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伏瀬 イラスト／みつばー

転生したら スライム

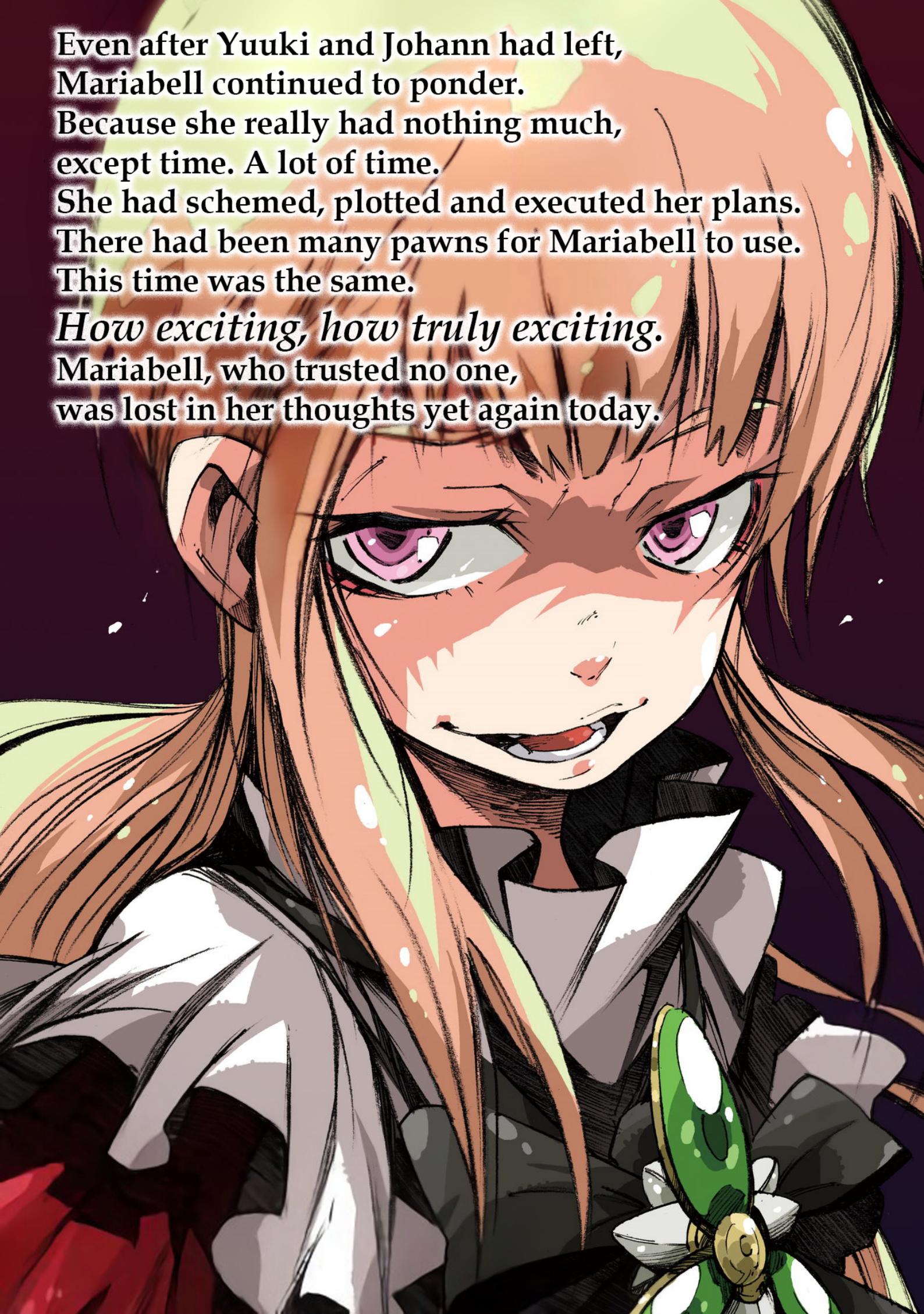
That Time I Got
Reincarnated as a SLIME

10



GC NOVELS





Even after Yuuki and Johann had left,
Mariabell continued to ponder.

Because she really had nothing much,
except time. A lot of time.

She had schemed, plotted and executed her plans.
There had been many pawns for Mariabell to use.
This time was the same.

How exciting, how truly exciting.

Mariabell, who trusted no one,
was lost in her thoughts yet again today.

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Volume 10

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Majins' Manipulations

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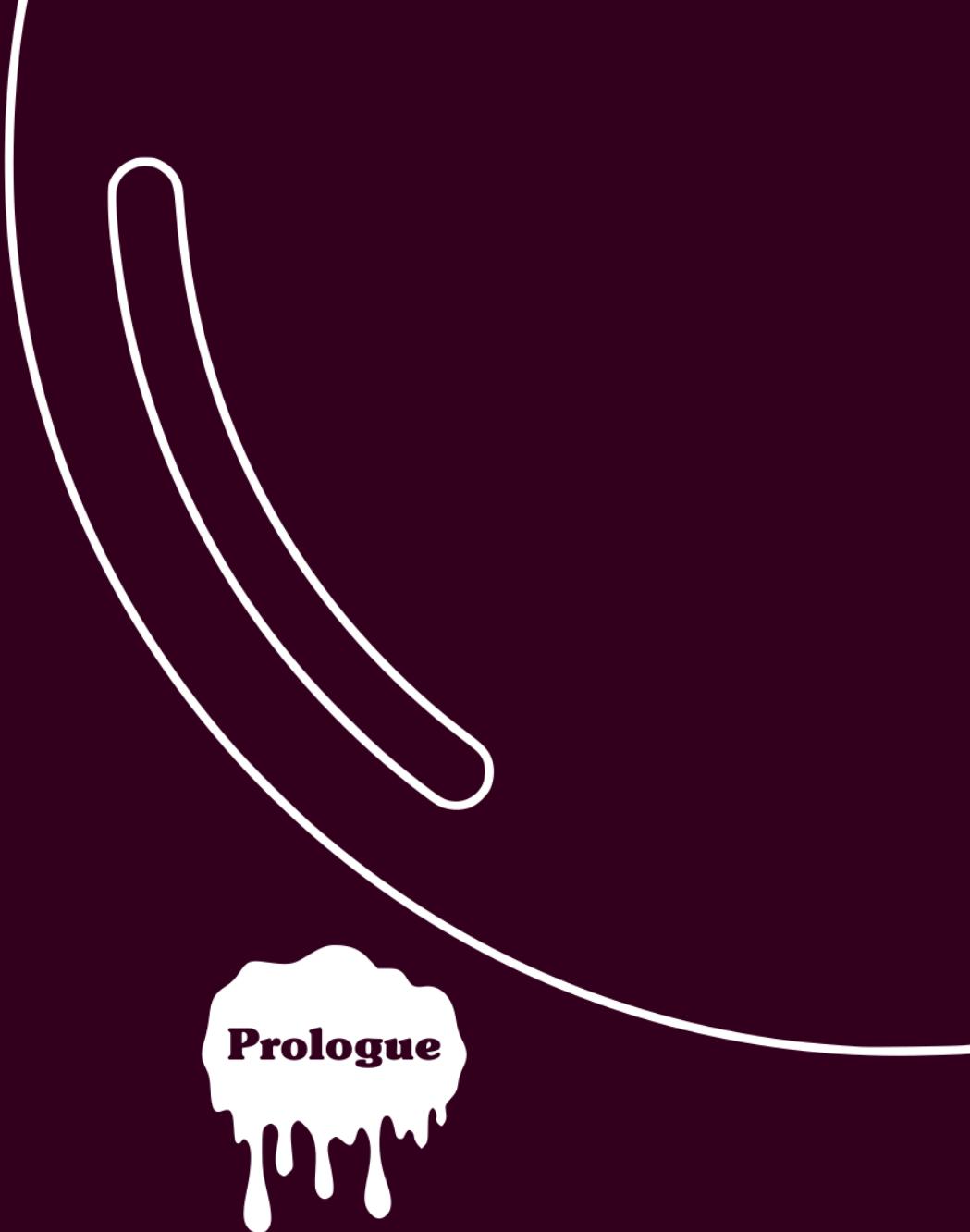
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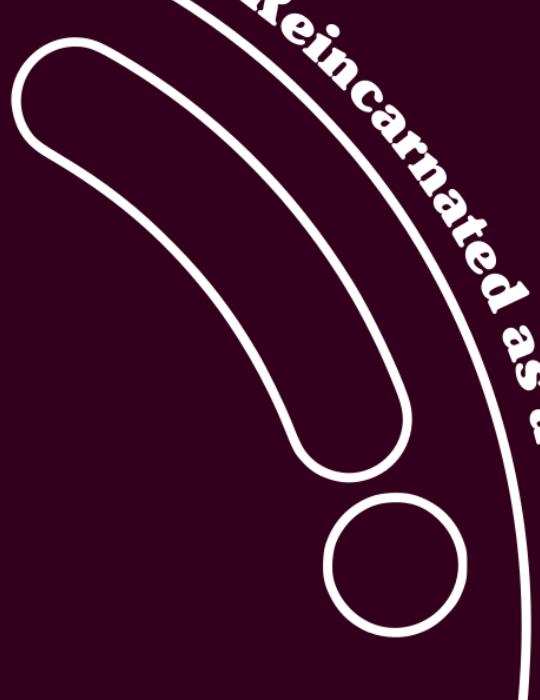
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Prologue



**Men on
the Move**

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Prologue

Men on the Move

Phew, seriously—the young man sighed.

“You seem frustrated. What’s the issue?” asked the man with the asymmetric mask. It was Laplace, the majin of the Moderate Clown Troupe.

He was a trusted companion of this young man—Yuuki Kagurazaka.

“I suppose it’s *an issue*. Since I was invited, I went along to pay a visit. And as it turns out, our opponent is so incredibly strong that I’ve lost confidence in myself. I think it’s time to re-examine our plan.”

“Did you say we need to re-examine our plan?” Ex-Demon Lord Kazalim, in disguise as a secretary—Kagali—questioned back. To that, Yuuki responded with another sigh.

“Yes. It’s about that slime. It turns out that it’s best that we avoid antagonizing him.”

“If that’s the case, shouldn’t you just keep him close? I planned to explore the ruins as well, so isn’t it for the best that we maintain friendly terms anyway?”

“No, we will still go according to our plan. It’s just going to be harder, that’s all.”

“Why? Surely there won’t be any conflict if we tread carefully.”

Laplace was no fool. Even though he bore a grudge after his companion Clayman was killed, he wasn’t going to go against his boss—Yuuki’s commands—and pick a fight with Rimuru.

It wasn’t just Laplace’s sentiment.

Footman, Teare, and even the chairman of the Clown Troupe, Kagali, thought the same. Even they knew the danger of acting on impulse.

The truth of this world was that it was the survival of the fittest.

At this point, these experiences had taught Laplace and the others that if they didn’t have a one hundred percent chance of winning, forcing their plan would only result in failure.

Far from wreaking vengeance on Demon Lord Leon, Clayman was now dead. Kazalim already put so much effort into resurrecting with the identity of Kagali, but now, it seemed like they were back at square one.

Moreover, if they really were to take on Demon Lord Rimuru, they would have no time to take their revenge on Demon Lord Leon. It was for this reason that the clowns decided to obey

Yuuki's orders and be cautious.

Yet Yuuki now claimed that there was a problem.

"That's true, but that also seems to have gotten harder."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I think that slime is onto me..."

"What? Did you do something to get yourself caught?"

"No way! This is the Boss we are talking here, not you, Laplace!"

"Heh heh, that's right, Laplace. As far as I can tell, there's no one more careful than Boss. There's no way that Boss would slip up."

Yuuki, who had always been cautious, admitted his misstep. When Laplace retorted in surprise, Teare and Footman reacted as if they denied it. That was how much Yuuki had won the trust of the clowns.

Kagali, head of the Troupe, then scolded the clowns, "Don't get riled up now. Rather than saying that it was Yuuki-sama's misstep, it was more due to that slime's intricate mind games. I confronted it with Yuuki and found that that slime was really something else. I felt as though I was being surveilled from start to finish. It really got on my nerves. Although I've yet to see through its true ability yet, I could already tell that this was no easy opponent."

Having faced it herself, Kagali knew that slime was dangerous. Although she didn't feel it was as strong as Leon, its eyes that seemingly could see through anything, made her feel greatly threatened.

Yuuki agreed with Kagali, "Ahh, seriously, that slime—Demon Lord Rimuru—was really something else. During the festival, the key figures within the council that sponsored us, were there too. Those people didn't know how to tackle the slime and ended up looking awfully pitiful. Our opponent was cunning and merciless. Despite his normally kind and generous demeanor, once he gets pissed off, he becomes a force to be reckoned with. Our plan of manipulating him didn't work out. Surely, he will be on his guard from now on," he shrugged.

"But Boss, no matter how much he's on the lookout, he doesn't have any evidence, right? If that's the case, as long as we act without raising any suspicion, won't they struggle to make another move?"

"That's true, I didn't leave any physical evidence, but I was the one who leaked the information about Shizu-san to Hinata. I think that should be sufficient evidence. In fact, on the last day, when he gathered everyone connected to him and discussed plans for the future, everyone gathered there seemed to be Demon Lord Rimuru—Rimuru-san's suspects. I was definitely found out there."

"How could that be...?"

The gang went silent as they listened to Yuuki's explanation.

"Never mind. It's only a matter of time, anyway. That slime really poses a threat to us. Then, Boss, how will we adjust the plan?"

Of course she's the one to ask. The first one to bounce back from the shock was Kagali.

She had seen plenty of turmoil during her time as demon lord, so naturally, she was back on her feet just as fast.

“Umm. Let’s first proceed just as before: keep ourselves in the shadows peacefully. Since Demon Lord Rimuru doesn’t have concrete evidence, he won’t be openly hostile towards us. Despite his casual looks, he’s constantly calculating his losses and gains.”

“I see. That’s why he mentioned the ancient ruins directly in front of us. He was probably trying to see our reaction. If we had planned something against him, he’d ruthlessly retaliate—”

“My thoughts exactly. Humans are unpredictable creatures. There’s a saying that goes, ‘Today’s enemies could be tomorrow’s friends.’ Unless things change drastically, there’s no need for us to antagonize him. As long as we can change his mind to favor our side, we would be home free.”

Yuuki glanced around to observe everyone’s reaction.

“In other words, we’re supposed to continue to cooperate with them?”

“It shouldn’t be that difficult to control them by force, but since the Boss has spoken, we shall do as ordered.”

“Footman, you big idiot, it’s because we *can’t* take them by force that we have been working so hard!”

“Ahh, don’t get so worked up about it. Footman has a point too. It’d piss anyone off to have been looked down upon by some newcomer. But even if we win by working together, they still have the Storm Dragon. There’s no need to gamble our own forces for that.”

“Yeah. We shouldn’t dwell on it too much. Just follow Boss and Chairman’s orders.”

“You guys, I told you all to follow orders from the start! I don’t object to their views at all.”

The trio looked a bit upset, but they weren’t objecting to the plan. Having confirmed so, Yuuki and Kagali exchanged looks and nodded.

The Western Holy Church had the Holy Empire of Lubelius to back it up.

While the top of the chain of command for the Freedom Association was the Western State Council, its power was controlled entirely by the Rosso family.

These two forces had been the main hindrances on their road to dominating the Western Nations. And now there was one more: Demon Lord Rimuru who established the Tempest Federation.

With Yuuki witnessing the nation founding festival himself this time, he realized how stupid it would be to try and oppose Demon Lord Rimuru.

I was worried that these guys would do their own thing if I were to announce that we won’t go against Rimuru-san again.

While Yuuki had been doubtful of it, it seemed that he had simply been worrying too much. It might have been different in the past, but Kagali had learnt to calmly keep her composure after she lost to Leon in the past. She had endured for a long time, with the clowns trying to help fulfill her ambition. It would seem that these companions that Yuuki trusted were no fools. They wouldn’t act recklessly without careful consideration.

“How reliable you all are. Then I’ll have you guys handle the job that Damrada has been

doing,” Yuuki said cheerfully.

“Hold on... Are you referring to the top-secret merchandise?”

“Eh? Are you really handing it to us...?”

“Hehehe, is that really wise, Boss?”

The clowns’ expressions changed drastically.

Yuuki’s cheerful smile didn’t fade one bit as he looked at them.

“Of course. Surely it wouldn’t pose an issue to you guys right now.”

“Just count on us! You must be worried about us doing something reckless, no? No way, no way, I swear I’m not gonna strike even if I think I can win!”

“That’s right, that’s right! Clayman forgot to act cautiously in the end... If we were to make the same mistake as he did, we wouldn’t be able to mock that guy in hell.”

“You have a point. Reckless acts would only end in failure. As the Angry Pierrot, I must keep that idea close to heart. Even though I swore to take revenge on Demon Lord Leon one day, it’s still too early to act on that yet.”

All three gave their own views as they promised, and Yuuki smiled.

“You guys have matured more than I expected,” he murmured.

It was then that he recalled something that had been bothering him.

“By the way, I just recalled...when you mentioned top-secret merchandise... Demon Lord Rimuru took away the kids that were under my care, yeah?”

“Ah, because of Shizue Izawa’s involvement, we couldn’t do anything about it afterward—”

“That’s right. He even used the festival as an excuse. Now that I think about it, he definitely suspected me back then. Never mind, that doesn’t matter. I’m more concerned about what Demon Lord Rimuru said.”

Yuuki explained his thoughts.

The children had grown stronger, most likely due to Demon Lord Rimuru’s meddling. Rimuru refused to talk openly about what happened, but he had accidentally blurted out that “The kids need to deepen their understanding of the spirits.”

“He has more or less obfuscated all the questions that I raised.”

“It’s probably because the kids have grown so strong that he didn’t think it was possible to keep it a secret.”

“Who knows? Maybe he’s doing this strategically, which is getting on my nerves. However, he must have used the spirits to neutralize the magicules in their bodies,” Yuuki shrugged as he finished.

Demon Lord Rimuru is not an opponent to be underestimated, Yuuki thought to himself. It wouldn’t be far-fetched to think he had some scheme behind this.

“That makes sense,” Kagali agreed with him. “Now that you mentioned it, wasn’t Shizue Izawa also a Spirit Wielder of a Greater Fire Spirit? In other words, ‘Incomplete Summoned Ones’ who were summoned with flaws can be reused by using spirits.”

Hearing Kagali’s deduction, Laplace and the others also seemed to realize something.

“I see how it is. Could this be Demon Lord Leon’s true goal? He seemed to be gathering

otherworlders who had failed summonings. Has Leon been collecting them so as to train them into soldiers?"

"Uh—I remember! Isn't Ifrit the Flame Giant one of Leon's subordinates? Clayman has ordered his men to attack Leon several times, but they were all taken out by the Flame Giant."

"Hehehe, is he perhaps planning to expand his crew of Spirit Wielders such as Shizue Izawa? In that case, it might be unwise to hand over the top-secret merchandise."

The clowns expressed their views.

Perhaps Footman had a point, as Yuuki felt the same. But there was still one thing that was confusing to him. The so-called 'Top-secret Merchandise' was, in truth, just children who had been summoned imperfectly.

Right now, there were still places conducting countless flawed summonings. They had managed to deceive Shizue Izawa as well as the entire Western Nations.

The more they conducted these summonings, the more failures they got. The one who was buying these failed summons was Damrada of the secret organization 'Cerberus.' Since the truth about these children couldn't go public, he had been collecting them for personal usage in the name of research.

But that was just a ruse; he had other plans in mind.

It was, in fact, at the request of Demon Lord Leon.

He was looking for "Otherworld children under the age of ten."

Uh—did Leon do it to expand his arsenal? I suppose that makes some sense, but why couldn't he have just done it himself...? He must have something else in mind to have intentionally leaked the most advanced theories of summoning to the Eastern Empire and the Western Nations.

Yuuki couldn't reach a solid conclusion. Thus, he didn't have room to act—having still been bound by his contract with Demon Lord Leon.

Yuuki made up his mind as he gave his order to the three.

"Then I will have you three discuss the matter with Demon Lord Leon. Whether his plan is to increase his martial prowess or otherwise, you must be thorough with your investigation of the matter. Misha will be negotiating with the Rosso. Take the goods from her and proceed with the plan."

"Understood, just count on me!"

"Um um! I will do my best!"

"Hehehe, yes sir."

The trio looked highly motivated as Kagali gave a wry smile.

"Don't work too hard and get yourself exposed in front of Demon Lord Leon."

"Yeah, heed me now, you guys really need to be more careful. We can't afford right now to antagonize Demon Lord Leon as well."

The three acknowledged Yuuki's warning.

Laplace professed that the three of them were not idiots.

Yuuki decided to put his faith in his trusted companions before continuing to explain the

engagement plan in detail.



After ordering Laplace and the other clowns, it was time for Kagali's order.

She turned to Yuuki and asked in a serious tone, "Boss, what should I do then?"

She was inquiring about the investigation of the ruins.

Although it was called a ruin, that really wasn't the case, especially to the likes of Kagali. To them, it was a familiar city. When she was still Demon Lord Kazalim, she used to apply magic as a defense mechanism for the city. That was the true identity of the ancient ruins of 'Amalita.'

Unlike the city on the surface protected by Adalmann, 'Amalita' was mainly guarded by Kazalim's spells and his numerous enchanted dolls. Clayman inherited Kazalim's technology, but even his finest work, the doll named Viola, could only be considered as mid-to-high-end among the enchanted dolls that were guarding the ruins.

To have such powerful defensive mechanisms within the ruins—in other words, this ruin named 'Amalita' was the true form of the Puppet Nation Jistav.

And to ask why these ruins named 'Amalita' had such a high level of defense? The answer to that question could be traced back to ancient times.

In the distant past, the Ultra-Sorcerer Kingdom of the elves was once prosperous, but it called upon its own destruction by its own stupidity. The nation angered a young girl who would come to be a demon lord—Milim, the daughter of the Dragon King. The kingdom was wiped out from the face of the earth overnight.

The rubble left in its wake was known as the ancient ruin 'Soma.' Elves that managed to survive swore to restore the glory that Soma once held, yet they failed in their conquest. The depraved monster that they themselves created—the Chaos Dragon—wielded power beyond belief and drove these people away from their hometown. The power held by the Chaos Dragon was the equivalent of Catastrophe-class. Although it was not as strong as a True Dragon, it still wasn't something the elves could tackle.

The elven survivors went on to spread across the land and walked down different paths. Struck by the sudden misfortune, the elven people, ignorant of the event that took place, sought refuge from their elven ancestors. Those with power explored and settled in the wilderness before building new kingdoms. Some escaped in secret, became reclusive, and lived away from civilizations.

Because of the sins of a few individuals, the golden age of elves came to an end.

After that—

Some were cursed for their sins and became dark elves. In order to escape from Milim's fury, they went afar to explore a new land.

Kagali—Demon Lord Kazalim—was one of them. He managed to survive after witnessing the true power of Demon Lord Milim and was among the few remaining members of the elven royal family. Kazalim was not a Demon Lord then. He escaped to this distant land and tried to rebuild a nation in the image of his hometown. He managed to preserve all the elven technology, so it hadn't been lost, and thus he proceeded to recreating physical copies.

The nation that was born as a result was the capital Amalita of the Puppet Nation Jistav.

Caught up in reminiscing about the past, Kagali tore herself away and shook her head to get her mind off the memory.

"The defenses in Amalita have yet to be disarmed; should we set them up against Demon Lord Rimuru?"

She had made a deal with Rimuru to explore the ancient ruins at Clayman's base together, during which she could use the opportunity to sabotage Rimuru with the traps. It would be a piece of cake for Kagali right now.

With that, only Milim and Veldora would pose a threat. If it were just Rimuru by himself, wouldn't it be simple to take care of him?—Kagali thought to herself.

By merely triggering the defense mechanism, she could also avoid raising suspicion. Based on these thoughts, Kagali gave her suggestion, but Yuuki rejected the idea without hesitation.

"That would be quite interesting, but will it seriously work? Have you considered that Demon Lord Milim might tag along with him?"

"Anyhow, where there's a will, there's a way. He won't be suspicious if I only trigger the mechanisms."

Kazalim's homeland was destroyed in the past—no, Kagali's. Yuuki was worried that that might have traumatized her, but she didn't seem to mind.

From elf to dark elf, then into undead elf, and finally a demon lord. Throughout all these experiences, Kagali managed to overcome all the trauma Milim brought her. But Kagali knew that she had no chance of beating Milim. She knew it would be a reckless act...

"Right! Then I'll be counting on you in that regard. It would be quite impossible to try and beat him. But I will be able to ascertain just how strong Demon Lord Rimuru really is."

"Is our opponent really worth such effort?"

"Yes, yes he is. So, Kagali, make sure you don't reveal your true identity. He must be suspecting me at this point, but he shouldn't be certain about your identity. Just act cautiously and don't let him provoke you."

"I understand, Boss."

Yuuki and Kagali smiled at each other.

"Right! Then we'll be off to meet Misha."

"I'll keep preparing. What do you plan to do next, Boss?"

"Me? I was going to contact Damrada to have him expand our base of operations in the

East. If anything happens, we can flee to them. But before that..."

"Huh? You are definitely plotting something! And you're telling us to hold back while you are out scheming yourself," Laplace grumbled as Yuuki gave a wry smile.

"That's not the case, Laplace. I'm just planning to use every card I have. Because I'm not giving up on dominating the West yet."

A small smile emerged on the corner of Yuuki's lips.

The majins in the shadows were once again on the move.

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

**Chapter
1**

**The Smooth
Operation of
the Labyrinth**

Chapter 1

The Smooth Operation of the Labyrinth

The Founding Festival of the Tempest Federation was a success, and with that the festival came to an end. It had been a busy ten days, and all the invited guests as well as visitors from the neighboring nations had all left the town.

That included the king of Blumund and Fuze, who both seemed to have something to discuss regarding their future plans and went home as soon as they could.

Dwarven King Gazel promised to elect a squad of researchers and also left pretty early.

As for the Emperor of Sarion, Elmesia, she bought some sort of inn near the guest hotel located in the prime district of town. She picked one of the rooms in it and set up a magic portal, apparently for the convenience of coming back for fun at any time.

As expected from a billionaire. She really was lavish with her spending. I still remember the superiority-laden smile Elmesia gave the clearly jealous Gazel—chances are he'll march right back to Dwargon and have their treasury authorize the cash to purchase one of our villas.

Maybe I should be thanking Elmesia. Even better, she agreed to continue employing our local people working there, under the same conditions. Rigurd took care of the detailed arrangements involving chores such as providing her food and routinely cleaning her room.

“I guess next time I visit, I’ll transfer my consciousness to a homunculus. It’s a pity that I can’t fully enjoy myself with that body...”

“Your Majesty, please stop being so self-indulgent!”

An example to counter her point this time was the fact that Elmesia herself leaving the nation had already caused Armageddon. Although this had nothing to do with us, Elalude must have been tormented beyond his breaking point. Even the mobilization of the bodyguards to protect Elmesia—the Magus—was considered a serious matter in terms of national defense.

“Is that so... Then is Elen using a homunculus as well...?”

Elen was Elalude’s daughter, so she was of course also an elf.

Her ears however, looked human.

“Oh, about that, Elen-chan is using her own body. Homunculi are not all-powerful. In fact, prolonged use of one puts the user at risk.”

“YOUR MAJESTY! Your nonchalant attitude leaking national secrets will cause huge problems!”

From my private conversation with Elmesia, Elen seems to have been using drugs to alter her appearance and used her own body to travel. That was why Elalude was always worried and had sent many bodyguards in secret. Speaking of which, to my utter surprise, Kabal and Gido were both members of the Magus. Elalude was just shouting that dispatching even one of these knights would affect national defense, yet he was generous enough to send two by his daughter’s side... Elalude sure cared a lot about his daughter.

“But how come those two never looked that strong...?”

When I ran ‘Analyze and Assess’ on the two in the past, they appeared to be quite weak. Therefore, I asked to clarify my doubts. Elalude, on the other hand, answered with quite a bit of restraint, “That’s top secret as well, but I’ll let you in on it. Those two have equipped magic rings that limit their abilities. If Elen really were to fall into danger, the limit would then be removed.”

That’s what he said, so does that mean that Sarion’s Sorcerer Technology is superior to my ‘Analyze and Assess’?—I was quite surprised. But now that I thought about it, the accuracy of my ‘Analyze and Assess’ back then was vastly inferior to what I have now. Perhaps today I’d be able to see through their hidden strength. It seemed that I couldn’t let my guard down just because I had run an examination or two on a person. *I really need to be more cautious from now on. Next time I meet the two, I’ll secretly run an ‘Analyze and Assess’ on them.*

“Then, please take care of my daughter.”

“Well then, till next time!”

With that said, Elmesia’s party went aboard their kingdom’s Guardian Dragon King Ship to return to their nation.

Demon Lord Luminas on the other hand was very casual with her travel methods since she could use her immense power to cast ‘Spatial Movement’ and return to her kingdom almost instantly. As for the orchestra exchange, she told me she’d contact me about the matter in the future.

Hinata remained in town. She checked on the kids’ classes at the Church and occasionally sparred with them. At the time, we couldn’t find any suitable teachers for the children. It was at that point that Hinata showed up.

Until then, she had been maintaining the peace of the Western Nations as the commander of the Holy Knight Order. We would collaborate from now on, and since we were handling the peace in the south for now, Hinata also seemed to have gotten some spare time.

“If you don’t mind, could you spend some time with the kids?” I asked her. “Although I know how to use magic, I’m not really a great teacher.”

“Sure. I’ve already used Elemental Magic ‘Waypoint Teleportation’ to register the town. I’ll drop by to take care of the kids when I’m free.”

Hinata accepted my request without hesitation; she really came in clutch this time.

After all, I had no intention of letting the children return to Ingracia in the first place. Due to my suspicion towards Yuuki, it was better to not leave them in the care of the Kingdom of Ingracia. That's why I brought them out using the festival as an excuse...

I didn't forget to register their transfer. In any case, instructing the children became more and more of a challenge for the schools of Ingracia. After "Merging" them with spirits, they had obtained incredible power. Any average tutor wouldn't have been able to handle them. So right now, I had to find someone who could properly instruct them.

Yuuki told me that the Holy Knights were the most capable of commanding spirits. I had mentioned spirits by accident back then during our conversation. And according to Yuuki's reaction at the time, he seemed to have known about it from the start.

I should probably have kept it a secret—

«Report. You should have kept it a secret indeed.»

R-right. Even Raphael-san seemed to be rubbing the salt in the wound.

No no no, even if I hadn't said anything, he probably would have found out anyway.

We're just overthinking it, so let's not worry about it too much.

«...»

Umm, sorry.

I still spilled the beans despite my suspicions towards Yuuki. I realized that in some corner of my heart, I still wanted to believe in him. I'll have to reflect on this slip-up and be more cautious in the future.

The children were now my responsibility. And given these circumstances, Hinata's help was a godsend. The children also grew very close to Hinata through their time spent together during the festival. She was the perfect candidate.

Speaking of having Hinata as a teacher, maybe I should also be a student and learn some things from her.

After I settled on the idea, I stood alongside the kids behind the row of desks. Yet Hinata glared at me.

"What are you trying to do here?"

"Eh, well, I wanted to observe for a bit..."

"You're a nuisance, so get out now."

"Ah, yes ma'am..."

And so I was chased out cruelly. What a pity.

This was what happened around a week after the end of the festival. The traffic on the streets had gradually settled down and the residents were no longer that busy. And so, we began to open and run the moderated dungeon. Quite a few adventurers seemed eager to explore the dungeon and a great number of them had inquired about it. And, as if in response to their expectations, we finally opened up the labyrinth. We had already made sufficient preparations and waited until just the right moment to open.

The days gradually became busy.

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...

Problems emerged within hours of the debut. The issue at hand was the unexpectedly reckless and stupid way challengers went about exploring the dungeon.

We expected this to happen for the first demonstration during the opening festival. That's why we took steps to lower the difficulty accordingly. But despite all that, the challengers were still having too much of a hard time. It would appear that what we set up was just not gonna work.

We didn't put any traps on the first floor, and the monsters that spawned there were at most F-ranked mobs. Being incapable of combat, these were monsters even a villager could easily handle.

