servant—while the councilors quietly had the thought, Moss’s report sent a wave of shock across the hall.

“W-what!”

“I-is this true?”

“T-then, Testarossa-dono, what are these ‘reinforcements’ referring to?”

“Moss.”

“Yes ma’am. Dragon ships from the Sorcerer’s Dynasty Sarion are heading to the scene. There are some lesser demons scuffling there; however, with that elf’s subordinates, they will be easily taken out.”

“Everything you heard, Speaker-dono, is true. By the way, Moss, it’s very rude to call His Majesty Rimuru’s ally *an elf*.”

“Ah! M-my utmost apolog—”

“Don’t ever do it again, understand? Make sure to address her as Her Majesty Elmesia.”

“U-understood.”

Under the intense glare of Testarossa’s crimson eyes, Moss shrank back in fear. His face paled with the realization that he still hadn’t outgrown the prejudices he held from his time as an archduke in the demon realm. If he were to anger Testarossa, then he’d be signing his own death warrant. Moreover, to have belittled Rimuru’s friends, Moss himself could not allow such a mistake.

Perhaps it was because Testarossa knew what Moss was thinking that she did not pursue the subject any further and only gave him a warning. If Moss hadn’t changed his arrogant attitude, he likely would have been executed by Testarossa the very next second. Despite Moss being a demon of great standing, he still pledged his eternal loyalty to Testarossa. That would never change.

Testarossa was truly a gentle yet cruel person.

The next moment, the atmosphere within the hall became unbelievably chaotic. After listening to the conversation between Testarossa and Moss, the councilors had gotten a rough idea of the situation. On the other hand, there was no evidence to back up her claim, so they couldn’t just blindly trust them either.

“Our nation believes in Testarossa-dono.”

“Umm, our nation agrees. We shall entrust the handling of all military affairs to Testarossa-dono.”

Some of them declared their support outright.

“How can you say that, isn’t that being too irresponsible?! If anything were to happen, it’d be too late!”

“Hear, hear! If the talk of reinforcements were all a lie, human society would be crushed by demons!”

Some of them rejected the idea...

They continued to argue as the council was split into two sides.

Testarossa observed this pandemonium rather casually. She did not give her opinion and merely watched.

Not long after, Testarossa suddenly stood up.

“I get it now, it was you. You’ve hidden yourself quite well.”

This happened so abruptly, the councilors were all confused about what Testarossa was saying.

Although, there was one person's face that turned pale, with sweat dripping down his cheeks, when Testarossa gazed at him.

He was one of the Five Great Elders. The Duke of the Kingdom of Rostia, Johann Rostia.

"W-what did I do?" Trying his hardest to hide his inner panic, Johann questioned Testarossa in return. Yet Testarossa simply cracked an amused smile.

Johann lost his composure and reacted first.

"A-as expected, monsters are indeed untrustworthy! We have to use our own strength to protect humanity. Guards, guards, get over here!" he shouted, acting all serious. His face was covered with a thin sheen of perspiration, desperately trying to fight the fear he felt. In contrast, Testarossa's smile deepened.

Noticing Johann's order, soldiers quickly charged into the meeting hall, his personal guards among them too. He quickly regained his composure.

Testarossa began playing with her hair, looking elegant as she did so, while the other councilors fell into disorder again.

What Johann had done was completely out of line. Even if Testarossa was bearing malicious intent, an unlawful act that purposefully ignored the rules of the council would not be tolerated. Regardless of how important Johann's position was, such reckless behavior was unsanctioned.

"You there, your name is Johann Rostia, correct? The Duke of Rostia, a rather prestigious position."

"S-so what? It's no use flattering me now—"

"Johann-dono, who were you communicating with via 'Magic Communication' just now?"

"What...!"

"Why did you give the order to disrupt this nation's 'Defensive Barrier'?"

"H-how did you..."

"Could you please tell me why?" Testarossa pressured Johann to answer with the demeanor of someone casually chatting in a tea party.

The other councilors were all flabbergasted. There was no time to panic anymore. They immediately ordered their subordinates to confirm the 'Defensive Barrier' of Ingracia's capital.

Before they could get an answer—

Everyone felt the rumbling that slowly started occurring in every direction, like an earthquake.

"Could this be true...!"

"How could you destroy the barrier?! This means it can't prevent monsters from invading anymore! This will bring catastrophe upon the civilians!"

"Seriously, what in the world is going on! Johann-dono, please give us an explanation!"

Seeing someone more panicked than themselves, people would naturally be influenced by that as well, causing a positive feedback loop and eventually falling into a state of fear. Yet, if you were to take a step back in these circumstances, you would naturally regain composure.

Johann belonged to the latter category.

Knowing his plan had come to fruition, a serene smile emerged on his face.

“Girard-dono, the barrier has disappeared, and thus the time has come. Please summon that lord.”

Urged on by Johann, someone began to move. The councilors’ faces turned pale as they laid eyes on the man.

“T-that man, he’s the leader of the mercenary band ‘Apostles of Verte’—”

“Commander Girard!”

“Are the ‘Apostles of Verte’ linked not only to Gavan, but Johann as well?!”

“If that’s the case, what is Johann-dono planning?”

Ignoring the councilors’ comments, Girard stood by Johann’s side.

“Our contract is effectively complete as of this moment. Thank you for the assistance.”

“It’s nothing, but you’re welcome. This is the final wish of our leader, the Great Elder Granbell. It just so happens to align with your goal. Come on then, no need to hold back. If you are going to do it, make it thorough, and turn this place into a living hell!” Johann declared, laughing maniacally.

The light of reason gradually dissipated from his eyes, and instead was replaced by his true vicious nature.

It was not until this moment that the councilors finally realized Johann was the traitor. Even so, the ‘Defensive Barrier’ of the capital had already been breached.

Seemingly grasping their situation, the councilors all looked desperate.

“Ayn, it’s time.”

“Umm, understood!”

Following Girard’s encouragement, the woman named Ayn commenced with her chanting. It was summoning magic.

Ayn was the leader of the labyrinth team ‘Green Rebellion’ and a spirit wielder. However, what she was summoning this time was not a spirit, but the god worshipped by the ‘Apostles of Verte.’

A dark oval-shaped portal appeared. A powerful being of undiluted strength crossed the gate and stepped in front of everyone. It was a green-haired beauty in a dark red maid outfit. Yet everyone could tell that this beauty was dangerous. Contrasting with her attractive appearance was the youki, reeking of desolate despair, that emanated from her entire body.

Even the magical inquisitors that arrived after sensing the disturbance were petrified by this youki. Their instincts told them—moving even a hair now would get them killed.

The one that emerged from the darkness—her name was Mizeri, a demon peer.

Amidst the sudden desperation, Johann sneered with satisfaction. He recalled the day that he was summoned by Granbell for the last time. With the demise of Gavan, there were only four people left among the Five Great Elders:

The head of the Rosso Family—Granbell Rosso.

The Count of the Cidre Border of the Kingdom of Ingracia.

King Dolan of the Kingdom of Dolan.

And then there was Johann.

Granbell summoned all three and gave them the terrifying final order. “Mariabell is dead. At this point, us Rossos have exhausted our strength. Perhaps it is possible to achieve our goal from a different perspective and coexist with monsters. If it were like Luminas-sama’s method and that they had no interest in the human domain, we could perhaps successfully coexist with one another. On the other hand, if we were to walk the path that Demon Lord Rimuru promotes, humanity would fall prey to his control. We must stop him at all costs.”

“But Great Elder Granbell, if there is no viable way to fight back, regardless of what plan we create, it would have flaws.”

“I am well aware of what Mariabell was afraid of, but now that even our Chaos Dragon trump card is lost, we have no more options left. Razul should not be moved out so easily either...”

Dolan’s words were a reality check. Cidre nodded while Johann agreed.

Johann had directly interacted with the dangerous individual named Mariabell before. To have won against that menacing young girl, Demon Lord Rimuru sure was terrifying.

Right now, it's probably smarter to pretend to play along with Rimuru's will as we accumulate our strength again—that was Johann’s belief.

With that being said, likely sensing that the others were hesitant, Granbell expressed his view vociferously. “Fools, did you lose your nerve? No matter how chaotic the world is, no matter what sacrifice we have to make, the human world should be ruled by us humans! Have you forgotten?”

The others did not dare make a sound against such a fierce aura.

Granbell rarely expressed his emotions, and because of that, they could tell how deep Granbell’s hatred and fury truly ran.

“I am tired. If this continues on, the human world will be destroyed, and in its place, Demon Lord Rimuru will have the entire world in the palm of his hand. If this is our fate, then I shall make my last stand. I am going all in for this wager. You people can follow your own will.”

Granbell had given the others time to contemplate their decision for the future.

Would they follow Granbell to fight against destiny, or surrender to Demon Lord Rimuru?

In order to prevent the Rosso bloodline from dying out, someone needed to sever all ties and become a hostile faction to the Rossos—only Dolan chose this option.

“My domain is far from the heat of battle. I shall be the last of the Rosso family and judge the history to come with fairness.”

Granbell approved of Dolan’s words. “Very well. I fear that I won’t have the opportunity to do this in the future, so I shall give my final words to you. It’s too late for me, but you must never hold a grudge.”

Granbell steeled his resolve and left Dolan with this advice. Dolan quietly wept and nodded. He then left the scene alone.

Johann knew this would be their final gathering, yet he had no regrets in his heart.

Granbell was the progenitor of the Rosso family. When considering the hardship he had already experienced, to Johann, sacrificing himself for the cause was nothing.

Cidre had the same thought.

And so, the three began planning their final scheme.

Granbell would manipulate Grandmaster Yuuki of the Freedom Association into confronting Luminas.

Cidre would dissolve the western defense network and allow the demons from the north to wage war against the Western Nations.

Johann, on the other hand, would sabotage the ‘Defensive Barrier’ that protected the capital of Ingracia and kill off key members of the Western Council. If it was possible, he aimed to kill the delegate of the Tempest Federation, hopefully antagonizing Demon Lord Rimuru and also worsening his relationship with Demon Lord Guy.

And so, human society would be plunged into chaos.

They would deal with the aftermath later. After all, their designated survivor, Dolan, would lead the restoration of society.

There might also be some nation that stood out and rose to power. Or perhaps someone would become humanity’s new hope and lead the masses.

Granbell seemed to have some other ideas, but Johann did not give too much thought to it.

“...Are you all fine with this? You do understand that I am sending you all to your deaths, right?”

“Why in the world would we object? I am also a member of the Rossos, and my heart rests with you, Grand Elder!”

“Me too. While my illness-ridden body may not accompany you to the end, I wish to be at least of some use.”

Granbell had asked to confirm their will, and both Johann and Cidre answered without hesitation.

There was a reason why Johann’s mind changed so quickly. The Rosso family naturally should follow the order of Granbell. Without his guardianship, the family would never have prospered. This was just how much the fate of the family relied on Granbell. It was obvious Granbell had decided to embrace his death and so the usually indecisive Johann made up his mind.

Dolan-dono appears heart-broken as well. It’s like a child being abandoned by his parents; surely his heart must be uneasy too—Johann thought to himself. In considering that viewpoint, perhaps he was rather happy in the end. He could bear the pride of the Rosso family and accept his final moments.

Johann followed Granbell’s orders and made contact with the ‘Apostles of Verte’ which previously conspired with Gavan. He promised to assist them.

The Apostles’ goal was to summon the ‘Green Deity’ that could plunge the world into

anarchy. This mercenary band's dream was to blossom during that chaotic state, an ideal that was completely self-centered.

Back to present time.

Johann's mission was complete. The 'Apostles of Verte' had also clearly achieved their ambitions. Because their god—Demon Peer Mizeri—had answered their summoning.

Mizeri was more terrifying than some demon lords. She wouldn't break a sweat in destroying the Kingdom of Ingracia.

Kukuku, even the supposed strongest unit of this nation, the magical inquisitors, froze at the sight of the demon. This country is doomed. Our nation of Rostia will probably be affected as well; I suppose I'll just have to apologize to everyone in the next life. In satisfaction, Johann glanced around the meeting hall.

And what he saw next made him question his eyes.

Faced against Mizeri, the embodiment of horror, was a person that wore a gentle, conspicuous smile. The young man standing beside her seemed disinterested at the fact as well, completely at ease.

W-what's wrong with those two?

Johann, shocked, recalled that those two were the delegates of Tempest: Testarossa and her servant, Moss.

"I see. What an interesting scheme, Johann-dono. Could it be that you wish to destroy this nation and plunge the world into chaos and war?"

Testarossa's reaction displeased Johann quite a bit. He was even more upset at how casual and calm Testarossa was acting while facing Mizeri, the walking calamity that surpassed demon lords. "What if I did?"

Yet he quickly changed his view. While Testarossa may be strong as a monster, her arrogant confidence would soon be her downfall.

You can't do anything with strength alone. You haven't even seen through your opponent's true strength. That ignorance will destroy you. When she finally realizes the reality of her situation, she'll cry and plead. By purely imagining the sight of a distressed Testarossa begging for mercy, Johann's heart was filled with an overwhelming sense of ecstasy.

"How very laughable. Your plan failed the very moment I was appointed military attaché."

"Kukuku, what nonsense are you talking about?"

Hearing Testarossa's words, a calm smile settled on Johann's face. The more confident Testarossa was, the greater her despair would be when she got a taste of what was to come. With that belief, Johann eagerly anticipated that moment.

It was then that the Speaker interrupted their conversation.

"T-Testarossa-dono, this is no time to chit-chat. You must escape even if it's by yourself, and you must report to His Majesty Rimuru as soon as possible!"

"Ara, Speaker-dono? What *should* I say to His Majesty Rimuru-sama?"

In the Western Nations, people's comprehension of demons was not deep. Compared to the

experts in the Eastern Empire, what they knew was barely the tip of the iceberg.

The Speaker was no exception. When he saw Mizeri, he was not aware of her species. He only knew that she was the subordinate of Guy Crimson, the symbol of terror, and therefore determined Mizeri to be a highly threatening individual.

Ignorance is a sin, but sometimes it was useful too.

Had the Speaker and the councilors known demons well enough, their hearts would have despaired the moment Mizeri appeared. They were lucky since they hadn't fallen into that state yet, which was why the Speaker continued to earnestly beg Testarossa.

"Please inform him that one of Demon Lord Guy's subordinates has invaded our land. Surely he will not leave the council for dead!"

The Speaker knew he was being too optimistic.

Regardless of how much Demon Lord Rimuru sought to coexist with humans, he would not purposely go against Demon Lord Guy just to secure his wish. It was a simple cost benefit analysis that anyone would understand.

Yet even with that being the case, the Speaker still wanted to have a glimmer of hope on this small possibility. He had seen Demon Lord Rimuru with his own two eyes and believed his words.

Perhaps if it is that emotional and overtly human demon lord, he may just defy logic and save us—despite knowing that his thought was absurd, the Speaker couldn't help but to think so. That was the reason why he was still able to maintain a coherent frame of mind amidst the terror.

Testarossa smiled at the Speaker. "That's why I am here."

Although the Speaker didn't understand what she meant by that for the longest time, he would soon enough. And he was not the only one confused about Testarossa's words.

Johann felt the same. That composed, easygoing attitude of Testarossa had pushed him to his limit.

"Do you really think I'll just sit by and let you interfere? Girard-dono, it's about time to give them a reality check."

However, Girard, as he was being ordered around by Johann, was also confused by the scene in front of him.

Why, why hasn't Mizeri-sama made a move yet?

Ayn was Girard's lieutenant, and she had lost consciousness the instant Demon Peer Mizeri was summoned. It likely cost much of her life force, but it was undoubtedly masterful work. The fact that she was even alive at all was commendable. Although, without the supernatural power of Mizeri, she would likely never wake up. While feeling proud of Ayn, Girard prepared to retreat once the opportunity presented itself.

With the unusual power of Mizeri, it'd be a piece of cake slaughtering everyone at the scene. Besides, even the capital of the Kingdom of Ingracia would soon become engulfed by the hellish flame that was about to come.

Girard was planning to flee with Ayn before that happened. He intended to sacrifice all

the citizens of this city to their god, Mizeri. And with this contribution, the members of the ‘Apostles of Verte’ would surely be able to join the ranks of their deity. That was his plan.

However, things were going the opposite way of what Girard had envisioned. Ever since Mizeri showed up, she had been standing still and silently staring at Testarossa.

Finally, she decided to speak. “Unbelievable, Blanc. How did you manage to get a body?”

“Ara, that title sounds so desolate to me. Someone has already given me the wonderful name of ‘Testarossa.’ Wouldn’t you dislike it if people started calling you the green demon? No, Mizeri?”

“Y-you...got a name? How is that possible—”

Testarossa giggled. “Very possible it seems. It’s so kind of you to come all the way here to say hi, but unfortunately, I won’t lose to you in this state. It’d be quite amusing if you still intend to fight me. How about a thousand years of slumber as a parting gift from me?” she said provokingly with an elegant smile.

Not only did she obtain a body, but she even received a name.

And just like that, Testarossa had evolved into a demon peer, same as Mizeri.

They were now both on a level playing field.

At first glance, their combat abilities were on par with each other, but logically speaking, Testarossa, who only acquired her body recently, would be at a disadvantage.

That would have been the case if not for Testarossa’s bellicose personality. Mizeri, as Demon Lord Guy’s subordinate, mainly handled administrative affairs, whereas Testarossa, a primordial just like Mizeri, had been fighting for power every single day of her life.

There was no clear-cut way to compare either of them in combat experience. Furthermore, Testarossa’s subordinate, Moss, was here with her.

While I possess more magicules, I don’t want to risk fighting two demon peers. Moreover, my opponent is one half of the troublesome black and white duo. The duty Guy-sama gave me was just to create a disturbance at the capital, not risk my life trying to eliminate one of the primordials. I should report this problem to Guy-sama first.

Mizeri was very calm. She instantly recognized the difference in strength between her and her enemies, and determined the best course of action that the situation demanded.

“There is no need to provoke me like that, Bla—Testarossa. My target today is not you, but only to destroy the ‘Barrier’ over the capital. I think I achieved my goal.”

“Ara, are you trying to flee?”

“Indeed. My life belongs to Guy-sama. It is not something I can choose to throw away with my own free will.”

“I see. Then I look forward to our next encounter.”

To that declaration, Mizeri remained emotionless. “That is my line. Get used to your body soon. I won’t allow you to make excuses when you’re defeated.”

Testarossa’s smile deepened.

The two stared at each other for a while before Mizeri vanished.

“—Eh?” Girard couldn’t help but let out a gasp.

With her departure, she left behind a room full of baffled bystanders.

Their god—the supreme existence, the invincible, the omnipotent being—had been persuaded to leave by the councilor who only had a beautiful appearance going for her—or so it seemed in Girard's eyes.

The ‘Apostles of Verte’ was merely a disposable tool to Mizeri. It was something she prepared on a whim to keep human societies under her surveillance and obtain information. There were plenty of replacements at the ready, so she was indifferent to the fates of Girard and the others.

She abandoned them without a second thought—but Girard refused to accept this reality.

“N-no way! Dammit, you made our god leave!”

Enraged, Girard swung his sword at Testarossa.