The intent behind the design of this floor was to provide challengers with a sense of pride and accomplishment and familiarize everyone with the environment inside, which was why we only placed monsters in the rooms that contained treasure chests. That said, the previous fall traps that Ramiris set were all removed. So, in order to successfully break through the floor, you would still need to sketch maps.

The way I saw it, no matter how slow you were, a whole day was the longest you would need to complete the floor.

Yet for the past three days, not a single one managed to get to the second floor. Even that squad Basson led got lost big time and just gave up. Even though Basson's squad already had experience with the labyrinth, they still didn't plan out any noteworthy strategy.

Should I say that I'm dumbfounded or what...

But I guess you could say Basson's squad was doing well, especially considering that some teams even fell victim to rank D monsters.

Perhaps I should correct myself: that happened to *a lot* of teams.

Most of them were likely blinded by greed and didn't discover the monsters lurking in the room's corners. Plenty of idiots like that went straight for the treasure chest instead. They were probably caught by surprise by mere skeleton archers. As these comically bad adventurers rushed towards the treasure chests, their backs were inevitably pierced with arrows.

In other words, they just sucked. Their danger awareness was practically nonexistent. Among the idiots, some were at least smart enough to come in squads. Yet there were really no limits on human stupidity, since some of them actually tried to challenge our labyrinth on their own. That kind of behavior bordered on insanity.

As I've mentioned, the spawn rate of monsters on the first floor was really low, and even if any were to spawn at all, they were rank F at best. That said, when appearing in a group, monsters like those could still pose a threat. Actually, whether it indeed "posed a threat" was subject to debate. Rather, I should say that it posed sufficient threat to the challengers.

If you were to come in alone, even resting would prove challenging. With no one on guard,

you couldn't even take a nap. No matter how weak rank F monsters were, they were still capable of hurting you. Certain types of monsters would launch a sneak attack on sleeping humans, and if you weren't cautious enough, you could easily wind up dead.

I initially thought that these solo challengers had some great strategies in mind, but it turned out that they were just a bunch of brainlets. These reckless idiots didn't get anywhere and immediately left upon exiting the labyrinth. But, to be honest, based on how they had acted, they wouldn't have lasted any longer even if they had managed to somehow make it further down.

From Floor 2 onward, not only were there more monsters in the hallways, but rank E opponents would also start spawning among them. When challengers made it to Floor 5, they would begin to face rank D monsters as well. If you had trouble merely getting through these earlier floors, you would definitely be killed when encountering rank D monsters.

One of the challengers had a particularly embarrassing reason for forfeiting—he was starving.

On every tenth floor we had set a save point, and on every fifth floor we had a safe zone prepared where water could be refilled. We also subtly reminded everyone to bring more rations.

The other adventurers seemed to have made plans after analyzing Basson's squad's experience. But that alone wasn't enough. Adventurers seemed to be a very prideful bunch and they often ignored others' advice. Not sure whether it was the fact that they couldn't die in the labyrinth, or that they were overconfident in their abilities. Either way, many of them didn't bring any rations.

If you got so lost that you were unable to find your way back to the entrance, then starvation came as no surprise.

No matter how I thought about it, it was their own fault.

They wanted to open as many treasure chests as possible—*although I suppose I remember how that feels...*

If our labyrinth were truly designed with the intention to kill, I doubt there'd be anyone who could crack it even after a hundred years. But at this time, the challengers were either impoverished bodyguards or mercenaries, all of whom sucked at exploration.

We don't have to panic just yet—with that thought, I held my expectations for the next three days.

Yet, in the end, not a single one managed to reach the safe zone on the fifth floor. The attempts had been miserable.

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That being said, we did profit off of the entry fees, which was always a plus. But if this were to continue, the adventurers would all have low morale, and chances of challengers returning would be minimal.

It looked like we needed to re-examine the whole project.
This unexpected matter had caused me grave concern.



This being the case, I called an emergency meeting.

The people attending were me, Veldora, Ramiris, and the observer, Masayuki. I also summoned Myourmiles who ran the project. After confirming everyone's arrival, I lead the opening statement: "Everyone, it has been three days since the labyrinth went public, but this is not looking good. To be blunt, it actually sucks. For our entertainment—no, in order to have anyone want to return to our labyrinth—I think it would be best to provide them with a level of guidance."

First of all, people would have problems reaching the tenth floor if we were to continue like this. If that were to be the case, our labyrinth would probably have to be put on hold as a result. That's why I came to the conclusion that we had to at least educate them about strategy to some degree.

"Umm! Rimuru is right. If we allow this to continue, there won't be a chance for me to shine no matter how much longer I wait."

"Seriously! Floors 50 and below are my proud work. I really want the world to see them. I think we can give them some hints!"

And so, I got Veldora and Ramiris's approval. Masayuki seemed to be pondering something—actually, he seemed confused. He didn't know why he was here and seemed to feel out of place. After all, he got summoned so abruptly. Anyhow, it looked like Masayuki probably needed a while to regain his cool, after which I would ask for his opinion.

I shifted my gaze away from Masayuki and over to Myourmiles. Getting to see Masayuki, who he admired greatly, had left him beaming with joy. It was probably the reason why he was particularly well-prepared to speak on the matter.

"May I have a word about it?"

"Any suggestion is welcome. Speak your mind; there's no need to hold back."

Hearing this, Myourmiles nodded.

"Regarding the matter of giving hints, I hope you can be reserved about the number. It's only been three days and whatever adventurers we had so far, each one of them had subpar skill. I have already made contact with some seasoned adventurers through the Freedom Association; therefore, I believe that there, surely, will be more adventurers of rank C or higher with greater abilities in the future."

"Is it going to work?"

"Yes. Although I can't grasp what's on Yuuki-san's mind, he did carry out his end of our

deal. He contacted all the divisions of the Freedom Association throughout the land via ‘Magic Communication’ in order to promote us.”

“I see, so there’s some benefit to hosting one of their branches here after all. Anything else?”

“Yes. I’ve asked for favors from the merchants to assist in advertising. The experienced bodyguards and street mobs that were acquainted with them also joined the cause. Their report seemed to indicate very good feedback from the public.”

Both the delivery and collection of information were important.

I then introduced Souka to Myourmiles and told her to assist him in his work.

Souka was the leader of ‘Dark Shadows’¹, and she also hosted the festival events with Myourmiles. It seemed that Myourmiles was good at dealing with people, and so the two immediately got along. I was glad that there was no prejudice involved.

And with that, several of Souka’s subordinates began operating under Myourmiles’s command.

As a matter of fact, even Souei helped him out with things. Souei was currently investigating Duke Muze’s activity. I indirectly ordered him to also promote our nation during his mission.

As a result, word of the dungeon even managed to reach some distant villages that weren’t home to a division of the Freedom Association.

“In other words, we will wait for elites to gather from all across the land, and then make a decision?”

“Indeed. This project has just gone public,” Myourmiles said enthusiastically. “We have no need to rush in order to see any results just yet. I believe that we should calm down now and set our eyes on the future! Moreover, if the noblemen invest in the conquest, we can expect to see adventurers with rank B and above.”

Seeing Masayuki nodding in admiration, Myourmiles seemed to be pleased. Looks like he was eager to show off his abilities in front of Masayuki.

What he said made sense as well. It was all because of how much Veldora and Ramiris complained that I too got nervous all of a sudden.

Basson’s entire squad combined could be considered as rank B. With their current equipment, their individual abilities were around C to C-plus, far from outstanding. If the conquest were handled by someone above rank B, surely, they would familiarize themselves with the labyrinth without requiring many hints.

In our labyrinth, you could pay to have your personal safety ensured. Even if we left them to their own devices, these experienced adventurers would be able to devise their own strategies.

“That’s right; there’s no use for us to rush things.”

Public interest in the labyrinth was high. Apart from ‘Magic Crystals,’ you could also harvest materials from the monsters, and knowing that you could sell these for a pretty penny,

¹Ruby text: Kurasemi (Blue Dark Crowd)

there was no end to the number of people who came flocking to the labyrinth.

The nobles were also quick to react. Their willingness to partake in the conquest business was higher than we imagined. Some were quick-witted enough to immediately hire adventurers upon returning to their nation, requesting them to help with the labyrinth conquest. These hired adventurers weren't driven into rash actions by their own desires. They would only operate after proper preparations and setting up plans. Right now, there weren't as many of these types of adventurers, but I expected to see a rise in number in the future.

"Then what should we do?"

"We've set up an armory on the first floor, should we have the challengers try things out over there?"

"Try out? What can they try there?"

Ramiris wasn't the only one who was confused, so I began to explain my idea: "I was thinking about setting up a training ground for people to practice. They can study how to counter traps and how to fight against monsters. Wouldn't that be more meaningful compared to giving them hints?"

We could also build a stadium of sorts along with it. Due to the increasing number of novice recruits to our nation's army, I hoped that this would be beneficial to their training. There wouldn't be any fatal accidents in the labyrinth, so maybe this would provide some very meaningful combat experience.

An unexpected ally came forth to support my idea—it was Masayuki.

"If that were to be the case," he interjected rather casually, "I think it would also be nice to hold lectures about the dungeon conquest."

I looked at Masayuki in surprise.

"Ah, was it bad for me to cut in like that?"

"No no, there's no such thing!"

"Ayy, that's good. The topic you guys were discussing sounded quite interesting. Even I could follow along, so I accidentally cut in," Masayuki said with a wry smile.

He was adapting faster than I imagined, but he did seem kind of bold.

"Then what sort of lecture should we hold?"

Should we have all the adventurers gather at the big conference room if we were to hold lectures?

It would be very helpful to explain how the labyrinth worked to them.

"We can imitate tutorials in video games."

"Tu...torials? What is that?"

"That sounds tasty, is it food?"

Masayuki's suggestion got Veldora and Ramiris's attention.

And I thought that Veldora would know, but it seemed he actually had no idea about it?

The language in this world could be translated pretty accurately, but when lacking a shared understanding of a subject, it would be hard for two parties to make sense of what the other was saying. Since Veldora had no idea what a tutorial was, Ramiris couldn't have known either.

And so, Masayuki and I began to explain what tutorials were.

“It’s like a facility to train their abilities. We can simulate what actually takes place in the labyrinth.”

“Rimuru-san is right. I think it is important to experience all possible scenarios before entering the labyrinth. If we can teach everyone the basics in the form of missions, I’m sure that it will be easier even for the adventurers to understand—”

Adventurers probably aren’t gonna be fans of lengthy explanations. So, we could only prepare a training ground for people who were serious enough to experience for themselves—this was Masayuki’s suggestion.

Therefore, we planned to make it a mission-style tutorial. Before releasing the permits to enter, they would have to undertake some simple missions. In this way, the adventurers hoping to challenge the labyrinth would learn the bare minimum required for exploration.

Veldora and Ramiris seemed to have understood after hearing our explanations.

“That may be great. From my point of view, everything now is too simple to the point of being boring. I hope that you can build a training ground so that these challengers can improve their skills.”

“I think so too! If Milim were to catch a glimpse of those past challengers, she would have lashed out and beaten all of them up.”

Veldora, Ramiris and Myourmiles all gave the green light.

“After studying the tutorial, we should let them try out some of the amazing weapons and armors crafted in the Tempest Federation. For those who struggled during their actual expedition, preparing more challenging tutorial missions sounded like it would be a fun idea as well,” Myourmiles gave some rather note-worthy suggestions.

I see, issuing a guidebook could be an interesting idea. It could also serve as a little tourism brochure. We could introduce the town to the new-comers and even find some suitable people to write some columns.

A lot of inefficiencies stemmed from the fact that no one really knew much about the labyrinth. For that reason, we decided to at least give them a basic tutorial. If we didn’t, I doubt anyone would be able to make it past Floor 50, where the difficulty really ramped up. And for those who wanted to fully experience the labyrinth, it would be good to prepare a more extensive practice course.

Well, the Holy Knights were scheduled to be dispatched for Floor 50 and below, which you could say was the real deal.

It seemed like we couldn’t expect a lot from the adventurers for now, so it looked like we’d have to depend on the Holy Knights to be Ramiris and Veldora’s playmates.

With that, we decided to open the first floor as a practice field. We also didn’t forget to prepare an entrance for the new recruits, separate from the challengers.

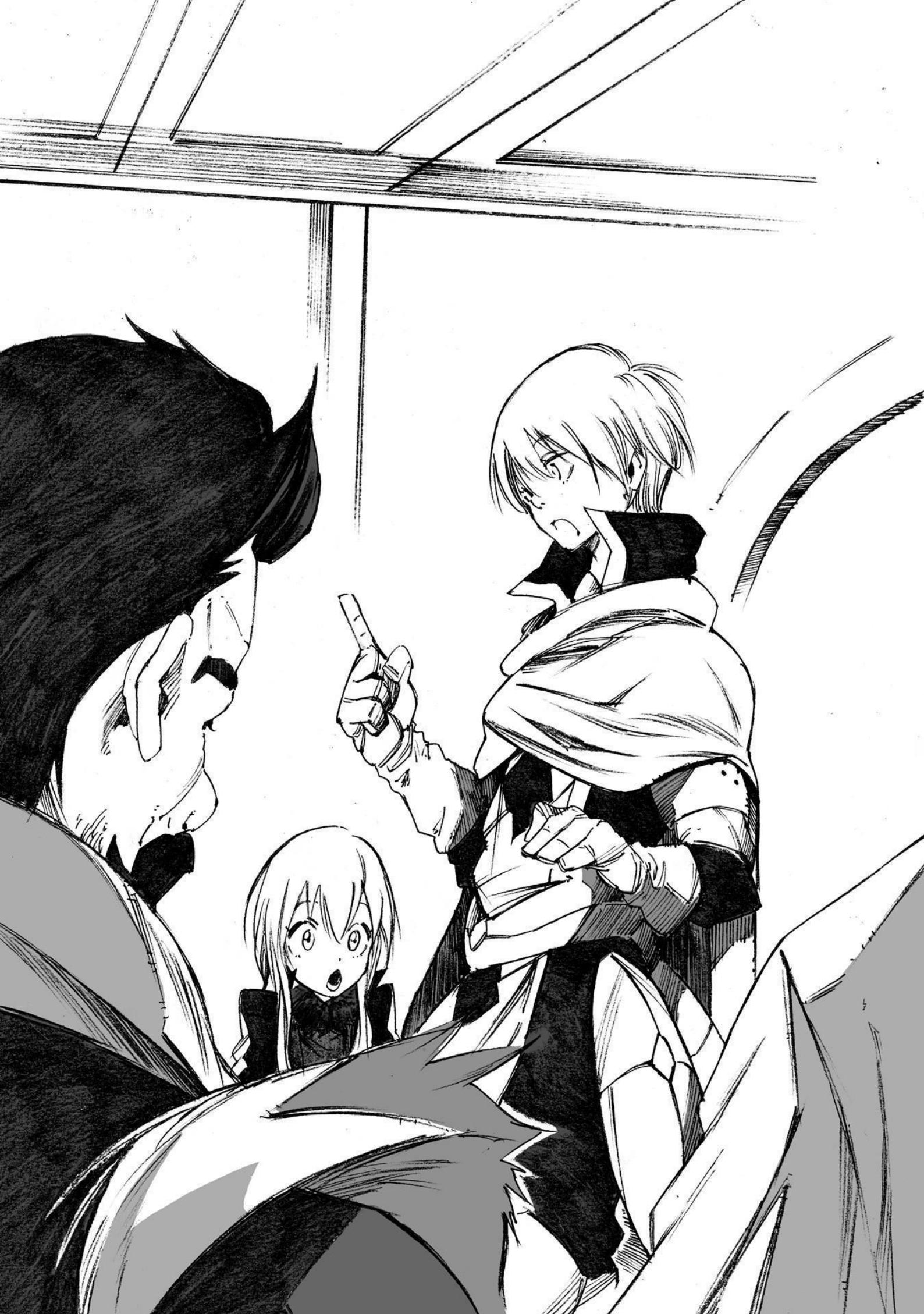
“You’re right; it would be good to separate them. Okay, I’ll make them right away!” Ramiris accepted it willingly.

With everything settled like that, I was about to end the meeting when...

“Ah, wait a moment. Another idea came to mind.”

To my surprise, it was Masayuki himself who gave his opinion with sparkling eyes.

“Right now, we only have inns and restaurants in safe zones, don’t we? Don’t you think it would be a good idea to prepare them on every floor as well? And you see, not having places like restrooms too can be tough. If we’re connecting the spaces anyway, we should set up doors near the stairs of each floor. Since there are people who set out for battle without even a sleeping bag, don’t you think it would be nice to provide them with a sleeping space for a premium price?”



What? This guy...could he be some sort of a genius?!

Hmm, a restroom, huh. Maybe it's because I no longer have bodily functions. I completely forgot to consider that.

I was quite surprised by his insight.

I turned to Ramiris. She signaled her agreement with a vigorous nod.

“Masayuki-kun, we will employ that idea right away!”

“As expected of Masayuki-sama. Your insights are brilliant!”

“Yeah yeah! I’ll remove the safe zones and put up doors by the stairs connecting to the rest area instead!”

Doing this was comparable to offering toilet paper at an exorbitant price next to restrooms that, *incidentally*, didn’t have any.

It was a dirty, but nonetheless effective tactic.

It seemed that Masayuki was actually quite sharp.

“If you have any other ideas, please don’t be shy. Feel free to speak up,” I urged him with a smile.

Then, as if he were remembering the games he played, he immersed himself deep in thought.

“Ummmm, let me see... Is it possible to make single-use save points? I was lucky enough to get to the tenth floor, but now without the pitfalls I think it would take quite a bit of time. For the challengers, this isn’t just a game, and I think the total amount of time they need to spend is one of the things that makes the labyrinth especially hard.”

Hmm, I see. Surely, what Masayuki said has some truth.

With the way the labyrinth was currently set up, it would take challengers several days just to get to the tenth floor. Hearing the idea just now, I realized that all the time spent in the labyrinth created a wealth of business opportunities. How about we go one step further and give this more thought?

“Mmm, what that boy there is saying is right! Humans are fragile, so we have to give this more consideration.”

Veldora was the first to approve Masayuki’s suggestion.

And just *who* was the one that gleefully made this labyrinth of horrors targeted towards “fragile” humans?

“If they’re disposable save points, then I can prepare them with my power, y’know? But wouldn’t it be more profitable to make an inn for them to stay at?”

The single use savepoints could, in fact, be made. And Ramiris, for some reason, was surprisingly sharp whenever money was involved.

“Not at all, Ramiris-sama. Rather, this is precisely why we should charge a high price for it. Adventurers that don’t have any pressing matters will choose to stay at an inn. However, there are probably people who are required to report back regularly. There are also people who would prefer to have at least one just in case anything unexpected happens while they’re in the labyrinth. With that in mind, our sales will surely increase along with the ‘Return Whistle.’”

Seemed like Myourmiles saw an opportunity for success and wanted to exploit it. Hearing

that, I definitely *could* think of various use cases.

If you ended up spending several days in the labyrinth, there could be times where you would want to know the situation outside. Adventurers employed by nobles were in on the action as well, so they might be obligated to report back every now and then.

Moreover—

“Aren’t there strong monsters guarding the save point on the tenth floor? While in our case my party was easily able to defeat them, I think there would be quite a lot of people who would want to use the save point *before* challenging those monsters.”

After hearing Masayuki out, I very much agreed with him. Saving before challenging a guardian—that’s what every gamer would come to expect.

Memories of challenging the final boss without saving beforehand, dying, and then having hours of work go up in smoke all came flooding back to my mind. Those sad incidents could be forgotten with a laugh because it was just a game. But I wonder how furious people would be if it were in real life.

“I see. Thinking about it, maybe our difficulty curve was a bit too harsh.”

Veldora and Ramiris nodded along as well.

“My boy, no, did you say your name was Masayuki? I think your views will be very helpful moving forward.”

“Yup, Yup. Incredible, incredible. As expected of an otherworlder like Rimuru. I hope you’ll keep pitching in, Masayuki!”

And in no time, they seemed to have accepted Masayuki as a colleague.

And Masayuki, as well.

“Below the fiftieth floor, where the going gets tough, I think it would be all right to remove those conveniences. But at least for the upper floors, where there are few skilled adventurers, it wouldn’t hurt to hold their hands a little.”

He was firing off suggestions on operations management left and right. I wondered if this high adaptability was Masayuki’s true character. Well, I didn’t have any objections either.

“Okay, then should we prepare a resting room beside each stairwell? And if they pay, let’s make it so they could go to an area on the ninety-fifth floor.”

“Are you saying we’ll prepare an inn and a restaurant there?”

“Of course. I don’t plan on opening the exclusive elven shops (cabaret) for adventurers. We’ll provide separate accommodations for those guys. Naturally, it’ll be pricier!”

“Fufufu, I understand.”

Tourist spots were pricier. If you went to places like the summit of Mount Fuji, something as simple as a coffee could be many times more expensive. The barbequed beef there was unparalleled, but regardless of the taste, it was quite pricey. In the same vein, it was only natural that using the facilities within the labyrinth would be more expensive than using the facilities outside.

With this, the city on the ninety-fifth floor just got a lil’ more useful.

“And Ramiris, about the one-use save points, could you really prepare them?”

“Of course! It’s trivial for me! You see, there is an orb called the Recording Crystal, and it can be used to make one-use save points.”

Ramiris had gone and made something rather handy. It would work anywhere in the labyrinth, but, other than that, it was like a normal save point. If you registered with the Recording Crystal and died, it would be possible to return to the recorded spot.

In case you got out of the labyrinth with a ‘Return Whistle,’ your return point would be the point that was saved in the Recording Crystal. This applied even if the structure of the labyrinth changed. It wouldn’t be the exact same spot, but it’d at least take you to the nearest safe zone.

“Let’s sell it at the store for a high price.”

“Speaking of which, I think it would be good to hand out a few for promotional use.”

“Then I will include them in the treasure chests as a rare drop!”

And with that, everything was smooth sailing.

“GA-HAHHAHA, finally some more fun!”

“Although I think it’s a bit too early to say, we should be seeing less people give up as a result of these changes.”

Veldora and Masayuki were happily taking part in the conversation as well.

And just like this, by tackling the problems together one by one, progress was made, and improvements were proposed.



Great, great. Everyone’s insight has been helpful.

The first floor was converted into a tutorial-style training ground, which also included an announcement system. We set it up to have missions so that adventurers wouldn’t be totally clueless coming in.

Whether they made use of it or not was up to them. Nothing good came out of forcing stuff upon them. Plus, whatever happened would be their own responsibility.

Additionally, we also made it so that you couldn’t die on the first floor. There could be adventurers that caused problems, and it would be troublesome if something happened to the employees in charge.

Not only that, I also wanted to use the first floor for people to experiment with dying. We set it to resurrect immediately on the spot so it could also be suitable for a children’s playground.

We also prepared a room for more experienced adventurers to practice fighting against different kinds of monsters. We captured some monsters and gave them a collar that allowed them to constantly revive. The adventurers could sharpen their skills here.

Using the extra space, we also made an area dedicated to training our own recruits. From time to time, it would be fun to catch a large number of monsters for large scale collective battles.

The real dungeon started from the second floor downward.

However, we wouldn't be deploying any lethal traps until the fourth floor. There would only be rank E to F lesser monsters roaming the area. The rooms would only have one rank D monster. The treasure chests in them would contain items such as low healing potions which would be helpful for early labyrinth exploration. High price items such as gear were set to spawn only on the fifth floor and below.

And that pretty much summed up all the adjustments we made to the difficulty.

With this, the challengers can pick up the pace of their conquest of the dungeon starting tomorrow.

Everything up until now was like a closed beta for a developing game, so it was no surprise that we weren't ready to open the real thing right away.

...Well, in truth, we already had beta testers.

But our testers were six of Shion's 'Yomigaeri,' which might not have painted an accurate picture. Those guys swept through the first thirty-nine floors without a hitch. Unfortunately, they got annihilated by the fortieth floor's boss, the tempest serpent. Thanks to that, we got the false impression that the difficulty of the labyrinth was just right.

They didn't fall victim to the traps, nor did they struggle against the small fry monsters. I didn't think there would be any problems with the labyrinth difficulty after seeing their performance. Maybe they could even reach the fiftieth floor with a little bit more experience.

Seems like I needed to be more careful when choosing testers.

Shion trained them herself and they'd become more exceptional than we could have expected.

Welp, we can think about all that stuff later.

"Then, shall we wrap it up here? Are there no other comments or concerns?"

Even if I was fully satisfied, I still had to make sure everyone else was fine with it, too. A lot of suggestions had already been made, so I thought that was gonna be all for today. However, Myourmiles suddenly interjected, "Could I say one more thing?"

"Eh? Is there something else?"

"There is. It's about the management of the labyrinth."

Ahh, is this about the labyrinth's advertisement and fee collection?

I definitely was concerned about that part as well. It had only been three days, so the profits probably weren't that noticeable, but...

It seemed like Ramiris also smelled the money. She stared right at Myourmiles with an avaricious glint in her eyes. She was such a vulgar fairy that it made me laugh.

"Haha, even if you look at me like that, the fund collection has only just started. The report I will give is related to the advertisement."

Myourmiles smiled bitterly as if he were giving an excuse to Ramiris. Myourmiles then hardened his expression and began the explanation.

"I've already come up with an idea of monetary reward to attract the attention of the nobles.

How about one hundred gold coins?"

Ho ho?

"That would only be natural—"

"Of course," Myourmiles interjected, "the payment will instead be in the form of one stellar gold coin. At least, that's my plan."

Myourmiles had already read my intentions and was planning accordingly.

I learned one thing from my mistake before. He thought of converting the stellaras to just regular gold coins for the sake of liquidity. As far as I knew, even just one hundred gold coins should be nearly ten million Japanese yen.

"But isn't that too low?"

It might've been a lot of money for an average joe, but it was hardly enough to convince a noble. Of course, the labyrinth had more to offer than one hundred gold coins. Rare drops from treasure chests, magic crystal, etc. but I didn't think we should be relying on those alone.

Myourmiles answered my doubts with a reassuring smile.

"Huhuhu, those doubts are natural. I will advertise that this reward will go to those who beat the fiftieth floor. Only the first set of teams every month can claim this prize. If it's just one person, then he or she will get everything. If they have a party, then the reward will be split. However, there's more to it—"

According to Myourmiles's explanation, each boss monster would drop a reward when subjugated. The tenth floor's guardian was a rank B black spider. If you subjugated this one, then the first five teams would get a reward of three gold coins.

On the twentieth floor was the rank B-plus evil centipede. It was a fairly strong monster that could spew a long-range and potent 'paralyzing breath.' If you subjugated this, the first five teams would get a reward of five gold coins.

We placed a rank B-plus ogre lord and his five subordinates on the thirtieth floor. They differed from Benimaru and his clan in the sense that they were brutal monsters that acted only on instinct. They possessed tremendous strength and were capable of coordination. Since you would be battling against a group of monsters, fighting them would be difficult without a team. The reward for beating them was ten gold coins. The same first five team policy applied as well.

And from here on out it genuinely became difficult.

The fortieth floor had the tempest serpent which was rank A-minus. This guy had a lethal ranged attack called 'Poison Breath' that was capable of instantly annihilating naive parties. Seriously, beating this guy would prove no easy feat, even for an A ranked adventurer like Gai. The reward was twenty gold coins. Only the first three teams could claim it, but only very few people would be able to beat it and survive.

The job as the fiftieth floor's boss was scheduled to be handled by Gozer and Mezer on a rotating basis. They had evolved beyond rank A, so those who could take them down were quite limited. If you broke through the fiftieth floor, then you would receive one hundred gold coins. It was a much more substantial award, but that's to be expected if you looked at the difficulty.

“I see. Seems like a fair distribution. If we advertised it like this, would we be able to spark the competitive spirits of the nobles?”

“It’s exactly like that. We can fuel their competitive drive even further by announcing the subjugators each month. Since the reward is only limited for the first time, the same person can’t receive the reward multiple times. This can avoid causing excessive competition.”

I see. If they could only claim it once, there wouldn’t be a point in obsessing over fighting the bosses of the prizes. We could also prevent the same people from monopolizing the monthly rewards.

Since the amount of people that could receive the reward were limited each month, we could calculate it as a fixed business expense.

“Then, can we adjust the profit margins?”

“No problem. I’ve calculated based on the sales of our first three days of running the labyrinth, we may even raise the prize money a bit.”

The prize money would only be a small part of our actual profit. We were merely trying to incite the participants’ competitiveness and their willingness to try their luck.

Our balance wouldn’t be at a loss anyways, so this was a great strategy. Someone breaking through the fiftieth floor seemed like a distant future for the time being. With that in mind, the money we would have to distribute was rather trivial.

“If push comes to shove, we could ask Masayuki-sama to break through the fiftieth floor and to promote the labyrinth but...”

“What?!”

“With Masayuki-sama it’s only a matter of time.”

Fufu, as expected of Myourmiles; he was proactive with these things.

He seemed to have made a plausible plan, so let’s go with that.

“It’s a plan. We could spread Masayuki’s fame and also advertise the dungeon at the same time. We should look out for a time when the mainstream meta becomes stagnant and begin that operation then.”

“I was thinking that as well. As expected of Rimuru-sama. Kufufu.”

“It’s nothing really, Myourmiles-kun. Mmfufuf.”

I laughed with Myourmiles as I was satisfied.

“Excuse me, what about my opinion...”

Masayuki wanted to say something, but I pretended that I didn’t hear it.



Myourmiles wasn’t finished yet. Rather, we were only just getting to the meat of things.

“So, I want to propose something to Rimuru-sama: I wish to make the reward even bigger!”

he said, giving off a wicked grin.

At that moment, I felt like he was such a reliable person.

“Tell me about it, Myourmiles-kun,” I responded with a Buddha smile that showed my open-mindedness.

“I want to shock the nobles from the neighboring nations a bit and give a reward of one hundred stellaras to whoever conquers the final floor!”

“...?!”

“Ho ho?”

“EH?!”

“About that—how much is that when you convert it to Japanese yen?”

I suppose it would be around a billion Japanese yen?

Moreover, because of the low cost of living in this world, these coins would seem to be worth even more.

“Surely, you must be exaggerating, right, Myourmiles-kun?”

“Fufufu, if we do pitch our prize like that, even the most passive of nobles would reach for their own piece of the pie. They would start hiring adventurers to participate in the labyrinth conquest.”

In that case, there would be an even larger flow of money. Money comes with consumers. Once we planted the seed of interest within the population, everyone would be scared to miss out on the trend. Even those who had little care for the matter would start to be attracted.

“Bu-but, that’s so much money we are talking...” Ramiris muttered worriedly. But Myourmiles, filled with confidence, was unfazed.

“Well, I wonder who’s the ruler of this labyrinth?”

He asked provocatively before giving Veldora a peek.

Veldora reacted quickly.

“Kukuku, ga-hahaha! It is I, the great True Dragon. The majestic Storm Dragon Veldora!” he announced his title proudly.

“Hmm?! Where have I heard about this Storm Dragon Veldora...”

Masayuki sitting on the side was looking all mindful of something and seemed to be pondering, Myourmiles on the other hand was nodding with a villainous expression.

“Of course I knew that. Which is why, surely, there can’t be anyone who would be able to defeat Veldora-sama, isn’t that so?”

“That goes without saying, Myourmiles. You are truly a man of wisdom, GAHAHAHA!”

“Fufufu, it’s nothing. I’ve learnt this from observing Rimuru-sama every day.”

Oi oi, can you not drag me into this?

While Veldora and Myourmiles were laughing out loud, I was pondering over Myourmiles’s proposal. He suggested a reward of one hundred stellaras. It was a pretty insane amount of money, but it was at the same time, the prize for successfully beating the final floor. In other words, the prize for defeating Veldora.

Well, that would be impossible.

Though it might sound highly fraudulent, it wasn't a lie. I should say that it's still too early discussing the plausibility of that. From what I've seen so far, I really doubt anyone would truly make it to the one-hundredth floor.

"He's right. I think our labyrinth is unbeatable."

"Yup yup."

"That is most correct."

"That's right. Perhaps people can still make it to Floor 50, but the difficulty levels beyond that are beyond my imagination. Don't we even have dragons later, as well? How in the world are any adventurers supposed to defeat dragons?"

Upon saying so, even Myourmiles gave a rather baffled expression.

If someone as bold and greedy as him would not tread any further than that, it truly meant that our labyrinth was too well defended.