His elevated rank A abilities weren't just for show. The swiftness of his sword was invisible to the average person.

Yet to someone like Testarossa, he moved like he was in slow motion. Besides, there was no need for her to do anything; Moss was with her. He would never ignore such insolence.

Clang. With a sharp crack, Girard's sword shattered in half. He was apprehended by Moss the very next moment.

“Don't kill him. Same goes for that official, Johann.”

“But these people insulted Testarossa-sama—”

In the blink of an eye, Moss's ear was sent flying away.

“Moss, are you asking me to repeat myself?”

He kneeled immediately, demonstrating regret for his misconduct. “I would not dare! To have given my opinion to Testarossa-sama, I thought too highly of myself!”

Testarossa had been in a good mood lately, which caused him to become careless for a second. She was actually very egocentric.

The same applied to not only Testarossa, but Ultima and Carrera as well. ‘Birds of a feather flock together’ was probably the best phrase that described them.

“Since you are aware of it, I shall forgive you this time. Ara ara, I have such a generous heart. Right, Moss? Wouldn't you agree?”

“Definitely! You are absolutely correct!” Moss said cooperatively. He was a smart man after all. Even though he occasionally made mistakes like this, he had served Testarossa for over ten thousand years. That was an incredible achievement that no one could even hope of replicating.

And so, Johann, Girard and Ayn were captured. Even the soldiers on their side were arrested.

“H-how can this be...”

Girard finally collected his thoughts after losing to Moss. The conversation between Mizeri and Testarossa began slowly sinking in before he realized something crucial.

Our enemy was acknowledged as an equal by our god...? Blanc—could ‘Blanc’ be referring to the White Primordial?!

Girard knew of the primordial demons. That was why he was able to see through Testarossa's hidden identity. As soon as he connected the dots, Girard plunged into a state of utter stupefaction. Now armed with the knowledge of what they had attempted to go against, he knew his soul would never see a day of rest. His ego as a strong individual meant nothing in front of the power of a primordial.

"Aha, AHAHAHAHAHAHA!" Girard laughed maniacally.

In a way, he had met an enviable end. Thus, both Girard and an unconscious Ayn were dragged away by the magical inquisitors.

Johann looked as though he had suddenly aged a few years as he laid lifelessly on the ground, rambling, "H-have I failed...? Even Granbell-sama's wish, his final request..."

"Yes. There is nothing you can achieve," Testarossa mocked, whispering into Johann's ears, her words filled with spite.

When the sweet voice of Testarossa reached Johann's eardrums, it completely numbed his heart.

"Dammit! DAMMIT! If-if it weren't for you, our plan would have worked!"

"Ara, is that so? Then I'm terribly sorry to have interfered with your plan in the end. Perhaps this is fate and it wanted you to give up. Ara ara, looks like someone's waiting behind you. Now please excuse me."

Testarossa stroked her pale finger across Johann's jaw before making way for the magical inquisitors, who were waiting to carry out their orders.

"N-no, stay away, stay away from me!"

The magical inquisitors remained silent throughout the process as they escorted Johann out.

"Stop it, oi, get your hands off me!" Johann shouted in front of an aloof crowd. "D-do you have any idea who I am?! Do you not know the consequences of your actions here?! My nation will not allow this to stand! You're creating an international problem for yourselves!"

No one reacted. Not a single person was willing to lend him a helping hand.

That was only natural.

With all these witnesses present, Johann would have to answer for his actions.

"There's no use crying—you have to pay the price for your crimes. Don't worry, your friends will be with you too. You will all have a fun time together."

"GO TO HELL YOU DEMON!"

Seeing Johann's distress, Testarossa laughed happily. "Ufufufufu, wonderful! There it is. How can I not be amused by a stray dog barking like that? Within the council, criminals are judged by a jury, and if your charge is 'Inciting subversion of state power' or 'Conspiracy against one's country,' it is outside the jurisdiction of the council and instead will be handled by Ingracia. How unfortunate that I won't have the right to punish you. Even though I could claim self-defense, you seem a bit too weak for me."



Testarossa's words were perfectly aligned with international law. Taking the law as an excuse, she merely utilized logic to force Johann into a corner. With Johann arrested, he would follow in the footsteps of Gavan: never to see the light of day again and eventually executed in secret.

Looking at the results, Testarossa single-handedly forced the demon that attempted to destroy the kingdom to back down, thus saving Ingracia and even all of the council members.

This incident cemented Testarossa's status within the council. Both her intelligence and martial prowess were insurmountable. Even the Speaker began to regard Testarossa highly, and her reputation spread far and wide.

And so, Testarossa was able to conquer the West once and for all.

"Did he predict what would happen beforehand? Ah, Rimuru-sama is truly infallible! How wonderful, how truly wonderful," Testarossa sighed.

"The extent of the lord's wisdom is genuinely unfathomable," added Moss.

"Indeed. But the incident could potentially cause Guy Crimson to take things seriously, and if that occurs..."

"We shall gather our strength. We must let the world know that no matter how fierce our enemies are, none will stand in the path of our lord!"

"Since you know this already, I don't have much to add. You should work hard in order to reach his expectations. Remember to tell Cien the same."

"Understood, my master!"

Testarossa nodded, satisfied, and gave a graceful smile.

The situation in the northern realm was going well too. Testarossa's subordinate, Cien, went above and beyond to contain and control the battle before Elmesia's Magus Order could arrive. Luckily, Guy wasn't really trying to invade anyway, which meant the demons were quickly defeated and routed back to their domain.

And so, the disturbance in the West seemed to have drawn to a close.

But the true unrest had yet to even begin.

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"Hey, Mizeri just contacted me," said Guy, sounding rather dismayed. "When did the White Primordial get a name?"

"Oh, you mean Testarossa. She is among the many people that have learned how wonderful a person Rimuru-sama is," Diablo explained proudly.

"All my men got defeated too. This prank was a complete failure."

"It is only natural. Everything is going according to Rimuru-sama's plan. You are merely a pawn in this game as well, Guy," Diablo added. Again, unbeknownst to Rimuru, he was antagonizing Guy.

Had Rimuru been there, he would probably have squealed something along the lines of,

“What the hell are you saying, you idiot!” and tried to stop Diablo at all costs.

“So, did that Rimuru give her the name ‘Testarossa’ too?”

“Yes, he did.”

“And the fact that Testarossa evolved into a demon peer after obtaining a body—”

“That was thanks to Rimuru-sama, of course.”

“...Right.”

Diablo’s smile widened whereas Guy’s headache worsened. Behind him, Raine was awaiting orders. Yet, upon realizing the severity of the situation, her face paled.

Oi oi oi, is this for real? The balance of power that had been maintained for thousands of years has been shattered to pieces...

Guy could only find the situation laughable.

The balance of power in different regions had always been subtly preserved. The three primordials had stood strong in their respective domains whilst the East and West were against each other. Furthermore, Luminas and Dagruel pressured each other from their respective domains as well.

Yet, this delicate balance was now completely obliterated.

Abruptly hit by an ominous feeling, Guy couldn’t help but ask Diablo, “Oi, if Testarossa emerged from the primordial trio, what happened to the other two?”

Diablo’s expression became smug. “Hmm, you mean Ultima and Carrera? Rimuru-sama prepared positions for both of them. They seem very happy about—”

Baffled, Guy quickly interrupted him. “Hold on, HOLD ON for a second!”

“What is it? I was about to explain the important part, you know?” Diablo was quite displeased as he was just about to brag.

“Eh, slow down now, is it a long story?” Whatever the answer was, Guy just didn’t want to spend all this time with him.

“Of course.”

“I’ll hear you out later. Who is this Ultima and Carrera...”

“Oh, Ultima is the Violet Primordial. Carrera is the Yellow Primordial. But if you don’t call them by their names, they won’t take kindly to it. Lately, it’s almost like they’ve forgotten their original titles.”

“I see...”

Guy was utterly gobsmacked.

Oi oi oi, what the hell is that brat Rimuru thinking? Guy thought to himself. It’s not impossible for the Black Primordial since he’s always been an oddball, but there’s no way the Violet and Yellow Primordial would yield so easily. Didn’t he mention the White Primordial too? That woman is the most prideful of all primordials... To think she would be willing to take orders from other people—

“Well,” Diablo casually interjected, “I was the one that invited them. I would welcome more jobs, but it’s pointless if that means I can’t take care of Rimuru-sama as a result. Wouldn’t you agree?”

“—Huh?”

Guy gave Diablo a weird look, as if saying, “*Oi oi oi, what is this guy talking about?*”

The absolute overlord, Guy, was completely dumbfounded at Diablo’s words.

“To put it simply, I wanted to push some of my chores onto other people—cough, cough, I mean, I wanted some companions to work with. So I invited that unemployed lot. Endlessly fighting like a bunch of idiots over power is so boring. That’s why I hoped they would mature a bit and come to Rimuru-sama’s aid!” Diablo declared in a haughty tone.

So you were behind everything! Seriously, this is all your fault—you’re the one who should grow up! Guy cursed internally.

“...So you invited those girls and Rimuru took them as subordinates, giving them names and physical bodies?”

“That’s right. They were very rude to Rimuru-sama at first. Now that I think about it, I wanted to kill them for that. But since they’re now useful, as long as Rimuru-sama doesn’t mind, I will forgive them.”

Diablo was weird enough already, which made Rimuru seem even weirder. That was Guy’s genuine opinion.

An average demon lord would not have been able to name a primordial. Such a drastic action was accompanied by an equal amount of danger. One would need to wager their life, or even their existence as a whole, to do it.

Essentially, if the primordials didn’t recognize your strength, they wouldn’t follow you, regardless. Your entire soul could potentially be consumed before you successfully named them.

What Rimuru did could no longer simply be described as ‘crazy’ or ‘overconfident.’

With that, Guy came to a conclusion. *I suppose I should just talk with him directly.*

“I’ll go hang out at Rimuru’s place next time.”

“Huh? That sounds troublesome. I refuse.”

You little shit—Guy clenched his fists. But he’d lose if he lost his temper now.

Diablo was a very special demon. Even if he were to be eliminated here, he would revive instantly. Knowing this well, Guy did not fall for Diablo’s taunts.

“It’s nothing really, I just want to hear more about all this from you, and this is certainly no place to chat. I heard from Dino that Rimuru’s domain is quite affluent. So, I want to check it out for myself too,” Guy said in a rather intimate tone as he wrapped his arm around Diablo’s shoulder.



“Pff—can’t help it with you. If that’s the case, I will welcome your visit. Surely, Rimuru-sama would be pleased to have you.”

Diablo’s mood improved dramatically when he heard Rimuru’s nation being praised. So much so that he permitted Guy’s visit.

Rimuru would definitely squeal upon learning this.

Later in the aftermath of these events, when Diablo reported this to Rimuru, the demon lord would think to himself: “This guy, why do you pick up all the bad traits from Shion...”

But not knowing things would go this way, Diablo promised Guy.

“Since you are here, I’ll be going now.”

“Right. *Whatever* happens here, Rimuru-sama will surely take care of it.”

“I guess. Please send my regards to Rimuru.”

“No problem. See you next time. I’ll look forward to our next meeting.”

And so, Guy left the scene.

Diablo gave a sigh of relief.

“Looks like I managed to pull through this time. There’s no telling how things would go if Guy decided to interfere. Even I would have trouble dealing with him. Kufufufufu, I must become stronger—”

The sound of Diablo’s laughter echoed in the empty space.



A fierce battle raged within the inner sanctum.

Louis’s innocuous hand-chops slashed through any obstacles. Furthermore, it was accompanied by a shockwave which closed in on Laplace, who was fleeing further away. However, Laplace was merely evading, almost teasingly, with a relaxed smile on his face.

“Right, right, are ya Roy’s big bro? Yer twins? Then ya can stop fighting already, ya won’t be able to beat me!”

Laplace was so unconcerned that he could run around dodging attacks, and still have the strength to crack jokes.

Louis remained emotionless to Laplace’s teasing. He didn’t mind that his attacks were being avoided; he simply continued to swing his hands at Laplace.

At some point, the two ended up fighting outside of the tomb. With Laplace constantly avoiding Louis’s attack, it was only natural that they would wind up here.

“As you just said, I am Louis’s twin. Our power was quite alike to each other, so was our appearance. The only difference was that Roy was more aggressive while I didn’t have much emotion, that is all the difference. However, there was one aspect that I am a lot stronger than him in, that is, I have good eyes.”

“The hell is ‘good eyes’?”

“I can closely analyze my opponent’s skill, body language and his focus of attack. That is why I clearly see that you have been looking for an opening on me ever since we started.”

“...The hell, so ya really are better than yer bro. But having a good pair of eyes alone ain’t gonna beat me!”

“Don’t sound so certain. By the way, my name is Louis; please do not call me his *bro*. To be honest, I was not that close to Roy.”

“Hmph—fine. It’s none of my business anyway.”

Amidst the fierce combat—or rather, Laplace evading Louis’s pressing attacks and casually responding—it was not Louis who was observing him; instead, Laplace was the one analyzing Louis. It was evident from the expression of his eyes.

“Enough of this, aren’t you getting tired? Take a good nap for now,” Louis declared.

His attacks began to intensify.

“Told ya it’s useless.”

“Is that so? Then allow me to go even further.”

His tone did not change at all, yet Laplace had a bad feeling about this. His instincts were surprisingly accurate in times like these. He instantly darted away from the scene with overly theatrical movements.

His judgement was on the mark.

Louis’s attack split apart and decimated the location where Laplace was standing just a moment ago.

“—Uh! What is this power...?”

The latest attack held immense destructive potential. Had Laplace continued to underestimate Louis, he likely would not have been able to react quick enough, sustaining severe injuries as a result.

“Phew—I’m finally getting the hang of this. I’m surprised you managed to dodge that strike. Looks like you are not a simple man after all.”

“Ya wanted me to get careless so ya could take me out with that shot, right?”

“Well, I can’t say I didn’t. But I can still beat you without underhanded tricks like that.”

“What are ya on about?”

Laplace had slaughtered Roy. At the time, Roy had underestimated Laplace, but even if he hadn’t, Laplace’s strength was still far greater than that of Roy’s.

Regardless, Laplace did not get careless. Even when Roy acted as the body-double of Demon Lord Luminas, his power still rivalled Kazalim’s. That was the undeniable truth. Kazalim was like a parent to Laplace and the clowns, and there was no way Laplace would let his guard down against someone of his caliber.

“Just now, that was the enhanced version of ‘Blood Raine.’ Its magic aura was purposely hidden to lower my opponent’s guard. Although, once they’ve seen it in action, it is impossible to pull it off again.” Louis decided to explain his skill to Laplace, even though he was essentially showing his hand.

Yet hearing this worsened the ominous feeling in Laplace's heart.

This is bad. Is he stalling? The hell is this guy's goal?

Laplace's instinct told him that he was still in danger. He determined that he would fall into Louis's trap at this rate, and decided to pull out his trump card immediately. There was no time for hesitation. A moment of indecision could cost him his life.

“—And that is why you will die here!” Louis roared as Laplace's surroundings exploded.

The shockwaves from the explosion were concentrated at the center region where Laplace was standing. He had nowhere to run, since the ‘Blood Ray’ missiles had already locked onto him.

The victor had been decided.

Anyone would reach the same conclusion if they saw it.

The flames burnt fiercely.

A humanoid figure collapsed at the center.

“What a pity. Roy and I were the same person; it was Luminas-sama’s power that separated us into two. Roy’s death had returned my original power back to me.”

In the past, there was once an extremely violent ‘Bloody Lord’ that no one dared to challenge. It was Luminas who subjugated the man and recruited him into her service. But because of his sadistic and violent nature, he constantly clashed with Luminas’s other subordinates. It was then that Luminas decided to bisect the person, naming one of them as her right-hand man, the pope, and the other as her body-double, the demon lord.

In other words, Louis had finally regained his old powers and became complete again. He was several times stronger than before. Even if Laplace’s power was above that of Roy’s, Louis still had confidence in winning.

And that was why—

“Terrifying. That was a close call.”

Louis felt a bit surprised to see Laplace raising his body and standing up.

There was no way Laplace would ignore such a good opportunity.

“Run away now, Footman, or ya gonna get killed!”

“Hehehe, while I’m not content yet, I may really end up that way if I continue.”

Footman was devastated by cuts and bruises, courtesy of Gunther. Gunther was the strongest among the ‘three Archdukes’ under Luminas’s command. Even though he wasn’t nearly as powerful as Louis in his complete form, he was still capable of rivalling Footman.

Laplace was able to meticulously analyze this aspect even during his battle with Louis. It would have been too easy for him to flee by himself, but there was no way Laplace was going to leave Footman to his own demise.

Even if I go all out here, I still won’t be able to take all of them out. Footman will probably die before that too. That being the case, it’s best for us to run away as soon as possible. We’ve done our job of stalling the enemies, so there’s no need to risk our necks any longer! Laplace concluded.

He intentionally spoke up to distract Louis before taking action. His plan worked, and so

both Laplace and Footman managed to escape with their lives.

Thus, only Luminas and Maria Rosso remained inside the tomb.

Luminas seemed to be holding back against Maria's attacks; she was not fighting seriously. The fact that the being before her, Maria, was able to hold her own in a lightning-fast battle was proof in itself that she was a fake.

Yet, even so—

Luminas could still sense the benevolent aura that Maria emanated.

Granbell probably preserved Maria's body and then used her corpse to create this death golem—no, that's not right. This carcass has no free will. This must be a familiar summoned by the necromancy spell 'Raise Undead.' To have resorted to such forbidden sorcery—has that man really fallen that low...?

Anyone would pray having lost their loved ones...

Pray that their loved ones would return.

But no one could grant this impossible wish.

Luminas could understand Granbell's feeling as to why he resorted to heretical crafts like that, but her mind could only relate on a hypothetical level. Luminas was far from death, and therefore she could never truly understand sorrow and grief.

Granbell and Maria were a very intimate couple.

Maria was a Saint's priestess, or Saintess, that supported the Hero Gran throughout his life. Gran wanted to share the burden of Saintess Maria, and thus they got stuck with each other. The two were so close that it made Luminas, who was their enemy at the time, jealous of them.

It demonstrated the extent of Granbell's resolve to have turned his precious Maria into a familiar. However, she was abnormally strong, so he must have casted other dark spells on her. Luminas came to this realization because Maria had used countless special abilities during their duel. It was like she was invoking several Unique Skills at once, and even Luminas was having a hard time fighting her.

While it's quite magnificent, it's still too weak. Granbell probably knew she couldn't defeat me. Then, his goal here must be—a sense of uneasiness suddenly washed over Luminas as she pondered. She felt like she had overlooked something very important—

“Luminas-sama, the intruder has escaped. Louis is currently pursuing them, and I shall depart to join him—”

Gunther had returned to report to Luminas. Yet he stopped halfway, just as Luminas finally noticed what was wrong.

Something was missing in the room.

Something very important...

Gunther saw it; Luminas's heterochromatic eyes simultaneously darted to the same place.

—The carefully guarded Holy Ark from within the depths of the tomb had disappeared—

Luminas was struck speechless. She was in complete shock and denial of what was in front of her.

This shouldn't have happened.

Stupefied, Luminas took a direct hit by Maria.