"I doubt we'd ever have to pay out those hundred stellaras."

"That was the plan from the start. This is a bait for the nobles, therefore, I don't think it'll be a problem if we are to set the prize that high. I heard that the Holy Knights are taking up the challenge as well. I'm quite keen on seeing the result of that."

Despite putting it that way, Myourmiles looked convinced that even they would not be able to break through the labyrinth.

I agreed with him. I was terribly shocked when I heard the amount, but after I calmed down and thought it over, there was no need for me to worry about it being conquered.

"Myourmiles-kun, let's proceed in that direction."

"Yes sir, I understand."

"Then I will trouble you to do some promotion and hopefully attract more participants."

"I'll make sure to phrase it like an invitation to battle issued by the demon lord and put as much spice in it as possible!"

Can you really advertise like that? Actually, hold on.

Since I will continue to be the demon lord in the future, perhaps at some point, there will be foolishly daring brutes coming here to challenge me. It would be troublesome having to deal with them one by one, perhaps it would be better to announce it so that only those who make it through the hundredth floor get to challenge me... That's right. In that way, even the freeloader Veldora will become a more valuable asset.

Okay, let's do just that.

"Could you please add this as well, announce to the public that whoever makes it through the labyrinth would be granted the right to duel me. Masayuki, this applies to you as well. If people around you start instigating you to duel me, you can easily derail the topic using this excuse."

"That's great. Seriously, I really don't want to fight Rimuru-san. Now I am saved."

"I get you. Then, Myourmiles-kun, I'll be counting on you!"

"Leave it to me. Then excuse me, for I must leave at once."

Myourmiles sure is a workaholic.

As soon as the matter was settled, Myourmiles got off his seat quickly. He then saluted us and left the room.

We watched Myourmiles leave. It would be okay to conclude the meeting now, but Masayuki looked rather unwell.

That worried me a bit, so I asked: "What's wrong? Is there something that's bothering you?"

"Well, it's related to what we just discussed. People seemed to think I am still sitting on the idea, but I will probably need to fight that guy one day."

Fighting that guy—is he talking about the promise that he made during the tournament?

"By that guy, do you mean Gozer?"

"That's right... I've put the word out like that, so I can't just run away. But if I were to really fight him, I will surely lose..."

He had a point. Masayuki's Unique Skill was incredibly special and possessed great utility. However, such utility was not much practical use in combat. Actually, he could win without fighting, through clever use of his Skill. So, I suppose, in a way, it was actually extremely suitable for combat.

In any case, I couldn't just do nothing about Masayuki's duel with Gozer. Just like Myourmiles did, the audience probably had faith in Masayuki to win. And Masayuki had always acted to live up to that faith as well.

Cancelling the duel at this point was out of the question.

"Would you like to get some training with the kids while Hinata is in town?"

"She will probably butcher me. I just want to live a happy and peaceful life."

Unfortunately, Masayuki rejected me with a bright smile.

Perhaps I should show this guy a hard time for once—with that thought in mind, however, wouldn't it be strange for kids living in modern-time peaceful Japan to be aggressive and war-mongering?

Now that I think about it, I am a lot like Masayuki.

"Well, it will be, in a sense, trouble for me if you were to lose. So, let me think about it."

"Really? Then I will be counting on you, Rimuru-san!"

"Right, and in turn, you should help me out as well."

"Of course, I will!"

Masayuki was willing to cooperate. Nowadays his fame was very helpful for us. If Masayuki were to lose to Gozer, I would suffer great losses as well.

It was a troublesome problem that we had to resolve somehow. One way would've been to convince Gozer, but that didn't seem to be very legitimate. Anyway, I'd take my time about the matter.

After some more casual chit-chat, the emergency meeting concluded. And we began to revamp the labyrinth starting on the same day.



We were observing with high expectations. As I had predicted, we were fortunate to have corrected the problems pointed out by Masayuki. The difficulty of the labyrinth was lowered quite a bit. But then again, I had taken Myourmiles's advice as well, so it shouldn't be too simple either.

Now then, I wonder how everyone is reacting to the changes?

First of all, there were still many idiots who wouldn't listen to instructions. Just as before, they ignored the tutorial missions and focused on progressing within the labyrinth instead. But, naturally, there was no way they could conquer the floors that easily.

Even so, those were the inflexible people who kept on challenging floors over and over.

I wonder what drove them to do so?

Could it be that they had employers? Or out of their pride perhaps?

The answers were never noble in any way. In fact, they were more practical reasons.

The day the Labyrinth was made public, Basson's party found a rare-grade sword from the treasure chest. To them it was a most incredible weapon. It seemed that the competitors had a drastically different understanding of things compared to us.

Rare-grade equipment normally referred to an evolved version of a piece of quality equipment crafted with magisteel, after it experienced a long period of time, it eventually began to show special properties.

The magisteel produced in our nation used iron ores mined from the mountain region by the high orcs. They were exposed to the magicules unleashed by Veldora which prompted their change in quality. That's why as soon as these ores were moved to the storage section of the labyrinth, their quality began to change naturally.

Not only was it easy to source, it was of very fine quality as well. And so, we generously used it as crafting material for equipment.

Unlike the gear circulating the markets of the Western Nations, this equipment solely relied on magisteel to be crafted. Since they were different right down to the raw material, even the average gear in our nation's garrison would appear to be special-grade to outsiders. Needless to say, it outperformed the challengers' equipment by several orders of magnitude.

As for the gear worn by the soldiers of our nation, they were crafted by Kurobee's disciples. There were around a dozen of them working at the workshop. Under Kurobee's guidance, they were crafting equipment day in and day out. That's why we got to produce gear in mass.

Even these weapons crafted by Kurobee's disciples were all superior in quality when compared to the average gear being sold on the markets of the Western Nations, even approaching the quality of special-grade.

These days, their creations were all put inside the treasure chests. The failed creations were destroyed and the ones that were deemed somewhat useful were placed in the treasure chests in the labyrinth. There was good gear and bad gear, but there was, nonetheless, outstanding work among them.

One of them—a sword, barely making it to rare-grade, was taken by Basson.

The rate for getting one of them was one in a hundred. This probability seemed to be the sweet spot regarding the chance of winning the jackpot.

By the way, if it were crafted by Kurobee, even his failed work would reach rare-grade. At first glance, you may think this was good stuff, but according to Kurobee himself, these failures were just failures.

“There is a distinct difference,” Kurobee declared.

So, I did some intense digging and, eventually, I uncovered some insights. While both pieces of equipment were of the same grading, each piece had a lot of variance in terms of their stats. Kurobee could identify this and tell whether his work was a success or a failure.

In fact, I compared the sword forged by Kurobee’s disciple and his own creation. Both were rare-grade, yet their differences were very obvious. It was thanks to the increase in precision of my ‘Analyze and Assess’ that I was able to realize the differences. Had Kurobee not pointed it out for me, I probably would not have known how to tell them apart.

To give an easy example, let’s say I copy a piece of equipment crafted by Kurobee. Obviously, the end product would be of the same grade. However, just like I’ve mentioned before, I could not recreate the quality. At first glance, the replica would appear to be the same as the original, but in truth, it was an inferior version of the original. This was the “difference.”

The reason for such a phenomenon to occur was probably because my blacksmithing technique was not as good as Kurobee’s.

Therefore, I concluded that weapons had many different levels of quality. While even for weapon merchants, let alone amateurs, to tell such a difference, I started to understand how to differentiate good weapons from the bad.

To those whose lives relied on the quality of their weapons, the difference could be crucial. You never knew when you would be ambushed by monsters in this world. Weapons and armor with good quality could be their life-saving tools.

During the founding festival, Kurobee’s exhibition caused a stir among the public. There were even many people who wished to purchase his work. We were still considering that point, we planned to decide after doing some more market investigations.

The guardian on the tenth floor would drop rare-grade equipment—one of the best masterpieces crafted by Kurobee’s disciples. While it was far from Kurobee’s work, it was still a high-grade item when compared to the average gear on the market.

Adventurers, naturally, would want better gear. No wonder Basson was so happy about it. After all, for an average grade weapon, as long as its quality was nice, its price would also be

ten times higher than the average ones in the market. Moreover, for special-grade, I had been told that it could go as high as fifty times the market price.

As for rare-grade, it was all up to luck whether they could get it or not. It was rarely produced, and it wasn't something you necessarily would be able to buy with money.

Obviously, there would be people who get obsessed with the labyrinth and try to come back for more.

Basson and his men were already promoting for us at the tavern.

"Hey hey, check this out, people! This is the sword that is worthy of my skills!"

Just like that, Basson and his posse were bragging with his weapon at every opportunity.

The news that the tenth floor's guardian would drop rare-grade equipment began to spread among the challengers. The news also began to reach the ears of the merchants as well as the members of the Freedom Association across the continent.

We never expected all these people wishing to become rich overnight would flood our nation. This was what led to the latest situation within the labyrinth.

I really needed to thank Basson and his party for promoting our nation.

That said, rushing straight into it was never a recipe for success in the labyrinth. After all, those who weren't willing to listen to our instructions, were always beaten by people who finished their tutorial missions before challenging the labyrinth.

Anyone with a bit of brain would know that the right thing to do was to listen to the instructions carefully first. Now, there were a lot more people who would do their tutorial mission seriously and receive their training on the first floor. The challengers were able to utilize the new knowledge they learned and apply it on the spot. There were also counters that sold various utility items, and this brought in a small fortune on its own.

Moreover—

A few days after our revamp of the labyrinth, there were teams that made their way to the fifth floor.

The second floor was merely very wide, and up until the fourth floor, most of the traps were just for show. They were not exactly malicious in any way. As long as you sketched maps of the passages, it was a piece of cake to reach the fifth floor.

That's why it was a result that we expected.

From the fifth floor onward, it was up to the challengers' abilities. The lethality of the traps increased, and there were rank D and above monsters roaming around the area. On top of that, we also began to raise the chances of treasure chest containing more expensive items.

I do hope they will give it their best.

While I was cheering for them, the people who made it to the fifth floor quickly got into tough fights. It was likely just because of their exhaustion. Having to be on guard against monsters all the time would easily exhaust someone mentally.

Many people returned to the stairs temporarily to use the resting zone. The business of the

inns on Floor 95 had been booming as well, which was exactly what we wanted.

Later, there were challengers that started making it to Floors 5 through 8. The adventurers from different nations' Freedom Association branches had arrived as well. Among them were many skillful adventurers who were contracted by noblemen. The town had been bustling with life. People were discussing strategies with excitement.

Because of the second group of people joining the battle, the morale of people who fought first was raised as well.

It was then that some people began to cheat, ignoring proper rules of engagement and began to sell maps publicly within the labyrinth.

Some people were probably super bad with direction like I am. Something like the labyrinth couldn't be conquered with strength alone, that's why I understood why they wanted to cheat in this way, but... I hoped they would just find companions to team up and assign each other's role appropriately together.

That's why we were broadcasting, both inside and outside the labyrinth, that we would constantly change the internal layout. There were sad moans coming from the challengers all over the place, and many who just wouldn't stop complaining about it. But I was the demon lord—I was in no way obligated to listen to their opinions.

I hoped to make them realize, sooner rather than later, that they wouldn't be able to use maps not made by themselves. Essentially, if you didn't make maps yourself, you would be unable to tackle the structural change of the labyrinth during your conquest. In a sense, this was a friendly reminder for them.

I suppose this is what they call tough love.

The frequency of the layout changes was around once every two to three days. It would take at least a couple hours to break through one floor. It didn't seem plausible that they'd make it to the checkpoint on the tenth floor without encountering a change.

That's why the change in the layout of the labyrinth had many benefits. Challengers would start to strategize properly and give up on buying and selling maps. There would probably be people starting the conquest as soon as the layout change began and try to sketch and sell maps within the same day. Those people could do whatever they wanted.

We integrated this feature so as to prevent cheaters, and I was greatly satisfied with the result. However, we couldn't underestimate our challengers, either.

The adventurers from the Freedom Association began to challenge the labyrinth as well. There were many who were capable caster of the elemental magic 'Auto Mapping.' Exploration became extremely easy for them.

These adventurers from the Freedom Association sure are different.

Not only were they used to battling monsters, but their techniques were also very skillful. Moreover, their strong suit was their division of roles. Basson' party only consisted of combat-type individuals, but the parties who joined later had well thought out structure of members.

Against monsters, there were raiders who specialize in combat.

The traps and mazes were handled by explorers.

There were also knowledgeable treasure hunters².

The balance of a team was highly valued. As expected from adventurers who knew how to learn and adapt. They completed their missions with ease and challenged the labyrinth over and over.

The people who were good at exploring ruins were also good at disabling traps. They were relatively calm when stumbling upon treasure chests, they were also more cautious compared to bodyguards or mercenaries. They had been displaying work ethic beyond our expectations. And they understood the rules almost instantly. I was fortunate that we didn't make the labyrinth too easy.

And so, a few days after the different teams began to come in, there were already people who made it through the tenth floor.

The morale of the challengers was greatly boosted. They were studying the strategies of the people who came before them. Strategize carefully and progress through each floor gradually. Once a floor was beaten, the news would spread quickly. People then started to imitate their strategy.

I suppose people were actually selling information about strategies.

Should I praise their resourcefulness?

So now that they realized selling maps wouldn't work, they began to sell information instead. About that, I did want to commend their efforts. We wanted the atmosphere to become livelier as well.

The active performance of the challengers also became a topic of discussion among the townsfolk.

Shops, inns, restaurants—the news traveled from one to another. There were legendary stories of tragedies, comedies, and more. It was then that one story in particular was gaining popularity. There was a team that was progressing at lightning-fast speed.

They had a balanced team of ten people. What their team did to level up quickly was by sending one person to join another team that had already made it to Floor 10, register himself at the Floor 10 checkpoint and then utilized a Return Whistle to get back to the entrance. From there on, he rejoined his actual team and would start immediately from Floor 10 and onward.

We were already expecting such things, that's why we felt fine about it. Their progress had been shockingly fast, nonetheless. It only took them a short span of three days before defeating the guardian on the twentieth floor.

These guys were truly capable. Each of their abilities were up to rank B. Their entire team was close to rank B-plus. Moreover, the ten men's cooperation was extremely well-coordinated, making their actual strength closer to rank A-minus.

²Kanji: 採取係, it's a general term that refers to people who are good at gathering items, I can only assume it's some very obscure game/novel reference because I can't seem to find any modern trpg reference of this.

It was almost impossible for me to not question their innocence, considering how fast they were progressing. The reason being, that they had been choosing the shortest route almost without hesitation.

«Answer. Spirit interference detected. ‘Spirit Communication’ conducted by a spirit wielder was found.»

Ah, so that’s why...

Spirit wielders were a special type of magic users that could command spirits. One of their magic skills was ‘Spirit Communication,’ the ability to hear words spoken by the spirit. If they could communicate with wind or earth spirits, they would be able to find the right path leading to the stairs with ease. Since they could gain such information, things such as maze were meaningless for the spirit wielders.

How cunning! Spirit wielders are so cunning!

That said, they weren’t breaking any rules. Depending on the different properties of the spirits they commanded, even if they used ‘Spirit Communication,’ it wasn’t a guaranteed way to learn the correct route. Essentially, there were very few spirit wielders out there, which was why I had never expected them to pull such a move on us.

It was a totally justified way of progressing in the labyrinth, so it didn’t warrant a response from us. I even wanted to praise them for coming up with an idea like this.

It looked like their team would continue to progress at a fast pace. For each floor they made it through, their latest exploits would be broadcasted throughout town. These people rapidly rose to fame.

The name of their team was Green Rebellion—an elite task force led by a mysterious spirit wielder whose identity was a mystery.

Their popularity was rivaling even that of the ‘Shining’ led by Masayuki.

As we had expected, powerful people began to gather here.

Young and inexperienced challengers who dreamed of becoming famous and rich would trickle into town. And so, the number of challengers rose rapidly. The sales of the labyrinth were finally taking off.



We gathered once more.

It had been ten days since we last altered the layout of the labyrinth. Our meeting today was to discuss whether there were any new issues.

Unlike last time, the meeting went smoothly, and everyone was content.

I couldn’t help but smile at the situation.

“Oi, you are called Masayuki, right? I knew from the start that you’ve got some balls, but it turned out that you are an incredibly courageous man.”

As soon as the meeting started, Veldora, who was in a great mood, began to praise Masayuki.

“Eh, is that so? Thank you for the compliment...”

Masayuki was very confused after being praised out of the blue.

Who is this guy? That seemed to be what he was trying to convey through his face as he turned to me.

He was present last time during Veldora’s introduction. But Masayuki was too nervous back then, so it wouldn’t be strange if he had forgotten about it.

“Didn’t we introduce him last time—”

“No, last time... Ehhh, the conference kind of just started on its own...”

Eh, was that so?

«Answer. As individual ‘Honjou Masayuki’ stated, Veldora did not introduce himself.»

Ahh, I see. It looks like I was the one who didn’t recall clearly.

No wonder Masayuki was confused. Let me introduce you two.

“Then I shall introduce him once more. This guy is my good friend, big bro Veldora. I asked him to act as the guardian for the one-hundredth floor.”

“Umm, I am Veldora, and I recognize you. A pleasure to meet you, Masayuki.”

Veldora seemed to have recognized Masayuki as he greeted him with a happy smile. But as soon as he finished, Masayuki’s face turned pale as snow. He then said: “Ehh, a-about that... Isn’t Veldora that Catastrophe-rank monster that wiped out the Farmus army—?”

Oh yeah, we did put out rumors like that.

It’s fine to tell him the truth, but that would just be more trouble. It’s meaningless to tell him about it, so I might as well just be vague here.

“Ah yes, he is very strong, so you better not piss him off.”

“GAHAHAHA! My heart is as wide as the sea, and I seldom become angry! By the way, if you were to offer me some desserts, I would be generous enough to grant you my divine protection!”

Veldora had gotten ahead of himself and said some foolish things.

I rolled up my notebook at lightning speed and gave his head a whack.

Punishment executed. Discipline is essential.



Probably out of shock, Veldora shouted “What the hell!” I then ignored him completely and began to introduce Ramiris.

“This here is Ramiris. She’s the fairy that runs the labyrinth.”

Masayuki mumbled: “So I didn’t remember it wrong...” almost speechless before being brought back by my words.

He turned to Ramiris who was fluttering her wings nearby.

“Uh, y-yes... So Ramiris-san is a fairy. By the way, you are truly strong to have created such an incredible labyrinth,” he said to praise her.

Hearing this, it was Ramiris’s turn to get a big head.

“Ohoho! Aren’t you the sweet talker. Why don’t you become my lackey. Also, Rimuru! Did you hear that? This guy just called me strong!” she bragged excitedly as she lunged at me with a flying kick.

How annoying. She gets so prideful every time someone remotely praises her.

I dodged her flying kick effortlessly and played dumb about it.

“Yeah, yeah, how strong of you indeed. That being said, if Masayuki really wants to be your lackey, I guess it would be up to you?” I replied.

A Hero who’s also the lackey of a demon lord. That’s gonna be my new light novel series.

However, Masayuki himself looked to be deeply conflicted.

“Ehhh, ehh... So, how’s Ramiris-san as a person?”

Masayuki whispered next to me, and so I replied in a hushed tone, “She may not look the part, but she’s one of the demon lords, just like me.”

“AHH!”

Masayuki froze upon hearing that.

Ramiris approached the dumbfounded Masayuki with a smile.

Despite keeping our conversation quiet, nothing escapes her damn big ears.

“Yahoooo! I am Ramiris, a member of the Octagram. Masayuki-chan, nice to meet ya!”

“Ah, eh? Ramiris...-san...is a demon lord? And Veldora-san is a dragon... Oh my God! There’s no way!”

Masayuki...

He had lost himself at learning that the people in contact with him this entire time were a demon lord and the Storm Dragon. It looked as if his soul had gone to heaven.

I should have made sure to introduce them from the start. This was my miscalculation.

But it was Masayuki’s fault as well. During our last meeting, he was a bit too casual and relaxed. That’s what led to my misunderstanding that Masayuki already knew who those two were. I thought that this guy was quite bold, but I never expected that he didn’t know about those two...

Even though they say that ignorance is a sin, it may sometimes be a blessing. To have gained recognition without himself even being aware of it, I once again realized that Masayuki’s luck was not to be underestimated.

It was Myourmiles who extended a helping hand to Masayuki.

“Ramiris-sama, please don’t force this upon him. It will make Masayuki-sama very troubled.”

It’s probably because Myourmiles was Masayuki’s fan. He seemed to think that Ramiris was just joking around.

To Ramiris’s demand, the kind-hearted Masayuki must be very troubled—that’s probably what he thought.

Normally, his fantasy should have been diminished at this point, was it because of Masayuki’s Skill? —No, that’s not the case. How should I put this, Myourmiles really seemed to have faith in Masayuki.

Myourmiles’s will appeared to have reached Masayuki. He gave a wry smile.

“This is Myourmiles. He’s a trustworthy consultant of mine. The financial department of the Tempest Federation is handled by him. In other words, he’s the minister of finance.”

“I am Myourmiles, pleased to make your acquaintance.”

“Ahaha, Myourmiles-san is such a nice guy.”

“Y-you are too kind. I’m just a black market...”

“As Myourmiles-san has said, I can’t be Ramiris-san’s lackey. Because I’ve already promised to assist Mikami—I mean, promised to assist Rimuru-san,” Masayuki explained to Ramiris with an apologetic gesture.

Myourmiles followed up: “That is a good point as well. After all, Rimuru really knows his way around recruiting people.” His expression was like he knew me all too well.

I don’t get it.

Ramiris decided to join in as well, “Ah, then that can’t be helped! Rimuru sure is cunning.”

“Finders, keepers,” I answered rather uncaringly.

For some reason, Veldora suddenly began to brag arrogantly on the side.

“GAHAHA, there aren’t many reliable men like Rimuru out there. Ramiris, I’d advise you to give up on one upping Rimuru. Let’s not mind that, introduce Masayuki now. Or else this conversation can’t continue!”

Even though I was actually very mindful of how these people think of me, I recalled that Masayuki hadn’t even finished introducing *himself*. Although, it seemed that everyone already knew his name, so this almost felt like an after-thought.

“You have a point. Then, Masayuki, please introduce yourself.”

As I finished, Masayuki nodded as he replied, “Right.”

“Some of you probably already know me, my name is Masayuki. I came from the same world as Rimuru-san, that’s why I’m helping him out. I seem to be called a Hero a lot by people, please don’t take it seriously.”

Masayuki turned to face everyone, straightened his back, and began to introduce himself in earnest. When he called himself a Hero, he seemed eager to add “That’s a running joke.” But considering Myourmiles was present, he didn’t say it out loud.

Masayuki seemed to adapt well and had already calmed down. He wasn’t the least bit

emotionally scarred. Even though he had already met everyone here during the last conference, it was pretty impressive of him to be able to crack a smile in front of Veldora and Ramiris.

He's got great potential.

Perhaps the reaction the bystanders had to him wasn't entirely the doing of 'Chosen One.' Could it be that they were simply more influenced by Masayuki's own personality? I doubt his Unique Skill alone would have such a great impact. But, well, that's something I'd have to examine in due course.

While thinking this over, everyone had finished introducing themselves.

We had all settled in our seats. Last time, we had an emergency meeting, but this time we were in no hurry. There was a casual mood in the air.

"Speaking of which, Masayuki-chan, you are really good. Our success was all thanks to you!" Ramiris shouted excitedly as soon as she was seated.

"While on the topic, Myourmiles is mighty ingenious as well. Your call to not lower the difficulty of the labyrinth was remarkably prescient!" Veldora praised Myourmiles as well.

I agreed with both of their views.

Indeed, we can achieve great success when we all cooperate and contribute ideas.

"You are too kind. I am glad to be of help for everyone."

"It was nothing extraordinary, it was all due to everyone's hard work!"

As they finished praising each other, we began to discuss the current state of the labyrinth.

Our performances were looking up. During the peak sessions of the labyrinth, it was so good as to make Myourmiles shout with joy. Moreover, the visitors to the town would all rest at the inns and use the services of the restaurants. I heard that business had been booming lately.

"Here are the reports," Myourmiles said as he handed me some documents.

Veldora and Ramiris were interested as well, so I gave them each a copy. I had Raphael-san run the numbers in detail. This way I would make sure that the content was in order.

Let's see now. I glanced through the report.

Fortunately, I could turn into my humanoid figure in times like this. Even though I *could* still read documents in my slime form, in terms of efficiency in tackling work-related matters, the humanoid form was definitely much more convenient.

It seemed that after our renovation to the labyrinth, it had been running smoothly. It could be verified by the statistics in this report.

"Looks like our promotion has had a great effect."

"Yes sir!" Myourmiles nodded happily. "It's been bustling with work every day."

I wasn't sure if Veldora and Ramiris had a clue what they had in front of them, but they were staring at the report intently.

The content was mainly the recent financial details with some special matters documented as well. For instance, adventurer ID card details.

Myourmiles asked for Yuuki's assistance so that we could check through adventurer ID cards to confirm permission to enter the labyrinth.

It was a type of magical card that also monitors the user's health status. It was a very convenient tool that occasionally recorded their status. The way to use the card was just like the explanation I got from the association's help desk, so the adventurers were all very familiar with it. Bodyguards and mercenaries who were not part of the guild were in the minority, so it was very easy to integrate the system into our labyrinth.

The fee for entering the labyrinth was three silver coins.

The card production was handled entirely by the Freedom Association. It was meant to reduce the workload at our service window. Our nation would issue a simplified version of the card as well at a price of ten silver coins.

Most people had the card from the association, but occasionally there were people who would purchase the simplified cards. Considering the profits we reaped from that process, the entry fee for the labyrinth alone earned us a sizable income.

In addition, the report also mentioned the three items crafted by Ramiris.

The Resurrection Bracelet—it was only given out for free the first time. The reason for providing a free sample was to allow people to experience the convenience of the product.

They would have to purchase it from the second time onward. The price was two silver coins, a very reasonable price. Because this Resurrection Bracelet would heal all the severe wounds inflicted before death, and then revive the person. After much discussion, we came to the conclusion that we might as well give them this little bonus effect.

In addition, if someone were to enter the labyrinth again without wearing the Resurrection Bracelet, we had to send a broadcast in order to get the attention of the person in question. Although they'd have to bear the responsibility, we still didn't want lives to be lost out of negligence.

To facilitate purchasing them, we situated the revival point next to the counter. This way, the Resurrection Bracelet became a necessity. It was selling like hotcakes—the best, in fact, among the three items.

The item 'Return Whistle' was limited to single-person usage. The benefit of it was that it could return the user to the outside instantly. It was a life-savor when you got lost. In essence, it was an item made for emergency usage. Its price was rather high, at a cost of thirty silver coins.

Those who tried to save some cash by buying a Resurrection Bracelet instead of a 'Return Whistle' should reconsider their choices. After all, while you could return to the entrance after death in this way, you also had a chance to lose your equipment. Despite keeping your armor intact, any weapons that fell out of your hands would be left behind. No one in their right mind fought while holding on to their loot, they were more likely to lay that stuff on the hallway floor. Subsequently, those goodies wouldn't be extracted, and, in a sense, it was a penalty for death.

There aren't many people who risked returning by dying, that's probably why the item sold that well.

The sale of Recording Crystal was a lot worse than we expected. However, there was a history where a large amount of it was purchased. It cost one gold coin, an expensive price as it would convert to around a hundred thousand yen. It looked like some people had the foresight

to purchase this expensive item in large quantities.

You could easily utilize death to return to the entrance by using this item. I'm guessing that some people may be very stubborn in challenging the guardians, so it'd be very dangerous to give away these items cheaply. This was why we set the price this high.

Even with that being case, I still thought there would be demand for it. Upon reaching the deeper floors, the difficulty of the floors would increase drastically. Given that the checkpoint only appears every ten floors, it must give the challengers the impression of trying to reach heaven's gate.

I always thought that it would one day become profitable, even if just a little. Some people would, surely, find it useful.

There were also other ideas, such as lending weapons and armor. But they didn't seem to be profitable yet. This gear was prepared by Kurobee, they were of excellent quality. The only people using this seemed to be the ones who lost their weapons during their last attempt. However, it was slowly gaining popularity. When the rumors surrounding the amazing quality of the weapons spread far and wide, surely, there would be more people renting them.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly.

However, even if we finally landed some success, we still couldn't get careless. Times like these require even more caution.

The fastest progressing team had been doing well. So far no one had deserted. They were gradually delving into deeper floors.

Fortunately for us, they managed to inspire other challengers' motivation. They would come back to the labyrinth even after failed attempts, and our sales had been going up because of it.

We must maintain this flow.

"I want to challenge the labyrinth again"—if we could get everyone to think that, it would be surprisingly easy to get over a thousand customers in one day.

"Well then, according to Myourmiles-kun's report, we have been very successful. However, we must not be satisfied just yet. Please feel free to express any feedback you have."

In order to keep everyone on their toes, I said this to give it a head start.

Ramiris was the first to react.

"I got something!"

"Then Ramiris-kun, please take the stage."

"Well, it's about the spirit wielder's 'Spirit Communication.' It's a blind spot for us where they can gain information from the spirits! But I can actually interfere with it! So, what should we do?"

"Hmm—interference you say..."

Although I did want to sabotage them a bit, that did also seem rather despicable. Because our customers were using totally valid ways of progressing, if we were to use unethical tricks to interfere it would seem to be unfair.

This was not a war, nor some competition.

“You are sure that the spirits are not being forced into service, right?”

“No, they aren’t. It’s evidence that the spirits like them if they are able to build such a trustworthy relationship with them.”

“If that’s the case, then we shouldn’t interfere. I dislike the idea.”

“Right! I half guessed that Rimuru would say so.”

Ramiris compromised immediately. While she did propose it, she likely didn’t want to do it either.

“Indeed, lying is no good. But Ramiris, how about you create a zone without any spirit? That ‘Spirit Communication’ thing, isn’t it used to hear what the local spirits have to say? Would it therefore be rendered useless if there aren’t any spirits to begin with?”

Oh, this surprising response came from Veldora.

He’s usually very useless, and to think he’s come up with such clever words.

“Rimuru, what’s with your surprised look?”

Yikes, this guy is sharp.

“Nothing, only that I feel truly impressed. I thought just now, *as expected from Veldora*. Your suggestion was very good!”

I panicked a bit trying to answer him.

Yet Veldora’s mood was immediately cheered up afterward.

“Right? My wisdom has finally come in handy, GA-HAHHAHA!”

He sure got fooled fast.

“Well, what about it, Ramiris?”

“Umm, no problem! I can ask the spirits to change their residence. Without spirits that possess will, the challengers won’t be able to activate ‘Spirit Communication’!”

Looks like there isn’t any problem.

Thanks to Veldora, we would have a chance against the spirit wielders.

“Then I’ll be counting on you. It’s great to have been able to exchange ideas like that.”

“Indeed, you are correct, my wisdom—”

“Yep, next one. Does anyone else want to give his suggestion?”

I can’t have Veldora keep acting smug anymore.

Let’s get to the next person.

The person who then raised his view was, again, Masayuki.

“Isn’t it the case that you can’t get any items from defeating monsters?”

Monsters upon death would drop items—these are common occurrences in video games, but it would seem bizarre in real life. I figured it was enough that you could extract materials or ‘Magic Crystals’ from defeated monsters...

“Will it be necessary?” Veldora asked.

To which Masayuki’s answer was very simple.

“Eh? Not really, it’s just that the healing potions are surprisingly expensive. High ranking

adventurers may have the spare cash to use them sparingly, but most average men won't bear to use them. Instead, they would choose to flee. Some people probably think that, if you can be revived without a scratch inside the labyrinth, you might as well endure more defeats as opposed to spending the money buying potions. That's why, we might as well have monsters drop some low tier healing potions so that everyone can easily access them? But that's just my view."

Umm—he had a point.

Healing potions were among the list of things being promoted in our nation. People were gradually realizing their practical value. However, it wasn't exactly cheap. And the price had hindered the number of customers from growing any faster.

In our nation, a lower healing potion would cost four silver coins. While a higher healing potion was sold for thirty-five silver coins. And regarding full healing potions, we weren't even selling them on the market. And even if we did, it would cost somewhere around five hundred silver coins to five gold coins, and more.

The cost of living in our nation's cheapest inn, accounting solely for lodging, cost three silver coins. It cost five silver coins instead for included baths and a meal. Better inns, used mainly by merchants, cost around ten silver coins, excluding meals. This is the equivalent of a rank D challenger's entire day's worth of work within the labyrinth. The average income was around fifteen silver coins. And even with a team to improve efficiency, it fell around twenty silver coins. This income was passable for now. It was sufficient to make a living with this money.

But it may not be the case for any emergency situations. For instance, them falling sick or being severely wounded. They had no chance to experience a complete social welfare system. In addition, it was also important to maintain their weapons and armor. They'd need to replace them when they were broken. They would also have to save up money to purchase better gear.

Low rank adventurers had a hard time even hunting monsters. In order to improve their quality of life, they would have to train themselves to become better.

It was quite challenging for these people to just pay four silver coins. After all, they also had to save up for the entry fee of the labyrinth. I could understand their feelings when they could only watch and were not willing to purchase...

If they were to come across a treasure chest, they would become rich overnight, but still, I didn't think they really had the capacity to waste any of their savings.

"That is a common setting in video games. Masayuki had a point, however... All of the monsters in the labyrinth are spawned naturally. It's not that simple to have them all carry items—"

These people weren't my subjects anyway, there was no reason I should give them such convenience so easily. While I wished to help them, they should first try to survive on their own.

After all, there was Freedom Association for such circumstances. They were not the citizens of this town, so I couldn't grant them aid in the name of the nation.

Unfortunately, this was the reality, who couldn't keep up was left behind—

“We probably can do it.”

As I was almost about to give up, Ramiris’s carefree voice rang in my ears.

“You serious?”

“Yeah, all we have to do is to feed the items to the newborn monsters!”

Assuming we could do that, it opened the door for all manner of possibilities. We could have treasure chests keeping all the good stuff, while the monsters would drop all the garbage. But even if it were garbage, to low rank challengers, they would be a source of their income.

This would, in fact, be a welcome change for low rank challengers in the future. If you can work hard, you will be rewarded. Such an environment, to me, was most ideal.

“Then there shouldn’t be an issue. You will get rewards just by defeating monsters, surely, the challengers would work even harder now.”

In this way, there could be more monster materials circulating the market. It may even become a specialty of our nation. When we have enough profit, we may even invest part of it on healthcare. Any sickness would be covered, and even if you were to be severely wounded, there could be solutions. It’ll be just like Japan. Having a healthcare system for all citizens will be a dream no more.

If such a policy were not implemented quickly after the founding of a nation, it would seem very unfair to the people. Because of this possibility, we should enact it as soon as possible.

The recognition of citizenship also posed a problem. The challengers of the labyrinth, traveling merchants, these people were all not citizens. They should try to register as citizens now to get their rights. At this time, the Tempest Federation was still developing. That’s why we welcomed immigrants. But perhaps once our nation matured, we may even come down against immigration. The so-called nation, at its core, is just a massive mutual assistance organization. People can’t live on their own, that’s why they form communal groups to help each other out. That’s why we didn’t want any parasites in this nation. Neither did we want to accept people with no will of staying. It would be difficult to assimilate people with different ideologies to the same group.

When you possess citizenship to a nation, you are obligated to contribute to the nation. That was also why you get to enjoy the rights for serving the nation. Those who do not belong to any nation, they won’t have to afford any duty and they can roam freely.

I wasn’t the one making the choice. It was up to the people visiting Tempest. If they were willing to submit their loyalty to Tempest, I welcomed them. Otherwise, they were guests. We wouldn’t be able to provide the same welfare that the citizens received, that needed to be distinguished.

It seemed that I need to discuss the matter in detail with Rigurd.

—And things along those lines, for once I was actually pondering over things seriously.

As I was in the midst of my thoughts, Masayuki wanted to speak to me.

“Is it true? If that’s the case, we can actually mix in unidentified potions, or weapons and gear that have unknown effects. Shouldn’t we do that so that people won’t be able to identify

which ones are the truly high-valued items?”

Oh yeah. We are in the middle of a meeting.

I quickly considered Masayuki’s words.

I see, I get what he meant.

“Could it be? Are you making it so that they won’t be able to use the items unless they appraise them at the counter?”

“That’s it! That said, most people probably won’t drink unidentified potion anyway.”

“Perhaps some people would. We can mix it with poison. It can be considered as a form of trap. It can be a good reminder for people to remember doing appraisal. We gotta put it into practice.”

“Cursed type equipment could prove to be an interesting challenge, but magic weapons may also be interesting. They would probably think it’s trash at first, but their true quality can only be revealed after appraisal.”

“That’s great! You can’t even toss away random trash; you have to leave the labyrinth to do the appraisal.”

I began to discuss all these video game ideas with Masayuki.

Most surprisingly, an idea that we can implement was forming. We began to get excited.

Hearing our conversations, Ramiris and Veldora also got a giddy look on their faces.

“If you want them to hide their true forms, you can use my ‘Illusion Magic’!”

“GAHAHAHA, I’m getting worked up just thinking about the troubled and confused looks on those challengers. Looks like I’m gonna have plenty of fun in the future!”

These two seemed highly motivated as well.

“Hmm, hmm. Trash gear is gonna take up their valuable space, so you will have to go back to town to sell them. I somehow feel like sales of the ‘Return Whistle’ are gonna take off,” Myourmiles expressed this practical view.

Hearing his words, that did seem to be the case. It would certainly make people feel reluctant if they had to throw away unidentified weapons or armors—it would definitely trouble people who liked to roam the labyrinth for good items once such an idea was put into practice.

Every time they entered the labyrinth, it would also charge them an entry fee. The increase in the number of entries would also bring up the profit margin. After all, we wouldn’t be the only one having fun now.

Unidentified—how charming does that sound? Bearing the excitement of waiting for the result of the appraisal, that was quite fun in itself. Your brain’s gonna explode out of excitement.

What you thought was garbage turned out to be a treasure. In this way, even if it really were trash, people would still value it a lot. I didn’t think we needed to put in too many big prizes. Instead, we could increase the drop rate of the low healing potions. That way, we could support the lower rank customers. We would need to adjust accordingly.

“I see, then it’s about time we work in that direction.”

“A patch update, right?” Masayuki followed up.

I shouldn’t have said “about time,” I did just acknowledge his idea.

With that being said, “patch update” was a great term.

“That’s a nice way to put it.”

Ramiris nodded along, as if she understood everything that was happening.

Oi. Did you really get all that—with that message in mind, I turned to her, but she immediately averted her eyes.

It looked like she was just playing along with the atmosphere. This gal only knew petty tricks like this.

Myourmiles gave off an evil grin, Veldora burst out in laughter as he always did.

We looked at each other and nodded in agreement.



Moving on to the next evening.

It was another day of serious work. I have been patrolling the town during the day—definitely not idling around for fun, absolutely not. I had also been listening to reports at night. The location was my office.

Most of the paperwork was handled by Rigurd, though some important matters would only be approved by me personally. I had someone prepare rooms in the duty hall to handle these.

“Rimuru-sama, here are the reports submitted by Myourmiles-dono,” Shion said as she handed me a bundle of paper.

She had been working hard. It’s like she was an actual secretary now. I was a bit surprised by her.

“Um, good work,” I said in my most lord-like manner before taking the reports from Shion’s hand.

It seemed to be the outline based on yesterday’s meeting. Myourmiles got the documents ready at lightning-fast speed.

“Looks like everything is going smoothly.”

“That’s certainly good news,” Diablo nodded in agreement after hearing my mutter.

“The sales in the bars have gone up ten percent lately. Looks like the lower rank challengers have been making profits. It’s good for the townsfolk as well.”

“Indeed. Everything is going just as Rimuru-sama has predicted.”

Agreeing to my words, Diablo gently served me some black tea. It wasn’t actually because I had some amazing foresight, but I was nonetheless pleased to see that things had been working as planned.

Diablo always portrayed me too positively. But, even if they were just meant to be complimentary, they sounded quite nice to my ears.

I took a sip of the black tea.

“Ehh? It doesn’t taste the same as the usual one, did you change the tea?”

“Is it not to your liking?”

“No, that’s not the case...”

Indeed, it’s not bad. But the bitterness tasted stronger than usual.

“I-I shall change it for you at once!” Shion suddenly said in a tizzy.

But that really wouldn’t be necessary. It wasn’t bad at all, in fact, quite delicious.



Was it because black tea made by Shuna has always been too good or—wait a second, could it be?

“Could this be—”

“Yes, number one secretary-dono insisted on preparing it herself. I’ve tested it for poison, it is perfectly fine to drink.”

O-okay.

What a surprise. I never expected black tea made by Shion to be so tasty.

Moreover, I was surprised that Diablo was willing to help her.

“I didn’t expect you to assist Shion.”

Poison wouldn’t work on me. Diablo’s supposed poison test must have been a taste test, which was even more surprising.

“Benimaru-dono has been pushed to his limit having done taste tests every day. I supposed I was forced to do it. Thanks to this, I was able to experience feeling “unwell” for the first time. I suppose you have to be adventurous in life,” Diablo replied with a smile.

I thought such an experience would be unnecessary, but I did need to thank him this time for cheering up Shion.

By the way, Shion had really come a long way. Although meals made by her were more deadly than a lethal dose of poison, I never expected her to make black tea without her Skill... Her violin performance during the concert was amazing as well. She had been a constant source of surprises lately.

That’s why I was deeply grateful.

“Diablo, thank you.”

“You are too kind.”

“And Shion, great job. You have really been trying your best!”

“Yes! Thank you for your praise!”

It was Shion’s turn to pour me a second cup of tea.

While it was still kind of bitter, I was satisfied.

It then suddenly occurred to me that I had yet to give Diablo his reward.

“Oh yeah, I forgot about your reward. You magnificently captured Farmus, and you’ve also helped out so much with all these tasks back here.”

“No no no, I merely wish to be of Rimuru-sama’s aid—”

“Even if you say so...”

I had given Hakuro a vacation. He was now joyfully training with his daughter Momiji.

As for Gobta, I took him to the elven cabaret located on Floor 95, which was only available to special guests. It was too early to give him his own VIP badge. I wanted to bait Gobta with this and have him do more favors for me.

Although, he was currently abducted by Milim...

Veldora said he wanted to train Gobta, but that would just be too cruel. I hope he won’t do it.

As for Gabil, I rewarded him with a new research facility located at the deepest, one hun-

dredth floor, behind the gate guarded by Veldora. Gabil was the acting director, while Vesta was the vice director. We had gotten more researchers as well; things were progressing very smoothly.

My other lieutenants received their appropriate rewards as well, yet Diablo, my closest lieutenant, had not been given anything. I simply couldn't let that stand.

"I actually have a request; I hope my master may approve it."

As I was worried about it, Diablo opened up saying this.

I can only say that his ability to read the atmosphere was truly impressive.

"Then speak."

"Yes sir, please indulge me. I hope you may grant me permission to recruit some subordinates to help manage miscellaneous tasks."

"Ah, you mean like preparing tea and stuff?"

So, he really did hate being the errand boy. That made sense though. Why would a powerful demon like Diablo be willing to serve tea for a slime? Even I found that strange.

"Ah, no, not that. To me, attending to Rimuru-sama's every need in life is a very important job! So instead of that, they will be handling trivial tasks such as destroying nations and other chores along that line. I hope to find some subordinates that can handle these things for me. In this way, I can always be by Rimuru-sama's side," Diablo explained with a smile.

...Oi oi, what?

HOW IS THAT ANY TRIVIAL MATTER? THOSE SOUNDED LIKE VERY IMPORTANT MATTERS!

But to Diablo, it seemed like the job of taking care of me was more important than waging wars against other nations.

I had no clue what was going on in his mind.

"I see how it is. But to have someone that has the power to do such tasks to be your subordinate just seems—"

This way, there would only be Benimaru or Souei when I needed to find someone who was both intelligent and capable to take on a nation.

I really would've loved to grant Diablo's wish, but it just wasn't in the cards. However, it seemed that I was making up these worries myself.

"No no no, I don't intend to overtake Benimaru-dono's status in any way. I have old friends that are capable enough to fulfill the role. I plan to try and invite them."

I see, so he was trying to find some subordinates outside our nation. Then there wouldn't be any problem.

"Then that should be fine, do you need any funding?"

You gotta spend money recruiting people, right? I asked upon thinking so, yet Diablo rejected the idea with a grin.

"No, they are not interested in such things as money. In reality, I require something else. That's why I hope you may prepare some bodies for them to possess."

Oh, I get it now.

These old friends of Diablo were probably demons as well.

“Very well, will the type of body I gave to Beretta suffice?”

If he wanted human corpses, I wouldn’t be able to prepare those. Unlike when I summoned Diablo, things were very different now.

“It will suffice. I will make sure they don’t complain about it.”

That’s reassuring.

It happened so that Ramiris wanted me to prepare bodies for Treyni-san’s sisters. She said that they would be assisting the upkeep of the labyrinth, therefore I agreed to her request. I might as well just make a couple of extra bodies when I finished making those.

“That’s good to know, but is it really the only reward you want?”

“No problem. However, regarding the people I wish to recruit, I recall they each have their own subordinates as well. I was thinking about recruiting them as well, may I do that?”

He was confident as always.

But with how he put it, it sounded like he had predicted that they wouldn’t be refused.

“But we won’t be paying any salaries, is it really okay?”

“If my lord is willing to grant them bodies, I am sure they will all be happy to pledge their loyalty to Rimuru-sama!” Diablo said conclusively, without a shred of doubt.

If that was the case, there was nothing more I wanted to say.

Although I would have to clarify some questions.

“By the way, how many people are you recruiting?”

According to Diablo’s words, there seemed to be more than one person. Since I was crafting bodies for them, I had to confirm this first.

“Well, at most a couple hundred people. And if I have to push it, there won’t be more than one thousand.”

“That’s so many!”

What do you mean at most not more than one thousand?

Were they all demons as well? Just how strong would they be!

“Are you trying to start a war all by yourself?”

“No no no, I don’t think they will fight me. Even if they do, it won’t be a hard fight,” Diablo answered casually.

Where did this guy get his nerves of steel?

“Is it really gonna be okay?”

“Yes. I understand that their number is big. I will dispose of those who are not needed—”

“No, that’s not what I meant! I’m asking if you are gonna be okay.”

Diablo smiled happily hearing my question.

“No problem.”

Seeing Diablo asserting that conclusion, I felt like an idiot for worrying here. Diablo may actually have been stronger than me. If someone like him said it’s okay, then I wouldn’t be saying anything more.

“Then I shall prepare one thousand avatar bodies.”

“Would it be all right?”

“Yes, it’s a reward anyway. Just remember to be careful when you are out. Don’t get hurt.”

It looked like there was no need for me to worry, yet I still felt the need to mention it.

Diablo looked very grateful and bowed to me.

“Understood, while I feel extremely saddened to leave you, please allow me to depart from Rimuru-sama’s side temporarily.”

He then bid me farewell in a more than dramatic fashion.

I really felt like just playing dumb to get over the matter.

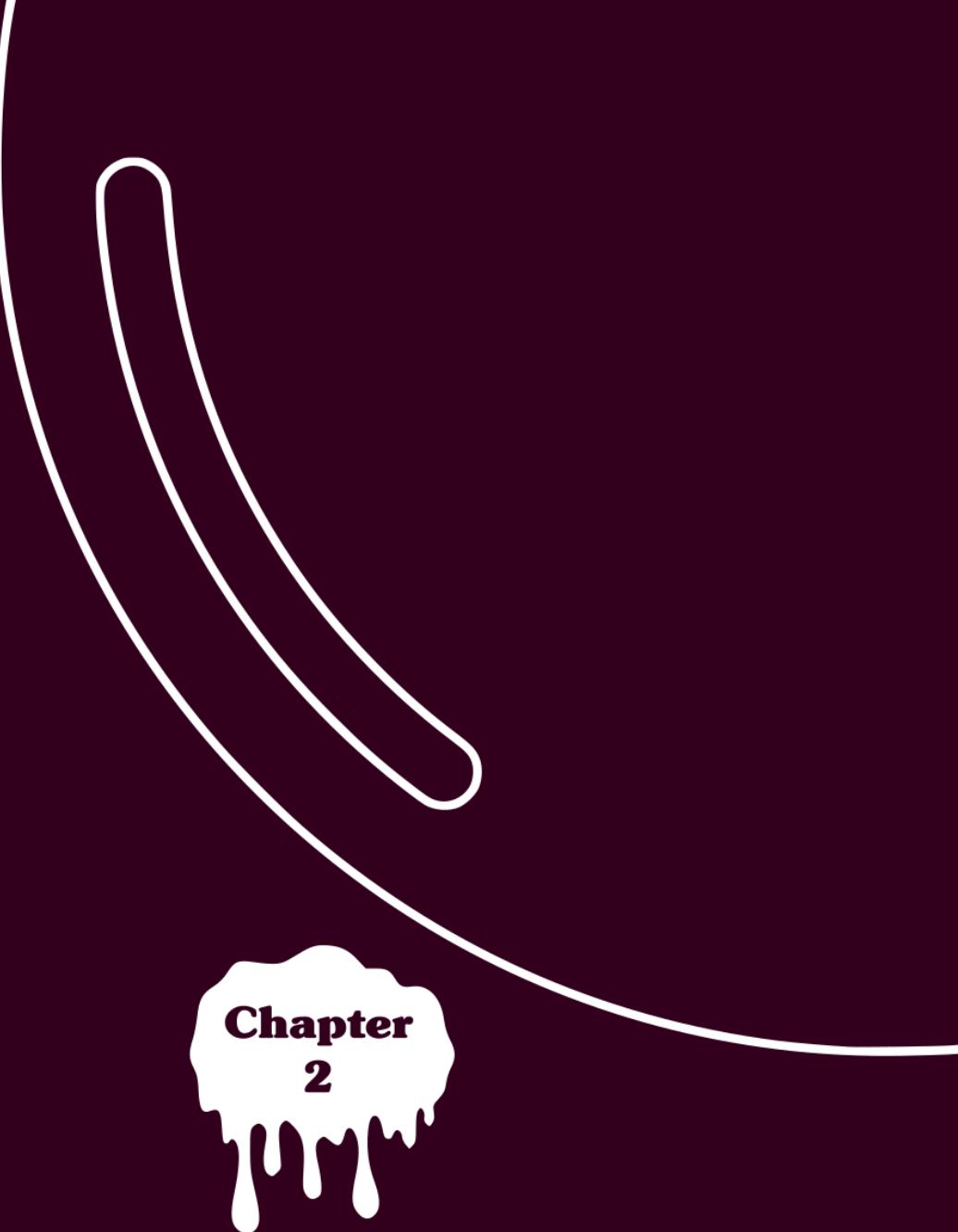
“I’ll handle the rest, just go now,” Shion said, almost as if she were chasing away a hindrance.

I could sort of understand Shion. Surely, she felt the same as me.

Almost as if saying “Better tomorrow than today,” Diablo seemed eager to go on the journey as well.

Honestly, having Shion as my only secretary was sort of concerning. But if anything were to happen, there was also Shuna to stand in as well. There shouldn’t be anything that’s gonna give me a headache, right?

Upon thinking so, I saw Diablo off with a smile.



**Chapter
2**

The Bustling Daily Life

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Chapter 2

The Bustling Daily Life

Several days passed since our last meeting. A party finally managed to break through Floor 30—it was Masayuki's team. Just as we'd discussed with Myourmiles, their conquest was progressing smoothly. Although this was a complete sham, as long as we don't get caught, it wouldn't be a problem.

Since Masayuki had the Unique Skill 'Chosen One,' even if we slipped up a bit, others would still receive the outcome with a positive spin all on their own. He really was the ideal guy to handle public relations.

Inside the labyrinth, the defeat of the thirtieth floor's guardian, the ogre lord and his five subordinates, was announced with great fanfare.

You could say it worked well. Loud cheers erupted among crowds of people gathered in the inns and bars. "Ma-sa-yu-ki, Ma-sa-yu-ki!!" chants filled the town with a joyful atmosphere.

Masayuki responded to those cheers with a smile. His expression was strained, but in the eyes of the audience, it was the most brilliant smile they could imagine. Masayuki's fame was steadily rising, and his popularity was far from hitting its limit.

Taking advantage of that situation, there were stores with something like 'Hero Masayuki-sama's thirtieth-floor conquest commemoration sale' and the merchants' eyes were glowing with excitement. Along with that, the town became even more lively...

We gathered in the conference room within the labyrinth again.

"Ara, you seem quite popular, Hero Masayuki-san!"

"Hold on, Rimuru-san, please stop teasing me. You're giving me a hard time!"

It was only meant as a simple greeting, though Masayuki seemed to be genuinely troubled.

"Ahh, you showed spectacular valor in those amazing battles. I was deeply moved as well!" Myourmiles joined in the conversation, and it sounded genuine, to which Masayuki could only respond with a wry smile.

I see. No wonder he would get tired seeing this type of reaction all the time.

"But to be honest, I barely did anything."

“Here we go again... You have an outstanding sense of humility, Masayuki-sama.”

Masayuki was probably telling the truth as opposed to being humble.

The Ogre King was a monster that fell under rank B-plus, and his subordinates were each rank B as well. Even one rank B monster alone could drive a small village to the verge of extinction. With such a troupe of strong enemies to face off against, it took some genuine strength in order to make it through Floor 30.

Nevertheless, Masayuki’s group succeeded with little difficulty. Jinrai’s defense went up by equipping the mithril³ full plate armor I gifted to him. Thanks to that, apparently it became a viable strategy to use him as bait. Maybe because the other members were fairly skilled too, they were able to focus on offense and use powerful magic. Bernie’s ‘Elemental Magic,’ Jiwu’s ‘Spirit Magic,’ and compensation effects from Masayuki’s ‘Chosen’—the combination of these factors had elevated the base power of their team substantially.

Masayuki claimed that he didn’t do anything, but he was already helping them by just standing there.

“And yet... This sounds weird coming from me, but the publicity has been great. In particular, the rare-grade equipment from the special series coming out of the treasure chest was very charming.”

“Right? That’s what I was thinking.”

If you managed to collect the full set of a series, the equipment would gain a special effect—that was among the ideas that I exchanged with Kurobee. He apparently remembered and put together a prototype—that was the Ogre series.

The golden chest in the thirtieth floor’s boss room would contain exactly one random item from this series. This was another dirty scheme.

The weapon was randomly selected from among the five types: axe, sword, bow, saber, or knife. As for the armor, it could be a helmet, chest plate, gauntlets, greaves, or boots, but there weren’t any shields available.

What you would find depended on your luck. The only certainty was that the gear would be part of the Ogre series. Therefore, whether it would be a weapon or a piece of armor, even that came down to chance. Besides, there was no guarantee that a weapon or piece of armor would drop in the first place, since the golden chest the guardian was guarding was set to only have a two percent chance of containing rare-grade gear. Even if you managed to bring the boss down in one hour, that totaled to opening twenty-four treasure chests in one day. By that calculation, it was fine for rare gear to show up once every two days.

This was optimal to stimulate the gambling spirit. It was human nature to desire collecting things that belonged to a series, and if they happened to receive duplicates, they could always trade or sell them. With this, we could give an extra incentive to challenge the labyrinth.

“What I got were Ogre Greaves.”

³Kanji reads Magic Silver (analogous to Magisteel)

“Yeah, you see, if you gather all five armor pieces, it will activate a powerful ‘Magic Interference’ effect as magic resistance.”

This was the same effect that was on the scale shield I had gifted to Kabal. That one could activate the effect on its own, but for these you needed to gather a complete set to unlock it. That was the difference between unique-grade and rare-grade.

To put it bluntly, the weapons and armor of the Ogre series were made from magisteel mixed with the leftover scraps we had after processing the Charybdis scales. That’s why the magic resistance effect was pretty strong.

It worked against the tempest serpent’s ‘Poison Breath’ as well, so, by all means, it was worth collecting.

“Is that so?”

“Yeah. That’s why I want you to gather all of them and challenge the next boss, and hopefully, that will become our game plan for the future.”

As Masayuki’s group broke through floor thirty, the existence of the Ogre series went public, and it was only a matter of time before this information was spread around the world. With this, no doubt, the challengers would be burning with the desire to try their luck. And the sheer number of people wanting to conquer the labyrinth would rise to new heights.

Parties were limited to a maximum of ten people. No matter how strong the troupe of monsters was, if the challengers managed to form a party of rank B and above, then it wouldn’t remain an insurmountable opponent. They might fail a few times here and there, but if you considered it as practice against a group of monsters, then this offered a great deal of experience. Like that, I hoped for them to gather powerful gear and set their gaze on the floors ahead.

This was a flawless plan, and everything went according to it.

“So, if that’s the intention...would it be good for me to gather that series, too?”

“Well, that’s a tough question. The mithril armor I gave Jinrai is equally rare-grade but has no special ability. However, it offers a higher defense than the Ogre Chest plate. As it is, you probably could beat even the tempest serpent if you really pushed it.”

The tempest serpent may have been strong, but you only needed to face one of them. If you challenged it with a party, one person could serve as bait whom you could constantly heal while fighting the monster. In their case, Jinrai would take on that role, but I was sure he’d do just fine.

“Then we’ll head straight to the next floor.”

“Okay. Your active participation has been a great advertisement, so keep up the good work!”

“Jinrai and my other colleagues are more excited than I am, though. I guess it’s more fun now that the monsters drop items. Of course, finding treasure makes me happy, too.”

Monsters dropping various items—this suggestion was brilliant. Some monsters, like skeletons, didn’t yield any usable materials, and the ‘Magic Crystal’ was often of poor quality. From those, you could only earn a handful of change, so the higher the people’s ranks were, the more

of a hassle it would be to them.

But now, the situation had been flipped on its head. Those people who used to begrudgingly fight monsters out of necessity, had started to aggressively hunt them down.



The market was booming with the trade of materials, the result was truly magnificent.

It was surprisingly easy to make the monsters that spawned inside the labyrinth drop items. It was the dryads, headed by Treyni-san, that helped make it happen. What they did was force the newly spawned monsters to swallow items whole—putting it that way made it sound like a tough job.

It was difficult to know where monsters would spawn inside the labyrinth. Figuring that out was very tedious. But the truth is, that there was no need to do that.

The amount of magicules flowing to each floor was managed by special pipelines. We set up rooms on the fifth floor and below for these pipes to pass through. That way, we created a system where large hordes of monsters would spawn in specific rooms—these were the so-called monster rooms.

Treyni-san's group, the labyrinth managers, distributed the items I prepared to each room, then released monsters that swallowed them. It would've been a hassle to manage every monster inside the labyrinth, but when narrowed down to just the monster rooms, taking care of them was a piece of cake. Monsters that spawned in the passageways didn't carry any items, but we could wave that problem away by calling them blanks.

Like this, we were able to efficiently deploy monsters with items on each floor.

The way I intended it, the monster room was a kind of trap in its own right. But for now, its bigger purpose was to serve as a room that managed the monsters. Naturally, there would also be those unlucky enough to stumble into the room while it was a crowded monster den...but that, too, was a way to raise the tension.

All things considered, the alluring profits the labyrinth had in store were what everyone was fascinated by.

“The appraisers are in for a treat! They receive one silver per session, yet the waiting line has no end in sight.”

You could find fruit juice and milk with preservation magic applied to keep them fresh for several days, along with low potions, among other things. On the other hand, there were also drinks that spoiled within a few days, so appraisal was a must.

There were also failed works by Kurobee's students; those garbage weapons were being sold at a low price.

It might look like we were operating at a loss, but it was more like a giveaway. We could think of it as reinvesting a portion of our profit to bring in more customers. And speaking of the giveaway, there was a jackpot.

Occasionally, masterworks Kurobee's disciples made would be mixed in. These were an absolute hit, and the number of people who showed off the special-grade gear they earned in the labyrinth increased.

This lavish feast had caught everyone's heart. Like ants attracted to sugar, they challenged the labyrinth day in and out. Items obtained from various treasure chests, prize money for breaking through every tenth floor, and loot from monsters—once the challengers got a taste for these various treats, they soon became regulars.

As you could see, the operation of the labyrinth was going well.

Inevitably, the town was bustling with activity.

"The ninety-fifth floor is also thriving!" Ramiris triumphantly announced, to which everyone happily nodded.

That's right, we prepared a new inn at the ninety-fifth floor, and this, too, was a smashing success.

We had prominently placed a room in front of the stairs on each floor, featuring an unusual door with the word "inn" inscribed upon it. Next to it, there was a doorbell on the wall, wired up to call a labyrinth manager. Once summoned, they would illustrate the wonders that lay beyond the door.

To open it, you needed but three silver coins. It was the same cost as the labyrinth's entry fee, but for those who toiled away in continuous battles, it was a price they gladly paid. After all, most of the people who heard the pitch ended up using the service.

And there was a definite reason for that: The structure of the labyrinth was ever-changing. Once every two or three days the labyrinth shifted. This made any attempt at challenging the labyrinth far more difficult than it may have seemed.

There were very few people who didn't get lost within the vastness of the labyrinth, and there were countermeasures to prevent the 'Spirit Communication' of spirit-wielders.

Therefore, it became difficult to determine the shortest route. In other words, it was difficult to get to the tenth floor in just one day, forcing many to sleep within the labyrinth's halls.

"Seriously, this is my first time camping out in the open."

"How'd it go? It sounds quite fun?"

"No, no, it might be all right for you, Rimuru-san, but sleeping on the cold, hard, stone pavement not only makes it easy for you to get sick, but also makes your muscles ache. Although, aside from me and Bernie, the other two lay down comfortably like they're used to it..."

Even Jiwu, being a girl, didn't complain about camping out. However, sleeping while taking turns watching out for monster ambushes seemed to torment Masayuki.

"I see. It must've been very hard."

"Please don't say it like it's none of your business! I'm not gonna sleep there again," Masayuki said with a grimace, likely having flashbacks.

For these modern kids it was apparently too much to ask. This wasn't only a problem among 'Otherworlders,' but the locals had a tough time, too.

Even if you secured a room with a treasure chest and slept inside it, you would need someone to keep watch. There were also those who wandered the labyrinth without ever catching any sleep or taking a rest, so providing a place where they could relax and go to bed was highly appreciated, more than we had thought.

Also, it would've been a waste to dump the gear you had earned to the wayside. This was also part of the plan, because even if it looked like useless items, there was a chance that something good might've been mixed in.

Besides that, food and bedding for several days, replacements and maintenance supplies for gear—they had to bring these necessities, setting a limit on how many of the items they found they would be able to tote along.

When there was no more room to spare, the easiest thing to cut down on was food. Running out of supplies left you with no other option but turning back, however, some of the monsters were edible and could be killed for food. Water could be replenished with the use of magic, leading many to hold out with the bare minimum of rations.

Even in the worst case, as long as you had the Resurrection Bracelet you could get resurrected after death. In those cases, there was a possibility you would lose your items, but that was apparently deemed preferable to starvation.

This brought the spotlight back to the 'Return Whistle,' raising discussions about its usefulness, and, because you could leave with all of your items in hand, there was a great surge in purchases lately.

In that way, to maximize the number of items you could take, reducing the amount of food had become mainstream.

What if, in that situation, there was an inn that could be used inside the labyrinth?

Merely returning to the stairs was all it took to reach the inn. Doing so, made it redundant to carry food and bedding, allowing you to travel lightly.

If there was an inn available, it was only natural to use it.

A safe resting place was available for three silver coins—the same amount as the labyrinth's entry fee. That was triple the price of those on the surface, so it was a tad expensive, but you were also offered food. And so, with three silver in your pocket, you could use the inn and stay for a night.

The building was divided up between male and female and offered only tiny areas with nothing more than a bed like in a capsule hotel.

To be honest, the service wasn't as good as above ground.

The management of this place was left to the treants, and they used it as a place to train new employees. Cleaning, laundry, cooking and serving the customers. They let the inexperienced

trainees get their practice here, and if they passed, they would then be allowed to work on the surface.

Nevertheless, the people who used it would still use it.

You could buy safety in exchange for money, so this was no time to complain. Also, there were fancy additional services available for those who could afford it.

Laundry wash: three silver coins.

Public bath usage: three silver coins.

Gear cleaning and repair: five silver coins.