"Luminas-sama...!"

Gunther's anxious voice reached her ears, yet Luminas had no time to be concerned. The pain quickly spread across her body, but she welcomed the stimulation to her senses; it helped her keep her cool. Part of Luminas's mind calmed down and began to think critically once again.

That part forced her to accept the reality of the situation. Although she desperately wanted to deny the truth, she managed to pull herself together with her calm, analytical mind.

And the reality was that the coffin made of holy particles—the Ark of Holy Power—had been stolen.

Overwhelmed with rage, Luminas pierced through Maria's chest.

Luminas unleashed the mana from within her body with a furious roar. "GRANBELL, HAVE YOU REALLY COME TO DO THIS?! YOU DARE—YOU DARE TEST MY LIMIT, GRAN—!"

The tomb was instantly destroyed by a tsunami of immense power. Luminas's surroundings were filled with swirls of chaotic mana, to the point that she had become an aura of death.

"Gunther—!"

"Yes, I am here to serve!"

"Find them. Flush out the invaders at all costs!"

"Understood!"

No more words were needed.

Gunther acted immediately, having understood Luminas's will.

Facing an enraged Luminas meant that even Gunther could lose his life if he weren't careful.

If this mission fails, Lubelius may face destruction... Gunther thought as he sprinted out as fast as he could.

Luminas was the only one left at the scene and was having a difficult time trying to simply suppress her anger. She began analyzing in a composed manner, knowing that if she were too reckless, it would only worsen the situation. Her thoughts needed to be detached from her emotions—to Luminas, this was only natural.

Nonetheless, the incident had shocked her greatly. *This can't do. If it's not carefully protected before the time comes, it'll likely lead to this world's destruction. It'd be something even I won't be able to handle...*

That object—the Holy Ark—had been entrusted to her by an important friend. If she were negligent in its management, the world could face an unprecedented catastrophe as a consequence. That was why it had been sealed tight.

Luminas calmly scrutinized the current state of affairs.

Only she could remove the seal imposed on the Holy Ark. The holy particles would burn even the original caster, Luminas; an example of how powerful and terrifying the 'Barrier' was.

Thus, the problem was...how could something like that be stolen...?

—Who could it be? To have taken that item means this person was quite capable, or at least strong enough to rival me.

In other words, this individual's strength was on par with the demon lords.

The chaos Granbell incited at the Grand Cathedral must have been a distraction. The fact that Granbell entrusted them with his key goal meant this person was powerful. He definitely had enough faith in the other person to let them steal the Holy Ark while allowing himself to play bait.

In this wager, Granbell had won.

—No, perhaps there is still time. I can't show weakness at this point. Compared to that, right now I should...

What did Granbell want with the Holy Ark?

She needed to confirm this first and foremost.

Luminas hadn't shared any information about the Holy Ark with Granbell. It was confidential information. Even Gunther and Louis only possessed a surface-level understanding of it and the young girl sealed inside.

Granbell was willing to sacrifice all of his aces. Just from that knowledge alone, anyone could see that his resolve was more than just strong.

Luminas could clearly tell that something was off.

As long as I can achieve my true goal, nothing else matters—Luminas could feel this hateful sentiment from him.

"Very well, I shall confirm your true intentions first," Luminas muttered and turned her gaze towards the cathedral.



It seemed like Leon had caught on to the meaning behind my words. He was simply playing along and crossed swords with me.

To the eyes of bystanders, this certainly appeared to be an actual battle. If I were too careless, I could actually be killed by the slashes.

On that note, did he really understand me?

The look he gave told me that he probably knew Granbell was behind everything. We just had to wait for the right moment. And before that happened, we just needed to pretend to duel. At least that was how I envisioned it. Yet, Leon's swordsmanship refused to give me any room to breathe.

His speed was extremely fast. While Hinata's rate of attack was swift, Leon was no slower. He had a very beautiful stance, typical of practicing orthodox swordsmanship.

I, on the other hand, had incorporated some personal tastes to my swordsmanship after learn-

ing from Hakurou. Since using a sword was not my only means of combat, I couldn't help but add my own flair. Moreover, with Raphael-san's monitoring, it wouldn't be too unconventional.

In any case, that didn't really matter; I was just complimenting how clean Leon's attacks were.

It truly made me question whether he was actually planning to kill me with his attacks or not. In addition, Leon's face was essentially an emotionless mask. That meant I couldn't tell if he had killing intent by looking at him, which began to really concern me that my message hadn't gotten across.

«Report. No problem. According to analysis of 'Predict Future Attack,' he is striking in coordination with you.»

Ah, what a relief.

I'll let this continue while Raphael-sensei takes over with automatic battle mode.

Putting that aside, there was something else that was unsettling. I had been getting feedback about small earthquakes. At first, I suspected it was plate displacement—but it was quite intense. My guess was that it was Luminas's doing, who was currently absent.

There were problems everywhere.

This unrest was no longer just a minor incident. It was already far beyond just the simple involvement of other nations. Had I not been the person at the center of all this, a complaint would have definitely been filed to escalate the whole thing into an international affair.

—Although, Luminas probably wouldn't let a complaint affect her anyway.

Putting that aside, Diablo had yet to return.

Shion and Ranga were struggling against an insect type monster called Razul.

While Hinata and Granbell appeared to be on par with each other, I felt that Granbell still had more strength to spare. It was obvious to me that if the battle were to continue any further, the odds would soon turn against Hinata.

The various battles, as a whole, were not ideal. It was almost impossible for me to judge which one I should handle first.

As I was analyzing the battleground, I detected an intense mana explosion underground. It was from Luminas.

The stone tiling of the Grand Cathedral floor was blown away, breaking open a circular hole with a diameter of two meters. A pillar of light shot from it and instantly evaporated the ceiling as it dissipated in the sky.

The power of it was insane, but such an attack was probably a piece of cake for Luminas.

“Granbell, it looks like you are seriously trying to be my enemy.”

Luminas emerged from the hole in the ground while holding a beautiful woman. And as soon as she came out, she interrogated Granbell. Her killing intent was palpable.

Looks like the situation is changing.

Leon seemed to bear the same thought as he turned his attention to Luminas.

“Kukuku, as expected from Luminas-sama. Even my familiar was not able to stop you. I had to infuse it with the power of many otherworlders, and it was my greatest masterpiece.”

“Foolish man. No matter how much power you infuse into that knockoff, a mindless golem can never compete with the real thing. You should know something like that best yourself.”

“Of course I know.”

Granbell was still very calm in front of an agitated Luminas.

Hinata’s strikes against him had become even faster, yet Granbell parried them easily.

I knew from experience that Hinata had some way of stealing Skills from her opponents, but it seemed that she was unable to invoke it this time.

Speaking of which, Arts and Skills were different things. You wouldn’t be able to use an Art immediately, even if you stole it. You could only master them through years and years of training and accumulation of experience.

The reason why Granbell was so strong was probably due to exactly that—years of training and research. His center of gravity did not shift an inch, maintaining his balance like a steady mountain.

Leon and I whispered to each other, “Impressive. Looks like he wasn’t bluffing when he said that he was an ex-Hero.”

“Umm, this was a little bit unexpected.”

We were ignored as Luminas and Granbell continued to speak.

“What in the world are you planning to have done this—“ Luminas said while gently laying the woman in her arms down.

She looked like she had fallen asleep. No, she was already dead. As the name suggested, she had merely been turned into a familiar through the manipulation of her corpse. Since she did not have a ‘soul,’ no matter how much energy was inserted into her, it was meaningless.

I knew this point very well.

“—Maria has already passed away, and yet you chose to desecrate her like this!”

Luminas apparently knew this woman.

Was her name Maria?

She looked quite similar to Mariabell...could she be...

“Because it is necessary. Everything I have done was for this exact moment.”

Facing a confused Luminas, Granbell took off the glove on his left hand, revealing an engraving on it. It began to glow, and responding to it was the body of Maria, which also started to shimmer along.

“What are you doing?!” Luminas questioned loudly, but this unfolding event was undoubtedly on everyone’s mind.

Leon and I stopped to observe.

At this point, keeping up this facade with each other would just look ridiculous. I almost couldn’t remember why we were fake fighting in the first place.

An unbelievable phenomenon was occurring right in front of us. Maria’s body turned into a beam of light and was absorbed into the engraving on Granbell’s hand. Soon after, Granbell’s body quickly began filling up with power.

It was not only his magicle content. His physical body also seemed to enhance. Granbell’s

cells were now rejuvenated; his white hair transformed into a shiny golden color, and his withered skin regained their elasticity.

The Hero of the past had returned—a young Granbell Rosso.

His eyes were sharp.

“—I understand now, you...you even put my love energy into Maria’s body!” Luminas shouted while Granbell nodded in confirmation.

I recalled that love energy was the power to help maintain one’s youth. Was that power originally granted to Granbell now fully restored in him?

Whatever the case may be, the end result was the Granbell in front of us.

“Luminas-sama—no, Luminas. Our duel has yet to be settled. I remembered that I can’t die before this is all over. Now that Mariabell is dead, my ambition has changed, but I still intend to complete one final wish!”

“You scum!”

“Don’t you underestimate me now!”

Two people responded to Granbell, and they were Luminas and Hinata, respectively.

Granbell, now revitalized, turned his head towards Hinata.

“Ah yes. Hinata, there are still things that I’ve yet to teach you. You are the most talented among all the students I’ve taught. You have always been ambitious and worked hard to hone your skill. *Outstanding* is not high enough of a praise for you. However—“ Granbell casually swung his hand, releasing an unbelievable attack.

“Melt Slash—?! No way! Can you really manipulate spiritrons like that without chanting?!”

Hinata sure was impressive to have dodged that unscathed, but her accomplishment paled in comparison to how Granbell was able to unleash the ultimate holy sword art with ease. It was a feat simply beyond imagination.

He had become an unthinkable monster.

“Hinata, in the past, I was very confused about why you couldn’t become a Hero. One cannot dream of becoming a Hero through talent and hard work alone. Without the endorsement of spirits, it is impossible to obtain the credential. That said, however, you *were* endorsed by spirits, and yet...”

“How unfortunate then. So what if I was endorsed by the spirits? I simply can’t become what is impossible.”

“Had you awoken as a Hero, it would have surely helped with my ambition. Allow me to give you a word of advice. Is there darkness in your heart already? You killed someone close to you, haven’t you? Your parent, sibling, or perhaps a friend?”

“SHUT UP!!”

Hinata had previously kept her distance in order to dodge the ‘Melt Slash,’ but now she charged forward to close in on Granbell. Her eyes were brimming with rage. Granbell’s words probably hit a nerve.

The clashing of swords resounded.

Granbell remained still. Instead, it was Hinata who was sent flying away.

“Uh...!”

The difference in strength was too overwhelming. Comparing Hinata to Granbell was like comparing an infant to an adult. I could barely believe my eyes.

“You could not accept a light spirit into yourself. Overcome it. The darkness in your heart is nothing more than an illusion fabricated by your own mind. You must forgive your past self and be proud of the life you lead now. Then, you shall see the light—”

“I TOLD YOU TO SHUT UP!!” Hinata shouted frantically as an expressionless Granbell watched on.

“How regretful, Hinata. Had there been more time, I could have given you the proper guidance. If you cannot understand my words, then you shall experience it in person. If you cannot protect what you yourself want to protect, then you are delusional to think you could save the world.”

This is bad—my instincts alerted me.

This conversation put everyone’s attention on Hinata.

If Granbell had calculated all of this, his goal would be—

«Warning. According to results of ‘Predict Future Attack,’ his target is—»

Once Granbell swung his sword, the ‘Disintegration’ released from his slash could not be stopped. Rather than a slash, it was more like a strike—something akin to a ‘Melt Strike.’ The strike would travel at nearly the speed of light and piece straight through its target.

This was why I bolted towards that kid.

Yet according to my calculations, I wouldn’t make it in time, even at full speed. But perhaps if I activated ‘Gluttonous King Beelzebuth’ and consumed the entire space in front of me...

I could not capture spiritrons traveling at the speed of light. But since I knew that his target was Chloe, I should be able to make it.

“Chloe!” I shouted.

Then it was all over.

Hinata took action first. Without a hint of hesitation, she jumped in between Chloe and Granbell’s attack. Sacrificing herself, she let Granbell’s ‘Melt Strike’ hit her directly in the chest.

It instantly pierced through, and Hinata coughed up blood as she fell to the ground. However, this merely reduced some momentum of the beam as it continued to approach Chloe.

Unexpectedly, another individual jumped into action right after Hinata. It was Venom. Just like Hinata, he planned to sacrifice himself in order to protect Chloe. Likely out of loyalty for Diablo’s order, Venom had been extremely focused this whole time to ensure the children’s safety. That was why he managed to make it in time.

“Guu, that hurts—!”

He seemed pretty energetic even with a gaping hole in his stomach.

As expected from demons; so long as their ‘soul’ remained intact, they would be perfectly fine even if their bodies were destroyed. It might have been a different story if Granbell’s target was Venom, but that was not a question I had time for.

I managed to make it thanks to the extra time Hinata and Venom bought. I consumed the entire space in front of Chloe. With that, I appeared in an instant. Now I just had to use ‘Absolute Defense’ of ‘Covenant King Uriel’ to protect Chloe.

“Eh, Rimuru-sensei? Hinata...oneechan...?”

Chloe only paid attention to Hinata, and while it was kind of rude to Venom, I couldn’t blame her; I was concerned about Hinata too.

Luminas ran towards Hinata to inspect her wounds. “Hinata, are you all right?”

“Hinata-oneechan, you can’t die!”

“Oi, Chloe!”

I wasn’t fast enough to stop her before Chloe bolted away. The rest of the children wanted to follow her, so I swiftly put them to sleep using ‘Paralyzing Breath.’ I gave Venom a healing potion and instructed him to protect the children.

“C-Chloe, you say? Is it really...Chloe...?”

Leon seemed to be acting a bit strange, but I didn’t have time to worry about it.

I chased after Chloe and reached Hinata.

On one hand, I was keeping my guard against Granbell, whilst on the other, I was examining Hinata’s situation.

—*Eh, this is...*

“Oi, Luminas...”

“Quiet! The spiritron corrosion is progressing too fast!”

Although her superficial wounds were being healed, Hinata grew weaker and weaker regardless. The spiritrons were destroying her spiritual body. At this rate, even her astral body would start eroding. If that happened, even she—

It was then that Hinata opened her eyes slightly.

“G-good! You’re doing great, Hinata, stay awake now!”

“—No, Luminas-sama, I-I—cough!”

Shit.

Hinata would be in mortal danger if this continued. But even so, Luminas, who was more skilled at holy magic than me, could not drag Hinata back from limbo.

Granbell’s skill truly was deadly.

“C-Chloe, it’s good that you are unhurt...”

Despite the blood dribbling from her mouth, Hinata managed to hold herself up. She had a will of steel. Even though her eyes were unfocused now, a smile still hung on her face.

Hinata extended her right hand to Chloe. It was trembling. She held out her ‘Moonlight Rapier’ and a bracelet—the Holy Spirit Armor. “...Chloe, I’ll leave it to you. Still, as your Master...it seems that I couldn’t do anything, but you’ll be able to... You’ll be able to surpass me—”

Hinata’s sentences were broken up, but she was able to convey the heart of her message to the weeping Chloe.

“Hinata...oneechan...”

Chloe reached out her shivering hands to touch Hinata—

And in the next second—

Hinata's body began to glow, with the light seemingly drawn to Chloe's hands.

Am I seeing things—?

Even Luminas was quiet.

Or rather...time had frozen for a brief instant...

Chloe's cry reached my ears. "Y-you are lying! I didn't know about this! Why?! It's not time yet!"

"Oi, Chloe?" As I called out, Chloe vanished without a trace, as if she were never here to begin with.

—I recovered swiftly.

What happened just now?

"Chloe? Chloe, where are you? Rimuru...damn you, what did you do to Chloe?!" Leon demanded as he clutched my shoulder, yet I was equally confused. Where *did* Chloe go?

"Uh, no, I have no clue..."

Could she really have just disappeared?

Seeing how I was behaving, Leon seemed to believe the truth behind my words. He began to anxiously turn his head around in search of her.

I, on the other hand, felt incredibly shocked.

What just happened? I had absolutely no idea.

«—Unknown. Situation is abnormal. No information can be obtained regarding what occurred with individual 'Chloe Aubert.'»

To my surprise, even the usually reliable Wisdom King Raphael offered no information about the situation. Nevertheless, I didn't even have time to be dazed.



Luminas wasn't surprised about the disappearance of the young girl at all. To her, the most important matter was lying in front of her—her precious companion.

Luminas's resurrection spell had no effect, and instead evaporated in mid-air. It baffled her.

"Why?! She didn't die for long, so why is it..."

—No, Luminas could *see* it.

While Hinata's body was restored to perfection, the most important part of her, her 'soul,' had vanished.

"Hinata, I am so sorry. To have let this happen to you when I am here..."

A single tear escaped from Luminas's eye. Yet, it was this exact moment that someone decided to speak up, spoiling the heartfelt scene.

“Quit mourning already. Everything has been going according to plan. This one just now went extremely well, Luminas.”

Under these circumstances, only one person—Granbell—was laughing gleefully. Obviously, this enraged Luminas. Hinata was dead, and Luminas didn’t even get the time to grieve.

“UNFORGIVABLE, I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU. I WILL TEAR YOU APART!” Luminas roared furiously. The flare of rage reddened her face.

Her precious Hinata had been taken away right in front of her eyes.



Yet she could do nothing. Feelings of powerlessness and desperation swarmed her mind. The level of anger was perhaps comparable to when her old kingdom was destroyed by Veldora. Luminas, the demon lord, was in distress.

This reminder of her past trauma evoked Luminas's lust for strength, and it was the last straw that broke the camel's back.

Her great emotional turmoil prompted some sort of change within Luminas, who had always suppressed her inner feelings. She had perfected all her skills. However, she'd never been able to ascend to the pinnacle of the world. Until now. The 'Voice of the World' resonated in the air, ringing in the silence of her evolution.

«Confirmed. Conditions satisfied. Unique Skill 'Lust' has evolved to Ultimate Skill 'Lustful King Asmodeus.'»

At that moment, the power within Luminas soared to new heights, making her much more vicious and violent than ever—she had reached the realm of the rulers of heaven.

Demon Lord Luminas's evolved Skill—"Lustful King Asmodeus"—commanded "Life and Death."

Luminas awakened this power as a result of her feeling helpless at Hinata's death. However, Luminas did not react to her newfound power at all. She instinctively knew that, at this point in time, this Skill meant nothing.

"It doesn't even matter anymore! It's too late...if it wasn't useful when I needed it most, then it is a meaningless power to me!" Ignoring even the 'Voice of the World,' Luminas's fury continued burning. "You wish to finish your duel with me, don't you?"

"Indeed, Luminas. You've evolved too, haven't you? It was unexpected, but I am happy for you."

Luminas's heterochromatic red and blue eyes glowed, much like that of a monster. As she glared at Granbell, they swirled with hate. Inexplicably, the face of the girl that had vanished suddenly flashed through her mind. Luminas chased the stray thought out of her head.