These were our pricey, exclusive services, and yet, there was a surprising number of customers using them. Constantly fighting in the labyrinth meant you'd inevitably be soaked in blood and sweat. Women, in particular, were bothered by the smell, so baths were greatly welcomed.

For that reason, we raked in a lot more revenue inside the labyrinth than above ground, and the profit margins were excessively higher to boot.

Even if you didn't use it as an inn, there were times when you just needed a place to take a break and being able to safely use the bathroom without worry seemed to have been a major selling point.

After having it pointed out by Masayuki and digging a little deeper, this seemed to have been giving everyone a hard time.

There were no bathrooms in the labyrinth. When side by side with death, you had to muster the determination to just let it leak if need be.

There was no need to clean up, either, since the monsters that spawned would take care of it on their own. The slimes inside the labyrinth would eat anything and everything. Excrement, monster corpses, or debris, it was all the same to them.

Even when those monsters were slain by the adventurers, a replacement would spawn in no time. Thanks to that, we didn't need to worry about cleaning up after anyone. Besides, every time the structure of the labyrinth shifted, the unnecessary trash was eliminated. And so, surprisingly, the labyrinth was always kept clean and tidy.

Yet in spite of all that, the issue regarding toilets remained.

From the labyrinth management's perspective, having the whole place stink was a 'shitty' situation. But as if that weren't bad enough, the challengers had another problem to deal with: getting attacked by a monster at your most defenseless state of times, that would likely drive anyone to tears. You could shout "Time out!" all you wanted, but the monsters held themselves to no such courtesies.

For both numbers one and two, you'd always need someone keeping watch. But you may feel ill at ease when quickly doing your business while your partners were protecting you.

Maybe less so when you only had to take a leak—no, definitely both would be unpleasant.

Now imagine monsters showing up at the same time, that would be the absolute worst time for a fight.

Soiling your pants during combat—I don't even want to imagine it.

If that happened to you, the first impulse would be to run back to your group that very instant, but to have them see you wetting your pants before their eyes, what an absolute humiliation. A man might laugh it off, but this would, surely, be a life-or-death situation for a woman. At worst, I'd bet some would rather choose death in those instances.

Mixed parties of men and women weren't uncommon either, so it was no surprise that the inns would see a lot of visitors, considering the toilet situation.

Incidentally, there were those who took care of it with the help of some magic. They said that they managed their condition with the use of daily magic 'Health Care' or 'Clean Wash' within the labyrinth. 'Health Care' was said to help you manage your bowel movements. Although there was a limit, I heard that they could hold it for about three days with no problem.

For everyone who didn't fancy wetting themselves during battle, this was said to be an essential spell. Nonetheless, one would be remiss to forget about its limit. If you planned to wander the labyrinth for a long time, relying on magic alone would be like playing shitty Russian roulette.

And so, even those who could cast magic gradually used the inns as well.



As it stood, the management of the labyrinth was going very smoothly.

Myourmiles gave the income report with a gleeful look on his whole face, "Things are going smoothly, ladies and gentlemen. Revenue has been steadily climbing. Even after deducting the necessary expenses, such as the loot items distributed in the labyrinth, we are still making enough profit. As for the return on our investment, we're currently at around ten percent. We are aiming for twenty percent, and seeing as the number of users increases, I predict we will be able to achieve it."

Hmm Hmm, everything is roughly as expected.

The loot was valued at its market selling price in these calculations, not the raw production costs, meaning that the real profit margin was even higher. Not only that, but the residents working in the city were not being paid a single copper, letting all of the money flow straight into the state treasury.

"Looks like it's all right to increase my investments."

"If we do that, we might have to wait a while before the country becomes profitable, but it would not take long to be in the black."

If all we wanted was to turn a profit, we could've simply sold goods we produced at a high price, but that alone didn't make us a legitimate nation.

There were people engaged in various jobs around town, and only when the work was appropriately divided, could everyone do their best. Therefore, I thought it to be important to create an environment where everyone could work with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Work for every citizen of this country—in other words, it was my job as king to offer them a worthwhile life.

—That being said, I didn't think it was good to continue the status quo.

“But, you know, not getting paid is a bit...”

“In fact, our funds are sufficient to cover paying everyone a salary equivalent to the average salary in the kingdom of Blumund. It's just that people haven't taken it...” Myourmiles said with a bitter smile.

As a merchant, it would be out of the question for Myourmiles to work free of charge. It was a feeling I could deeply sympathize with. Going without a paycheck was a glaring issue on so many levels. We guaranteed food, clothing and housing, and everyone seemed to be happy with that, and yet... This was verging on outright exploitation, so it was about time to pay them what they were owed.

I was thinking about it, but Raphael-san was perfectly managing it for me. And probably thanks to that, there weren't any complaints piling up. There would have to be discussions about the matter with Rigurd and the other three officials.

While the residents were satisfied despite the lack of pay, there were those who were true to their desires.

“Th-then there won't be an issue with my paycheck, right?” Ramiris asked with a gulp.

With all of that talk about withholding wages, she seemed to be worried that her share was gone too.

I was a man of my word; such worries were uncalled for. So, I signaled to Myourmiles with a glance. In response, Myourmiles grinned and nodded vigorously, followed by a pompous announcement, “You may have high expectations! Mark my words, we will pay you handsomely.”

Ramiris wore a broad grin on her face after hearing that.

“So, it's finally here.”

“Hmm? What is?”

“The time, the age! My era has finally come!”

I wonder. I don't think such an era has come.

Ramiris laughed with a shrill voice while saying that. Treyni came by to bring her tea and had the same joyful expression... She seemed a bit overprotective and heavy on the love...but that wasn't any of my business.

“Speaking of paychecks, don't I get one too?”

Annoyingly enough, Veldora had also awoken an interest in money. I figured this was the time to pay up. Myourmiles glanced at me, and I returned a slight nod.

“Of course, we have it prepared. Would you agree to receive the same amount as Ramiris-sama?”

As a matter of fact, I had already discussed this with Myourmiles. After all, Veldora was employed as the king of this labyrinth. It may have looked like he wasn't doing anything, but we were actually relying on Veldora's leaking magicules to maintain the environment of the labyrinth.

Turning iron ore into magisteel alone already drove major profits. So, I didn't want to be stingy and thought that it would be right to properly compensate them.

"Oh, ohhh! Is that so? As expected of Rimuru. I can feel relieved knowing you'll take care of it."

"Don't waste it on unnecessary things."

"Uh, of course not!"

"Of, of course! I know what saving is, too!"

Knowing something didn't mean much if you didn't put it into action. That's what I thought, but I didn't want to rain on their parade.

"Hahaha, no harm in spending some. You gotta feel the joy of spending it first to appreciate the effort of saving it."

"Right?! Myourmiles-chan, you know that well!"

Myourmiles, if you pamper Ramiris she will get carried away. I'd hope you see Treyni-san as a bad example and learn from it.

"What of it? I also have experience working at the takoyaki shop. I understand the value of working and the importance of money. Rimuru, you worry too much!"

What's with your smug attitude? It was me who set up the takoyaki shop, and it was Myourmiles who actually did the work. You were just frying takoyaki!

I would have liked to lash out, but I got a grip.

Well, you live and you learn. Let the two of them do as they wish. Even if they failed, they could learn something from it, and that's okay.

I knew that the town was flourishing, but I wondered what the internal situation was really like. I was concerned about that, so I decided to pose the question, "By the way, Myourmiles-kun, how are things going outside the labyrinth?"

Myourmiles's face lit up.

"It's lively—that one word says it all. The festival has already ended but I don't see a big change in the population. It is safe to assume that the merchants are now on a steady stream."

"In other words, does that mean that this town has started to become a trading hub?"

"That's right. The merchants looking to do business have begun to pay me visits. Not all of them were coming through connections, so Rigurd-dono seems to have been busy handling correspondences. Ranging from those affiliated with the Freedom Association to wealthy merchants in Western countries, inquiries about opening a shop have been stacking up."

That seemed to be going more smoothly than I had thought. We succeeded in bringing people over with the Tempest Debut Festival as the spark. On top of that, the labyrinth that we created for fun enjoyed surging popularity and was able to win the hearts and minds of visitors.

All that's left was to direct the money into a smooth flow.

We let those who challenged the labyrinth earn money and consume our country's goods. Products included not only lodging and meals but also weapons, armor, and supplies. Naturally, merchants from other countries would also play a part there. The Freedom Association would buy up the monster materials and pour money back into our country. Merchants from foreign lands would bring various kinds of rare goods. By the time that happened, the town would be bustling with activity.

In the meantime, our country would earn a reputation for the excellent products made here. We had a wide selection of local specialties to offer, many of them were culinary ingredients and alcohol, along with the countless dishes Shuna developed with them. There were also various kinds of weapons and armor made in Kurobee's workshop. Now that several of Kaijin's disciples were working together, a variety of products were available. There were many other things too, but I was sure there would be more yet to come.

It spread by word of mouth, and even without putting much effort into advertising the product, customers would surely come. And as a result, this country was bound to become recognized and required by many.

But wait, there's more.

Some of the gear that came from Kurobee's workshop was displayed in markets as this city's specialty product. The armaments traded there would also attract a lot of attention. They were sold by different shops depending on the quality, but high-performance equipment could be bought if you had the right amount of cash. Though, when it came to rare-grade and above equipment, I only planned to exhibit it on the ninety-fifth floor of the labyrinth.

Some might question its performance, but that wasn't a big deal. After all, there was a place close by where you could try out the products you bought. There were still only a handful of people using this service, but we did offer rental gear for challengers as well. And it would only be a matter of time before news of how great the quality of the products was, would spread on its own.

And so, little by little, the trust in this country piled up.

Credibility was more important than profit. I didn't think that we had to run a deficit to gain credibility, but if we are in the black overall, we could call it a success. Our goal was not to make money, but to get this country recognized on the world stage.

"It is as we expected. The merchants still approach us in spite of Tempest being a kingdom of monsters, because they can smell the profits. The number of challengers continues to grow, and it seems we have an opportunity to get along with the Western Nations."

Accepting my wishes, Myourmiles nodded as well.

"There doesn't seem to be a problem. The number of customers is increasing steadily. This is with the knowledge that this is a monster country ruled by a demon lord. We can safely assume that we've gained credibility, just as Rimuru-sama intended," he agreed emphatically.

Besides, Myourmiles was a really interesting man.

“We,” huh? From that statement, you could tell that even though he was a human, his thought process was entirely from our perspective.

That does put a smile on my face.

Credibility is not something you can earn at the drop of a hat. As they say, trust is a fragile thing—hard to gain but easy to lose. Few words were truer than that.

Although we attracted people by stimulating their desires, it was another matter to gain their trust. If they regarded us as someone who satisfied their desires, that meant you had gained their trust.

Myourmiles is a good example, we were bound by a trusting relationship built upon desire. Do a good job and reap the proper benefits—I believed this to be important.

Of course, pursuing your desires one-sidedly is an unpleasant way to go about it. You must look deeply into a person’s character to gauge if they’re worthy of trust. This was the perfect time to hone that very skill.

With Myourmiles as the teacher, there was still lots for me to learn.



After that, I gave Ramiris and Veldora their pay; the two of them looked happy. I *did* tell them not to waste it, *but do they even think about what they’re buying?*

Despite these doubts, the discussion carried on.

Now that the labyrinth was on track, I was thinking about devoting myself to the things I loved.

The research facility, which was newly prepared on the one-hundredth floor, was divided into several compartments. At present we had laboratories headed by Gabil and facilities where Ramiris conducted her personal research.

“Um, could you prepare a facility for me as well?”

“Fine, but are you going to do some research as well, Rimuru?”

“No, in my case, it’s development. I’ve got a lot of things on my mind, so I thought I’d make them.”

When it came to research, Kurobee was working much more diligently than I was. His workshop was located in the southwest part of the city, and the surrounding area was lined with the workshops of disciples who were recognized as master craftsmen.

It was said that some artisans who heard the rumors had taken up residence there, and some even opened their own workshops. These people were also repairing equipment, and now it was a kind of industrial area.

Therefore, the technology developed there was nigh impossible to hide. This was a place where everyone could share and learn from each other in a friendly competition—that was no

place to conduct confidential research and development.

What I asked Kurobee was to make armor and technical stuff, which no one else could feasibly imitate.

Besides, I didn't need the space to do any research, all thanks to Raphael-sensei. That's why I wanted a place to set up the development, based on the diagrams I had completed in my brain.

"Okay! I'll have it ready for you today!" Ramiris readily agreed to my request.

And with that, the lowest floor, the one-hundredth floor underground, the one that began as the great hall of Veldora, became a large space with various research facilities.

Viewing it from the perspective of defense as well as leak prevention, there was no other place that guaranteed this level of security. It was truly impregnable.

From now on, important projects would be carried out in this location.

"So, Rimuru, just what are you trying to make?"

"It's a secret."

"What? You always make the strangest things, so I'm quite curious."

"That's right. There should be no secrets between you and me!"

What nonsense... Ramiris and Veldora are always up to something behind my back. But when it comes to this, these two are persistent.

Deceiving them was even more of a hassle, so I decided to give them a proper answer.

"It's about bodies. I'm planning to make one for Treyni-san's sisters to use."

In truth, I was thinking about preparing the quantity Diablo had requested as well. When it came to amounts around one thousand, making them by hand would've been a herculean task. With this in mind, I wanted a facility capable of mass production.

"Make it big; I have quite a lot of things I want to try out."

"Okay. Since it's for *my subordinate*, I'll do what I can to help!"

Putting an emphasis on the subordinate part, Ramiris accepted my request.

Hee hee, it was right to only give half of the truth. With this, I'll be able to experiment to my heart's content.

Until now, the idea was just floating in my head, without the spare time to make it happen. Finally, I could dive into developing it. I grinned at the thought.



A couple more days passed.

I was engrossed in installing the equipment for the development. I could finally get to work after looking forward to this for a long time, and incorporated Raphael-san's input as it replicated

a bunch of stuff in my ‘Stomach.’

If these had been bits of technology that were meant to be passed on to future generations, I would never have done things the way I did. But I didn’t intend to share this tech with the public in the first place, so I didn’t restrain myself and created whatever I wanted.

It was then that someone called for me from outside.

And just when I thought that I was beginning to be productive—

«Report. You have been cut off from outside communication for several days. Something might have happened.»

Now that Raphael-san had pointed it out, I realized that I wasn’t even eating anything. I was too absorbed in what I was doing, and I didn’t realize that until Raphael-san stepped in to make me aware of it. Even if nothing happened, Shuna and Shion would have been worried about me, nonetheless.

It just so happened that my work was done, for now, *I guess it’s time for me to show up for a change.*

I answered the call and stepped outside the R&D facility. It was indeed Shuna and Shion on the other side.

“Rimuru-sama, is everything all right?”

“I was worried sick. You always looked forward to dining, yet you haven’t shown up for mealtime in the past few days. We were just wondering if something had happened to you.”

They really *were* worrying about me.

“Sorry, I got a little too focused here.”

“I-it’s all right! As long as you are fine—”

“Shion is right. You have always been working hard. And even if Rimuru-sama acts more free-spiritedly, people won’t really complain.”

Knowing that I was all right, Shion and Shuna smiled.

I need to seriously reflect on myself for having them worried this time.

“From today onward, I will show up every day.”

“I will be very happy if you would do that.”

I suppose. I really need to stop getting carried away with my interests. But merely knowing that someone was worried about me cheered me up.

Halfway through my introspection, Shion suddenly recalled something and began to mutter: “Speaking of which, Myourmiles-san has been looking for Rimuru-sama since yesterday.”

Eh?

“If that was the case, couldn’t you just come and find me.”

“We did, but you weren’t responding… Sorry, we should have shouted a bit louder.”

“Ah, it’s okay. I was the one at fault. It’s all because I got lost in thought. I will prepare something like a call bell for such occasions in the future.”

It seemed that Shion didn’t think it was anything urgent, but seeing that Myourmiles was still looking for me to that day, she became anxious and went to discuss it with Shuna. Moreover,

Shion further mentioned that what Myourmiles wanted to talk about had to do with the labyrinth, yet he didn't tell her the details.

Did he feel that she wouldn't understand or was it something that he couldn't tell Shion— Myourmiles's thoughts were intriguing.

Speaking of which, Diablo may have been more qualified than I had expected. In times like this, Diablo would have definitely come to call me out. He might've gone so far as to just come in by himself. Now that I think about it, Diablo was probably even more stubborn than Shion.

But let's put that thought aside. I should go find Myourmiles.

Shuna made me some packed sandwiches, and Shion made me some black tea.

While enjoying my food, I waited for Myourmiles's arrival.

“Oh oh, Rimuru-sama! I’ve been looking for you. Something terrible has happened!” Myourmiles burst out in panic before me, quite unlike my own casual attitude.

“What, what happened?”

Did we get complaints from customers? I thought as I asked.

“There have been other people who made it through Floor 30, after Masayuki-san.”

“Wow, that’s impressive. They are progressing faster than I expected.”

“Now’s not the time for such idle chit chat! They are progressing at lightning speed and are already approaching the fortieth floor’s boss room!”

Woah, wow-wow. Indeed, now wasn’t the time for chilling. But I didn’t think such panic was warranted.

Upon coming to that conclusion, what Myourmiles said next changed my mind on the matter, “Their strategy is bordering on foul-play, moving in grey areas that could potentially violate the labyrinth rules. For instance—”

And so on and so forth, Myourmiles continued without pause.

Seriously, this was unexpected.

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It looked like these people were good at using Ramiris’s items.

First, before they went to fight the guardian of Floor 20, they used a Recording Crystal. This item applied to a full squad, so even if they were wiped out, they could still respawn at the save point that they registered.

All of those item uses were in line with my expectations. This on its own was fine, but, on top of that, they were also using a ‘Return Whistle’ to leave the labyrinth as a squad. Following that, they would disband the squad and then each member would find additional teammates to form a new squad, with a maximum number of ten members.

“Let’s see, this way the total number would be—”

“Indeed. These are no longer just a couple squads, their size is more comparable to a small army.”

With ten squads in total, that added up to one hundred challengers. Every single one of them boasted a strength of at least rank C-plus to B-plus. I heard that they were also wearing the same type of jacket embroidered with some sort of symbol. All of these people grouped together in style. Almost as if they were trying to show everyone else how “strong” they were, they marched onward through the labyrinth. And of course, it was said that all members had appeared before the guardian of Floor 30. These challengers were also divided into squads, ten in total, each of them taking turns.

The ogre lord and his five subordinates were a powerful company, but those challengers weren’t rookies either. And in the end, even though it was a tough battle, these people still made it through Floor 30 with their third squad of challengers.

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“Didn’t something similar happen lately?”

“Your Majesty has sharp senses; their group was the Green Rebellion.”

I see, of course they were behind it. Wearing the same type of jacket with the same symbols. Were they sent by some noblemen? Considering how often these people were using a Recording Crystal, I couldn’t help but shiver. *Well, the saying goes, “Time is money”—but to simply use a disposable item that costs as much as one gold coin without a flinch...*

“Did that symbol reveal what noble house they belong to?”

“I asked Souka-san to investigate. They seemed to be a famous mercenary group known as the Apostles of Verte. Their sponsors seem to come from the Kingdom of Ingracia.”

Apostles of Verte, never heard of them. On the other hand, the central kingdom of the Western Nations was suddenly interested in the labyrinth in our nation—this was a lot more surprising to me. During the Debut Festival, there seemed to be nobles from lower houses in attendance...but I don’t suppose there were any from the royal house.

Did they fear letting someone get ahead of them? Or were they up to something else—

“How should I put it, I suppose... The attitude they had, essentially that money makes the mare go, left a sour taste in people’s mouths. Nevertheless, they weren’t violating any rules.”

What was giving us a headache, was that we had no reason to kick them out. I could understand why Myourmiles was nervous. At this point, there was really nothing we could do.

“We are profiting from it, so there’s really nothing to complain about. But these people will probably tear through the floors designed by Rimuru-sama...”

In other words, during my shut-in period, Myourmiles wanted to see me because he was afraid that these people would conquer the labyrinth.

“Take a look at yourself, you’re shaken to the bone. It shouldn’t be an issue. After all, what lies beneath Floor 40 is the real deal. Getting there still won’t be a cake walk though, beating the tempest serpent is no small feat.”

The squad Green Rebellion displayed immaculate teamwork, so, if I had to guess, that team had the strength equivalent of rank A-minus. Although I still had my doubts, considering their

individual strength was only rank B. They would probably be unable to resist a powerful area attack.

The tempest serpent was very powerful among the rank A-minus monsters. So, it should take more than ten B-plus members to defeat it.

“However, according to Ramiris-sama and Veldora-sama, the captain of the team Green Rebellion appears to have lied about his actual abilities...”

Eh?! From footage alone, I can't really run an accurate ‘Analyze and Assess,’ but—

«Report. Applying ‘Analyze and Assess’ on battle footage alone cannot calculate the mag-icule content of the target.»

That was the advice Raphael-san gave me. We could solely analyze the video footage and infer the equivalent monster (adventurer) ranking established by the Freedom Association. But we were unable to calculate the team’s absolute level of ability.

For instance, my registered rank was B-plus, yet my actual ability was at rank S. That’s just how it was, sometimes your true level of ability didn’t match up with your ranking. Moreover, it was even more difficult to tell when someone was faking it. This would be something I needed to figure out countermeasures for.

“I want to hear what Veldora and the others have to say.”

“Leave it to me. I’ve already contacted all of them. Let’s talk in some other place.”

As expected from Myourmiles. The moment I left the room, he had already contacted Veldora and the others.

I nodded and stood up from my seat.



Everyone gathered in the meeting room inside the labyrinth—the usual guys, of course.

“You were so slow, Rimuru!”

“Yeah, that’s right! You are the captain, you know, gotta do better than this!”

I’m the captain? First time I’ve heard of it. But that’s not the point now.

“Well then, what’s the current situation?”

“It’s gotten really dire. They have already made their way to Floor 38.”

Ramiris rendered the raider’s progress into video footage as she spoke. She looked dis-traught and flustered as she worked to visualize the situation. It was like a bunch of tiny models moving around in a transparent box. They were extremely delicate 3D projections.

If only I could use this to perform a direct ‘Analyze and Assess’...

«Proposal. If permission to interfere with the individual Ramiris’s Intrinsic Skill ‘Labyrinth Creation’ is granted, more accurate intelligence could be extracted.»

Oh oh, it was rare of Raphael-san to suggest something. It looked like it was worth a try,

let's ask her right away.

"Ramiris-kun, may I ask you a favor?"

"Eh? Why are you getting so serious all of a sudden?"

"The thing is, I want to interfere with your 'Labyrinth Creation,' is that okay?"

"Interfere? How are you going to interfere with it?"

Even if you asked me—I certainly had no clue.

"By interfere I mean interfere. I just want to collect all sorts of information from the labyrinth, I guess?"

I casually threw out some contrived nonsense in an attempt to bamboozle Ramiris.

«Report. That was basically it.»

Hoho, I am a genius after all.

It seemed that I correctly interpreted Raphael-sensei's idea.

"I guess you may, but can you endure all that?"

"Eh, me? Why are you worrying about me now?"

"Not really, but the thing is, that the amount of information within my labyrinth is huge.

Even I can't grasp all of it, that's why I usually just delete most of that stuff."

Uh-huh, wait a minute? An immense amount of information—just like she pointed out, it was indeed filled to the brim. There were already more than a thousand challengers using the labyrinth at that very moment, in addition to the many items on various floors, not to mention the residents on Floor 95. And all of this would be handled by—

«Answer. No problem.»

Ah, yeah. No problemo indeed.

"Uh...no...problem...?"

"Why do you sound like you're full of doubt?"

"Well then, you don't have to pursue it, Ramiris. Just go ahead and hand the matters to Rimuru. No more need to worry about it!"

I wasn't even sure about it myself before Ramiris was suddenly convinced by Veldora.

"I got it! Then I'll give Rimuru the access to interfere with my 'Labyrinth Creation'!" Ramiris declared and reached out to touch me.

And with that, I was easily connected to the labyrinth.

«Report. Established connection with the Intrinsic Skill 'Labyrinth Creation' of individual 'Ramiris.' Proceeding to gather intelligence.»

As if it was already on the edge of its seat, Raphael-san launched its operation. And in that same instant, it felt as though a tidal wave of information flooded into my brain—though it had no ill effect on my body. I had tensed up in anticipation, yet it was all for nothing.

«Report. 'Analyze and Assess' of team Green Rebellion has concluded. The captain's abilities exceed rank A. The analysis of the remaining members deviates by a negligible amount from the previous appraisal.»

It looked like Raphael-san was able to get the necessary information in a moment's notice. What a reliable sensei indeed. But for some reason, Raphael-san seemed to be continuing its

‘Analyze and Assess,’ was there something else on its mind?

«Answer. Currently analyzing all on-going battles within the labyrinth—»

I felt like I was being told to stay out of the way.

Right. Ordinary men such as I had not the faintest idea of what Raphael-sensei was up to. I believed it must’ve been doing something really rad again, so I let it do its thing undisturbed.

Speaking of which, let’s get back on track.

“I see.”

“What did you see, Rimuru?”

“That was fast, so he really couldn’t handle it...?”

Ignoring Veldora’s usual demeanor, Ramiris was gazing at me with doubt in her eyes. Although she had good reason to do so, I was slightly offended, and, therefore, declared my discovery with a slice of arrogance: “That guy looks to be above rank A.”

I presented footage that was quite unlike the feed displayed by Ramiris and continued to enlarge the images.

“EH!” Everyone seemed surprised, but Ramiris was the one that was hit the hardest.

“H-hold up, Rimuru? How did you figure out how to use my Skill?”

“Hahaha, after you gave me access to interfere, I just suddenly learned how to use it.”

“No way! Even I can only broadcast specific locations and people that I’ve checked on before...”

Apparently, Ramiris could only project images that the labyrinth managers could see. No wonder why it was difficult to verify intelligence in detail.

“Ahh, don’t be a stranger. I’m just good at this type of thing.”

While pacifying Ramiris by saying that, I turned my eyes to the projector.

Speaking of the person above rank A, he was the captain of the team Green Rebellion, a spirit-wielder. Given how much power he had been hiding, surely, he would be able to utilize many spirits. If this guy were capable of wielding greater spirits, his power would definitely have stood to increase many times over.

“Oh, so the ‘above rank A’ you said was in comparison to the ranking of monsters?”

“Yep, that’s the standard set by the Freedom Association in order to determine which people of a certain rank can defeat what type of monster.”

Yet they never considered the relative safety of such a battle. In my memory, stipulated by the association’s rules, multiple adventurers were to confront a monster of the same rank.

“Then what rank is my team?”

“You guys, let me see...”

Masayuki’s rank was a tad ambiguous. Honestly, I thought that he would still be considered a rank D loser. But Masayuki’s Unique Skill was ridiculously over-the-top, so the whole team may easily have added up to beyond rank A. But saying this directly to Masayuki could easily be misunderstood, so I should save it for another time.

Right now, it was best to try and make something up.

“Jinrai barely made it to rank A. Although I’m unsure whether he could defeat the tempest serpent alone, it should be a piece of cake if he had the ogre series.”

Not even mithril full plate armor could completely protect one against ‘Poison Fog,’ making the tempest serpent a tough enemy for him. Unlike monsters, humans had all kinds of weaknesses. This was, of course, no video game; the possession of resistance could be a matter of life and death. Despite being on equal footing in terms of strength, one can easily succumb to a lethal dose of poison.

“Jinrai sure is impressive.”

“Isn’t he? However, a lot of that is due to your Skill buffing Jinrai’s abilities through the roof. Aren’t the rest of your comrades a girl, named Jiwu, and Bernie? Both of them are also rank A-minus.”

A very balanced and strong team. This was probably the reason why Masayuki was never shown in a bad light before.

“All thanks to my reliable teammates.”

“Hahaha, Masayuki-sama must be stronger than all of his companions. I think he can be easily evaluated as above rank A. Since you are, after all, the Hero recognized by Rimuru-sama!”

Myourmiles gazed at Masayuki with admiration.

Please don’t act like that.

Masayuki was torn between laughing and crying again because of it.

“But here’s the problem: not only was this one member of the Green Rebellion that strong, the guy next to him is also rank A. They are the mercenary group Apostles of Verte, right? Seems like an organization with many skilled warriors.”

“There’s no way! Where did all of these elites come from?”

“Umm, to me they’re still pushovers, but...”

After putting some thought into it, I figured that, if these people were to team up, they could have easily broken through Floor 50.

“Gozer and Mezer are both rank A. But it may be too much for either of them to handle these two people at once. Moreover, that captain of Green Rebellion seems to rival Gozer and Mezer in strength.”

“Is he really that strong?”

“Indeed. By the way, those two guys are also twice as strong as Jinrai. This is ignoring techniques however, a purely physical comparison.”

The two guys, approaching the strength to rival the captain, were also powerful enough to stand against greater majins. Right now, they seemed to be weaker than our ol’ pal Gelmud, though stronger than the lesser skilled Holy Knights.

The captain of Green Rebellion stood head and shoulders above the rest, and although this is my assumption, he was more experienced in combat as well.

“Even the traps I specifically set for them were taken out by the beasts they summoned. These people are good at this.”

“Yeah, if this were to continue, they will eventually end up on the floor I prepared.”

“How terrible, it will be bad if this continues.”

“Huh?”

I thought those two would have been happier, were they worrying about something? I was pretty pissed by the fact that my own traps were getting thwarted, but, by all accounts, these two should've been looking forward to challengers. Moreover, since a short while ago, Ramiris's face had been filled with panic; were they hiding something from me?

“Is there something you aren’t telling me?” I asked straight up.

And soon, Veldora and Ramiris turned to look at each other, before Ramiris seemingly decided to be straight with me and began to talk.

“The thing is, during the three days you stayed in your room...”

And following the things that came out of her mouth, my head began to hurt as I listened.



According to Ramiris, the Holy Knight Order had begun their training. They started from Floor 51. Floors 51 to 60 were trapped by Ramiris, and she was excited to see the results.

Adalmann, who had been appointed as the guardian of the sixtieth floor, had summoned hordes of undead monsters. As a result, Ramiris created ferocious traps, such as hallways filled with endlessly respawning waves of the undead, or entire rooms devoid of oxygen, something undead monsters had no use for anyway.

“I was quite confident in those traps! But they were easily purified by the Holy Knights. The oxygen-free room got the better of them, but the people following immediately came to their rescue, reviving them...”

“They were a direct counter to one another, that can’t really be helped,” I said to comfort a dejected Ramiris as I continued to listen to her report.

The Holy Knight Order made its way to the boss room of Floor 60. Adalmann was waiting there but was also beaten to a pulp by his opponents. I had come to expect that.

After losing his power, he became a mere wight. I could only hope for him to be of use as a summoner, because the Holy Knights were too much for him alone to handle. Be that as it may, Adalmann should've been considered a senpai to the Holy Knights. Getting beaten by his juniors was enough to dishearten even a dead man...

“Was he really frustrated about it?”

“Super frustrated...”

Ah yeah, of course. I should go comfort him later.

“Then, what happened next?”

“After they beat Adalmann, they continued onward to the floors I trapped myself. I was gonna enjoy a show, thinking that they would be faced with a tough battle—”

“The infuriating part is that all of Mentor’s traps were evaded as well! The sliding floors, illusory walls, pitch-black hallways, light beams of death, and many more I can’t even think of, were all overcome by them.”

Veldora and Ramiris gritted their teeth in frustration as they gave their reports.

Veldora prepared floors sixty-one to seventy with a lot of care. Although there were casualties among the Holy Knight Order, those who weren’t immediately killed were promptly revived. Moreover, with the Resurrection Bracelet, the Holy Knights weren’t particularly concerned about the dangers.

And here I thought that the difficulty had been set too high... It seemed that any squads of soldiers above rank A could recover as long as one of them was left standing. Now we really had to re-evaluate and re-adjust the difficulty.

“But my Elemental Colossus worked really hard. After improving upon the one you broke, my new one is super strong, and it killed all the challengers. However...”

Very impressive. It was able to take out all of the Holy Knights; it packed one hell of a punch. Though, that really was to be expected.

Its abilities alone were a threat. It could shrug off both swords and magic, coupled with its massive size, yet agile motion—this wasn’t an opponent any average person could take on.

But if it’s that strong, then why is Ramiris so upset...?