"This is different from what I've been told—but that hardly matters now. I shall send you to your maker, Granbell!!"

And so, Luminas stood against Granbell.

After over a thousand years of entangled fate, they began their final showdown.



I could only watch silently at how Luminas dealt with the issue. Even though she employed a textbook example of her resurrection spell, it failed to make a difference. It was a shocking scene to say the least.

Basically, as long as one's soul was safe, resurrection should have been able to revive them regardless of their spiritual or astral body.

So how come it didn't work...?

«Answer. The 'soul' of individual 'Hinata Sakaguchi' has disappeared.»

...No...soul?

Actually, I noticed that too.

This was the second time that Hinata had fallen, yet there was a distinct difference compared to last time.

Luminas probably realized the same thing as well.

Normally, one's soul wouldn't disappear so quickly. Was it possible that something went wrong, and we didn't recognize it? Perhaps Luminas was holding onto that tiny sliver of hope.

With that being said, it still didn't appear to have worked. I never expected Luminas to fall into a panic like that. The intimacy of her relationship with Hinata must have been beyond my understanding.

I couldn't excuse myself of this outcome either.

My mind had become a jumbled mess. *How could something like this happen*—I thought to myself.

But now was not the time for reflection.

“This is different from what I’ve been told—but that hardly matters now. I shall send you to your maker, Granbell—!” Luminas yelled. I jolted at her outburst, realizing that I had been dozing off this entire time.

What the hell am I doing? Especially since this is a live battlefield.

It was practically suicide.

I can grieve later. I have to do what I can right now.

Luminas’s words sounded a bit strange, but I could look into it later.

Keep calm, just keep calm.

This wasn’t over yet. If I acted recklessly, Hinata’s sacrifice and everyone’s efforts would be all for nothing. Even though I was forcing myself to do it, I still managed to switch up my mindset. Perhaps, had Luminas shouted a bit later, the situation would have worsened—the reason being the huge explosion at the Grand Cathedral that just occurred.

The bright light and dust storm caused by the explosion rushed to the central area. It rapidly swept across the area, but compared to the recent lightspeed battle, it was rather sleep-inducing.

I acted calmly, trying to protect the children and band members. I peeked in Shion and Ranga’s direction, as I was worried about them.

Apparently, Diablo had returned without me noticing and created a ‘Barrier’ to protect them.

“Kufufufufu, I was late.”

“No, you’re just in time!” I thanked Diablo.

By the way, what surprised me was Shion. Ranga and Diablo both noticed the explosion, yet it seemed that Shion’s attention was purely devoted to her enemy. Her expression was terrifyingly serious, and her face was flustered, seemingly mesmerized amidst all the bloodshed. It

was a strangely sexy and eye-catching sight on the battlefield.

Well, never mind that.

They were being cornered by Razul, but at least they were holding their own in the fight. Thus, I let Shion and Ranga continue their battle against Razul.

With that, I decided to find the source of the explosion.

I soon felt an immense wave of youki.

The aura was so evil that a chill ran down my spine.

This was a lot worse than an ominous sign.

The oppressive atmosphere was as heavy as lead, like if the sky was crashing down—eh, why did this aura feel like the greater spirit that had once merged with Chloe?

While similar, there were subtle differences. However, the immense presence it exuded was exactly like the one in Chloe.

«Warning. Target possesses a material body. Abnormal power detected—limit is similar to the power of individual ‘Veldora.’»

Holy moly. Now that's a real monster!

Unlike before, the result was no longer incalculable, but this knowledge wasn't very comforting at all.

If it was just rampaging based on instinct like the Chaos Dragon, I might be able to handle it. On the other hand, if this enemy possessed intelligence, I could only surrender. Furthermore, if it had combat experience...the thought alone was terrifying. Perhaps I would see defeat before I could even get the chance to put up a fight. That power was several magnitudes higher than mine.

Unfortunately, I had a sneaking suspicion that I most likely would have to fight it head-on.

Is this what despair feels like?

Shortly after, the smoke dissipated. Standing there was a peerless beauty. Stark naked like a newborn, her eyes were closed as she stood silently. Her long, silver-black hair drifted down her head, whilst she was surrounded by shimmering light. She had a beautiful body that was the stuff of dreams. I couldn't help but be mesmerized.

—It was a little untimely to be dazed.

“The one who stole my Holy Ark, is this your doing?! And you just had to unseal the holy particles and awaken the consciousness of ‘Chronoa’ too...” Luminas shouted in a certain direction, where a familiar figure appeared.

It was Yuuki.

As I suspected, he was behind everything.

While a part of me really wanted him to be innocent, it seemed that Wisdom King Raphael-san was right. Nevertheless, if you asked me who I trusted, it would undoubtedly be Raphael-san.

That explained why I wasn't surprised at all.

“So, it did have something to do with you?” I questioned coldly.

Yuuki didn't look guilty in the slightest, and instead arrogantly replied, “Tsk, did I get

caught? Never mind though, this is fine.”

So this was his true nature. Judging by his words, he seemed quite reckless.

Behind Yuuki were two unfamiliar majins, both wearing masks.

One had an ‘asymmetric, with a pretentious attitude mask’ and the other, an ‘angry-looking mask’—they were probably Laplace and Footman from the ‘Moderate Clown Troupe.’

I had my suspicions for a long time, but it appeared that they really were in league with Yuuki.

“And you must be Luminas. I am Yuuki Kagurazaka, a pleasure to meet you.”

“Silence! How did you manage to break the seal?”

“To answer your question, I have a very special attribute. My ‘Anti-Skill’ can nullify all magic and special abilities.”

“—I see. You are quite bold to give that information so blatantly.”

Luminas, biting her lip, glared at Yuuki. Still, her actual attention was entirely focused on Granbell. The two of them were both on equal footing. Neither could find an opening on the other.

Moreover, Granbell was looking at the black-haired girl too. And just like Luminas, he was responding to all of her attacks.

In terms of skill, the battle between the strong was indescribable.

“I suppose so. Anyhow, since Rimuru-san already knows this Skill, there’s no need for me to hold back. By the way, I also have a question to ask. Not you, but for Granbell-san over there.” Yuuki spoke in a casual manner, but he didn’t let down his guard. His eyes had been carefully surveilling his surroundings the whole time.

“Kukuku, I can practically guess what your question is, but regardless, speak your mind.”

Since both Leon and I were free to move, Yuuki wouldn’t be able to escape so easily. Though, that was assuming Yuuki planned to run away. Even so, I was confident that he would definitely try to flee.

I still couldn’t figure out why Yuuki would be here, right at this moment. It led me to believe that things probably hadn’t turned out the way Yuuki wanted to today.

Nonetheless, it’d be dangerous to act now without getting a clear picture of the situation. I could only try to deduce what was going on from Yuuki and Granbell’s exchange.

“While I was told that the Holy Ark contained the Hero, she won’t listen to my commands no matter what. She even unlocked her seal by herself. What exactly is going on here, Granbell?”

Hero? You are saying that this girl is a Hero?

I was getting more and more confused.

Why would a demon lord keep a sealed Hero?

Although, it appeared that Luminas treasured her a lot, so maybe it wasn’t as simple as it seemed.

Luminas answered the question for Yuuki. “You don’t say! That *thing* is known as a ‘Hero,’ but is not actually the Hero. Right now, this girl in front of us is the incarnation of evil named Chronoa—”

She sounded furious, yet surprisingly, it was mixed with a touch of anxiety.
Luminas said that the girl was called Chronoa, and that she was the incarnation of evil.
Hearing these foreboding words from her, she had to be very dangerous.

“Kukuku, thank you for all your efforts, Yuuki,” laughed Granbell. “For that Holy Ark—not even I could crack the seal of holy particles. That’s why I manipulated you. Once the seal is undone, none of us can stand against her. You demon lords and evil men! All of you will die here!” he finished with a roar. What a nice guy though. He spilled the beans about his entire plan; in a way, he did us a great favor.

—Even so, the current predicament didn’t improve.

I could hear Yuuki complaining.

“Seriously, in this a game of betrayal, I lost? I totally got played...”

However, this stalemate was about to come to an end.

A certain object started trembling. The black-haired girl—Chronoa—was moving.

She shook her head slightly and opened her eyes—

And thus began one chaotic battle.



Did Luminas know about something else? I’ll have to ask her about this later. Right now, the goal is to survive.

“Diablo, take my place and handle things here.”

“—Understood!”

Diablo looked like he was about to say something else, but he read my expression and promptly agreed.

He was probably going to volunteer himself to fight. I didn’t have to argue with him over this. Diablo must have seen that I had no intention of changing my order to him.

Next—

The immediate question was how to act.

Luminas and Granbell were locked in a fierce stalemate.

Shion and Ranga were battling Razul.

Yuuki and his men were attempting to flee. While I didn’t want them to escape, they were barely a threat compared to Chronoa. With that being said, my grievances also made it difficult to simply ignore them. They would surely plot something behind our backs. There was no way that they would fight alongside us.

Leon had been looking rather soulless for some time now. Honestly, I had a feeling that he was going to be unreliable.

There were too few allies and far too many enemies.

This was a difficult situation. The odds weren't in our favor.

Then, Chronoa opened her eyes.

She looked ready to fight.

While Chronoa was naked, she had on a single accessory: the bracelet on her wrist. That bracelet began to glow as black particles slowly covered Chronoa's body. It was an exact copy of Holy Spirit Armor. She was now protected by jet black armor, which was even stronger than Hinata's light-based Holy Spirit Armor.

In addition to her armor, Chronoa also summoned a sword. It was a beautiful rapier akin to the Moonlight Rapier, with the only difference being that the blade was black.

«Warning. Despite having an identical shape, the energy stored within it is incredibly high.»

It looked like both her armor and weapon overshadowed legendary-grade. It was probably equal to my straight sword, or perhaps even stronger. In other words, it was possibly mythical-grade¹¹.

I better abandon any naive expectations now.

This was no longer a question about whether my enemy was intelligent or not. My Skills alone might already be outmatched by her. I had a hunch that her weapon could break through my defense. If that premonition were accurate, I would be in grave danger.

«Warning. Enemy 'Chronoa' will—»

I know!

I didn't need Raphael-san to tell me that I was in deep shit.

Following my instincts, I activated 'Absolute Defense' and dodged. Immediately after, black lightning blazed through the spot where I had been standing. It traveled in a straight horizontal line, vaporizing any obstacle in its way. The flash of light easily pierced through the walls of the Grand Cathedral and disappeared.

This was worse than 'deep shit.' Had I been one step slower, I would have taken a direct hit.

I guess whether I can hold on or not will depend on my luck.

«Negative. Even with 'Absolute Defense' of 'Covenant King Uriel,' spiritrons can still break through. Only solution is to predict her movements and utilize spiritrons to interfere with and cancel each other out. However, the enemy's attack variability is greater than expected. It is difficult to predict, therefore—»

Impossible to defend against, right? I get it.

Then why was 'Absolute Defense' called "Absolute"... But my complaints could wait.

Evading her attack was already quite a feat. I deserved a bit of praise for that at least. Moreover, Chronoa wasn't just targeting me alone. She turned her attention to Yuuki when she struck next.

Chronoa scored a slice on his cheek, as Yuuki failed to evade the attack.

You deserve that one—while it was sort of inappropriate to gloat now of all times, do indulge

¹¹Ruby text reads: God-grade. The translation team has decided to go with the Kanji translation because God-grade is cringe.

me to take a jab.

Speaking of, Chronoa's attack was really something else.

Against a purely physical attack, Yuuki's 'Anti-Skill' was pointless.

Now that I thought about it, I actually enjoyed how convenient Skills like 'Physical Attack Nullification' were, while Yuuki did not. Even if he could fortify his body, at the end of the day, he was still human.

And here I thought that 'Anti-Skill' was quite a threat, but as it turns out, it had a surprising number of flaws.

I could only produce these observations by watching other people fight.

I needed to come up with a solution before she turned her attention back to me.

«Proposal. Do you wish to activate the Skill 'Storm Dragon Summon' of the Ultimate Skill 'Storm King Veldora'? YES/NO»

Ah, I forgot I had this in my deck!

I didn't want to use this ace in the hole in front of so many people, but if I didn't do anything, the situation would undeniably become dire. And that'd be an even bigger problem.

It would be too late if someone else was killed like Hinata.

I felt a bit uneasy considering the relationship between Luminas and Veldora. But I could deal with that later.

I happily accepted Raphael-san's proposal.

I had secretly practiced this by myself in order to master the key points. However, when I called for Veldora through 'Soul Corridor,' I only got a lazy response.

«Hmm, Rimuru? Are you having fun after ditching me for your little hiking tour?»

He was throwing a tantrum.

This isn't a hiking tour.

I really needed him to stop complaining for a second. I didn't even have time to make a clever retort.

Now was the time to speak from the heart.

«Veldora, I'm begging you here, we need your help. Please come and help us!»

Emotions transmitted through 'Soul Corridor' was a lot more straightforward than in 'Telepathy Net.' As a result, I would get caught lying very easily, hence I didn't use the former that often. On the other hand, if I wanted to convey genuine words, it was perhaps the best means of communication.

Veldora seemed rather surprised.

«Oh oh, do you need my power? Of course you do, there aren't that many people as reliable as me after all. I can totally understand why you'd want to rely on me!»

Dammit, did I boost his ego a bit too much?

No, it's fine. Surely Veldora will answer my request.

«There's no time; can I summon you?»

«Hmph, what kind of a silly question is that? You have a favor to ask from me, and if that's the case, there's only one answer! Whatever your request is, I will fulfill it to the best of my

abilities!›

Just as I thought, Veldora was quite reliable.

«Approval granted. Activating Skill ‘Storm Dragon Summon.’»

Soon after, a gust of wind began blowing within the Grand Cathedral—



This whole time, Leon had been numb.

Did I not make it in time...?

The girl named Chloe...there was no other explanation—she was the playmate that Leon had been searching for. In his pursuit, he had dirtied his hands, using countless forbidden methods for hundreds of years. And she was standing in front of him.

Indeed, she was right there. Yet, a moment later, she vanished.

At first, Leon suspected it was Rimuru’s doing. However, he quickly rejected the thought. Leon could only accept that something beyond his comprehension had occurred.

It’s still too early to give up just yet, Leon told himself. I’ve seen her now. I will get another chance!

By the time he pulled himself together again, he realized that the situation surrounding him had taken a steep dive for the worse.

A new enemy, with seemingly invincible power, had appeared.

Even though he had no idea about her strength, the fact that he could see Rimuru on the defensive put Leon on the spot as well. There was no telling whether he would be the next target or not.

Watching Yuuki being attacked and dodging left and right for his life reminded Leon that he was still on the battlefield.

It was a bit late of a realization.

All the people who had been incapacitated laid by the walls of the Grand Cathedral. Unbeknownst to Leon, Rimuru had purposefully moved them there to keep them out of the battle.

These people were still alive, just knocked out. That was why Leon lowered his guard against them.

Normally, Leon would not have made such a mistake, but his head was a mess. Seeing the girl he’d been looking for disappear before his eyes shocked him.

With all these factors combined, Leon was full of openings. And that was why he could not react in time.

Suddenly, a small magic missile shot from the wall side. It didn’t really pack a punch. Besides, it was meant for Chronoa, who was chasing Yuuki. Something like that obviously could not harm Chronoa, but the attacker’s actual purpose had been achieved.

Chronoa turned her attention to Leon, her stare boring into him.

Leon clicked his tongue. "Tsk, so it was meant to draw her onto me!"

He had to ignore the perpetrator as he couldn't take his eyes off Chronoa for one second; otherwise, it'd cost him his life. If he didn't fight seriously, even Demon Lord Leon would be in a tough spot. Yet, even if he did, he probably was not going to win against her.

That was how tough of an opponent Chronoa presented.

At this point, Leon could no longer care about anything else.

In the background, people began to cheer at this turn of events.

It was Yuuki and his entourage.

"Nice job, Teare!"

"What a nice call. I never expected Teare to be of use under these circumstances. But having this fail-safe sure was the right choice."

Teare's job was to potentially make Rimuru antagonize Leon. Sadly, no opportunity ever emerged, so Teare had to play along this whole time.

Her endurance and the perfect timing had been rewarded.

"Hehehe, now we just have to wait for Teare to return and we can retreat."

Yuuki was sweating hard when Chronoa targeted him, but now, he had regained his composure. He even had the spare time to observe Leon and Chronoa's battle. Because of this, he discovered Teare stumbling by the wall, trying her hardest to escape. He managed to rescue her in time for Laplace to finish his preparations for their escape.

Just as Yuuki brought Teare back, Laplace cast his magic.

"All done, let's hurry back now."

"Agreed. Rimuru-san seems to be planning something; it'd be dangerous to stay here. Let's get out of here, shall we?"

Nodding in agreement, Yuuki raised his hands to the sky. He subsequently destroyed the entire magic barrier over the nation of Lubelius.

"Hehehe, as expected from the boss man."

"No matter how you see it, Boss's Skill totally feels like cheating..."

"But ain't that just great? Thanks to that, we can easily get away."

Just as Laplace said, it was impossible to escape from the city center with his magic alone. Fortunately, Yuuki's power managed to change things in their favor.

Teare was right too; it really was like cheating. But thanks to that unfairness, everyone managed to escape, and so there were no complaints.

"I'm not sure who will manage to survive, but the next time we meet, we will be enemies. Give it your best shot!"

With these parting words, Yuuki and his companions departed.



I saw Yuuki and his men run away.

Although I was angered by it, with them having left behind these difficult opponents and being able to flee scot-free—perhaps it was a good thing when considered from a different perspective.

It was impossible to tell whether he was an enemy or a friend—or in this case, a definite enemy. Therefore, you never knew if you were going to be stabbed in the back while working together with someone like that.

It could get ugly quick with there being two fronts. Rather than that, it was better to lock onto one single enemy. I'd have a better chance of winning.

In the Western Nations, the Western Holy Church's influence was massive.

As long as Luminas supported my claims, Yuuki would lose all shred of credibility in the West. After all, the backbone of the Freedom Association was the council, yet this supposed leader of the Association was fighting against Luminas.

If we were to win here, Yuuki would no longer pose a threat. Thus, I needn't be so upset about his escape. I strengthened my resolve with these words, and fixed my eyes firmly on my enemy.

“Rimuru, isn’t this...the Hero that sealed me?”

“It appears so.”

“It’s definitely her,” Veldora smugly declared. “Even when she’s not wearing the mask, the shape of her mouth is just how I remembered when I got a peek. I was right! She *is* beautiful!”

Even though this was hardly the time, how could he, a ‘True Dragon,’ judge human appearances? I was a bit curious.

In any case, my suspicion that Veldora “Only lost because he fell in love” was deepened.

“I agree that she’s stunning, but she’s our enemy now. Looks like she was sealed by Luminas before and just went berserk. It sounds like it was a countermeasure to you, so could you please take responsibility and do something about it?”

“How rude. Why would anyone need some dramatic countermeasure for someone as upstanding as me?”

Did you actually just say that out loud...

I was almost impressed, if not completely baffled.

But Veldora’s nonsense could wait.

“You can save your jokes for later. Please try to hold her back for a while and win me some time!”

“KUA-HAHHAHA! Leave it to me! After all, fate has brought me the opportunity to fight

her again. Would it be okay if I beat her?"

Oh oh, so cool!

But hold on, isn't that what the losing side usually says?

"Fine by me! I'll be counting on you!"

"Just leave it to me. I lost to her when I was just a dragon, so this is a great chance to show off my strength after my growth."

In spite of how confident he sounded, hadn't he actually become weaker?

What kind of logic is that you become stronger in your human form than when you are a dragon? Despite internally disparaging him, seeing how motivated he looked, I decided it was better not to tell him. And so I very gladly shoved Veldora onto the battlefield.

Even if he lost, Veldora wouldn't die anyway. I could rest assured about that.

I turned my head to Leon. "Are you all right, Leon?"

Chronoa was observing us, so my eyes didn't dare stray from her as I spoke to Leon.

"I managed to hold it together, but don't get careless. She is stronger than I imagined."

In any case, I healed Leon's injuries first. His sword had been broken and he himself was covered in wounds. It was a miracle that he made it this far.

It was thanks to the time bought by Leon that I managed to summon Veldora successfully.

"I could tell that from the moment I saw her. Moreover, since Luminas had been on high alert against her, I knew from the start that she wouldn't be an easy opponent."

That was the reason why I even used my trump card, Veldora.

"Is this why you called Veldora? I'm not going to ask you how you did it, but it's definitely encouraging knowing he's on our side. However, even a 'True Dragon' would have a hard time fighting that thing."

I didn't need him to tell me twice.

Because this Chronoa was the one who sealed Veldora away.

"By the way, how are your wounds?"

"Nothing severe. I wasted too much mana trying to prevent my sword from shattering, and thankfully, nothing fatal hit me."

Coincidentally, Leon's sword had broken in the end, regardless. In addition, despite how nonchalant Leon put his words, he seemed to be biting his lip, trying to hold himself up.

We didn't have the extra hands to protect Leon. With how things developed, perhaps I made the right choice in the end.

I didn't just summon Veldora. There was one more person I called.

"Are you all right, Leon-sama? Long time no see."

It was Charys.

I ran into a bit of an issue during the summoning. Veldora decided to be stubborn and wanted to bring Charys along, no matter what.

"You are...Ifrit?"

"Indeed. I have now been given the name Charys and am in the service of Veldora-sama."

"I see, I am glad that you are doing well."

“I never realized Leon-sama’s true intention was for Shizue Izawa and I to understand each other. It was under the guidance of Veldora-sama that I have now realized how foolish I was.”

“…Is that so?” Leon nodded.

But I honestly doubted whether the two really knew each other. It sounded like they were just casually greeting each other, though it’d be improper to tease them about it given the current situation. They were both so serious. I guess the master and servant were very alike one another.

“Rimuru, please buy me some time. It’s time for you to witness some of my trump cards,” Leon said.

He could be planning to escape by using me as a distraction, but I believed that Leon wasn’t that kind of person.

I trusted him.

“Understood. I’ll be covering Veldora then. Charys, you shall stand guard here as Leon finishes his preparations.”

“Understood!”

“My apologies, thanks for the assistance.”

And that was settled.

Leon quickly began getting ready. Charys would be in charge of protecting him. The master and servant from the past were working together once again.

I, on the other hand, returned to the battlefield.

The final battle was about to start.

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

**Chapter
5**

**The Hero
Awakens**

Chapter 5

The Hero Awakens

Ahh, so sleepy.

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

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

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

In the past, Hinata once had a normal family.

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

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

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

Her father was the same.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Realizing this, she felt rather melancholic.

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

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

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

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

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

«You can't fall asleep!»

An intense call woke Hinata up.

Is that...Chloe?

This thought brought Hinata back to reality.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Synchronize?

«Yes, can you see a light ahead?»

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

«Yes, over there!»

Hinata approached the light.

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

And then—

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

A while later:

“Have you woken up?”

〈This is...?〉

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

〈You can just call me Hinata.〉

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

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

And so, Hinata expressed her gratitude. *⟨I see, thanks for waking me up.⟩*

Chloe explained many things to Hinata later.

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

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

However, Chloe remained calm.

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

⟨Huh?⟩

“Look there, can you see that mountain?”

⟨Yeah...eh, could that be?! The spirit hill¹² of Mount Liora? But that—where is this? If going by geo-location, shouldn’t this be the holy land of Lubelius...?⟩

It was only natural for Hinata to feel confused.

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

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

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

—In other words—

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

Chloe was right.

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

With that being the case—

⟨There’s no way...?⟩

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

¹²靈峰: Hill/Mountain where deity/sages reside.

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

«Chloe, how can you tell that this is the past?»

Indeed, that was her question.

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

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

Yet, Chloe had spoken without hesitation.

That was why Hinata was in doubt.

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

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

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

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

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



Chloe's explanation was indeed very shocking to Hinata.

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

However, that alone shouldn't be underestimated.

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

However, she couldn't seem to recall all her memories clearly...

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

«When did you awaken this power?» Hinata asked.

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

Spirits' to host a spirit, but—”

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

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

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

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

⟨Then you’ve been repeating the same thing over and over?⟩

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⟨Huh? Rimuru died? Killed by who? And how? How can anyone manage to kill that cockroach Rimuru...?⟩

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

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

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

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...

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

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

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

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

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

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

The children's school was one of them.

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

However, things quickly took a turn for the worst.

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

«Me?»

“Mm, Hinata. It was really scary.”

«I...am really sorry then.»

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

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

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

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

Five years passed after that.

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

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

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

However, this peace didn't last.

The fateful day arrived—the Empire began their invasion.

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

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

«Shizu-sensei's...»

“Umm, yes. The one I gave her.”

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

Chloe continued the story.

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

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

But, before they could finish their battle with Veldora—

Hinata was murdered by an unknown individual.

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

.....
.....
...

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

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

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

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

Yet Chloe did not mind Hinata and continued.

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

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

Indeed, many things had changed compared to last time.

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

⟨...Considering that guy, he'd probably think that he could pull through under those circumstances somehow, even if it's illogical.⟩

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

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

The future is filled with hope—Hinata thought.

⟨By the way, how come things turned out so differently this time around? What could the cause behind this be...?⟩

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

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

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

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

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

It was then that Chloe whispered something to Hinata:

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

〈Huh?〉

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

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

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

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

〈Not at all! Never mind that, let's get to work!〉

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

The reality of the situation finally dawned on Hinata.

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



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

Chloe started off without hesitation.

〈Do you know where she is, though?〉

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

〈Was it because of Veldora?〉

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

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

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

Chloe sure was determined.

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

And so, they arrived at Luminas's castle.

〈So this is Night Rose...no wonder Luminas-sama was so proud of it.〉

It was a beautiful castle.

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

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

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

Hinata was surprised at her words.

〈H-hold on! Do you think they'll let you leave in one piece with you calling Luminas by her name here?〉

Even with Hinata's warning Chloe was composed.

〈It's all right, I am friends with Luminas!〉

〈Wouldn't that be after you save them from Veldora's wrath? You are a total stranger now.〉

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

〈Ah, right. I've done this too many times and thought they already finished fighting. And I always get scolded by Hinata for this too...〉

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

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

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

〈Listen now, Chloe. Let me give you advice. Don't reply immediately, but listen to my opinion first.〉

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

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

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

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

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

Soon after, they were brought before Luminas.
Of course, it was not as simple as it sounded. Chloe had to force the soldiers to let her pass.
Furious to the point of trembling, Hinata snapped at Chloe, <Seriously, do you even remember what I just said?>

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Luminas was no fool.

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

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

Later on, Veldora came.

Luminas fought valiantly.

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

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

“Umm, but...”

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

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

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

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

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

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

In her secret chamber, Luminas met with Chloe.

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

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

“Very much so, do tell.”

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

That was of course while consulting with Hinata.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hinata knew that very well.

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

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

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

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

Chloe and Hinata paused a bit.

〈It probably would be bad if the name Chloe becomes widely known.〉

〈Umm, Leon-oniichan will definitely find out about it.〉

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

〈What should we do?〉

〈What did you do before?〉

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

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

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

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

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

〈Why not Chronoa?〉

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

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

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

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

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



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

Naturally, Chloe also came along.

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

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

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

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

“Oi! Wasn’t that a bit rude?”

«Ahh, sorry, I meant no harm.»

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

«Shut up already, it doesn’t matter since I’m already dead anyway.»

The two cheerfully bantered as they continued on their journey.

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

Time passed.

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

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

As this matched the timeline, Chloe casually declared:

“I’m going to seal Veldora now.”

This was what Chloe said after reuniting with Luminas.

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

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

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

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

Luminas accepted another soul within Chloe very quickly.

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

«Don’t worry, I’ll handle fighting with Veldora,» Hinata said.

“Eh?”

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

«I actually fought with Veldora once. At the time...»

The situation then flashed through Hinata’s mind.

KUA-HAHAAHA! So weak, so weak.

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

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

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

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

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

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

⟨...Things happened. I'll have to give him a good beating to ease my grudge against him.⟩

Chloe could tell from her tone that she was serious.

Luminas was serious too.

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

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

Hinata and Luminas happily discussed how to punish Veldora.

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

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

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

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

“GUWAAAAAAAHHHH!”

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

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

*

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

That point between past and present was approaching.

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

“Chloe, what are you talking about?”

⟨What does that mean?⟩

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

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

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

However, if assuming there was only one world—

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

It was more logical to think that the world was being remade. Or else, if many versions of themselves existed in many worlds, Hinata and Chloe's efforts would be meaningless in the grand scale of things.

If there is a world that will be saved, then there is another that will perish—Hinata found this idea hard to accept.

That was why she made up her mind to end Chloe's endless cycle and save the world. It didn't matter if she had to be sacrificed in doing so. However, there was also a problem. And that was what Chloe had just said.

By the looks of it, my theory seems to be correct...

There really was only one world, and it did not allow the existence of a paradox.

—No, that's not entirely true. It's not that it doesn't allow the existence of a paradox. It just stops the world from collapsing. If there was something strong enough, such as the creation of the mask, then even the paradox couldn't destroy it, and instead only twist its existence. Otherwise, there's no way to explain the existence of the peculiar mask.

Whilst relieved that her reasoning appeared sound, the thought of what would happen plunged Hinata's heart into darkness once more. She knew that what would happen next was entirely based on luck; their fate would fall into someone else's hands.

“—That's why I won't have memories from that moment on. I think Hinata will probably take over afterward and help save Shizu-sensei...”

«Me too. So I can only come into play until my future self who doesn't know anything comes, right?? What do you think would happen next?»

In the future, Luminas had always kept something very important to her.

Now that Hinata thought about it, it was probably the sealed Chronoa.

“I vaguely recall losing control and going berserk. But that probably wasn't *me*, but a different personality.”

Hinata suddenly recalled her naming of Chronoa. The moment she gave Chloe that name, it robbed Hinata of her Skill.

It finally dawned on her that Chronoa might actually be something akin to a monster.

“Anyhow, Chloe will lose consciousness soon, right? That is probably what happens when two of the same entity exist at the same place in spacetime continuity. Hinata, I believe your theory is correct.”

«Right. And then, Chloe's younger self will be physically transported to that time period since she'll have just been summoned.»

“It would most likely be the case.”

“Umm, that's why, Hinata, even though I know asking you to do something like this is—”

«It's fine. After saving Shizu-sensei, I will go and ask help from Luminas-sama.»

“Please leave it to me. I shall craft a Holy Ark using holy power to isolate you from the

world. I will find your ‘souls’ in the future myself, and then completely unbind the seal.”

Chloe, Hinata and Luminas.

The three remained united in heart.

All was entrusted to Luminas.

After Chloe’s consciousness disappeared, Hinata was alone. Apart from proving her theories to be true, she was also hit by a great sense of unease and pressure.

She felt uneasy because she was lonely. On the other hand, she was pressured by a strong will raging within her body, attempting to take over their shared body. It was tiring suppressing this will.

Chronoa is raging after its master Chloe disappeared. But I never imagined its power to be so strong...

Despite her shock, Hinata bent it to her will with her steely resolve.

Hinata went to Leon’s castle and rescued Shizue, handing her the *mask* successfully. Now that this mysterious mask had been given to Shizue, Hinata had a major breakthrough. And even though Hinata couldn’t show any of her yearning for Shizue, she traveled with her.

Their journey, however, eventually came to an end.

The day came, where they had to part.

While Hinata wanted to spend more time with Shizue, she could not do so. Perhaps due to the prolonged absence of Chloe’s main personality, Hinata was beginning to have a hard time controlling Chronoa. If this were to continue, their plan could fail. And all of this would have been for nothing.

In the end, Hinata bid farewell to Shizue according to the history she knew and went to seek Luminas’s help.

Hinata never truly found out what Chronoa was in the end.

Instead, Luminas used her power to seal Hinata in the Holy Ark.

Soon, she herself, completely ignorant of all their history, would come here.

What would happen to the slumbering Hinata?

If she were lucky, perhaps she would remain unaffected. But if not—the one to awaken first might be Chronoa.

But even so, there had to be...

I believe you will be able to find a solution—Rimuru!

Reminiscing about that slime she’d missed, Hinata fell into a deep sleep with a smile.



Veldora went to take on Chronoa, yet he quickly started yelping:

“GUWAHH—I-I’ve been cut...! R-Rimuru, I’ve been cut!”

Ah—sure, sure.

Of course you got cut. You were using your hand to block her sword. I mean, that’s no ordinary sword she is wielding. It’s an immensely powerful sword that was considered mythical-grade. And you just ran in recklessly trying to catch the sword by your hand.

How unreliable—

As I suspected, this guy had gotten weaker after turning into his human form. And because of how confident he acted before, my disappointment was immeasurable and my day was ruined.

I had been looking forward to Veldora beating Chronoa.

But as it turned out, there’s no free lunch in this world after all.

“Seriously, how are you so careless?! Obviously you would have gotten hurt!”

I started crying seeing the pathetic state Veldora was in. This was some grade-A bullshit.

“B-but, Rimuru, that sword was even stronger than when we fought last time...”

“So you’re saying the Hero is using ‘Absolute Severance’? Didn’t you say you’d been hit by it before?”

To be fair, I didn’t know how credible the ‘Absolute’ part was. But I definitely didn’t want to use my ‘Absolute Defense’ to test which one was stronger.

“No, that’s because...I was fine being cut by that...”

With that mutter, Veldora concentrated on evading Chronoa’s attacks. He would get cut at times, but fortunately, he seemed to have strength to spare.

No, in fact—

I understood what Veldora meant.

He was saying that in his previous battle with her, he didn’t take nearly as much damage with these same slashes. But the reason why was rather obvious if you thought about it a bit. This was purely the result of different sizes. The size of a slash could be estimated, and even if it could be widened through skill, it, surely, would not have been able to cut through Veldora’s giant draconic body.

However, Veldora was in his human form now. And he was stupid enough to try to use his hands to catch the sword, so of course he would be cut. Even though it would quickly regenerate, compared to his dragon form, it would consume magicule at a much higher rate. Normally speaking, when fighting in human form, it wouldn’t require nearly as much stamina. However, it didn’t seem to be strong enough against Chronoa.

He was probably too confident in his proud ‘Veldora-Style Killing Arts™’ and tried to recreate the made-up technique of blocking a sword with his hands from manga.

That said, I wasn’t really panicking. This would be a good lesson for Veldora. That’s why I decided to let him continue drawing Chronoa’s attention completely.

I turned my attention to Leon.

Under Charys’s protection, Leon was conducting a summoning. Even though it hadn’t been that long in reality, it felt like an eternity.

Leon summoned a rapier.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting. I couldn’t do anything about our enemy without a weapon. That’s why I’ve summoned my beloved sword ‘Flame Pillar’ from my time as a Hero for this occasion.”

It turned out to be mythical-grade, befitting of an ex-Hero demon lord.

The round, golden shield in his left hand seemed to be legendary-grade. It looked very impressive, but didn’t look strong enough to block Chronoa’s sword attacks. Leon probably just felt it was better than nothing.

All in all, Leon seemed to be ready.

We could finally start our counterattack—

Or so I thought. Suddenly, Luminas was sent flying in my direction.

Is she losing—I got worried a bit, but seeing how Luminas was uninjured, it looked like she was pulling an act.

In that instant, as Luminas and I crossed eyes, she sent a strong telepathic message to me.

«Let me explain this for you first. Chronoa is another personality of Chloe! Hinata’s soul may be resting inside her too, so you must not kill her!»

...WHAT!

Compared to the strength of her ‘Telepathy,’ the message she delivered was far more shocking.

How could you say something so important at a dire time like this so casually?!

I panicked when I saw Leon approaching to fight against Chronoa.

Luminas, right after dumping responsibility onto me, headed back to take on Granbell.

I didn’t know what to do now that I had been informed of the truth so suddenly.

Chronoa was Chloe.

Now that she mentioned it, they looked quite similar.

But what was the thing about Hinata’s soul? I didn’t know what to take from that...

What in the world is happening there?

«Report. Considering all possibilities, it could be deduced that Chronoa and Chloe are the same person.»

And that means?

«In other words, individual ‘Chloe Aubert’ likely time-leaped to the past and grew to be the ‘Chronoa’ in front of you now.»

No way, no no no.

Is that even possible?

I could just ask Luminas, but she was busy fighting to the death against Granbell. So I couldn’t just have a Q&A. Even her ‘Telepathy’ was only just sent in the nick of time.

Speaking of time leaps...is it like time travel or a time slip? I don’t think she can control it freely, so I suppose it’s more like sliding in and out of time?

—Eh, why do I believe all this.

No, the thing is—

Chloe disappeared in front me before.

«Answer. Assuming the phenomenon occurred at that time was a ‘Time Leap,’ then it is impossible to observe all elements of the event. Without authority to interfere with ‘Time,’ it is naturally unobservable.»

I suppose, after all, even if you know the concept of time, observing time itself is impossible.

Actually, hold on. I didn’t have to understand any of this. If I just accepted that it was possible, then so many things suddenly made sense.

When I was trying to help the young Chloe, the ‘thing’ we summoned must have been from the future. If something happened to the future Chloe, and the spiritual part of Chronoa was sent to the past—

«Correct. This possibility is extremely high.»

I see.

If that were true, it would explain why Ramiris was so panicked at the time. The Chronoa in front of me reeked of an evil aura. Sensing that aura, Ramiris would naturally try to stop it.

There was no use worrying about this now.

Chloe had definitely leapt through time, that was for sure.

Then how to explain the situation right now?

«Report. The same ‘soul’ cannot exist in two places in the same spacetime. Thus, they reacted to each other, causing one of the two to disappear. However, the crucial factor is that individual ‘Luminas Valentine’ utilized a holy spirit power ‘Barrier’—Holy Ark—to seal the ‘soul.’ Therefore—»

Chloe and Hinata’s ‘souls’ may all be sleeping inside Chronoa’s body?

If the power of the Holy Ark really surpassed the ability of Chloe’s ‘Time Leap’—uh, I had no choice but to believe it now.

In that case, my plan would be...

“Leon, don’t attack Chronoa, just focus on defense.”

“Did you come up with a plan?”