“About that, one of the valiant members of the Holy Knights said something that was pretty embarrassing to Hinata-sama. Probably out of spite, one of the challengers, Fritz-sama, commented: ‘I think even Hinata-sama would fail at conquering this labyrinth,’” Myourmiles answered my doubt with a wry smile.

I see, had Hinata been part of the force, even the Elemental Colossus wouldn’t have been able to stop her. I should ask—

“So, how far did Hinata get...?”

“Uh...”

“That’s the main problem!”

I was shocked after hearing what happened—Hinata made it to Floor 95 on her first day. Although she started from Floor 61, this was still extremely fast.

She easily immobilized the Elemental Colossus and instantly destroyed it using ‘Disintegration.’ And then she made her way down to Floor 80 in one go and easily took care of the guardian there.

“My disciple Zegion was in a cocoon at the time; he was in no condition to move. Apito had already awoken though and was there to face her. Yet that woman, Hinata, was too quick for Apito to react, and defeated her.”

“She was really strong. Apito is a queen wasp, after all. Her speed is unmatched among all monsters. Apito tried her best fighting Hinata, but even with that speed, her every move was seen through by that woman.”



Yeah, well. This was Hinata, she could certainly pull that off. I already found it pretty incredible to have won against her. That was how strong Hinata was.

“From there, that woman continued to make great strides. All of Kumara’s subordinates guarding Floors 81 to 89 were defeated by her one by one.”

“Moreover, since Kumara is still young, we let Beretta stand in as the guardian of the ninetieth floor, but he didn’t stand a chance, either.”

“I see... Beretta does seem to have become stronger than before, but such an opponent was still too challenging for him.”

“Mm-hmm, Hinata is so incredibly strong, it makes me wonder why she isn’t a Hero.”

I heard that Hinata had spent that night very elegantly on the ninety-fifth floor. And yesterday, she broke through Floors 96 to 99 in one go—the supposedly super-tough dragon chambers that Milim was proud of.

“By the way, on the terrain effect floors, there are not only earthquakes, there is also heavy gravity! It’s been cranked up to five times the normal strength; you’re supposed to have a hard time moving around.”

Lightning strikes from above, icy winds that freeze you to the bone, burning heat that scorches your skin—none of this left a mark on Hinata.

“And in the end, at last, it was my turn to fight.”

“Seriously? Did you actually fight her?”

“Yep, as the king of the labyrinth, I welcome all challengers. As the final boss, I will neither run nor hide!”

“—And, how’d it go?”

Of course, Veldora wouldn’t run or hide. But apart from that, I was more concerned about the result. Veldora was stronger than me, so the thought of him losing didn’t even cross my mind. Rather, I was curious about how Hinata had fought.

“Of course I won. She was really strong though. Her swordsmanship was very similar to the Hero that sealed me, yet her fighting style was the opposite.”

Hmm-hmm. It came as no surprise that Veldora won, but it was a shame that I didn’t get to see the fight play out.

Ah ah, I really hope there are at least some records left...

«Answer. Unfortunately, all combat records were deleted.»

I see... Darn it, I’m such an idiot for missing something so important.

“But seriously, the fight was mesmerizing. As expected from Hinata-sama, she put up an amazing fight.”

Did Myourmiles get to see it? I’m jealous.

“Hinata-san sure was strong... Even though everyone argues over which one of us is stronger, to be honest, I feel sick every time I hear such a conversation.”

“Wahahaha, how modest of you, Masayuki-sama.”

Myourmiles-kun...that’s not modesty, it’s nothing more than his honest feelings.

“Hahaha, please stop joking like that, Myourmiles-san.”

Masayuki tried to play dumb with a rigid smile hung on his face. Yet Myourmiles kept on singing his praises, not realizing Masayuki's desperation.

"I see, I see. Surely, you must be saying that this is no casual matter to discuss. Indeed, if Masayuki-sama and Veldora-sama were truly to fight, it would undoubtedly be a battle on a scale yet unseen by man. Please allow me to watch when the time comes."

Usually, Myourmiles was good at reading people's thoughts, yet under such circumstances, his moronic antics were pushing Masayuki to the brink.

Please stop. Masayuki's dying over there!

"Oh, I see. Masayuki, you wanna play around a bit with me?"

"Playing around a bit" with you will cost Masayuki's life.

"Ahh, don't get so hasty. Masayuki is strong, but he mainly relies on his head during battle. If we really had to fight, I'd probably have the upper hand. That's why, you know, he won't be able to match up against the invincible Veldora!"

"I see! That's how I'd guessed anyway. As expected from Rimuru, you really get me. GA-HAHHAHA!"

Phew, this will do. It's all because you let it go straight to your head when anyone praises you.

"So, what's your conclusion?"

First, it's time to hear what Veldora has to say. Having made up my mind, I turned to Veldora. He nodded with an "Umm" before continuing his speech.

"So, yeah, the Hero who managed to seal me didn't throw out any unnecessary attacks. By contrast, this woman called Hinata tried out a series of different attacks to see which ones would be effective against me. That being said, she was just as calm and cautious, but Hinata did heaps of unnecessary stuff."

According to Veldora, Hinata tried out a variety of attacks. She utilized all sorts of magic, spells, magic tools, and even magic artifacts. No expense was spared in their battle. Any purely physical attacks were ineffective against Veldora. That's why Hinata probably ran a number of tests to see which attacks had an impact. But in the end, none of Hinata's attacks amounted to much of anything.

"By the way, her last attack was pretty good. For just a moment, she managed to hurt me. It was something similar to the 'Absolute Severance' of the Hero."

What Veldora was praising was probably her 'Melt Slash.' I figured that it was likely Hinata's trump card. She even went so far as to sacrifice her moonlight rapier in order to execute this deadly attack. Yet, even so, she still couldn't hurt Veldora.

"Considering her fighting style, will she pose a threat?"

"Uh—it's certain that she's stronger than Clayman and the other poser demon lords. Even members of the Octagram may find themselves in danger, should they be careless. But Mentor is something else—"

"GAHAHA, of course! She'll need at least ten times more magicules to even stand a chance against me."

I see... Even Hinata was outmatched by Veldora.

Aaah, how I would've loved to have seen that fight. It would've been useful for future reference, had it been recorded permanently. Never mind, it's too late for that now. Let the past rest, it's time to get back on track.

"I get it. In other words, because of the whole ordeal with the Holy Knights and Hinata, all the floors below fifty-one are now out of commission? But hey, wouldn't the guardian have revived, nonetheless?"

"About that, wasn't Adalmann weaker than Gozer? He helps me out with research, and I think he's outstanding and all, but as the guardian of the sixtieth floor, he's not exactly dependable. Besides..."

At this point, Ramiris began to tremble—

"M-my masterpiece, the Elemental Colossus...was broken... It didn't revive!"

She broke down into tears as she finished.

Wasn't it a guardian as well?

"Did you forget to equip it with a bracelet or something?"

"N-no, it was the same when you destroyed it," Ramiris said in a huff. "For some reason, golems just won't revive..."

I heard that it was possible to revive naturally spawning golems, but the ones created by Ramiris would not. Hearing that made me think of something.

"Perhaps it had to do with the lack of a soul. After all, Beretta can be revived. Is it possible that the Elemental Colossus was considered to be an item?"

"—Eh?"

"Um, that's very likely. Ramiris, could the reason why your Skill did not apply be that the Colossus was outside its effect?"

Veldora added in agreement, so I was probably right. In other words, even if she were to make another one, there's still a chance that it would get broken again. The Elemental Colossus was strong though, so it was unlikely for it to get destroyed often. That said, we still needed to figure something out. But before that—

"It takes a long time to make that thing, doesn't it?"

"Yeah...that's why there's no guardian on Floor 70..."

Of course.

"Also, Zegion, on Floor 80, will need to sleep for a bit longer. Apito has grown stronger as well, but her combat experience is lacking. If she is planning to be a guardian, I think she will need more training."

According to Veldora, he seemed to have given Apito some combat training. *So, he's heading in that direction?* Although I personally had doubts concerning the matter, because Veldora seemed highly motivated, I'd let them have their way.

By the way, her instructor was Hinata. Apparently, using the rematch with Veldora as bait, he had asked Hinata to mentor Apito. Hinata was already tutoring the kids, she must've been willing to instruct Apito as well.

There was also Kumara. Floors 81 through 89 were guarded by Kumara's subordinates. Those majins were all generated using Kumara's tails, each of them possessed free will and could evolve and learn independently. Due to the release of all her subordinates, Kumara's own magicule content decreased drastically. She, alongside Chloe, Alice, and the others, would be studying under Hinata.

—As of yesterday, that's what had been decided.

“In other words, we have no real guardians from Floors 60 to 90 right now?”

“Yes!”

“Um, that's why we were troubled!”

For some reason, Ramiris and Veldora both looked rather smug.

“W-what...”

“The timing is just horrible.”

Myourmiles and Masayuki were both shocked by the current state of affairs within the labyrinth. *And I thought that there was room for slacks*—looks like I was too naive once again.

“...I got the gist of things,” I sighed, feeling rather powerless.



This was the perfect storm of bad news. But on the bright side, we were able to identify the issues of the floors below fifty-one. Moreover, all the traps I laid were still there. Our focus should be on the floors below forty-one, or rather, focus on floors below forty-nine.

“It's just a matter of time before the tempest serpent gets beaten. But we don't need to worry!”

“Oh oh, as expected from Rimuru. Have you already come up with a solution?”

“I see. We don't have to worry as long as you're around!”

Hearing my words, Veldora and Ramiris's distress seemed to have vanished.

I nodded to the two snobs and expressed my ideas, “Listen carefully now. As I've just said, I've put all the kick-ass traps below Floor 41. Those intruders will have a bad time.”

“Oh oh...that sounds so reassuring.”

“Ho—I see, I see.”

“By the way, Rimuru, what kinds of traps did you plant there?”

Hehe, you wanna know? I'll tell you then.

“The ultimate trap I had prepared on Floor 49 is slime. After passing into certain hallways, there is a mechanism to isolate people. And that's when a bunch of slimes will appear. Those fellows are a pain in the ass to deal with.”

A large amount of slime would gush forth and coalesce, forming a giant slime that was

over three meters thick. The path forward, as well as backward, would be blocked, trapping the challengers like fish in a barrel. None of the physical attacks, neither slashing, beating, nor ramming would work on the slimes.

In a tightly sealed hallway, the magic at their disposal would be limited as well. Explosive spells were out of the question because they would probably just end up blowing themselves up.

Although individual slimes posed no threat, they would all slowly move in to attack. And considering that the challengers would be cornered, this started to shape up as a significant threat.

“GAHAHAHA! Now we definitely will win!”

“Uh-huh, it’s our win for sure—!”

“You two are so naive. I’ve got many other tricks lined up as well.”

It was too early to get excited about the concept of my traps alone. There were still a ton of other traps to go over. Hear all about them and shiver in fear!

- Slime Pool: Although it appears to be a soft-feeling passage at first glance, it is actually a slime. About halfway through, it’ll suddenly show its true colors.
- Slime Rain: Fist-sized slimes rain down from above. They will also try to sneak into the openings in your clothes. Watch out for their acidic burn.
- Slime Doll: At first glance it looks like a monster. But it won’t get tired after sustaining consecutive attacks from its enemies. It will slowly exhaust the opponents’ stamina. The more terrifying aspect of it, is that it will splatter strong acid on the enemies’ weapons every time it is attacked. Watch out for your weapons’ durability.

And so on and so forth.

There were other traps as well, but all of them were installed with the intent of staggering the enemies—especially the ones aimed at destroying challengers’ weapons. *Surely, it would be difficult for them to continue fighting after that.*

At the very least it could help us buy some time.

“Amazing. Those traps sounded amazing. So, you were saying that we don’t need to rely on the traps to take out the enemies directly, but instead only harming them slightly?”

“That’s the idea, Veldora.”

“I see. Without weapons, no matter how strong they are, they will probably be intimidated. That’s when we can break them.”

“Yeah. It’s best to just defeat them straight away, but we can figure out something else if that doesn’t work. Right now, we can at least get some more time.”

It looked like this time my traps’ only purpose was to stall for time. Although that was a bit disappointing, we can use the time we earned to think of a countermeasure.

“Then what will you do with the extra time you’ve got?”

Since Veldora asked, I decided to answer seriously.

“What we should not forget is that our labyrinth is different from the normal one. An advanced labyrinth should be strengthened by overcoming various problems, shouldn’t it?”

“—UH!”

“Hmm, of course we should.”

“Then we just need to improve until we can handle the challengers next time. First, we need to deal with Adalmann. I’ll figure something out for him. I also want to change the environment on the boss floors, for which I’ll need Ramiris’s help.”

“Okay!”

Adalmann was a cardinal, if I recalled correctly, his role was the archbishop. Strictly speaking, he was supposed to be the support type. It was a mistake to let him be the guardian alone, what we should’ve done was finding him a partner to act as the vanguard. Besides, I had some ideas of my own. I’d find Adalmann and Ramiris later.

Next was the guardian on floor seventy.

“Regarding the Elemental Colossus, we have no choice but to make a new one. Luckily, it just so happens that the perfect man for the job has returned.”

I had prepared the materials and planned to rebuild it. But it would’ve been boring to make the same colossus as last time.

“The perfect man?” Ramiris asked with doubt in her voice, to which I nodded in return.

“Kaijin is back. That guy has a hand for spirit engineering; he would be happy to help. Moreover, the experiment that I’ve been running might also be of help, so I’ll be handing over my research results. You can look forward to the new and improved version of the colossus.”

“—Really? That’s wonderful!”

Even though he won’t be able to produce the outcome immediately, Kaijin would definitely prove to be a big help. Even in the event that we didn’t have enough time to finish it this time, its completion would, nonetheless, be a threat to future challengers.

“And regarding Floors 80 and below—”

“I think the problems will resolve themselves with enough time. When Zegion awakes, none of the amateur challengers will be able to hurt him. There are also the dragons prepared by Milim, they will probably evolve after staying in the labyrinth for a while.”

Kumara was still growing as well, so there was no need to panic.

One question remained: how much extra time could we salvage?

“Okay, our plan is settled. All we need to do now, is to buy ourselves time. We can’t simply rely on my traps alone. There’s one thing I want to try out, and I’ll need Veldora and Ramiris’s help for that.”

“Of course.” “I got it!” the two of them agreed happily.

I nodded and turned to Masayuki.

“Masayuki, you should resume your conquest. Your secondary objective is to break through Floors 41 and below, but right now you’d best try to collect a complete ogre-set.”

“Indeed. With Masayuki-sama’s conquest, it will serve as a tremendous boost to our labyrinth’s publicity. We don’t have to rush things.”

“Then we should just allow the others to break through Floor 40 first.”

“Yeah. On the contrary, you may as well stay away for the time being, lest you get caught up in our operation.”

“You’re up to something again, aren’t you?”

Masayuki looked at me skeptically. That really hurt my feelings. It’s as if I was always up to no good.

“Ahh, that’s a secret. In any case, we will be taking measures accordingly from now on. You guys, Myourmiles and Masayuki, will help by just acting as you normally do.”

“I understand.”

“Got it, I’ll tell everyone else later.”

This should do. Let’s see just how long my traps can last.

“Then that’s about—”

“Ah, please hold on one moment, I have something to discuss with your Majesty...”

As I was about to dismiss the meeting, Myourmiles stepped in. It looked like he still had something on his mind.

“What is it?”

“The thing is—”

What Myourmiles had to say surprised me.

“Hinata-sama asked whether the prize for completing the labyrinth would be delivered or not...”

“Huh?”

I couldn’t help but gasp. The prize she mentioned was the bait we set for the nobles. We claimed that prizes would be given to people that manage to break through every tenth floor.

Did Hinata want those prizes? I mean, she did pull through the floors...

“Even though she didn’t conquer it on the official record, Hinata-sama said that ‘Since we challenged it with just means, shouldn’t you guys pay us?’...” Myourmiles said, sounding rather troubled.

That may be the case, Hinata-san. But aren’t we in a two-way street in this regard? We got to do test runs of the floors, and the Holy Knights got to do live-fire training. So why should we pay them?

“Reject her.”

“But is that really okay? Wouldn’t she try to challenge the labyrinth seriously if we refuse her?”

“It’s all right, we can threaten her in time that ‘We will make it public news that you lost to the final boss of the labyrinth.’”

“GAHAHAHA! How could I ever lose!”

Umm, it was times like these that you could count on him.

Besides, if she seriously decided to challenge the labyrinth, we could use this for publicity.

“I-I understand. But, if possible, it is best that Rimuru-sama yourself rejects her in person—

”

“Eh, but I don’t want to.”

I don't want to be disliked, after all. She's gonna be petty and I would be frustrated as well. So, this type of job should be handled by the resolute and decisive Myourmiles-kun.

“B-but I heard that terrible things happen when Hinata-sama feels offended...”

“I'll be counting on you then, Myourmiles-kun-!”

I interrupted Myourmiles and concluded our conversation.

Sorry, I don't want to be the buzzkill. If possible, I'd like to be on good terms with beauties.

Myourmiles already had a villainous look and nerves of steel. And since he always put profit above all else, surely, he would convincingly reject her. Given this to be the case, I must've been hallucinating when I heard the sad sigh of “Then I'll use my own money to make up for it...”

The discussion was concluded.

Leaving behind a now depressed Myourmiles, I left the venue.



I told Veldora and Ramiris when to meet up on another day. We had to get all the preparation work done before that, but there was something I wanted to deal with first.

Shion was already waiting outside the room, so I went to find Shuna with her. Shuna seemed to be overseeing the dinner preparations and was giving all sorts of orders. There were more and more people in the kitchen, and the place was bustling with all sorts of races. Shuna was indeed an outstanding instructor to have easily managed all these people.

Although I didn't want to call her for the matter I had at hand, we were racing against time, so I made this an exception.

“Shuna, could I borrow a moment of your time?”

“Ah, Rimuru-sama! Please let me know what you need.”

Shuna happily came to me as I called out to her. At the same time, the kitchen was in an uproar. It was rare for me to show up in person, and everyone was happy to have me taste-test all sorts of dishes. Normally I'd give my opinion on every one of them, but today I had some urgent tasks at hand. *Sorry everyone, I'll eat them next time.*

“I happen to need Shuna at the moment. I'll come and have fun with you all next time.”

“Please do come by!”

“We will be waiting for you.”

“Our skills have all improved, you will definitely be impressed next time you visit!”

Hearing me say “Delicious” seemed to be the equivalent of giving them a five-star review. The folks were highly motivated. I looked forward to my next visit.

“Then, Gobichi, I'll leave the rest to you!”

“Yes, Shuna-sama! Please count on me!”

Gobichi was now the best chef whose skill could only be rivaled by Shuna. When she

wasn't present, Gobichi would act as the executive chef. The kitchen was left in good hands.

"See you guys on another day."

After bidding the crowd of disappointed people farewell, we departed. We were headed towards Floor 60 of the labyrinth, the one guarded by Adalmann.

"Ah, thanks for the packed lunch, it was delicious."

"You are too kind, it's wonderful that you liked it."

I thanked her for the bento as we were moving to our destination. Shuna smiled happily.

"Rimuru-sama, please let me prepare lunch for you next time!" Shion volunteered herself. I thought for a moment before giving my answer.

"I suppose, since you've grown a bit now. Maybe you can try to make lunch with Shuna next time?"

I figured that Shion had become more reliable nowadays. But still, I wanted to put a safety measure on top of that. With Shuna, surely, Shion wouldn't be able to run wild.

"Then, Shuna-sama, let's make it tomorrow!"

"Hehe, all right, Shion. Let's start with the easy stuff first, please."

Shuna and Shion chatted joyfully. The two were wonderful together during the musical performance as well. They sure were close to each other.

As we chatted, we reached Floor 60.

"Excuse us, Adalmann."

"Oh oh, to have Rimuru-sama come here in person! I am most regretful of the event that transpired, I shall willingly accept whatever punishment you deemed befitting for me—"

As soon as I called, Adalmann rushed to me and dropped to his knees. Still dramatic as always, but at this point I had come to consider this the norm.

"No, it came down to our naive planning. It was too difficult for you to handle the Holy Knight Order alone as you are, your failure was understandable."

"—No, I can only lament my own inadequacies. My opponents were very experienced as well... Yet I resorted to my old tactics I used when I was still the wight king. I lost before I could cast even a single spell..."

At this time, Adalmann was just a wight without power. Even though he had a wealth of arcane knowledge and combat experience, his body was still in the state of a lesser monster. The magic he could use was limited, and he could only summon lesser undead. The monsters he summoned would evolve after absorbing the magicle in the labyrinth, but it took time to do so. It was going to take a while for Adalmann's subordinates to become powerful. What we needed to do now, was to make Adalmann stronger, and fast.

"It's more important that you now are aware of the extent of your strength. Since you've learned that now, I have a question for you, if you don't mind."

"Please, do ask."

"To what extent can you use 'Holy Magic'?"

‘Holy Magic’ was the power of faith. It didn’t require you to concentrate the magicule in the air, nor was it bound by the amount of magicule you yourself possessed. Aside from requiring more preparation, as long as you possessed the knowledge and sufficient time to chant, you could cast grand spells at little cost to yourself.

However, the usage of ‘Holy Magic’ was limited to those who ‘Have formed a pact with God.’ The “God,” in this sense, referred to people who could manipulate spiritrons,’ the special particles that magicules consisted of⁴. In this world, it was irrelevant whether a being became a “God” conceptually. Those who could interfere with spiritrons directly, could be considered a “God.” For instance, within the religion of Luminism, Demon Lord Luminas was the “God.”

Adalmann was a fanatic follower of Luminism. Even after becoming a monster, his faith was not shaken. That’s why, even after becoming a wight king, he retained the ability to cast ‘Disintegration.’

But as he lost faith in Luminas, he instead turned towards worshipping me as his God. Perhaps now that the ‘pact with god’ no longer applied, that must’ve been why he couldn’t use ‘Holy Magic’ any longer.

“Yes, I have become incapable of using nearly all of my magic. As it stands, even the use of lesser magic spells escapes me.”

I see. ‘Holy Magic,’ at the end of the day, was in the same vein as ‘Spirit Magic.’ It depended on a pact of some sort as the user borrowed strength from a being of higher power.

The same applied to Hinata. She couldn’t have used any ‘Holy Magic’ if she hadn’t borrowed the power from Luminas. In other words, if humans stopped relying on the Demon Lord that was known as a “God,” they would also lose one of the effective means to combat monsters.

All in all, I felt that the more I knew about the matter, the scarier it got. This world might’ve become even more chaotic if Luminas suddenly decided to do something.

“Then I have a question for Shuna as well, to what extent can you use ‘Holy Magic’? Also, who did you put your faith in?”

“For me, technically speaking, I use it differently from ‘Holy Magic.’ I only emulated it using my Unique Skill ‘Analyst.’ It worked surprisingly well.”

I see, so she imitated the magic. In other words, after I told her to analyze the magic barriers, she turned out to have learned how to imitate a part of ‘Holy Magic.’ Moreover—

“And my faith lies in Rimuru-sama. I believe in his strength from the bottom of my heart. So, I thought that I would also be able to do it,” Shuna said with an embarrassed smile.

“—Ah? So, during our battle, your claim that even monsters could use ‘Holy Magic’ was actually...?”

“It was a bluff. Even though I was confident, you were the one who actually proved it,” Shuna said with the same smile.

Adalmann’s jaw dropped to the ground—figuratively—as he heard those words. For a skeleton, this guy had some lively expressions. *Right, let’s put that aside for now.*

⁴The term “magicule” may invoke the idea of a molecule, however, it actually refers to an element.

The most important element in casting ‘Holy Magic’ was faith. It sounded like something similar to the soul connection ability. Shuna somehow mastered the essence of it. All she needed to do next, was to build upon and study the theories. I had a rough understanding of the matter, so it shouldn’t be that hard.

“Then, I wish to bestow upon both of you ‘The Ultimate Secret of Faith and Grace.’ Luminas taught me this not long ago, and it’s top secret. Please don’t leak it.”

Adalmann was already a high priest, if he were to connect with me, he would have been able to cast ‘Holy Magic’ again. Nowadays, his magicule had been reduced drastically, and with ‘Holy Magic,’ his strength could once again be greatly increased.

“‘Ultimate Secret of Faith and Grace’—”

“OH, OHOHOH... I finally get to worship a real god...”

This guy’s still such a fanatic, but I’ll tolerate him for now.

“Uhh, Rimuru-sama, is it really okay for me to know this as well?”

I almost forgot I was in Shion’s arms. I hadn’t been hugged by her like this in a while—it went without saying that I was in my slime form. I felt a longing for this feeling, I wanted to stay in this state.

Shion wouldn’t understand my explanation anyway, so I simply told her not to spread the news, “Just don’t tell anyone else!”

“Of course!”

Hearing her reply so full of spirit, I was satisfied.

And so, I began to give a rough explanation.

“I see... In other words, if I put my faith in Rimuru-sama, I can also learn to use ‘Holy Magic’?”

“Umm, I suppose you can. Although I hope that you can study it yourself in your spare time. You should also be Adalmann’s consultant.”

“I understand. I’m looking forward to it as well. I don’t know how far I can take it by studying.”

Shuna was quick to understand. With her Unique Skill ‘Analyst,’ she would learn ‘Disintegration’ in no time. On the other hand, Adalmann...

“WOW, OHOH, OHOHOHOH! THE POWER, THE POWER IS COMING OUT!”

He was beyond excited.

“HOLY CANNON!”

Adalmann shouted as he thrust one hand out before him. A bright red light began to illuminate the depths of his eye sockets. A concentrated magic missile burst forth from his skelepalms. This was the Holy Magic ‘Holy Cannon.’ It was invoked by the will of Adalmann, with a certain power.

“OHOH, GOD, MY GOD, RIMURU-SAMA—”

He fell to the ground and began to worship me.

That’s pretty spooky, please stop.

“A-alright. Looks like it was a success? Let’s keep up the good work. Go and learn some

more advanced magic, and if there's a problem, just go ask Shuna!" I uttered in a hurry. Shuna understood and nodded lightly.

"—I see, you didn't want to deal with this guy, so you made me his consultant?"

Since the person in question has heard it now as well, perhaps the right thing for me to do, is to pretend I didn't hear anything. I'm very dull, after all, no idea what you're talking about—yeah, that'll definitely drive her off.

"Rimuru-sama, I will not betray your expectations—!" Adalmann proclaimed in high spirits. I then decided to ask him another important question, "By the way, didn't you hurt yourself by using Holy Magic, considering you're a wight?"

Holy Magic could be divided into two types: first, to manipulate spiritrons,' which had no elemental affinity, and second, to utilize the holy element to eliminate magicule.

Holy Cannon fell under the latter category, so I thought that it would have harmed an undead monster.

"Hahaha, it did hurt a bit, but it was nothing serious—"

I see. Adalmann's sturdy backbone let him tough it out. But that didn't really solve the issue. If he were to have Beretta's Unique Skill 'Reverser,' he could probably convert holy and demonic elements⁵... That would have to depend on the outcome of future research.

In any case, he should switch up his ability for this occasion.

"Adalmann, can you manage this?"

I jumped out of Shion's arms and cast a ray of light in the air.

"OHOH!"

"I excluded all the holy elements and tried to elevate the power further. This is an original spell of mine, Holy Magic 'Holy Ray.'"

'Holy Ray' was a magic spell that didn't have any element affinity. If he were to switch to using this, as long as he cast it correctly, the caster shouldn't be affected. However, this move was pretty difficult to perform—it would mean that he had to put even more faith into me...

Even though this was magic designed to tackle single opponents, its power was greater than my 'Megiddo.' It could be fired in rapid succession at an almost blinding luminosity. So, it would appear to be like a flash of light, when, in reality, they were, in fact, small, rotating spiritrons.' It was an attack that pierced the enemy, making it less deadly than 'Disintegration,' in turn the time required for chanting was also reduced.

"Amazing, this magic is amazing!" Adalmann was overjoyed.

If he could master this spell, he should also be able to get used to manipulating spiritrons.' When that time came, he would be able to blast even thicker beams of light and greatly enhance their power.

This was one of the magic spells that I requested Raphael-sensei to develop. I figured that for Adalmann, as he was right now, it would be a perfect fit for him.

"Don't be shy, I'll be there to discuss anything about magic. Remember to contact me."

⁵To clarify, the demonic element actually refers to magicule, because only monsters possess magicule (humans use mana), and the holy element is the counterpart to all monsters.

Shuna was ready to handle this task for me, to my relief.

“Then, please work hard to practice from now on and master the ‘Holy Magic’ that won’t harm you.”

I sure hoped that he would put in the extra effort every day, so that he wouldn’t end up as a pile of bones after every fight—that was my rationale behind those words of encouragement.

Adalmann was dancing with glee, but I got him to calm down with a gesture, before moving on to the next problem.

“Next, as it stands, your means of attack are still few and far between. You can gradually increase them in the future, but before that, something needs to be done first.”

“And that is?”

“Weren’t you originally a rearguard?”

“If I had to put it in words, I suppose I mostly offered rear support for the army. When I was still a wight king, I used summoning magic to raise the undead army and win by sheer numbers.”

I suspected as much. Since there were no such rules that limited the number of floor guardians to one, it was just a matter of finding him a vanguard, and fast.

“I see. So, it was a mistake to set you up against an entire team by yourself.”

“I’m something of a martial artist myself, but, as a skeleton, it’s not very effective...”

That’s hardly the problem. This wasn’t about his proficiency in hand-to-hand combat, though I think he mistook it as personal criticism.

“No no no, don’t be so self-conscious now. It’s fine when there’s only one opponent, but when they come in a group, you have all the right to summon companions. Didn’t you have a companion? His name was—”

“Oh oh, were you talking about my friend Albert?”

“Yes, yes, that Albert-kun. He seemed to have become a skeleton swordsman now. Wasn’t he a Templar Knight in the past? His swordsmanship even put Hakurou up to a tough fight. That’s beyond just strong. If we prepare proper equipment for him, he could serve as a force to be reckoned with, couldn’t he?”

“He is an outstanding man, surely, he will be able to live up to Rimuru-sama’s expectations.”

Hearing Adalmann’s proud declaration, I, too, became confident in the idea.

“If that’s the case, please hand this gear to him later.”

I took all sorts of equipment out of my ‘Stomach’ and laid them on the ground. I heard that Albert could fight without a shield. Then I’d present him with this sword and armor—

Cursed Sword—A bastard sword that absorbed life force from the surroundings and converted it into attack power. However, it also absorbed the life force of the user. It was a complete failure.

Cursed Mail—It maintained a magic barrier that greatly raised endurance and defense against magic. However, it was, once again, a failure that absorbed the life force of the user.

These were developed by both Kurobee and Garm in pursuit of raw strength. They were planning to make them into a series but discovered the flaw that no living beings could wield them.

By the time they finished them, Kurobee, and even Garm, were exhausted. Nowadays this has become a fun tale. Nevertheless, the works they made were filled with memories, and they couldn't just throw them away. Moreover, if you were to look at their quality alone, they were both special-grade gear...

Monsters were living beings as well, and just as we thought no one could use this gear, I realized that undead could handle them just fine.

“How about them? Do you feel any worse once putting them on?”

“We are already dead, so we don’t really feel anything in particular.”

I confirmed with Adalmann, and it seemed to work all right.

As soon as he unsheathed the sword, Shuna and Shion’s expressions changed for the worse. This indicated that its ‘Life Force Absorption’ had been activated. And even so, Adalmann didn’t seem to flinch. That should mean that undead monsters were good to go with this gear.

“Okay, looks like it worked just fine.”

Adalmann sheathed the sword and, with that, ‘Life Force Absorption’ ended. Looks like even the act of unsheathing could be considered as an attack.

“There’s also this.”

It was a surcoat I made with ‘Sticky Steel Thread.’ It boasted impressive resistance to heat and cold as well as slashing attacks. Normally, this would’ve been sold in our nation’s market as a specialty with an insanely high price.

“I will take this. Albert will be overjoyed as well!”

That’s great. With Albert as the vanguard, Adalmann would have a lot more room to perform. *Oh, by the way, this reminds me.*

“By the way, Adalmann, take this,” I said, taking out a jet-black clerical robe. It looked like a dark mage robe, handsome and luxurious.