“Yes, you may not believe me but—”

“—Nah, I’ve got faith in ya, ‘cause ya trusted me too.”¹³

I was surprised. I didn’t expect to gain his trust so easily. He spoke less formally too. I suppose a more casual Leon wasn’t that bad either.

A thanks would have to suffice for now. I then gave my order to Veldora.

“Veldora!”

“You can count on me.”

But I didn’t even say anything—

Never mind, it’s fine. I had no time to roast this dragon.

“I’ll give you a signal later. Please suppress Chronoa. I figure you probably know this will be very dangerous—”

¹³For clarification, Leon doesn’t have an accent like Laplace, he just switched to a speech pattern that is a lot more casual and rude (if not spoken to someone close to you).

“Didn’t I say that you can count on me, Rimuru? I have faith in you. That’s why you gotta make sure your plan works.”

—That was reinvigorating.

I didn’t want to hurt Chronoa—I mean, Chloe. But that might just be selfish of me.

All of this was still just a theory. We could still be wrong anyway. To have such a naive thought before an overpoweringly strong individual like Chronoa would be suicidal.

But even so—

Since there was the possibility, I wanted to wager on it.

“Sorry, please hold on a bit more.”

“GA-HAHHAHA! Don’t mind it, it happens all the time.”

“I’ve noticed something too. I’m gonna play along yer plan just to confirm it. No other intention behind it.”

I didn’t know about Veldora, but perhaps Leon had realized it too.

Chronoa was Chloe.

I really wanted to explain it to him in detail, but now was not the time for it.

Leon crossed swords with Chronoa calmly, but sweat was absolutely gushing down his forehead. Surely, it’d be difficult for him to even answer my calls.

If this plan worked, I needed to apologize to him properly.

Next, regarding how we’d infiltrate Chronoa’s soul—

〈Rimuru-sama, it was wise of you to have kept the details of your plan quiet. The Grand Cathedral is likely still under the surveillance of Demon Lord Guy.〉

Diablo also spoke to me through ‘Telepathy Net.’ His ‘Telepathy’ was concealed with careful and meticulous encryption.

By the way, it felt very similar to Luminas’s ‘Telepathy.’ She must have been very aware of her surroundings as well. In actuality, I just didn’t say it aloud due to my own selfishness. I also didn’t want Chronoa to hear my plan.

I suppose it was fine as it turned out to be the right choice.

〈That so? What do you want then?〉

He must’ve had some reason for speaking to me like this.

Diablo was truly talented. He seemed to have already caught up on the situation. Perhaps he could give some valuable suggestions.

〈Please allow me. If it is Rimuru-sama, you should be able to send your thoughts directly to her by interfering with her soul. However, there is another way which is more reliable.〉

〈What would that be?〉

〈This method would be to maintain physical contact with your target and use that to enter her spiritual plane. And then, in allowing your astral bodies to interact with each other, you can directly interfere with her ‘soul.’〉

Regardless of my ability to do so, it still sounded very dangerous. I may end up never returning...

Couldn’t I just reach her like how I usually used ‘Telepathy Net’?

«Answer. Proposal suggested by individual ‘Diablo’ has a higher chance of success. However, the level of danger involved is insurmountable.»

That’s probably why Raphael hadn’t brought the idea up before.

〈Thanks Diablo. But I do want to say something to you.〉

〈Yes, do tell.〉

〈You are overestimating my abilities way too much.〉

〈Kufufufufufu, surely you jest. Yet again, how very modest of you!〉

It’s not modesty!

In order to save Chloe and Hinata, I needed to use the method with the greatest chance of success. However, in this situation, I needed to prioritize my safety.

I should show Diablo just how useless I am this time.

I decided not to argue since he seemed to have run into Guy. I hoped he didn’t say anything weird. If he bragged about me like he usually did, it might attract Guy’s attention. I’d scold him properly about that later.

〈If possible, it is best to stabilize her first with a certain object. Then, I wish Rimuru-sama glory in your conquest!〉

Diablo’s faith in me was unmatched.

But for now, I needed to focus on the useful information he gave me.

“But how do I calm her down...?”

If I could do that, everyone could relax a little.

There’s no way some miracle item like that would just be laying around...

From his position supporting Leon, Charys spoke up. “Rimuru-sama, why not try using the ‘mask’?”

This guy seemed to understand what I was trying to do.

Impressive, but also somewhat scary.

“Mask?”

“Yes. That thing was able to seal even me. Surely it is enough to calm that person’s spirit down.”

“I see...”

While his idea was brilliant, he didn’t seem to realize I actually wanted to keep this quiet. But perhaps, in the end, it was my bad for muttering too much.

Well on that note, the mask, huh? But didn’t I give that to Chloe? Where is it now? Eh, hold on a second...

It was Shizu-san’s memento and then I remember fixing it. And then I gave it to Chloe as a present—does that mean that the mask ended up going back to Shizu-san again?

Huh, if that’s the case...where did that mask come from in the first place?!

—No, there’s no time to think about that.

Can I somehow recreate the mask?

«Answer. Do you wish to ‘Copy’ the ‘Anti-Magic Mask’? YES/NO»

YES!

As expected from Wisdom King Raphael, it managed to create a replica almost instantly. It looked just like the real thing, and had the same quality as well. With this, perhaps we could calm Chronoa down.

I showed the mask to Charys and thanked him with a smile. Then I turned my attention to Chronoa.

The plan was settled. Now I just needed to get serious and engage.

Leon was still dueling Chronoa. It was a one-sided battle, however, as she controlled the entire fight. Leon was only defending, but his injuries were still piling up. Even someone as strong as Leon was having trouble dealing with Chronoa. He would no doubt be defeated if this were to continue—that is, if I didn't intervene.

“Veldora, now!” I shouted as I approached Chronoa, mask in hand. The next moment—

As I placed the mask on Chronoa's face, my consciousness faded to black.



Taking the shock wave released by Razul head-on, Shion and Ranga were sent crashing through a wall and outside the church.

Razul casually strolled out to pursue the two.

In their fierce battle with Razul, Shion and Ranga were greatly wounded. However, Shion was still very calm. She wasn't afraid at all and confronted Razul as if it were nothing. She was maintaining a false pretense of confidence in order to avoid showing weakness to her opponent.



Behind Shion, Ranga was trembling as he regained his footing. Unlike Shion, Ranga didn't have 'Ultra-Speed Regeneration.' So every attack he received added up. He did, however, possess many resistances, wherein his defense was strong enough to nullify most physical and mental attacks. In addition, due to my blessing, he also received the Unique Skill 'Magic Wolf King.' The 'Ultra-Instinct' of his 'Magic Wolf King' Skill gave him the ability to predict and evade almost all attacks.

It would normally be impossible for him to be beaten down like this. Moreover, he was fighting against a single enemy with Shion. The fact that they were still losing showed very clearly just how dangerous of an opponent Razul was.

Almost as if she were protecting Ranga, Shion stepped forward.

"Ranga, it's okay for you to take a rest."

"How can I do that? This guy is strong. If we are struggling as it is with the both of us, it will be too dangerous for you to fight alone, Shion."

"Don't worry. I think I'm getting the hang of it. You should try to save your energy as much as possible until I give you the signal, Ranga."

Shion didn't wait for Ranga to respond before raising her odachi at her opponent. Her stance was very beautiful, a symbol of her unwavering will.

"Magnificent. Even amongst demon kind, few have been able to stand against me for so long," Razul praised.

To Shion, having been complimented by her opponent, who she failed to even land a scratch on, was nothing but humiliating.

"Shut up! I'll rip that smugness off your face!" Shion shouted, raising her sword high and then bringing it down with the wrath of a demonic god. While her action seemed to be uncomposed, it was a swift movement without any flaws.

Razul was completely unmoved. He simply raised his left arm.

A clang reverberated.

It was the sound of Shion's odachi being deflected off Razul's exoskeleton. He was an insect type monster and his body was covered in an exoskeleton stronger than steel. That's why, even without weapons or armor, he still had incredible defense. Moreover, Razul's exoskeleton deflected Ranga's magic attacks. It would seem that his exoskeleton had a special field around it, rendering any attack completely useless.

After blocking Shion's attack, Razul threw a punch. He was strong enough to crush a boulder. So if a human with flesh and bones were to be hit, they would be splattered into pieces by it.

Had it been the Shion of the past, she probably would have taken it without much thought. Her past self would have had no choice but to endure or die.

But Shion had grown since then. Perhaps it was due to her having to educate her subordinates, she had learned to see the bigger picture.

If she were to die here, the whole battlefield would be affected. If she could buy some time before she lost, surely, someone would come at her aid. These days, she had learned to prioritize

her survival instead of recklessly seeking victory.

It was why she wanted Ranga to rest. If they both went all out here, should something happen, they would both be useless. So, to avoid that, Shion, who still had strength to spare, decided to be the meat shield.

Although, naturally, she had other reasons as well.

Hehehe, if I win here, Rimuru-sama will definitely praise me!

That's what she was really thinking about.

Although she prioritized survival, Shion was not going to give up on trying to win. Her growth had given her plenty of room in her heart. And that extra room accelerated her dormant talent to blossom.

Shion's fighting style had also changed compared to that of the past. Having devoted herself to Hakuro's teachings, she learned to value the importance of technique instead of relying on brute force.

Her duel with Razul had honed her skill even more. That was why Shion embodied the beauty that an orthodox swordsman would have.

It was brute force plus techniques.

The result was—

In swinging the odachi, Shion created a shockwave heading for Razul.

Of course, Shion only used it as a distraction for Razul and then rapidly closed in. She launched her next attack in a swift motion. Razul managed to deflect the blow yet again, but it numbed his arm. She had improved greatly. Even during combat, she was refining her skills.

Not enough, this is still not enough!

Just now, she utilized her Unique Skill 'Cook.' She wanted to use 'Guaranteed Outcome' to destroy Razul's hardened exoskeleton.

She had not given up even though he deflected every blow. She focused on slashing the same spot all this time, only holding one thought: "destroy the exoskeleton."

Shion's goal was to bend the rules and break the seemingly unbreakable exoskeleton. Regardless of how strong Razul was, Shion refused to relent. She kept him busy, and even when her skills seemed useless, she did not fall into despair. She had faith that her wishes would come true as she continued to attack.

Razul calmly parried Shion's attacks. He attacked and defended with mechanical precision. He was entirely nonchalant in how he calmly handled Shion.

On the other hand, Shion tried every trick in the book. She even activated her Intrinsic Skill 'Ogre Berserker' to go beyond her limits as she fought. Yet no matter what she did, to Razul, her attacks were a piece of cake.

The difference in strength was unfathomable.

Shion exhausted everything in her arsenal. She could barely stand against her enemy. In comparison, Razul was as steady as a calm river. Yet, there came a sudden storm to flood the river.

Shion had drained her willpower after continuously using her Skills. If she were to lose her

balance even once, she would suffer the repercussions of overtaxing both her body and mind.

Moreover—

Since Ranga had withdrawn from the battle, Razul had been able to grasp Shion's techniques. During the fight, he had carefully probed her to confirm each trick until she had none left.

The next second, Razul's youki swelled dramatically. With overwhelming aggression, he began to launch a fierce counterattack. His power had grown several times greater than before, and he used it to rain a barrage of fists on Shion.

Just a moment again, Shion and Razul had been in opposite positions, with one stationary and the other on the move.

"You are indeed strong. And you should be proud of that. But you can't win against me. You failed to damage my shell. You're finished. You should just give up and surrender!" Razul declared.

Yet Shion answered him calmly, "Hehehe, how laughable. Did you think I was attacking mindlessly? I want to reach greater heights than this. If I don't, I will always just be looked down on by that arrogant second secretary, Diablo, and not be of any help to Rimuru-sama."

"What?"

"You're one clueless insect, aren't you? I said that I will surpass you."

Shion's youki suddenly grew exponentially as well, and she swung at Razul again with all she had.

The odachi slammed into Razul's arm.

Unsurprisingly, Shion's attack was deflected by Razul.

Yet, Shion cracked a smile. "Hehe, as expected."

At that, Shion pulled herself up from the ground, shaking, to face Razul again.

"How disappointing. Your attack couldn't harm me after all."

Shion sneered at Razul's words.

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Shion recalled how shallow she was in the past.

Strength is justice.

As a monster, it was only natural for her to think this way.

The weak would only be exploited.

Shion was born as an ogre, a higher ranked monster of the Great Jura Forest. Yet Shion's thought process was very concerning to the other ogres. Especially to the mentor of Shion, Benimaru, and the other ogres—Hakurou.

Shion's mind and body received thorough training. Even though it made her more modest, she probably didn't understand the true meaning of it.

When Rimuru set the rule—"Don't look down on other races"—Shion didn't oppose it, but neither did she care about it.

The weak can only die—that was just the law of the land.

It wasn't until Shion had died herself that she realized just how flawed her view was.

She was afraid of dying.

She did not fear death in itself, but instead the thought of disappearing before she could be of any use.

Later when Rimuru saved Shion, she was relieved. It was the kind of relief one felt when realizing that they hadn't been abandoned, and that their parents still protected them.

After the battle with the Holy Knight Order, even Rimuru shared some wisdom with Shion. She changed again.

At the time, she thought that humans were detestable adversaries. But afterwards, Shion let go of most of her anger. Even though she had to reflect on it afterwards, Rimuru's words helped solve the issue of what humans were to her in her mind.

Rimuru said that not all people were bad. If there were bad people, then there were also good people.

The important thing was being able to tell the difference.

A person's value depends on how they choose to live.

Stuff like strength or weakness had no intrinsic meaning. Even if you seemed to be useless in some field, perhaps you just had to explore your talents in another.

'A person's value should not be determined by other people but themselves.'

Shion understood what Rimuru meant. In this way, she realized that there was no need to be envious, or begrudge others. She knew that she was inferior to Diablo in every way, and so she had always been afraid that Rimuru would abandon her.

But that was not true.

Knowing that Rimuru would not forget about her, Shion's insecurities vanished. That ugly emotion had occupied Shion's heart until recently, but finally disappeared entirely.

There was no need to be envious of others; she just had to surpass them. She focused on her own improvement. She no longer treated other people as her competition, but instead, found meaning in improving herself.

By doing so, she believed she would continue to grow.

Even if it took her years and years, Shion's kind lived long, so she would doubtlessly reach a point where she was no longer fragile and weak...

This change of heart helped Shion grow, and she was less anxious as a result.

Even further, under these extreme conditions, her tenacious spirit bore fruits—

«Confirmation complete. Intrinsic Skill 'Ogre Berserker' of individual 'Shion' has evolved to Unique Skill 'Battle God.'»

This was not Shion's aim. This miracle was simply a byproduct of her endless determination and struggle in attaining victory.

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“I’ll tell you this. The goddess of victory looks favorably on the persistent! Take this, ‘Unleash Battle God’!”

Without hesitation, Shion put her newly evolved Unique Skill ‘Battle God’ to use.

Her overtaxed muscles screamed in pain as she pushed her body to its limits yet again. Using ‘Ogre Berserker’ earlier had burdened every part of her body, but in order to continue fighting, Shion spammed ‘Ultra Speed Regeneration.’

Unique Skill ‘Battle God’ was like the upgraded Skill of ‘Ogre Berserker.’ It would not cause the user to lose self-control, and instead, purely enhanced the strength, stamina, and psyche of the user. Just like Benimaru’s ‘Magic Flame Transformation,’ the Skill enhanced the user’s strength, and gave them the properties of a spiritual lifeform.

However, it wasn’t an all-powerful Skill. In fact, it had some major flaws.

Whilst activated, Shion’s physical strength was directly added to her spiritual body. However, it consumed magicules really quickly, enough that it could dry her storage in a short amount of time.

When Shion activated her Unique Skill ‘Battle God,’ she would quickly be pushed to the limit of her abilities. Her next strike would decide the victor of the battle.

And so, with this resolve, Shion entered the final confrontation with her enemy.

“What is this power?” Razul exclaimed. “It’s coming straight for me!”

Under the influence of ‘Battle God,’ Shion’s youki was overwhelmingly powerful. At the same time, it had enhanced her body, sharpening all of her senses. Shion could feel her strength boiling inside her.

“Now, Ranga!”

“Got it!”

Shion raised her Hercules Ex to the sky with both hands.

It was then that Ranga released ‘Black Lightning,’ having concentrated all his energy on it. He had been saving his energy to charge its power. It was the most powerful strike Ranga could manage.

Ranga had faith in Shion, and even if the lightning he summoned hurt her, if that were what she wanted, he would do it in a heartbeat.

“You punks! My shell—”

Shion didn’t give a crap about what Razul was going to say.

“CHAOTIC FATE!”

With all her willpower infused in her strike, it could cut through all the laws in the world. As lightning intertwined with her odachi, she swung down—

Shion’s attack left a small crack on Razul’s arm. His exoskeleton blocked most of the attack, but that was more than enough for Shion. As long as she could make a tiny opening, she would be able to activate ‘Optimal Action’ and reach ‘Guaranteed Outcome.’ This was the secret of Shion’s Unique Skill ‘Cook.’

—The blade flashed, leaving a severed blade flying through the air.

Shion’s odachi had broken into two in the end. Yet, Razul was the one to fall.

Starting from the left hand that was originally cut, a huge wound extending from the center of his body and his shoulder severed him in two.

The devastating lightning ripped through the wound and scorched Razul's insides.

It was at that moment that the battle was decided.

Razul fell to the ground. He knew he would die soon. He turned his eyes to see Granbell fighting against Luminas.

Sorry, Gran—I will go first. I shall meet you, at the place...we promised—

The light faded from his eyes, and Razul finally passed into oblivion.

Like that, Shion and Ranga emerged victorious.



As she watched Rimuru place the mask on Chronoa's face, Luminas couldn't help but think, '*Did he succeed?*'

It was a gambit.

Chloe and Hinata had placed their trust in Rimuru, and so would Luminas put all the hope in him.

The two had mentioned Rimuru to her a long time ago. Luminas had decided to feign ignorance, whilst keeping a close eye on him. When she discussed it with Hinata, she even pretended to know nothing. She only attended the Walpurgis Banquet because she'd learned that Rimuru would be present. However, Luminas had been told differently. Especially in regard to Rimuru becoming a demon lord.

As Chloe's words gradually came true, Luminas no longer had any reason to doubt. And that was why Luminas had never intended to antagonize Rimuru in the first place.

However, recently, these events contrasted greatly with the story Chloe and Hinata had told her. Inconsistencies were beginning to rise.

This stirred great fear in Luminas. She was afraid that Chronoa, hidden in the Holy Ark, wouldn't be revived correctly if things continued to change...

Her fear was realized when the least expected happened.

Right before her much anticipated music concert, her long-time subordinate Granbell betrayed her. Actually, she knew Granbell would betray her a long time ago, but never expected him to rebel against her so openly.

And then, Hinata died.

Chronoa was revived.

Facing all these irregularities was to depend on Rimuru. Despite what she knew, he had also survived, so he, too, was an irregularity. Thus, he was the best candidate to handle the situation.

That was how Luminas judged the matter.

Sure enough, Rimuru did not disappoint. He decided to try to call for Chronoa's 'soul.'

That mask looks just like the one Chloe had. Then there's still hope! Luminas cheered internally.

It was then that Granbell spoke to her.

"You seem quite happy, Luminas-sama. Do you truly believe that your beloved Chloe would return?"

"What did you say?"

"Isn't Chronoa the will of destruction? Now that the Holy Ark once containing it has disappeared, you must return Chloe's will in order to stop Chronoa. But do you really believe that Chloe's soul still rests inside Chronoa?"

Luminas was stunned. "How did you know this?"

She quickly turned her thoughts around. Had it been Granbell, it would have been possible for him to eavesdrop on Luminas and Chloe's conversation.

"I see, so that's why you..."

"Indeed. Just as you thought. This is the fastest way to destroy the world: just hand responsibility to someone stronger than me!" Granbell laughed, and his eyes were dark with madness.

"Silence! Don't think you can achieve that so easily!"

"But I will. This world has always trampled my dreams. For example, my friend has just died."

Hearing Granbell's words, Luminas noticed that another battle had concluded. Rimuru's subordinates had won and Razul had perished.

"Hehehe, this world is so cruel to me."

"So what?!" Luminas snapped.

Granbell merely declared to her calmly:

"—That's why, a world like this should just disappear."

"Quit talking to yourself. You can despair all you want, but do it by yourself!" Luminas shouted as she raised her beloved saber.

It was called 'Night Rose,' named after her hometown.

Granbell responded to Luminas in a similar fashion.

He drew his partner since his days as a Hero—the Longsword of Truth.

Both of their weapons were mythical-grade, and had similar quality.

Then—

"Despair? No, that's not it at all. Right now my heart is filled with hope!" Granbell roared.

Suddenly, the energy released from Razul's body began to flow into his.

It was Razul's soul, and his power.

Maria, Razul, and Granbell.

The three's power sublimated in their 'souls' to create one hope.

«Confirmation complete. Conditions satisfied. Unique Skill 'Unyielding One' has evolved into Ultimate Skill 'Hope King Sariel.'»

Granbell had once again gone to greater heights of strength under these circumstances. He

had reached the ultimate realm, which only the chosen could reach.

Coincidentally, both Ultimate Skill ‘Hope King Sariel’ and Ultimate Skill ‘Lustful King Asmodeus’ had the same authority, and that was over ‘life and death.’

Now even their powers were on par with each other.

Granbell stood silently, gazing at Luminas with his darkened eyes.

“I am ready too, Luminas-sama. Let us end this once and for all.”

“—Well said. I shall accept your resolve. Now then, rest assured as I *will* kill you.”

The next moment, the two powerhouses collided.

A duel between those who had awakened their Ultimate Skills—yet the victor was decided in an instant.

In a flash of red, Luminas struck with her Night Rose. With a dim blue flame, Granbell blocked her strike with his Longsword of Truth.

“MEMORY END REQUIEM—!”

“—FORTITUDE!”

The Ultimate Skill ‘Lustful King Asmodeus’ clashed with ‘Hope King Sariel.’ In having the same abilities, the one with the strong will would win the battle.

And because of that—

The unyielding Hero Granbell had no reason to lose and yet—Luminas was the last person standing.



After placing the mask on Chronoa, I could feel myself sinking into her spiritual world. Of course, I had no idea how to do that myself. Raphael-san handled the operation entirely.

I thought her world would be a void of darkness, but as it turned out, it was rather bright. Since a place like this definitely wouldn’t have any light source, I suppose that this must have just been an imaginary scene.

As I bounced forward, guided by my instincts, I noticed someone walking towards me.

“Hey, long time no see, slime-san. Actually, I should call you Satoru-san.”

It was Shizu-san.

Despite my nostalgia, I felt a little shy. So I said, half-jokingly, “Don’t be so formal. My name now is Rimuru. Not to discard my past, but it’s a bit embarrassing being called that.”

It definitely wasn’t because I was hoping she would call me that.

Definitely not.



By the way, this mental scenery was really convenient. If I ever felt lonely, even the dead could keep me company.

Shizu-san wasn't wearing her mask, and instead greeted me face to face. Her burn scars were gone as well, which once again confirmed to me that Shizu-san was absolutely beautiful.

It was only natural that I looked like a bishojo myself due to it being based on Shizu's appearance. I suppose that made sense.

Although, as a guy originally, the feeling was rather strange.

Having Shizu-san accompany me boosted my confidence and my pace hastened.

Shizu-san smiled and followed.

Yet, in front of us, stood another bishojo. It was Chronoa. Her eyes were flooded with hatred. It was terrifying. It really looked like she wanted to destroy the world.

First, I wanted to talk to her.

Hopefully she would listen. But as I was about to speak, something unexpected happened—
“—You are...Rimuru? Is this real...is it Rimuru himself?”

This reaction was rather surprising.

I thought she would be more hostile towards me.

“Y-yeah, Rimuru-san here.”

Confirming that it was me, Chronoa stepped forward to hug me.

The bishojo was hugging a slime.

It was pretty nice.

Seeing us like this, Shizu-san giggled. She patted Chronoa's head lightly and murmured:
“You have worked very hard. I really wanted to see you too, Hero-sama.”

Hmm—was it okay for us to act all lovey-dovey like this now?

People were fighting intensely outside, but here I was feeling really happy...

“W-well—are you Chronoa?”

Now that we were with each other face to face, I started to suspect that Chronoa was how Chloe would look after growing up. They were very similar.

“Yes. I am Chronoa. I am a personification of evil trapped inside Chloe. I am also her alternate personality. If Hinata never named me, I probably wouldn't have become self-aware as a separate personality.”

I-I see.

I still hadn't really computed the situation just yet, but it seemed that the situation was a lot more complicated than I originally thought.

“Then your goal is—”

If she wanted to destroy the world, I had to do my best to stop her. But since she was Chloe's alternate, maybe I could figure out a way to call Chloe back and switch them—which was why I had to ask her.

However—

“It's all okay now. Because Rimuru is safe and sound,” Chronoa asserted calmly. She didn't seem to have any other conviction.

What do you mean I'm safe and sound, please don't say something so ominous.

I had safely pulled through many dangerous situations in the past. So now, I didn't want any more trouble like that again.

"I mean, I've always been fine?"

At my answer, Chronoa became furious. "How dare you say that? You sacrificed yourself to save me!"

I sacrificed myself? I was very confused.

I didn't really know why she was pissed, but I decided to just apologize anyway.

"Ahaha, sorry sorry, I'll be careful in the future."

"Don't lie to me again! Pinky promise."

I then promised Chronoa to not do anything reckless.

I don't get it. It's not like I go out to do reckless things. Oh wait, hold on. If Chronoa has memories of the future, maybe in the future I'd—

«...The likelihood is very high.»

Oi, there's no way that's true, right?!

I really didn't want to hear that—actually I suppose it was better that I did. Better hear it now than later.

Never be reckless in the future—I solemnly swore.

With Chronoa finally calming down, I moved onto the important questions.

"Then, do you know where Chloe is?"

And is Hinata with her?

Even though I was getting impatient, I still needed to be careful. If I got on Chronoa's bad side, she probably wouldn't tell me anything.

But it seemed that I was worrying for nothing.

"She is lost in the 'Infinite Prison' deep inside my heart. In the past, I was the one trapped there. But as times changed and two of the same existence appeared, we switched places."

And so, she told me everything.

It seemed that Chronoa cherished Chloe a lot too. She seemed to think that Chloe was indeed the main personality while she herself was the supporting alter. I believed her.

Upon thinking so, I asked my next question.

"What about Hinata?"

"Hinata... She's already dead," Chronoa said.

Her answer made me freeze. "How can that be? Luminas said that Hinata traveled back in time with Chloe..."

In that way, Hinata should be fine—

"You are mistaken, Rimuru. Hinata has already died here. Granbell's attack could even extinguish souls. They were able to leap back in time together because Chloe absorbed Hinata's 'soul.' But Hinata alone would not be able to withstand the 'Time Leap.'"

Eh?

But, I thought...Luminas said she spoke to her as well.

Moreover—

“Wasn’t Hinata the one who gave the name Chronoa?”

“Umm.”

“Wouldn’t that mean...!”

“Only Hinata’s consciousness was left from the residue of her soul. Since it was stored inside Hinata’s Unique Skill, I couldn’t absorb Hinata’s ‘Mathematician.’ If I did that, Hinata’s consciousness would disappear too—”

Seeing how sad Chronoa was as she answered, I knew she wasn’t lying.

But, hold on.

Her Skill was born from her soul, and Hinata used it to preserve her consciousness, right? If so, if I put her Skill back into her body, wouldn’t that revive her from the dead?

“I know what Rimuru is thinking. I—Chloe had the same idea in the past too. But it didn’t work. Didn’t I say this before? The remnants of Hinata’s soul are also trapped in the ‘Infinite Prison.’ It’s a chaotic void, where everything mixes together. As someone who was born there, I can tell you that Hinata’s ‘Mathematician’ is probably integrated in that void already—”

It was different for someone like Veldora, who had a sizable ego and immense energy. But for Hinata, even if she became a Saint, she was still human. There was no way she could survive in the ‘Infinite Prison’...

Hinata’s body was outside.

As long as the soul was all right, she could be revived.

Chronoa sighed and I felt depressed.

But then someone spoke.

“No, don’t worry. Hinata is a very resilient child. She won’t have disappeared completely. So let’s try to call for her.” It was Shizu-san. She was smiling.



The unsettling feeling on my mind gradually dissipated.

It was better to grieve after we had confirmed the result.

“Indeed, you have a point. Chronoa, I want to save Chloe and Hinata from ‘Infinite Prison.’ Is there a way to do that?”

“Now that I’ve calmed down, I think I can feel the aura of the other me, ‘Chloe.’ But it’s gonna be difficult trying to deactivate ‘Infinite Prison.’ I’m not sure myself, but my body might disintegrate if I do that...”

This was because she had locked up her enormous energy reserves in the ‘Infinite Prison.’ I almost forgot to mention this, but it was actually Chronoa here who controlled the young Chloe’s

power.

If the amount of energy unleashed was strong enough to rival Veldora's, Chloe's body would be obliterated. Moreover, we still couldn't confirm whether Hinata's soul was inside or not.

I wanted to trust Shizu-san's words.

Since we needed to cleverly control the energy inside 'Infinite Prison' and save Chloe and Hinata—how about having Wisdom King Raphael interfere with 'Infinite Prison'?

Or perhaps, it could simply examine what was inside instead of unlocking the prison?

«Negative. Based on current circumstances, it is impossible. Insufficient access to interfere with the smallest physical unit, 'information particles.'»

Raphael said it could unlock 'Infinite Prison.' However, it did not have the authority to interfere with the information locked inside there. So that was a dead end.

Veldora managed to revive himself, but it seemed that he was a special case.

"I get it! Then I'll transfer the authority to you. The other 'Chloe' agreed too. We will have Rimuru do as you wish!"

—Eh?

As I worried about what to do, Chronoa suddenly made an unexpected proposal.

An 'information particle' was a substance smaller than even 'spiritrons,' and was close to having no mass at all. All matter in the world had to contain 'information particles.'

Even though they only existed in my 'Stomach' and Chronoa's 'Infinite Prison,' these 'information particles' could be observed. Raphael seemed to have the ability to manipulate information particles to either combine or abolish Skills.

Now with the access granted by the owner of the 'Infinite Prison,' Raphael obtained the freedom to exercise its authority over it.

«Report. Access granted. Interference will begin.»

How should I put this...Raphael-san *sounded* very happy. It must have been just like that one time when it was playing around with my Skills.

The series of events that took place next happened extremely fast.

Before I could do anything, Raphael took charge by itself.

«Complete. Unique Skills 'Infinite Prison,' 'Absolute Severance' and 'Usurper' have been combined along with a large sacrifice of magicule to evolve into an Ultimate Skill.»

Without asking me «YES/NO» as usual, Raphael acted promptly.

Actually, it probably didn't have to ask for my permission.

Since it wasn't my Skill—eh, this felt a little off.

Ignoring my concerns, Chloe—Chronoa—their power evolved to Ultimate Skill 'Spacetime King Yog-Sothoth.' Moreover, even the discarnate entity Chronoa, which was originally the other personality of Chloe, went through the upgrade to become an information-particle entity called 'Manas,' which gave her the authority to manage Skills and ability to switch with Chloe at any time.

Is it really okay to make such drastic modifications?

I wanted to follow-up with a 'No, it's not okay at all'—but everyone seemed okay with it.

“Rimuru is always so reckless, but I love Rimuru for it!”

Not only did Chronoa hug me, she kissed my right cheek.

Moreover—

“Eh, Chronoa! How can you cut in line before me like that?!”

I felt a soft touch from the other side too.

Just like Chronoa, Chloe came to hug and kiss me. Chloe was also in her adult form. Chronoa and Chloe had the exact same appearance, like twins. They were incredibly beautiful.

The mind's imagination is the best.

Even though the fact that this wasn't reality *was* a bit saddening, it was still very nice to be sandwiched between two beauties.

On that note, couldn't I shift out of my slime form and return to the appearance of that nice guy from my previous life?

I began to get immersed in my lewd fantasies.

Shizu-san watched me from the side.

Someone else was there too.

“Looks like you're having fun, Rimuru. You're enjoying yourself so much that you didn't even check if I revived or not.”

It was Hinata.

She was right, I shouldn't get ahead of myself.

I gave a couple dry coughs with my face flustered.

A-as expected from Hinata-san, you are just as pretty as before.

Should I compliment her like that to start a conversation?

I would say that, but I had seen her earlier.

But I suppose it was always good to praise a woman.

“As expected—”

“Spare me the flattery.”

“Ah, yes ma'am.”

She saw through me immediately. But I still had something to say first.

“That said, while it's strange to say that I'm glad you're okay, I am truly happy to reunite with Hinata under these circumstances.”

That was genuine.

“Thank you,” Hinata said. Her cheeks were a bit red.



She had to be blushing.

Could that be a “dere”¹⁴ moment?!

«Negative. It is not.»

I figured as much. There was no way.

Hinata then proceeded to ignore me, and joyfully reunited with Shizu-san. It looked like she had become a bit more open as Hinata’s eyes were filled with tears.

“I am sorry, sensei. I never meant to cause you any trouble...”

“I understand, Hinata. I never noticed at the time. I should be the one apologizing. And thank you. You were the Hero that saved me from Leon’s castle, right?”

“—Yes, sensei.”

Seeing them hugging each other, I had the urge to cry with them.

“Hinata, you’re a really strong girl. Your ‘Mathematician,’ born from that iron will of yours, was likely the reason you’re still here now,” Shizu-san whispered sincerely.

I see, perhaps she had a point.

Hinata was just like before, nothing had changed.

“But my other power disappeared.”

“Hehe, that means you don’t need it anymore. You will be able to face yourself properly and grow on your own.”

“—But can I really be revived?”

“There won’t be a problem. And you believed in it too, right?”

“Umm, sort of...”

It was then that Shizu and Hinata turned their eyes to me.

“How long do you guys plan to hug him?”

With Hinata’s interjection, I realized that Chloe and Chronoa were still clinging onto me.

“But I want to hug Rimuru a bit more!”

“That’s right, Hinata. I haven’t seen him in two thousand years, let me hug him a bit more too—”

Saying something like that could be easily misunderstood, you know?

I wasn’t doing anything, but Chloe and Chronoa had buried themselves in my slime body, that’s all.

With a smile, Shizu-san intervened. She faced Chloe and Chronoa. “All right, all right, we will talk about that later. It’s time for me to go. I hope you will be revived soon, Hinata.”

“Where are you going?”

“Shouldn’t you know, Rimuru? I am just an illusion you created.”

Right, this was just an imaginary space, so—

“All dreams come to an end one day. I am happy to have met you girls too. The children seem to be doing good as well. And thanks Rimuru, for punching Leon. I have forgiven him. It seems like everything was just a misunderstanding. Knowing this makes me feel a little better

¹⁴Refer to volume 10, Rimuru’s belief that Hinata is a tsundere, ‘dere’ moment means Hinata is falling for Rimuru.

about this world. That's why I no longer have any regrets and feel satisfied."

Chloe and Hinata were trying to convince her to stay, but seeing the satisfied smile on Shizu-san, they swallowed their words. They then vigorously nodded their heads.

"Rimuru, I'll leave Hinata to your care," Shizu-san said.

"Rimuru-san will definitely be able to do it," said Chloe reassuringly.

"I'm quite looking forward to your performance," came Hinata.

All three of them were giving me quite a lot of unexpected pressure to revive Hinata successfully.

It actually made me sweat a lot.

What if I fail—

No, I couldn't think like that. I couldn't show weakness like that. It wasn't my style to give up before even trying.

Hinata was probably more anxious than me, so I needed to stay calm.

"Just count on me, Hinata. I'll get you out in no time," I declared.

Words had power. *I must succeed*—with this resolve, I left the mindscape.

Back in the real world, I was still in my human form. My posture hadn't changed at all, and it looked like I hadn't moved one bit.

I stretched and cheered myself up.

Inside the scenery of the mind, the last thing I saw was the smile of the fading Shizu-san. I had to hold on a bit longer to not fail that smile.

"Oh, Rimuru, you seem all right!"

"What happened? I saw Chronoa stop and fall—"

"I'll explain to you guys later, can you please keep your guard up, so I won't get disrupted?"

"Just leave it to me!" Leon agreed without hesitation.

On the other hand, Veldora seemed to be hesitating, "Right, but remember to explain it in detail later."

Now I could rest assured.

I doubted it, but if Yuuki were to come back, the two would be able to handle him.

Let's see where Hinata's body is—

I found it completely uninjured after being healed by Luminas's magic. She was lying next to the fallen Chronoa.

Ahh, there was a hole opened near Hinata's chest area. I pulled out my backup coat and put it on her. This was the kind of charm you could expect from a mature adult who knew when to show tenderness.

I don't want to get glared at again either—but I'd hide that thought inside my heart.

The key was resurrection magic, but it would be difficult for me to perform it alone. Even though her consciousness had reemerged through 'Mathematician,' which was also Hinata herself, it was still inside Chloe's 'Spacetime King Yog-Sothoth.' Whilst merging with the Skill saved her from vanishing, separating them would be difficult.

I had to prepare the energy to replace her and switch out the two while simultaneously applying resurrection magic in order to rescue her. In order to do that, I'd need that gal's help.

I called out, "Please help me revive Hinata, Luminas!"



"Gu-guawah, good...win, Luminas...sama."

Granbell fell to the ground, coughing blood.

Struck with a mortal blow by Luminas, his life force was slowly draining out of him. Yet Granbell looked at peace.

"You idiot—"

Luminas had indeed received the true message Granbell wanted her to know.

—If I can't even overcome such a difficulty, protecting humanity is absolutely impossible. If that's the case, it's better for the world to be destroyed by the hands of the Hero who is meant to be humanity's guardian—

Luminas rightly understood that he was betting on this last hope. Accepting his resolve, Luminas gave him her response and defeated him in the duel.

It was at this point that she painfully understood Granbell's thoughts. He didn't want to make Chronoa go berserk, but to awaken her correctly and turn her into humanity's hope.

He is still so clumsy even after a thousand years. Luminas felt so in heart, but at the same time, a sense of loneliness.