This was the most expensive product produced in the Tempest Federation and would be sold for over a hundred gold coins. For comparison, that’s the equivalent of a classy car. Even the royalty and noblemen from other nations would find it difficult to afford. It was super rare merchandise. Its level of quality went without saying. The cherry on top was its ability to ‘Automatically Regenerate’ after being torn. It was a rare piece of magic gear that was enchanted with special abilities.

“OH, OHOHOH...”

Adalmann took it from my hands with reverence.

“I’d hope you can wear this and show your prowess as a wight king facing the challengers. I think it’s suited for a floor guardian and can create some atmosphere.”

To be honest, it partially came down to just being a hobby of mine.

I asked for Ramiris’s help to re-decorate the floor. We made it look like a throne room and Adalmann was to be the king leading the army of undead monsters.

“Just leave it to me. I’m good at it, after all.”

Adalmann was quite competent.

“Then I’ll be counting on you in the future. You can also find a few powerful knights to serve as your squires.”

“Understood. Then, I hope to confirm something with you—”

“Umm, what is it?”

“Your Majesty, I wish to bring a pet of mine to this land, do I have your permission?”

A pet? Umm—sure, I guess.

“I see, I don’t really mind. You can have your pet join in the fight if you want. But take care to not let your total number of companions exceed the number of challengers.”

“Understood. The land entrusted to me by my god Rimuru-sama, I, Adalmann, shall defend it with every bone in my body!”

There he goes, overreacting again.

I was tired of dealing with this, so I decided to ignore him.

“Then, tonight we will re-decorate your floor in the style of a throne room. You can decide the recruitment of your subordinates. Should anything else come to mind, you can find Shuna and Ramiris to discuss it with.”

“YES, MY LORD—!”

“Remember Rimuru-sama’s words by heart and work hard!”

Shion, for whatever reason, concluded the conversation, leaving Shuna at a loss for words. But since Shion looked pretty self-satisfied, I didn’t tease her about it.



Skiping forward to the next day, we gathered at the appointed time.

“Hehehe, Adalmann’s floor has been remade to perfection!” Ramiris proudly reported as soon as she saw me.

Looked like she had finished preparing the throne room last night.

“Thanks. Now Adalmann can actually hold his ground.”

“Is it really okay?”

“Um—at least he would perform better than yesterday, and the days before that. However, he may still have a hard time against rank A opponents, but he should be able to force his opponent into revealing all their cards.”

If Adalmann were to be persistent in his pursuit, surely the enemies would be forced to show their true strength. If that were to be the case, it would be time for Raphael-san to shine. It would analyze the combat record and figure out a strategy for me.

All we needed to do was to apply said strategy on the next floor. Therefore, even if Adal-

mann lost, it wouldn't be an issue. However, depending on how well our next operation works out, not only Adalmann, even Gozer and Mezer may not have a chance to demonstrate their prowess.

It was better if we had multiple strategies.

And so, we had to put them into action immediately—

“What the heck have you all been doing! I've heard the news; did someone beat my dragons!”

Trouble had arrived. Milim burst into the meeting room as she roared in a furious tone. She was dragging Gobta along in one hand like a rag. Despite getting scraped across the floor, he was still breathing.

“Hehehe, I did it... I made it through!”

Gobta was babbling something incoherent, but he *did* seem to be conscious. He probably got whipped into shape pretty hard by Milim and was utterly exhausted.

In spite of this, he didn't look any stronger. Although, he *did* look like he'd been through hell, was he all right?

Ignoring my concern, Milim nodded heavily.

“Yeah. Gobta was great! I didn't expect him to survive hell mode,” she praised Gobta with a satisfied look on her face.

For Milim, of all people, to be praising him, said a lot; surely, Gobta had achieved some goals.

“Then I shall teach you the ‘Veldora-Style Killing Arts™’ as well—”

“NO WAY! Gobta is my disciple!”

Completely disregarding an exhausted Gobta laying on the ground, Veldora and Milim began to argue with one another.

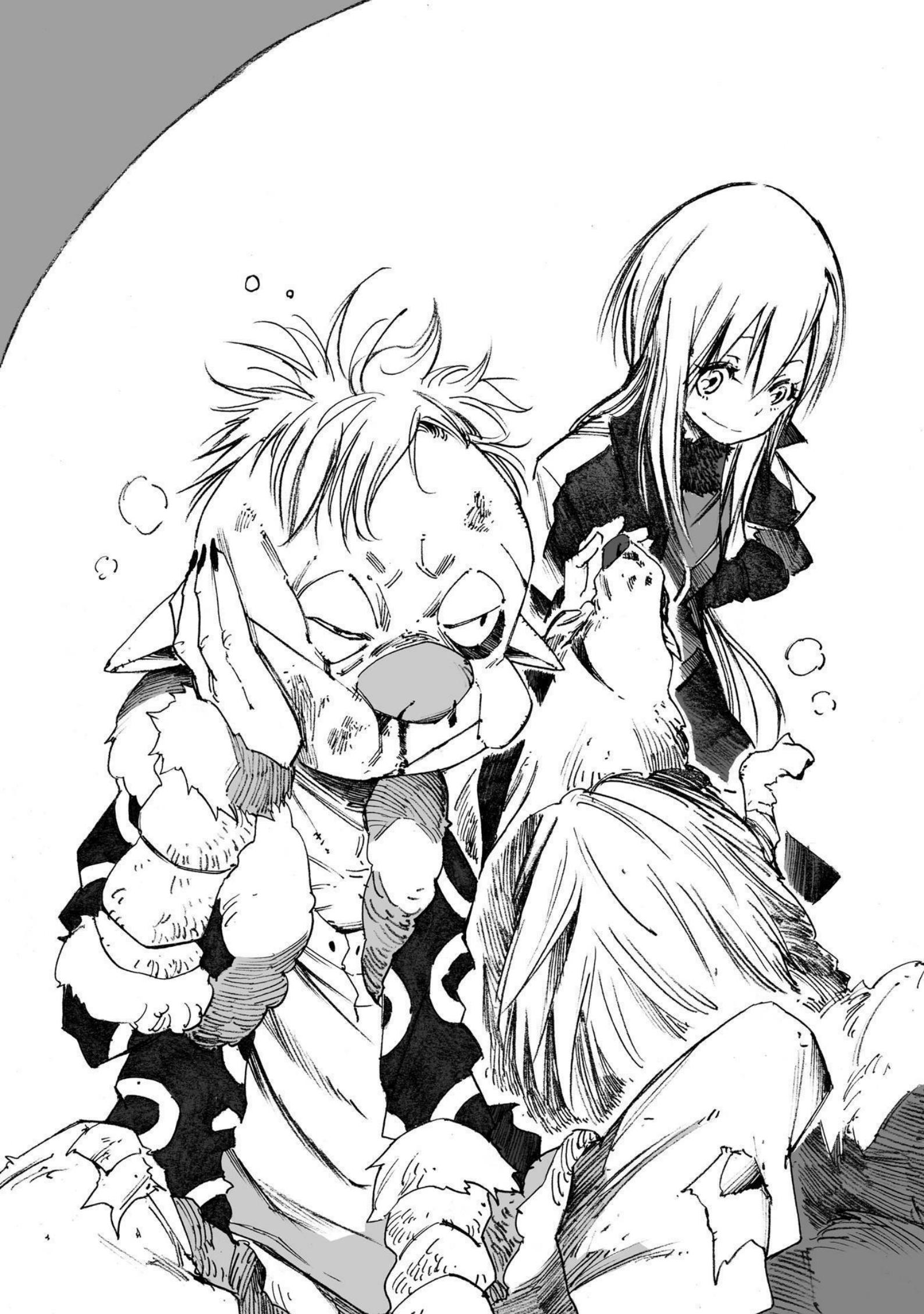
I'm not getting involved in this mess, let's see what fate had in store for Gobta. In any case, it's great that he has come back in one piece. I really need to reward him handsomely later.

The best thing for him now was to get some good rest. Upon hearing my suggestion, Gobta immediately headed to the lounge for a nap.

Ranga also made it back.

“M-master, I have returned,” Ranga said, evidently exhausted.

He stumbled as he slowly made his way over to me. Ranga's body was covered in scars just like Gobta. Their special training was clearly very intense. Ranga closed his eyes and was overjoyed while I pet his head absentmindedly.



“You worked hard, now rest up in my shadow.”

Before I could say another word, Ranga dove into my shadow.

Something off topic:

Later, once Gobta had recovered, I asked him how their training went, and he told me that it was mostly combat practice. Milim found monsters equal to or stronger than them to brawl with. Fight, repeat, and repeat some more.

After Gobta had mastered communicating with Ranga, they proceeded to fight Karion and Midley from dusk till dawn.

Milim had told Gobta: “No matter how hard you try, you can’t increase the amount of magicule you have. But rest assured, you can work around this with your ability to unite with Ranga. It’ll be your job to utilize this immense strength wisely later on! All you need to do is practice your skills, leave the task of increasing magicule to Ranga!”

“And after that, I have been receiving special training to practice my battle sense,” Gobta said with a smile.

He also obtained Extra Skill ‘Sage’ which had the ability to accelerate his thought processing.

This guy’s going places.



Well then, since Milim had come, that proved to make things significantly easier from here on out.

I had been busy making preparations after I bid Adalmann farewell last night. And, as it turned out, I managed to finish it on time.

I took out the items I had just completed. Veldora, Ramiris, Milim; all three of them were transfixed by the items in my hands, gazing at them with intrigue.

“Everyone, check this out! I have some special items here. I’ve been working on it for a while, and it’s gonna be revolutionary. It’ll help resolve all the problems in the labyrinth *and* introduce a whole new level of fun into our lives!”

As I finished, I handed each of them one of the items.

I didn’t expect Milim to come today, but in truth, I was going to call her when this item was put to practice. So, it all worked out, I had already prepared one for Milim.

I was inspired by the homunculus used by Duke Elalude in the past.

Since we could replace our bodies temporarily, this opened the door for many fun opportunities.

“What is this?”

“I’ve never seen this before; can you eat it?”

“Hmm, in my opinion, this is something similar to a soul container.”

The three expressed their views.

Give up already, Ramiris, you can’t eat this. Does she think that everything I prepare is food...? Oh well, never mind.

Veldora’s answer was the closest. It was indeed something made to emulate a soul container. The moment that you transferred your consciousness into the body of a homunculus, you would need to cast special magic techniques in order to establish a connection to the soul. I ran an ‘Analyze and Assess’ on the process and modified it myself. It was the same container I gave Treyni-san, the container for the ‘Chaos Core.’

I officially named it Emulated Soul⁶.

“Veldora got the closest answer. This is an emulation of a soul container. I can’t exactly recreate something like a ‘Soul,’ so I decided to settle for the next best thing.”

“Oh, so how did you make something like that?” Veldora seemed very pleased to learn that his answer was the closest and asked me rather smugly.

There was no need to hold back now, so I might as well just explain it. But before that, I’d be a little dramatic. After all, it took me a lot of time and effort to make these, surely, I could shock them a little bit.

“Hold your horses, I will explain in detail. But first, take a look at this. Hold this in your hand and picture your favorite monster before your eyes.”

Apart from the ‘Emulated Souls,’ I took out some black orbs and put one in everyone’s hands. Veldora tilted his head while gazing intently at the fist-sized object in his hand.

“Hmm? Anything I want?”

“Yeah. Any monster that exists. Even the crazy rare type.”

“Like a goblin or an orc? Can I even have a one-horned rabbit or a man-eating bear?”

“Huh? Sure. But just remember to pick the ones you like. Don’t complain about not liking it after you’ve decided.”

“Hmm, monsters. Are we making monsters to defeat the labyrinth challengers...?”

“That’s how it is.”

They were as sharp as ever during times like these. Seemingly understanding my words, they began to draw the image in their minds.

The black orb was a Master Core⁷. In order to craft this, the magic core of Charybdis was instrumental. I isolated it in my ‘Stomach’ and had Raphael analyze it thoroughly. It was the ‘Core’ of a large monster and the source of its power.

Before I became a demon lord, all of its negative energy seemed to have been consumed. That’s why, in that moment, it was merely an empty shell. It therefore became the perfect

⁶The ruby text was rather incomprehensible ギジコン (Gigicon), which is why we went with the kanji

⁷The Kanji reads ‘Magic Essence Core.’

medium for securely containing a soul. And that was—

After some time, the magicule in the air gradually concentrated in the ‘Master Cores’ and created monsters. All of them were the ideal forms imagined by Veldora, Milim, and Ramiris.

“How about this, isn’t it interesting? And just as Veldora said, let’s take on the challengers using these monsters. That was the main reason why I gathered everyone here.”

Although that wasn’t the only reason, no one pursued the matter. The trio were deeply moved after seeing the monsters they created.

Ignoring the three of them, I also began to create my own monster. It was a floating soul that had a transparent body—a ghost.

If we don’t consider the stats, it possessed the special ability ‘Physical Nullification.’ Since it was a ghost, you couldn’t exactly hit it physically. And in turn, because it also didn’t possess any physical means *to attack*, you could only use magic attacks yourself.

Next up, we have Veldora.

I saw a skeleton standing there, a skeleton warrior. He wouldn’t be able to use magic, but perhaps it could learn how to use it in the future. Once it evolved to be a more advanced species, it could probably learn ‘Qi Fighting’ as well.

On the other hand, we have Milim.

Her creature had a damp, gooey body with no hands or feet, and its red color made it stand out—it was a slime.

Hey...

“Oi, why did you make a slime? Are you trying to make fun of me?”

“No way, it’s because... You wanted me to think of a monster I like. Why are you complaining?!”

She turned the table against me instead. Never mind, since she seemed to be having fun. Her eyes were glowing as she shouted ‘Slime!’ I did want to ask why it was bright red.

Last but not least, Ramiris.

A knight? Hold on, is it actually a set of armor? It was animated armor. Even though it was a full plate set of armor, for some reason, it looked woefully shabby.

However, among the four monsters we created, hers was the largest. My guess was that Ramiris had an inferiority complex due to her small size. That’s why she imagined a giant monster, to compensate. Yet at the end of the day, it was all looks and nothing behind it, very much Ramiris’s style.

Everyone was gaping in awe at their monsters.

But there were more surprises in store for them.

“Listen now, folks. As Veldora has said, we are going to use these monsters to beat the labyrinth invaders.”

“Hmm? Invaders—?”

“Indeed. These monsters are guardians of the labyrinth, after all. In that sense, wouldn’t

the people coming in be invaders?"

"I see, I see how it is."

"H-how, what is?"

"Hm-hm, Ramiris, we are going to stand at the front line with the labyrinth monsters. So, it would be inappropriate to still call them challengers."

"I get it, now that you've put it this way, it would indeed sound strange."

"Uh-huh, I thought as much."

Veldora explained in my stead to make Ramiris realize what I meant. Then there was also Milim who was pretending like she understood everything. I wasn't sure whether she grasped what was going, but I ought to continue the topic, nonetheless.

"Then, do you guys think it is possible to defeat the invaders using these monsters?"

"No way, they're too weak."

"The armor I created looks really cool, but there's no way they can make it."

"Rimuru, I'm so disappointed in you. I've seen this coming a mile away, these monsters are an insult to my expectations."

Hehehe, as I suspected, they started talking trash without a second thought.

By the way, Ramiris and Milim, why are you guys acting all smug. It's kinda pissing me off. But since I'm the bigger slime, I shall tolerate it for now.

"That's not all, just yet. What comes next is the real deal. Go take a seat and get comfortable. Then aim your Emulated Soul at your monster and shout 'Possess.'"

I saw a fair amount of skepticism in their faces, yet they still listened and sat down in a comfortable position. The chairs in the conference room were all very cozy and had exquisite cushioning.

All at once, they shouted: " " "POSSESS!" " "

I shouted along with them, and not a moment later, the Emulated Soul in our hands began to glow and was absorbed by the monsters. It then began to merge with the Master Core.

The possession of the Master Core was complete.

And at the same time—my consciousness faded. And soon after, the view in front of me changed. The effective range of my usual 'Magic Perception' decreased sharply, making me feel that my field of view had suddenly become much smaller.

By now I had simulated the five senses, so it felt much better than when I first reincarnated. However, unlike me, the other three had not experienced something like this in the past. I figured that they were going to have a hard time. With that in mind, I glanced around...

From my reduced field of vision, I could see a skeleton warrior stretching and a slime moving at abnormal speeds. There was also a set of armor going through rigid motions, looking like some shoddy, bootleg Tin Man.

All three of them sporting their new appearances, each had successfully 'possessed' the monsters they created.



Hmm, I could feel myself settling in. It felt more natural than I expected, as if I were just controlling my own body. But my abilities were greatly curbed, so moving around wasn't really smooth. Then again, once I got to know the ghost's movement, it became very easy to react to things. And soon enough I got to move as I pleased.

It seemed to be no different for the other three.

“““THIS IS AWESOME!””” the trio shouted in sync, after spending some time to confirm the conditions of their new bodies.

“Right? How do you like the result of my research?”

“It's amazing, truly amazing, Rimuru!”

“Rimuru, is awesome! I knew you weren't a simple guy!”

“I was right, after all. I knew I was right to place my confidence in you!”

These guys change their tune on a dime. But seeing how happy they look, it's truly great.

“Um, looks like it was a success. What should we do now that we are transferred to these monsters... Don't need to spell it out for you guys now, do I?”

“Kukuku, what a silly question. You didn't want to leave it up to the monsters and hoped that we would duke it out ourselves. What an interesting idea you have, Rimuru.”

“Indeed. I'm super pumped to start my own conquest of the labyrinth in this form, though...”

“I know. I get it now; this is a game!”

“What? Is this true, Veldora?”

“Mentor! Then can we defeat enemies with this body? And perhaps make this body evolve as well...?”

As expected from Veldora. He saw right through me. Yep, I was imitating an MMORPG, a Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game. Although, this wasn't exactly on a large scale, so I suppose it wasn't really an MMO, but more like an MO?

Never mind, that's not important.

The important thing was that we wanted to have some fun in the labyrinth that we went through all the effort to build. That's the whole point.

“Hehehe, you sure know your stuff, Veldora. You saw right through me so easily. But don't get the wrong idea. I did develop this in order to enjoy playing this game, but don't we have other things to take care of before that?”

“GAHAHAHA, are you talking about that thing? So, are we supposed to use these bodies to take care of the challenger problem—no, to defend against the invaders?”

Looks like he got what I meant.

Indeed, I planned to use the monster body—monster avatar—to sabotage the rapidly progressing team Green Rebellion.

Just like what Ramiris said before, I was considering different ways we could have fun, like leveling up the bodies and learning how to fight with these inconvenient bodies that had many limitations compared to our original ones.

My true intention was for us to be able to get some fun out of defeating monsters and

challengers. I never thought it would come in handy in this way.

“However, once we’ve done enough preparations, I plan to use it purely to experience the fun of challenging the labyrinth.”

“I see, that way we can also try out our own labyrinth, right?”

“That’s exactly what I meant. Moreover, we can’t really show our true strength using this monster avatar. That means we can alter our perspective and see what problems the labyrinth has.”

“Umm, you’re right. After all, if I were to confront the challengers in the field, my authority as the king of the labyrinth would come into question. If I were, however, to possess some fragile monster...”

“Yes! No longer as a ‘Demon Lord’ or True Dragon, but as a monster that can unabashedly fight the invaders in the open.”

“I get it, that sounds like fun!” Milim chimed in, fully on board.

Switching to a new, inconvenient body with all of its limitations probably felt fresh and exciting to her, seeing as she normally did as she pleased while flaunting her power. She seemed thrilled and intrigued by the concept.

“Then let’s get to it.”

“Umm, before we start the game properly, let’s clear out the trash and make the place pretty again.”

“Time to show my moves off. I’ve been itching to test out my forty-eight ultra-instinct kill moves!”

“Although I’m not feeling myself in this, I’m still tempted to try things out!”

We set off, filled with motivation. Now it was up to us to take care of the troublesome team Green Rebellion and make them no longer capable of challenging the lower floors.

In order to achieve this goal—I had come up with an even more devious plan.



Our first order of business was to get familiar with our monster avatars. The second important step was gearing up.

We were equipped with ‘Revival Bracelets’ that suffered from no usage limits, allowing us to resurrect, no matter how many times we died in a row. But that alone would not be enough, as our monster avatars were just recently created and were still low-tier monsters. Right now, we were nothing more than a couple of chumps, and no matter what we did, we could not harm members of Green Rebellion.

However, if we were to somehow become equipped with some high-grade gear...

“Next up, it’s important for us to get armed. Let’s go find Kurobee and ask him to make us some weapons and armor!”

“Oh oh, I see! If we were to continue as we are, right now, I’d be nothing more than a rickety skeleton.”

“Fufu, you fools! My body is a slime, the agile extraordinaire! I’m goo-d to go with what I got!”

“Sorry if this is a dumb question, but if I’m a set of armor... Can I still wear armor?”

“Who knows? Perhaps you can make it work? Let’s take a look first. Milim doesn’t need any weapons, so please stay and keep watch.”

“W-what kind of nonsense! Of course, I *could* stick with what I have now, but I still want to gear up!”

How stubborn, why didn’t you just say that from the start.

Naturally, I wanted some gear too. So, I temporarily broke out of ‘Possession’ and prepared to head out.

“If you want to get back to your original form, just utter ‘Exit’ and you’ll be able to return to your bodies.”

I demonstrated the exit method to them and taught them how to store their Avatar Core⁸.

The Avatar Core would only record monsters created at a prior point in time. One core corresponded to one monster, and you could not change its owner. This item represented everyone’s core, so I reminded them to take good care of it. Thus, I gave further clarification, “With this, you can also call upon your avatar whenever you want.”

“This is amazing. But when we do use ‘Possession,’ we should think about where to place our original body.”

Veldora and Ramiris had reverted to their original forms and stood up from their seats.

“To make sure we don’t lose it, how about we seal it in the bracelet?”

“That’s right, I was gonna do that as well!”

She began to stroke the orb—Avatar Core—happily.

I’d have someone work on the bracelet as well. By the way, what was Milim doing?

“Oi, Mili—”

“I’m going in this form!”

Without letting me finish, Milim, still in her slime form, jumped into my arms.

“Let’s go!” she protested, fully prepared to ignore everyone’s words, and had the scene under her control.

It looked like she really adored the avatar.

That’s kind of childish... But, welp, she’s a kid, after all. You can’t reason with kids about how childish they are. I decided to give up and began to walk away.

We arrived at Kurobee’s workshop.

“Are you there, Kurobee?”

⁸These are the result of combining the Master Core with an Emulated Soul.

“Oh oh, is it Rimuru-sama? What can I do for you today?”

As soon as I called, Kurobee came out to welcome us.

Seeing that Veldora and Ramiris were with me too, he looked quite surprised.

“Umm,” I said as we walked into the workshop, “I wanted to take some weapons.”

It had been a while since I was last there, the number of people in the workshop had increased—including monsters. And it was still as hot as ever. I wasn’t affected by temperature though, so it didn’t matter to me. But it looked like working here was quite the hardship.

“Looks like you’ve gotten more disciples.”

“Yes, thanks to your Majesty. Although they still have a long way to go, there are still many talented individuals among our ranks.”

We toured around the workshop as we chatted.

The disciples looked up at the sound of my voice and, seeing me, stood up in unison and saluted.

I was somewhat taken aback, but Kurobee had gotten used to it at this point.

“Don’t stop! Get back to work,” he bellowed and forced the disciples to carry on.

However, I could relate to how they felt. It was like when a top executive went to visit the average joe’s workplace. People would get nervous. Moreover, the lower on the chain of command, the more nervous the staff would feel.

Although the example doesn’t entirely line up with the situation at hand, in this nation, I was the king. I didn’t really pay attention to such things in the past, but now it was probably better for me to send someone in advance to inform them about such a visit.

Surely, it would concern people if I were to just drop by at random like this. In the company of my original world, if someone such as a general manager were to come around and visit, we would launch an office clean-up the day before and make preparations etc. If the person visiting were to be the director of the company, we would have prepared the office in a way that gave the impression that no failure was tolerated.

The higher the status the visitor was, the more casual they tended to behave, which in turn made us at the bottom put too much thought into preparations.

With that being said... I sincerely hoped they wouldn’t prepare something dramatic every time just because of me. It also made me feel bad to suddenly call Kurobee while he was busy, so next time I’d be sure to come during off-hours.

“Sorry to barge in on you,” I announced to the room, “I won’t be dropping in this sporadically in the future, no need to be so nervous.”

It may cause a problem if they acted too familiar with me, but there wasn’t a need to be nervous about it. I liked to act cool, but I had no taste for embarrassing people. If they became too nervous, they wouldn’t know how to react, which would also be troubling to me. I preferred an idiot-like response from someone like Gobta.

TPO—time, place and occasion when reacting to things—I hoped they would understand this.

The disciples were calmed by my words.

Confirming that, I nodded and entered the back room.

—As a side note...

There was something I didn't know at the time. Those disciples were not just nervous because I was their demon lord.

Without my notice, Tempest held a popularity contest. I was voted as one of the top three idols. They were me, Shuna and Shion.

I heard that my popularity seemed to have been extraordinarily high. In addition, Ramiris and Milim were candidates as well. I don't dare to say the ranking, but I heard that Milim and I smashed the top of the charts.

Seriously, should I sigh or feel joy about their growth? I was dumbfounded after being informed of what they were doing behind my back.



“Which types of gear do you need?” as we entered Kurobee’s private quarters, he cut to the chase.

“About that—”

Since he asked what we wanted, we each began to list all the items we had in mind.

“I want to ask Garm to craft some armor for us. It should be fun for you two to work together again.”

“You have a point. I was going to check on Garm anyway.”

With that said, we accompanied Kurobee on his way to Garm’s workshop.

We stirred up a commotion once more, but I played dumb this time.

“Gear for monsters? Ahh, master’s still got all the interesting ideas as always.”

Garm was rather shocked as we each ‘Possessed’ our avatars in front of him.

“I understand. Then I shall do as you asked, actually, let me prepare something even better!”

“Just count on me. I’m getting the creative itch as well. I’m going to create *the* ultra-strong gear that no human can hope to wield!”

Kurobee and Garm got on with their craft immediately.

I’m looking forward to it—I thought to myself and left with the folks.

It was gonna take days for the crafting to be completed. We spent this time getting used to the avatars, and thus we began our training.

We did things like fighting monsters on the upper floors or attacking newcomers who seemed like actual adventurers. During these few days, we began to assign roles and were getting pretty good at it. But before we had reached that level of teamwork, we took plenty of

beatings.

We were even losing to beginner teams on the upper floors. There were times when we were taken out by our own traps set in the labyrinth. Those were some awkward moments. That did really piss me off though, leading to the development of magic items that would prevent the labyrinth traps from getting triggered by us. However, the times we did fall to these traps would remain as fond memories.

Ramiris fell into a trap, getting Veldora tangled up in it as well. I floated into the air while Milim got pushed against the ceiling. Since I didn't have to worry about getting caught in traps, I had gotten careless and forgot to alert them. It was a huge misstep, but, speaking of which, Ramiris... *How did you end up falling into a trap?* I could feel everyone relentlessly teasing her about it.

And so, as we endured, we trained all day and night without even catching a wink of sleep.

In combat, the most important thing was coordination. Under normal circumstances, we would've been able to call out to each other or give signals with a glance. However, we didn't have neat tricks like that. Mostly because Veldora and Milim were both tryhards.

However, I did have a Skill that was basically like cheating. I could use 'Telepathy Net' to contact everyone and deliver them precise commands. With myself as the command post, Veldora, Milim, and Ramiris were my foot soldiers. And in that way, we drastically increased our strength and raised our standards.

Once we could move with a certain level of confidence, we began to review our teamwork. Days passed as we waited for the equipment to be finished.

It was then that we were informed about Green Rebellion managing to break through Floor 49.

"This is bad. Those people finally beat the tempest serpent."

"Their combat style is extremely meticulous. Their first group of combatants would collect intelligence, followed by the rest of the teams focusing on draining the enemy's stamina, and finally beating the guardian using their main force."

Even if a guardian were to be defeated, they would be revived at full health shortly thereafter. However, in the case that a guardian won, the scars and tiredness accrued would remain. If it were to continue to fight, the circumstances would clearly be in the favor of the challengers.

"That was our miscalculation. We should've provided more ways for the guardians to heal themselves."

"But all those monsters rely on instincts to survive," Veldora commented. His rationale was that those monsters weren't intelligent enough to use healing items.

That was correct, but perhaps there was still a way.

"Should we perhaps ask Treyni-san for help? Being the labyrinth managers, surely, they would be able to heal the monsters?"

"Ah, I see. I should go ask her for help!"

And that was how Treyni-san's sisters became part of the aid team to heal the monsters

when they were wrapped up in continuous fights.

Thus, one by one, we managed to address all the issues.

Next—

“Those people are approaching Floor 49 fast, what do we do, Rimuru?” Milim asked anxiously.

Like she said, Green Rebellion was about to enter the final battle ground with us.

“Our coordination should be sufficient despite our lack of equipment. Shall we attack them straight away?”

“I agree! It’s finally time for me to shine. I’m gonna beat the devil out of those folks!”

Veldora and Ramiris were pumped.

To be honest, even if we were to fight seriously, our chances of winning weren’t that high. I put my strongest traps on Floor 49, so that was the only location where we could pull back team Green Rebellion.

“This can’t be helped, huh? We should at least wear some emergency gear—”

Anyway, even if we were wearing top gear crafted by Kurobee and Garm, we wouldn’t be able to face our enemies head-on. Although it would greatly increase the chances of our victory, so we might as well give it a try.

Upon thinking so, I was about to decide when—

Knock knock.

The sound of someone knocking on the door rang in the meeting room.

“Rimuru-sama, Kurobee wanted to tell you that ‘He’s ready,’” Shion notified me.

Hearing the news, we looked at each other with grins on our faces.

The gear specially crafted for our monster avatars had been completed.

My gear were the Grim Reaper’s scythe and robes of hell. A ghost could wear equipment as well, it was a specific property of magical gear.

Veldora’s got the Grim Reaper’s bastard sword and full body armor of hell. His left hand was equipped with the great shield of hell’s gate. He was fully geared up.

As for Milim who was playing a slime, she could only be equipped with simple things. She first swallowed the Grim Reaper’s javelin and wore a crimson feathered cape. She immediately gained a pair of red wings after equipping it.

That’s some incredible change.

“The gear has to be equipped or it won’t activate the effect!” Milim said with glee.

Since she was happy, I had no room to say anything.

Ramiris was next. She asked for heavy full body armor from Kurobee. The armor itself was finely crafted, the problem was whether or not she could wear it. Ramiris anxiously transferred herself to her avatar and tried to put on the armor. At that moment, lo and behold, the armor had been swapped out. With a loud ‘Clang,’ the rubbish armor fell to the ground and turned into dust before being blown away by the wind.

Ramiris's animated armor became heavy animated armor. This was not an evolution, and it also didn't seem to be a change in equipment. Instead, the pieces of armor themselves swapped their places.

"Eh, I move so swiftly now!"

Just as Ramiris said, before this her movement was very unnatural, like she needed to be lubricated. Now her movement looked very smooth. This would, surely, make coordination much smoother with her.

I never expected the quality of the armor to have an effect on movement. What an unexpected discovery.

Seeing how happy Ramiris looked, I asked her to choose her weapons and shield.

"Pooh! Stuff like shields are unnecessary for me!" saying that, she chose a large two-handed weapon, the Grim Reaper's great axe.

Its sheer might makes it a top-notch weapon, though wielding it may prove difficult. But never mind that, this would do. She always got mocked for being weak, so she probably got a little carried away this time. Interestingly, it reflected her personality as well.

And so, everyone changed to their new equipment.

This equipment fell under unique-grade. Since they were adjusted to be equipped by monsters, their designs, however, were rather unbalanced and comical in nature. Still, for any amateur adventurers, this was incredibly strong gear. We also applied some sort of a curse to register their users, so that they couldn't be stolen. To us right now, these were the best gear out there.

This new switch restored our resolve. Before we embarked on our battle, our spirits were soaring.

We checked the status of our avatars.

My ghost had given up physical attacks and focused on magic and mental attacks. It served the role of a sorcerer. I hoped to learn about 'Spirit Magic' and 'Illusion Magic' soon, since my goal was to become a wizard. Aside from that, I also wanted to learn 'Holy Magic.' What would happen if I placed my faith in myself? That was kind of part of my experiment.