"—My...my pathetic wish...was nothing...against her...power over time. If you, Demon Lord Rimuru...and her joined forces..."

In this cruel world, what was justice without strength? Even someone as strong as Granbell could only lament his own failures.

Suddenly, Luminas heard Rimuru's voice.

Rimuru wanted to revive Hinata. In other words, Chronoa—Chloe had awakened successfully.

That guy sure is reliable. Mission accomplished perfectly.

Luminas had much praise for Rimuru despite not saying it out loud.

"You've done what you can. Leave the rest to me. Be at ease."

With these final words to Granbell, Luminas planned to go to Rimuru.

Luminas's strike was more than enough to kill him, but Granbell had already exhausted his life force before that. His life had come to an end. There was no way he could continue to live, even with Luminas's help.

He could potentially survive if Luminas turned him into a monster, but she knew Granbell would not have wanted that.

“B-before that...Luminas-sama. I have one more request...”

“What is it?”

“Hope...I want to pass my hope, to...that girl...”

Luminas paused at this.

She wasn’t sure whether or not to fulfill Granbell’s wish, considering that it could be another trick of his.

With that being said, Luminas still accepted his request.

Sometimes, Luminas’s heart was just soft.

“Fine.”

“M-much obliged—”

Holding onto the hand Luminas reached out, Granbell was nothing but grateful. At the same time, his body began to dissipate and disappeared in a ball of light.

“—Pass on peacefully to the other world.”

The ex-Hero had fought for a very long time. But finally, seemingly guided by Luminas’s voice, Granbell was freed from his fate and vanished from the world.



“Sorry to have kept you waiting.”

I didn’t even need to check who it was. The arrogant tone told me it was Luminas. Her clothes were still all tidy even after what was obviously an intense battle. She looked victorious. But even so, I wished she had come sooner.

“What is it, do you have a problem with me?”

“No, not at all.”

I didn’t dare to say it out loud. It was probably a result of the exclusively Japanese ideal of not looking for trouble.

But that didn’t matter. We needed to hurry and help Hinata.

“I am going to interfere with Chloe’s ‘Infinite Prison.’ You take the chance and extract Hinata’s ‘Soul.’ If there isn’t enough energy—”

“Don’t worry about that, I will figure something out.”

Wonderful. Luminas was indeed super capable.

And so, I got to work quickly.

I held out my hand above Chronoa’s prone position on the ground and pointed out the location of Hinata’s ‘soul’ to Luminas. She was getting on fast and began to perform some sort of interference. As opposed to magic, Skills were more useful in these times.

“—Rebirth!”

Luminas activated her ability.

As I watched, I realized something.

Luminas was activating some super high-level Skill that I couldn't learn.

«—Analysis failed. This power originates from an Ultimate Skill.»

My guess was right.

Although, since it was Luminas, I shouldn't be surprised. I could rest assured with the matter in her hands.

The limp Chronoa and Hinata's corpse lay side by side. Fragments of Hinata's soul merged with Chloe's soul and were compiled into the Unique Skill 'Mathematician.'

Luminas used her power to grasp Hinata's soul that I'd managed to separate using 'Isolation.' In its place, she was carefully injecting a high concentration of energy to replace what she was extracting.

«...»

The energy injected was far greater than what was being extracted, but it was likely a necessary procedure. I watched as she reached out her hand to Hinata's corpse instead this time.

Luminas's power was returning Hinata's 'soul' to her body.

Her hair regained luster, her cheeks reddened, and her heart began to beat once more. The next moment, Hinata opened her eyes and coughed. There were no anomalies inside her body, however.

It worked. Hinata had been successfully resurrected.

And there was Chronoa too. With the abnormal presence of Hinata removed, she recovered to her complete self. While her soul was already very beautiful before, Chloe's soul right now shone with an inhumanly divine light. It was far beyond the beauty of a normal human soul.

She opened her eyes.

Will it be Chloe or Chronoa?

"Rimuru-san!"

That reaction sounded like Chloe. Although she used to call me "-sensei," for some reason, she began to call me "-san." Still, it sounded like Chloe.

She darted over to me.

I hugged her gently. *She has really changed from her childhood appearance. She's gotten a lot more feminine*—eh, how strange.

I got a much smaller armful of Chloe than I expected. With a closer look, I found that Chloe had turned back into a child. She was wearing a black, form-fitting suit, likely the result of Holy Spirit Armor. That was quite fortunate. I did feel a little disappointed, but I'd keep that to myself.

The others saw me hugging this little girl.

This could easily be misunderstood as me committing a crime.

Hinata's glare was sharp.

Moreover, Leon looked especially pissed for some reason.

"What the hell is this, Rimuru?"

"You better give us a good explanation."

Oi oi oi, chill out, Leon.

Also, Hinata-san, glaring so intensely will give you wrinkles.

—But saying something like that would probably be suicidal.

Hinata had finally revived and Chronoa's rampage was over. But for some reason, I still wasn't out of the hot water yet.

The sheer absurdity of this made me cry inside. I hoped they would hear me out.

“Everyone, please calm down. Either way, this is no place to talk. I am pretty exhausted for the day already, to top it off. Let's set a time and place and discuss the matter in detail!”

This motion was passed by majority vote.



And so, the battle concluded.

In the end, there was only the beautiful music left.

How surprising, Takt and the band members had been practicing their performances during the battle. Their diligence was commendable.

I praised the band members before dismissing them.

We also found out something else.

“—Eh? Isn't Chloe's power stronger than before?” I commented.

“You must be imagining things.”

“No, just as Rimuru said, it must be—“ Veldora agreed.

“Silence! I wasn't asking for your opinion, you damn lizard!”

Luminas's words startled us.

She seemed to be so placid earlier. You can't blame us for getting startled when she suddenly lost it.

It's better to leave this topic alone—I thought. However, a certain man didn't know how to read the room.

It wasn't Veldora, by the way. While he often said stupid things, lately, he'd learned better. Knowing it would piss Luminas off, he and I agreed to keep quiet about it, and he nodded at the thought, as if telepathic.

“No, just as Rimuru and Veldora-dono have said. While at first sight she is merely the most beautiful girl in the world, her strength has surpassed even that of when she was Chronoa earlier.”

It turned out to be Demon Lord Leon.

Despite his calm and collected appearance, he was actually a bit of an airhead, and the type to step in conversational landmines.

I mean, he valued Chloe so much. He'd been rather attached to her, without showing any

signs of leaving. He even claimed that she was the most beautiful girl in the world. He was being indulgent and didn't even have the decency to be subtle.

"Leon-oniichan, you've always been like this. You're too attached to me! That's why I always tell you that you won't get a girlfriend acting like this!"

Chloe was quite harsh on Leon.

Leon was just a super [Redacted] born for Chloe—honestly, it is what it is. Spelling it out aloud could hurt some people.

By the way, I might have been fooled by his cool and handsome appearance, but Leon was a really unlucky guy. Ramiris also said that Leon used to be a crybaby. *Maybe I should treat him better.*

After berating the rather baffled Leon, Chloe turned her head around to face us. "Umm, now seems like a good time to tell you guys. I wanted to tell everyone before, but it seems that I've finally awoken into a real Hero. The 'Egg' growing inside me merged with the 'Egg' incubated by Hinata. But that's a secret just among us." Chloe smiled as she finished.

Surprised, I suddenly remembered. "Chloe! Something this important—" I paused.

Guy could still be watching us, so I couldn't speak so carelessly. I tried to cover it up as soon as I realized, but...

But it turned out that my worries were unnecessary.

"It's fine! I don't think anyone is watching us anymore." Chloe's declaration assured our safety.

In that moment, Chloe was far more than the young girl she looked to be. Children would eventually grow up to no longer require their parents' care. While happy at Chloe's growth, it made me a bit lonely too.

It was then that I realized something.

As of now—'True Hero' Chloe Aubert had awoken. Hinata and Chloe weren't completely separated. Somehow the 'Hero's Egg' inside Hinata was left in Chloe's body.

Her single body possessed two Hero's Eggs. It was inconceivable. It shouldn't have happened, yet Chloe's awakening allowed her to reach this unprecedented realm of existence.

—No, that's not true.

It was not some accidental miracle, but instead a certain result of Chloe's unyielding will. Chloe pushed forward, persevering through her endless cycle of repetition and in the end, managed to overcome all challenges to reach a whole new level. It was Chloe's undying will that dispelled despair and made this miracle.

At that moment, I admired Chloe from the bottom of my heart.

That was why I decided to say this without any pretense: "You really worked hard. I want to learn from you too. I swear to never give up in the face of anything."

That was my most genuine thought.

"Mmhm!"

Chloe nodded with a bright smile. I swore to never let her lose that smile in the future.

In other words, I couldn't always be so naive. Now that I knew that there was a force out

there trying to kill me, it was only naturally that I would have to come up with a solution.

Am I right?

«Correct. A comprehensive solution must be made.»

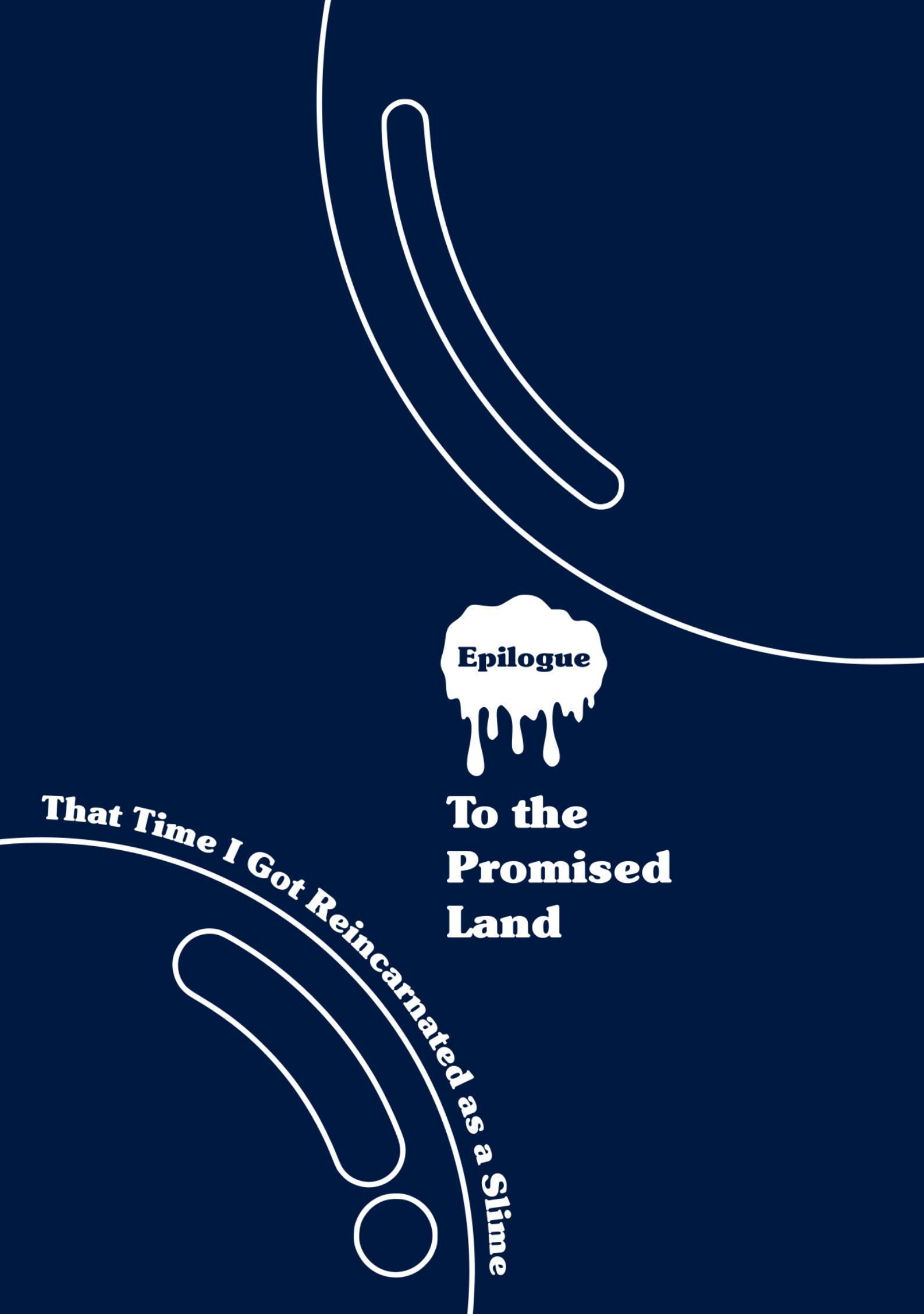
This incident gave me a very deep realization: if I were to be defeated, it would not just be *my* problem alone.

No mercy for my enemies—I solidified this resolve in my heart again.

Understanding my enemies' ideals were indeed important, but it was meaningless if it was at the cost of our sacrifice.

—I will do anything for victory—

While smiling back at Chloe, I secretly made this vow.



Epilogue

**To the
Promised
Land**

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Epilogue

To the Promised Land

That night, we just exchanged a bit of information with each other. We decided to discuss the details after we had settled down later.

Leon told me about his relationship with Chloe. They were childhood friends that grew up like siblings. He didn't reveal more information. Chloe probably had forgotten about it too, so it remained a mystery.

Although I wouldn't consider it to be that big of one.

Leon was always calm, cool, and collected, except when he was with Chloe. The extent to which Leon spoiled Chloe could rival how much Treyni-san spoiled Ramiris. His dedication was on a dangerous level. He might as well have declared, with a straight face, in front of Chloe something like: *Let me take a vow and pledge my loyalty to you.*

That being said, Chloe would probably smile and reject him.

On that note, Chloe seemed able to turn herself into an adult. Chronoa's consciousness remained healthy inside her in a relationship similar to Wisdom King Raphael and me. That's why they could switch control of their body. When engaging in serious combat, I heard that she could merge consciousnesses with Chronoa, and in doing so, she could restore her original appearance.

She also mentioned that suddenly turning into her adult form would probably cause a panic among the other children. So, she wanted to continue life in her current form.

I found that safer too and told Chloe to do as she wished.

Luminas told me about Granbell.

"Gran likely went mad after his wife's death. Following that, Mariabell was that man's last hope, her death has plunged him into insanity yet again. I suspect that he recovered later on as well."

So serious yet so clumsy.

That's perhaps the best way to describe Granbell Rosso as a person. The death of his wife Maria made him feel guilty that he was unable to protect the one he loved.

When this Granbell found his new hope—Mariabell, she too suffered defeat after challenging me. Even though I had no evidence, my guess was that Yuuki had killed her.

Yet to Granbell, any explanation was meaningless. Mariabell's death had a significant impact on him. Perhaps it was the loneliness he felt after losing her that cleared up Granbell's mind in the end.

There's nothing more ironic than that.

After his mind returned to normal, Granbell devised a plan to awaken the 'True Hero.' Had he failed, the world would have been devastated in a crisis. Yet Granbell had made his decision. His resolve was unmatched. That alone, was the only undeniable fact.

A Hero didn't have to be someone of lofty virtue. Everyone has their biases, or their madness in his case.

Granbell's love for humanity was great. Therefore, when he had succumbed to insanity, the consequences afterward were probably greater than if it was anyone else.

Even I could not deny that I was not susceptible to this. What if I were to lose my loved ones? I recalled the time when I had almost lost my companions. The loss almost tore my heart out.

"How foolish"—I seriously can't say this about him in good conscience."

I could relate to Granbell's feelings on some level.

The next day:

Under the vast blue sky, with the ruins of the Grand Cathedral as the backdrop, our musical exchange concert took place as planned.

In front of the band was a neatly seated crowd as the audience.

The beautiful yet melancholic music resounded through the skies. It was the song to bid farewell to those who had placed their hope in the future—a requiem.



I had a dream. A very strange dream. In that dream, I became a very selfish little girl.

Maria smiled as she woke up to the sight of Gran.

"Was it a good dream?"

"Yes, it was very sweet."

The two smiled at each other.

"How incredible, why didn't I believe that slime?"

"Umm—that's a hard question. *Because it was a dream*—An answer like this sounds a bit unromantic."

"Ehhh, can't you answer it seriously?"

“Hahaha, sorry. Just like you said, Maria, things wouldn’t have escalated to this extent had we been able to accept everything and trust each other. But humanity is cowardly. They fear the people who live by rules different from their own and are wary that they might betray them. More problematically, he who does not doubt others is a man of beautiful heart but by no means qualified as a politician. Since being more careful than anyone else is the quality that is required of those who lead...”

Hearing this, Maria bulged her cheeks, seemingly discontent.

“Seriously! Then humans would never really understand each other from their hearts! I don’t like that, don’t like that at all! That’s why I’ve decided to trust him next time.”

“You are talking about what happened in the dream, right?”

“Yes, I am. That is, if I ever have the same dream next time, I will definitely believe in that slime-san. I’m sure we will become very good friends by that time!”

“Is that so? I’m sure you will,” Gran agreed gently.

“By the way, Gran, what dream did you have?” Maria asked Gran innocently.

“Me? I...”

Gran had a very long and sorrowful dream.

But in the end, he got to see a ray of hope.

“It was a good dream. Really good.”

“Ahh, that’s great! If you are happy, I am happy!”

“Me too. As long as you are happy, I will be able to overcome whatever hardship I meet.”

“We can spend every day together peacefully. That thought alone brings me joy.”

“Indeed.”

“When our child is born, we will have more family, and we’ll be even happier!”

“Yes, you are absolutely right.” As he finished, Gran gently hugged Maria.

They heard beautiful music playing. It was the music telling them to set forth on their journey.

“It’d be improper to keep Razul waiting. It’s about time for us to get going.”

“Umm, right. Did you forget anything? We probably won’t get a chance to return here, no?”

“Well, no worries. As long as I have you by my side, I don’t need anything else.”

And so, the two held each other’s hands and started walking.

To the promised land far far away, where everyone was waiting.

Afterword

Sorry for the long wait. I will now give you volume 11.

This volume is almost entirely different from the web novel version. Spoiler alert, the character arcs later on in the story will also differ from the web novel version. That's why their character settings will be changed as well.

Yuuki's setting was changed greatly, and I also changed a lot about the settings related to the Hero. And also because of Editor I-san's reckless interjection, all the changes were settled as final.

I recall he even threw out a couple stubborn remarks like—

“Don't you think the little girl Chloe was a bit lonely?”

Something along those lines.

It was then that I began to suspect that Editor I-san is a Lo[redacted]con. I'm not talking about robocon¹⁵—cough, let's put that aside for now.

Chloe's plot was already a pain in the ass, and with I-san's demands, it really gave me a headache this time. Although I dare to say it ended up making the story more interesting.

So what will happen to light novel Chloe? Stay tuned for more!



The Western Nations arc concludes in this volume. From the next volume onward, it's finally time for the Eastern Empire to strike.

There will be new characters coming as well. I hope to make the world of “Tensura” even vaster.

I'll be in everyone's care in the future as well!

¹⁵Someone who likes robots. This is a pun since Fuse censored the second word in his last sentence, and ロ (ro) can be thought of as ロボ (robo), and not ロリ (Loli).

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime 11

Story by Fuse, Illustration by Mitz Vah