Veldora's skeleton swordsman was a Jack of all trades, he could do anything. He served the role of a heavy warrior, but seemed to want to learn magic and become a magic knight.

Milim's slime, on the other hand, specialized in speed and one-shot-kills. She's the super buffed type. Or perhaps I should call her the romantic type?⁹ It was her job to be the assassin. She may have been able to learn a thing or two from Souei, but I had forbidden her from troubling others when she was just fooling around.

Her approach was to launch an ambush by dropping from the ceiling for quick takedowns. If the enemies fell for it, she'd look like a boss. But what would she do if the enemies saw

⁹TL note: I believe Romantic Type (浪漫型) here has a similar meaning to phrase like 'メカは男の浪漫' (Robots are men's romance), it is just an otaku thing to say when you really enjoy/are attracted to certain archetype or genre.

through such a setup? Well, I think she would run away, considering her high mobility. In some ways, slime was the perfect form for this.

Ramiris's heavy animated armor focused on strong attacks. It possessed some level of defense and even had the potential to be quite balanced. She fit the role of berserker. Not that she had really gone berserk, but it seemed that she has never considered her defensive capabilities. That was just how I had been calling her since she decided to become a dangerous monster bent on attacking. Once she had gotten familiarized with her abilities, I wanted her to team up with Veldora and play the role of shield for him.



Everything was prepared.

We wouldn't get hungry, so our ability to fight on end would really shine.

Let's fire up our spirits and try our best in stopping the Green Rebellion.

With a burning spirit, we stepped onto the battlefield. Yet it turned out—to our great disappointment, we crushed the Green Rebellion with ease...

Gotta stay calm, yep, I gotta stay calm.

As I *calmly* ran 'Analyze and Assess' on my avatar, I realized its power was almost at rank A. This was mostly thanks to my gear, but it's pretty much the case when I was able to use my power smoothly.

However, we miscalculated one thing. The abilities of our original selves would be reflected in the avatars. Even though we couldn't use all of our Skills, with 'Thought Communication' and 'Thought Acceleration' alone, these were enough to turn the favor to our side.

For me personally, I could cast magic so fast it was almost cheating. Bound by my mana pool, I could not use all the magic, but my vast arcane knowledge remained. Compared to a third-rate court mage, my magic was still leagues ahead. I didn't need to chant my spells and could cast consecutively without delay. Surely our enemy couldn't handle that.

As for Veldora, I almost suspected that he had a pair of eyes in the back of his head. He swung his sword like a master of swordsmanship.

"GAHAHAHA! My 'Veldora-Style Killing Arts™' incorporates countless sword techniques. Hold on, that's not how it goes—" and on he went with his nonsense.

Veldora seemed to have learned some techniques from the manga he read. And I thought that mangas were just making up the drawings, looks like there were actually practical techniques out there as well.

Veldora was pretty unpredictable to begin with, so nothing could really surprise me at this point. Looking at him closely enough, you would realize he was acting like a moron.

On the other hand, we had Milim. She wasn't lying when she said that she focused on speed. She zipped around at break-neck speeds. It was beyond what the average person could control, let alone replicate, yet with Milim's reflexes, it was a piece of cake. Actually, I should say that that's just how fast a slime could move when it got serious. She could ignore friction while sliding across the ground and closed in on the enemies with a bounce. The way she darted along the ceiling with the same speed, surely, made it close to impossible for your everyday adventurer to spot her clearly.

I was a slime as well, yet I'd never realized such a thing until now. I was profoundly shocked.

"WAHAHAHA! You are so slow, all so slow. Eat this, you dimwit!"

Milim snuck behind her enemy without making a sound, acting all smug about it, and impaled the enemy's neck with her Grim Reaper's javelin—most fights with her ended like that.

Physical attacks couldn't easily harm her, and in order to cast magic against her, you would first need to get a clear fix on her. Now that I thought about this, it was pretty terrifying to fight Milim's slime as your opponent.

The person to complement Veldora and Milim was Ramiris, the 'Professional Wingman.'

"WHOOOA! LET ME SHOW YOU HOW STRONG I AM!"

She led the charge as soon as we saw enemies. In addition, Ramiris's combat style was to fight people head-on. Under normal circumstances, this was a risky move that rarely acted in her favor. She's such an idiot. But for the rest of us, her doing so was the right tactic. After reminding her several times to no avail, we turned this in our favor. In short, we used Ramiris as bait while we launched a three-pronged attack.

Normally, it would've been tricky to pull this off. But Ramiris set loose on a blind rampage, utterly disregarding defense. All the enemies saw was a large set of armor wielding the Grim Reaper's great axe barreling towards them. By then, confronting it was inevitable.

Because she completely neglected defense, all of their attacks were focused on Ramiris. However, she had 'Pain Nullification,' that's why she didn't even flinch and launched attacks one after another.

In addition, the armor itself was very sturdy. Sparing no cost and paying no mind to weight, the heavy animated armor was crafted out of thick sheets of magisteel. That imbued it with some level of 'Self Reconstruction,' so a couple scratches were nothing to worry about. The sheer weight of the armor was enough to crush the average person, and imagining such a giant hunk of metal charging at you—the threat it posed to our enemies was readily apparent.

Oh, and then there was my healing magic. As part of my experiment, I tried to cast 'Holy Magic' and found that I easily managed to pull it off, much to my surprise. As opposed to believing in myself, I controlled the spiritrons that I originally could not manipulate through the use of prayers.

This time, with me turned into a ghost, both the mana of my body and the words of my prayer would reach my original body. I then cast the magic borrowing the power of my original

body. The purpose of prayer seemed to be to convey the will to execute the action.

When manipulating spiritrons,’ you needed to listen to the individual wish of the prayer to execute them accordingly—with such a complex action, no matter how advanced my processing power was, I wouldn’t be able to do it. That’s why I turned to a different method and had different individuals conduct the calculation.

As the number of people who prayed—my believers—increased, my mana rose in kind. In other words, I could improve my “godliness.”

In addition, because I was connected to my believers, it also served as a secret technique. I could use the minds of my own believers to expand my processing power. This would also allow me to lend them mana and processing power.

I see how it is now. That’s why Luminas wanted to expand the number of followers she had. With a large number of followers, she could instantly cast large-scale magic.

‘Ultimate Secret of Faith and Grace’—I had learned a terrifying Skill.

Let’s drop that for now.

Considering this, I could now cast ‘Holy Magic.’ As a result, our team was extremely strong. And now, on Floor 49 filled with vicious intentions, we eliminated every member of the Green Rebellion.

We shouldn’t be afraid to face anything; we should embrace challenges. Had we attacked head-on, we would have been defeated long ago. But rather, we honed our coordination and utilized traps.

We ordered the slime dolls to damage our enemies’ weapons.

We used slime rain to distract them and cause them to waste their stamina.

We took the chance to ambush them and backed them into the slime pool.

Ramiris roared to attract the enemies’ attention when Milim launched her sneak attack to completely disrupt the enemy’s formation. Veldora focused on cutting them off and isolating the rearguard. We used the giant slime to defeat the weaker mages and thieves and had Veldora and Ramiris force the rest of their main combat force into the slime pool.

The goal was to destroy their gear with strong acid. Damaging the main force of Green Rebellion was to slow down their progress. That was our goal in this fight.

“Annoying! All our hard work—ruined!”

The pathetic cry made me realize that the captain of Green Rebellion was a woman. That surprised me a bit, but what she said next caught my attention even more so.

“Let’s retreat while we’ve still made some gains. This is probably a good point to stop.”

“You’re right, ‘home nation’ has given the order anyway.”

She talked to a surviving male member of the team that seemed to be her subordinate. She did just say that “the home nation has given the order.” I heard that the mercenary group Green Rebellion didn’t belong to any nation; they were free-lancers. I heard that their benefactor was the Kingdom of Ingracia, could it be that their entire group was hired? The way she said “home nation gave the order” sounded as though their loyalty towards it was more than a mere customer.

Looks like I need to be mindful of it.

Since the dungeon would attract customers, it was gonna attract many people with unchecked backgrounds. Regarding that, I'd been mentally prepared for it from the start, but it seemed that I needed to remind everyone about that once again. The Green Rebellion incident made me realize this once more. Moreover—

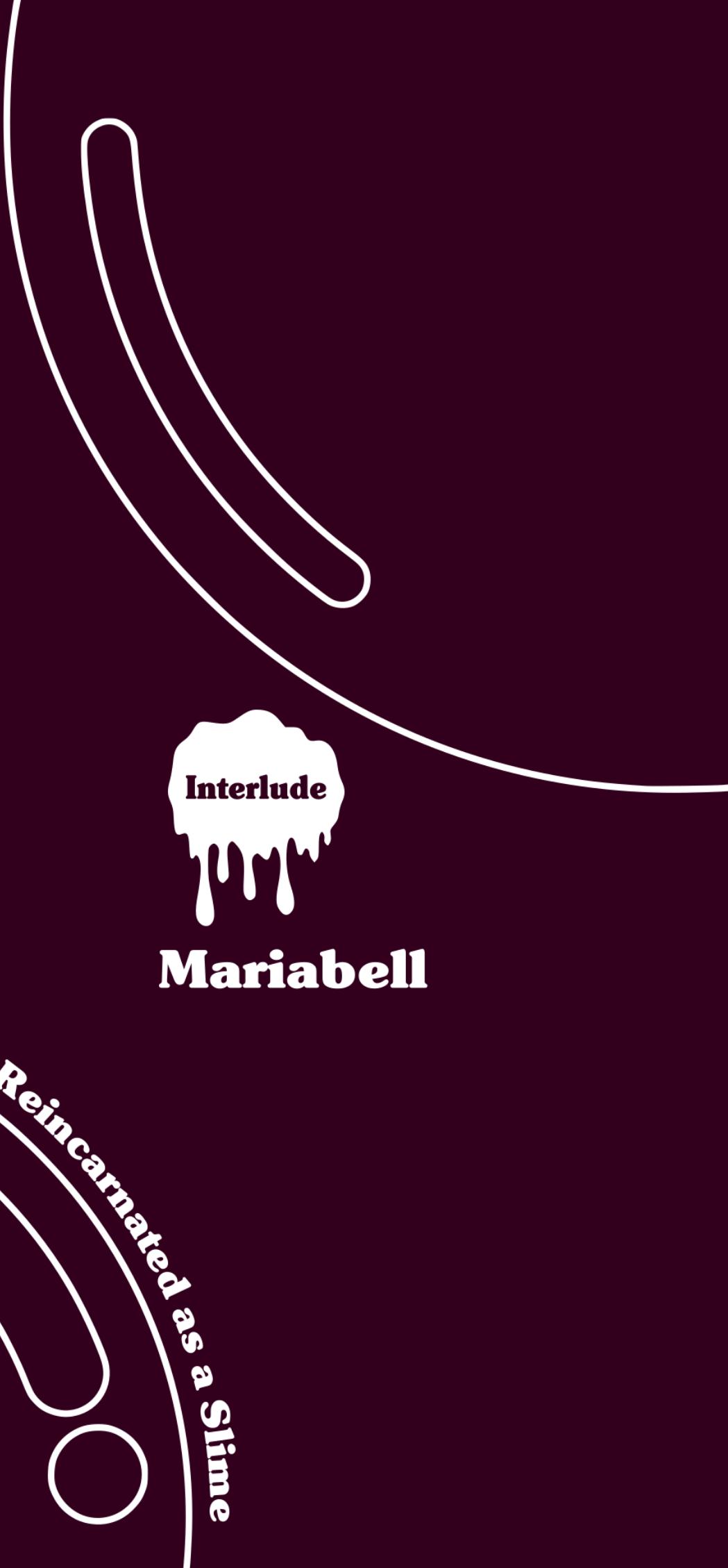
“This is wonderful.”

“Right, we won!”

“That goes without saying, we are the invincible team!”

These idiots need to be reminded or they'll soon get carried away with their immediate victory.

That being said, right now even I was basking in the joy of completing our mission.



Interlude

Mariabell

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Interlude

Mariabell

Mariabell was a ‘Reincarnated One.’ She recalled that her former self was a ruler that dominated Europe. In her past life, she manipulated the economy at will; even war was but a pawn on her board.

Bullets rained on the battlefield. People murdered their own kind, creating a hell on Earth that was bathed in blood. Houses were burnt down, families were lost, and people grieved and moaned. She built her affluence on top of all these misfortunes and not once had she doubted her actions.

Mariabell lived a happy life until she passed by old age—

She was able to enjoy the same lifestyle now. She was born as a princess of the small kingdom of Siltrosso. She was a member of the clan that ruled the Western Nations as their overlords.

In this world plagued by monsters, kingdoms wouldn’t easily wage war against each other. Under such circumstances, it prompted the birth of the Western State Council. One man formed the council hundreds of years prior, the Grand Elder of the Rosso family—Granbell Rosso.

No one knew how old this mysterious person was.

As the Five Great Elders controlled the Council, Granbell was the head of the Elders. And as the Rosso family cemented its strength in the Western Nations, he was also the clan leader.

That’s who Granbell Rosso was, even a princess under his direct lineage would not be able to meet him. In fact, even Mariabell’s brothers were unable to meet with the Five Great Elders. No one really had the fortune to do so. But that was normal.

However, Mariabell was different. Her knowledge and will were something that even Granbell could not ignore.



Currency is required for the development of a civilization.

In the past, crops such as wheat were used for bartering, but as humanity entered the era of monetary economy, civilization made a giant leap forward. The main reason was due to growth in the scale of economies.

In addition, the value of currency also changed. Currencies were once made of valuable metals such as gold and silver to ensure its value. However, in the new age, physical currencies were replaced by certificates and documents during trade.

That was the birth of the paper money economy.

And so, a mechanism required for the money to flow was born—the banking system. You would receive receipts by storing your gold coins in a bank, and in return, you could exchange those receipts for the physical, material currency. The banks could utilize the money stored in them at will; thus, they came up with a different mode of business: loaning money to those in need and turning a profit by setting interest rates.

This was a sorcery worse than alchemy.

Primarily, there was no money there, and yet, interest was accruing. On one hand was the total amount of physical money circulating in the market, and on the other was the total amount of receipts. When comparing the two, there would always be a certain unrecoverable difference... Someone would eventually have to pay the price for being unable to cover this fabricated margin.

This fundamental issue was inherent to the system of lending money and receiving interest.

Such a phenomenon became even worse when physical currencies were replaced by paper money. People would ask for loans from rich people with the interest rate as bait. Afterward, they would use the money to invest in financial products—to use money to make money. This cycle would continue beyond national boundaries and into the entire world.

Guaranteed in the name of the state, cash would be printed without limits. Meanwhile, the relative differences in national power would be exploited to manipulate the exchange rate and expand the scale of the economy to a dozen times its previous size. Including even the amount of paper money issued, the market was dominated by Mariabell.

The illusion of a large-scale economy was far from the real economy. It was much, much smaller in reality. And one day, this bubble would burst.

Just as her former self, who inflated the bubble as much as possible before bursting it, she would then push unpayable debts to the weaker countries and have them take on the responsibility.

—In other words, it was a war of balancing the accounts. In this way, weaker nations would crumble, while the rich would get richer. Instead of a single person paying the price, a whole nation would. There was basically not that much difference.

Mariabell was well-versed in such methods. She was known as a financial genius in her past life. She had the memories of her past life and an intense desire to dominate. These all fueled Mariabell's power: her Unique Skill 'Greed.' The Unique Skill 'Greed' originated from

the seven original sins of man. It belonged to the Skill type known as the ‘Deadly Sins.’ These were a special presence even among Unique Skills, as they represented the desire of their users. The users’ emotions and wishes manifested in the form of their Skills.

In fact, Mariabell was born to be the strongest among the Rosso. The power to dominate human desire—that was the ability of the ‘Greed.’

She could see through people’s desires. The greater their desires were, the easier they could be manipulated. Everyone had his desire, and once she stimulated it, he would dance to Mariabell’s score. Starting from people around her, she gradually increased the number of pawns she owned.

There was no need to panic. For she had already realized that the civilization of this world was not advanced enough. Even though there *was* an economy, within their economic circle, only one form of currency was used. It was a world without language barriers, quite unlike the world she came from.

But seeing it from a different light, she could exploit her environment. It was to the point that she thought this was her own personal playground.

Yes, yes indeed. I will dominate this world as well.

To dominate this world—to Mariabell, such was a natural thought. When she grew up and her words mattered, the world would become Mariabell’s plaything.

But until then, there should be as few people as possible who were to know her ambition. Upon thinking so, Mariabell decided to act with utmost caution in order to avoid revealing her true self.

And when she was three years old, Mariabell met Granbell.



“So, you are Mariabell?”

“Yes, pleased to meet you, Grandfather.”

That didn’t sound like the greeting a three-year-old would give. It was just a part of Mariabell’s calculation. Granbell was unlike the riffraff in the castle. To Mariabell, even her father, who was a king, was nothing but a pawn. As well as her brothers, her babysitter, her servants and countless more. Mariabell saw right through their desires and had since been manipulating them from the dark as her pawns.

But Granbell was different. He was special.

Seeing that Mariabell was no longer putting on an act, Granbell asked: “So, you are not planning to manipulate me?”

There was not a single scrap of familial love in his words, only the tone between the ruler and the servant.

Mariabell realized that her instincts were right. Had she tried to deceive Granbell, she could have been killed that instant.

Mariabell's 'Greed' was not all-powerful and could be resisted. There was a chance that she might actually have dominated Granbell by applying the Skill more frequently over time, but Granbell would not have allowed her.

Based on these judgements, Mariabell decided to come clean. She needed help anyway, and now that she thought about it, Granbell could be her most ideal aid.

"I can see what people desire; I can see them all. By stimulating their desire, I can manipulate people at will. But grandfather is different. Your ambition is greater than anyone else's, yet your will is also strong enough to suppress it perfectly, that's why—"

"Hmph, you managed to see through all of that, little girl—no, Mariabell. Who are you exactly?"

"Me? I am Mariabell. Mariabell of 'Greed.'"

"Heh heh, HAHAHA! How interesting, you are bold enough to announce yourself like that in front of my face!"

The Grand Elder of the Rosso family took a liking to Mariabell.

The two then laid their cards on the table and shared each other's secrets. Granbell revealed the situation with the Western Nations as well as the demon lords that dominated the world.

Mariabell, on the other hand, shared knowledge from her past life as well as what her acquired Unique Skill 'Greed' was capable of.

To Mariabell, this was the gamble of her lifetime. Putting aside her intelligence, she was just a three-year-old kid. She knew that it would be difficult for her to survive on her own.

*No matter how, no matter what it takes, I will take my place here. To do that—*She needed to make sure the ruler, Granbell Rosso, thought highly of Mariabell. Her instincts told her that this was the best way for her to one day become a ruler.

And in this gamble, Mariabell hit the jackpot.

"Mariabell, if anything happens to me, you shall carry on my ambition. I wish the world to be a peaceful place. Under the rule of us Rosso, we can build a world where everyone is equal."

"Yes, I understand. I understand, grandfather. I swear to give my all to aid your ambition."

And so, the two built a bond that none could harm.

Grandfather and granddaughter—an alliance between an ex-Hero and 'Greed' itself, began on that day. From then on, Granbell would spend years guiding Mariabell. She would learn the whole truth about the depths of the Rosso's power, as well as receiving many aides by her side.

Moreover—

She even learnt the true identity of the god Luminas and Granbell's secrets. In order to protect his true identity—one of the Seven Luminary Clerics, he frequently acted behind the scenes. She also learnt the truth that the true power guarding the Western Nations was Demon Lord Luminas.

Granbell told Mariabell everything.

And now, Mariabell, at the age of ten, was second only to Granbell. She was ready to begin her operation to take down Rimuru with everything she had.

**Chapter
3**



The Council

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Chapter 3

The Council

In the small Kingdom of Siltrosso, situated in the north, a meeting was about to begin. A young man and an elder were facing off against each other.

The young man was the head of the Freedom Association, Yuuki Kagurazaka.

The elder's name was Johann Rostia. He was the biggest financial backer of the Freedom Association and a major figure within the council, being the duke of the Kingdom of Rostia. Given his surname being Rostia, his being the elder brother to the current king of Rostia was obvious.

Yet in truth, his real identity was one of the Five Great Elders manipulating the council. They often gathered for their secret meetings in this land—the Kingdom of Siltrosso. This small kingdom on the border was perfect to fool the Western Nations, since an espionage organization held their secret base here—the best espionage organization among the Western Nations, in fact.

It was called the “Silt Foreign Information Bureau.” This organization set its attention beyond the petty disputes of humans and instead aimed to deter threats of monsters. Its purpose was for crisis management.

Therefore, the agents from the agencies all had impressive portfolios. Every single member was rank B or above. They were few in number, but could all be considered as the elite among the elite. With such agents guarding the kingdom, infiltration of spies from other nations was impossible.

That was why they chose this location to conduct their secret meetings.

“Begin your report.”

“Okay. Demon Lord Rimuru has completely seen through me and seems to have grown suspicious of me. That being said, I sent the eastern merchants in my stead and took various detours, so no evidence was left.”

“In that case, couldn't you have made up an excuse?” Johann questioned.

“My subordinates suggested the same thing, but even if I did, wouldn't I still be in danger? This is a demon lord we are talking about! If I were to get on his bad side, it's no different than

stepping on a tiger's tail," Yuuki replied.

Yuuki reported that Rimuru was suspicious of him, not trying to shroud that fact. Indeed, Johann of the Five Great Elders was Yuuki's superior. That being said, their relationship was strictly business related. The reason they preserved their relationship was due to the fact that both sides stood to gain a profit.

The Council funded the Freedom Association while the Freedom Association accepted jobs from the Council in return. The two organizations were equal in status and supported each other.

—All the aforementioned relations were a facade. The Freedom Association needed outside funds. If they were to operate in other nations, they required the respective nations' approval and care. Without such support, they wouldn't be able to continue.

While the Association had greater influence than when it was just a mutual-aid society for the adventurers, in terms of authority and power, the Council was still superior.

Moreover, the reason why Yuuki was able to expand the Freedom Association in just a span of a few years was due to the aid of the Great Elder Johann. It was also why Yuuki was willing to take on great risks in his plans.

"Not even you can beat that demon lord?"

"Don't be absurd. From what I've seen, he's got more than a hundred rank A personnel. There's no way I could deal with that."

"That's a lot. I see that it was indeed the wiser choice not to antagonize them. But—" Johann paused before turning to Yuuki with a sharp eye. He continued, "The Grand Elder has been complaining about Demon Lord Rimuru being in our way. Yuuki, are you aware that this is because of your misstep?"

"Huh—what do you mean?"

"I'm talking about your plan to work with Demon Lord Clayman. Had your plan succeeded, even without those difficult eastern merchants, we would still be able to trade with the Empire. In addition, in another couple of hundred years, Veldora would be eliminated, and Great Jura Forest would no longer pose a threat. Moreover, the two demon lords Karion and Frey would also become the barrier to protect us. Yet you..."

"Let's not go there. I couldn't have controlled what happened in the first place. I never expected such an anomaly would get in the way. That's not something I could have predicted during the initial planning."

Johann was one of the people who were in on Yuuki and his party's plans.

They had tinkered with the amusement the demon lords had conspired to set up, in order to manipulate events to their favor. It was because of the possibility of success that—

"Indeed, you are correct. It's not something you could control. You couldn't have expected a monster like that to intervene with our affairs. Nonetheless, shouldn't you be able to defeat him?"

A young girl entered from the opened gate without a sound—she was Mariabell Rosso, the person who created the first draft of their entire scheme.

There were now three men in the room.

Mariabell walked in and sat on the most luxurious seat in the room.

“Oh, oh-oh, it’s Mariabell I see. Where’s Grand Elder Granbell?”

“Grandfather isn’t here today, it’s just me. But that’s irrelevant, I demand an answer to my question.”

Mariabell hadn’t come looking for Johann; her eyes were fixed on Yuuki. Under her watch, Yuuki spoke, “It is impossible for me. Fighting Demon Lord Rimuru alone would be difficult, and with the Storm Dragon there as well, that’s not something I can handle. In fact, no human can handle that kind of threat.”

“You’ve seen Veldora yourself?” Mariabell asked doubtfully.

“Yes, in his human form. He did, however, address himself as Veldora.”

Yuuki answered honestly to Mariabell’s every question. To Mariabell, this was only natural.

“I suppose you are right. Demon Lord Rimuru would be the key to sealing Veldora. If we leave that evil dragon unaddressed, it will, surely, rain catastrophe on the world. That’s what Grandfather told me.”

“Indeed. Grand Elder Granbell lived through the era when that evil dragon rampaged freely. He told me time and again that it was no wonder why ‘God’ was always so cautious.”

“The evil dragon Veldora was tamed by Demon Lord Rimuru, so it would be dangerous to make a move on them. However...for the future glory of us Rosso, we have to take down the head of the Tempest Federation.”

“This is a tough situation we have at hand. Yuuki, are you sure you can’t defeat Demon Lord Rimuru if you bring out your real skills?” Johann asked once more.

On top of Mariabell’s query, the same question was repeated three times.

Surely Yuuki of all people would be able to defeat Demon Lord Rimuru?

To these questions, Yuuki gave the same answers each time—although this is not exactly the case, in truth.

“Even Hinata was defeated by him; surely it will be difficult for me to triumph, should I challenge him. But perhaps my chance of success could increase dramatically in the right circumstances.”

Yuuki was almost saying, “If it’s just Demon Lord Rimuru, we may still come up with something.”

Mariabell stared at Yuuki as she pondered.

“...Then, what are you planning?”

“Well, first we need to avoid antagonizing Demon Lord Rimuru. My guess is that even if we emerged victorious, the sacrifices would far outweigh any benefits we may reap.”

Yuuki proceeded to explain their future plans, including Kagali’s expedition to investigate the ruins. So, under Mariabell’s order, Yuuki even gave out all the information regarding Clayman. Mariabell and Johann intended to utilize this to begin their own operations.

She had some ideas. Whether it was to neutralize or eliminate Demon Lord Rimuru completely, this matter needed to be settled. Otherwise, the grand dream of the Rosso would never

come true.

While they could easily take over the world if they were to collaborate with Demon Lord Rimuru, Mariabell thought that this would be their last resort, and should only be considered when they were truly out of options.

The reason was the drastic difference in their ideals. In this life, Mariabell hoped to remove gold as the universal currency and instead promote paper money in each nation's economy. She didn't want all the available currencies to just disappear; instead, she wanted each nation to have their own currency.

It didn't necessarily have to be paper: it could be silver, copper or whatever. As long as the economy of the world converted to using paper money whose value would be determined by its nation's power, and its exchange rate reflected that.

And this power would be set by the Council; by the will of the Five Great Elders. The key to success here was for the Elders to be able to determine the value of nations. Weak countries could be taxed heavily, or they could be forced to perform laborious military service in the name of subjugating monsters. Through legal means, they could be converted into vassals of stronger nations.

With these conditions set, nothing stood in the way of their grand plan. Using the economy to manipulate the members of the Western States Council—this plan that was drafted by Mariabell, and carried out by Granbell, would be successful.

For the past few years, they had built the foundation. Yet now, this foundation was being torn up. Due to the sudden rise of Demon Lord Rimuru and the Tempest Federation, all hell broke loose with their plan.

Mariabell could already see how things would progress. Demon Lord Rimuru planned to provide a defensive force to earn the trust of the Western Nations.

Letting moderate economic relations be tolerated against the backdrop of a mighty military force. This was Demon Lord Rimuru's plan.

By using the small nation of Blumund as his base of operations, he would expand his influence to the Western Nations. In doing so, he would control the flow of goods and people would become happier doing labor while he ensured their safety.

What kind of a joke is that—Mariabell cursed internally.

For large kingdoms such as Dwargon and Sarion, since they were more self-sustaining, Mariabell would still tolerate their existence outside her grasp despite discontent.

Yet now—the Tempest Federation deliberately entered Mariabell's territory. Their willingness to join the Western States Council was, without a doubt, a declaration of war against Mariabell and the Rosso. They wanted to disrupt Mariabell's hunting ground. She could not accept that no matter what.

For two men to ride on a horse, one must sit behind the other. Mariabell was certain that she and Demon Lord Rimuru were incapable of coexisting peacefully. There could only be one ruler—the one with greater power. ‘If you aren’t the one making the game’s rules, then you won’t be able to win.’ Since the Rosso aimed to rule over humanity, Demon Lord Rimuru was

undoubtedly a hindrance. Even if they could negotiate at the start, in the long run, the two sides would eventually confront each other in pursuit of different interests.

This was why Mariabell considered Demon Lord Rimuru a threat.

Yet, to eliminate Demon Lord Rimuru—that was easier said than done. In order to observe Demon Lord Rimuru by herself, Mariabell actually attended the opening festival. She convinced Granbell that she wouldn't do anything reckless and set out towards the nation by herself.

It turned out her guess was on the money. The Jura-Tempest Federation was too charming of a nation. Its capital would surely become the city of desire and lead future trends in the wake of a new age.

This nation's value would only grow as it established more alliances and strengthened relationships with other nations. In time, the world would no longer be in the Rosso's grasp.

Yes, that's right, everything must have been going according to Demon Lord Rimuru's plan...

Mariabell was upset at that thought, almost wanting to break down in a tantrum. But she managed to restrain her fury before planning what to do in the future.

Simply defeating the opponent was not an option. Even if they were to succeed, they couldn't dismiss Veldora and his unpredictability. The legendary being took out twenty-thousand elite troops single-handedly. It would be most unwise to allow it to rampage freely.

With this being the case, the only solution here was to neutralize the threat—*But in what way, should we give the carrot or the stick?*

If using the stick, Duke Muze's case was a telling example of failure. Under Mariabell's careful planning, the game was to do a favor for the Demon Lord Rimuru. Yet he didn't play by the rules and instead retaliated. Duke Muze might have proven his stupidity in misjudging the situation, but his connection to Demon Lord Rimuru was worthy of praise.

Indeed. It was extremely stupid to have alerted them so easily...

Demon Lord Rimuru wished to join the council. It would've been easy to reject him outright. Mariabell had foreseen wars before and bought up crops and other goods in anticipation. Furthermore, due to the civil unrest in the Kingdom of Blumund, the civilians' own stores went into circulation on the market.

We can just hire mercenaries disguised as bandits to burn down the villages around towns at night, in that way—this way she could raise the price of the food, as well as limiting the quantity of bread in the market. If it were a smaller nation, with such a small limit, people's daily meals would become a huge issue.

Fear inspired by food shortages was the most terrifying. Such resentment would be directed towards the people who started the war. These ignorant people who didn't know any better would simply push all responsibility to Demon Lord Rimuru. By that time, the representatives of these smaller nations would then oppose Demon Lord Rimuru's entry to the council.

To Mariabell, it was child's play to execute this plan. But she had doubts.

No good, this won't work. You can't transport rations with magic—that's common sense,

but that demon lord may make it a reality. He used fresh ingredients during the night feast, there is no doubt about it. Moreover, he also had connections with major figures such as Dwarven King Gazel and the Emperor of Sarion, Elmesia. It will probably be less trouble to just accept Demon Lord Rimuru.

If she were to oppress the smaller nations via food shortages, it might give Demon Lord Rimuru a chance to provide food support. To threaten her opponents in such a way—if she failed, she would become the second Duke Muze.

If I were to continue the unsuccessful plan from last time, he may retaliate in some way— this was Mariabell’s conclusion. She wasn’t so narcissistic to think she could just come up with the best plan on the spot. All she could do was to quietly and cautiously do what she was able to.

As such, all that was left for her was the carrot.

*If we were to give them the carrot, I would first need to meet him and discuss an alliance. As long as we can agree on conditions—no, this won’t work. I can’t back down now. I am Mariabell of “Greed.” Even if my opponent is a demon lord, I can still dominate him! I must do this—*Mariabell thought to herself.

Her Unique Skill ‘Greed’ had the power to bend her subject to her own will. First, she would control her target’s desire and then let her target do as she commanded. Just like what she had done to Yuuki, Mariabell began to control others without them knowing.

There were, in fact, two ways she could achieve this.

The first way: Using her own desires to overcome the desires of her subject, leading the two to agree on a goal and therefore, turn her opponent into her ally. As for the drawback of this method, it was that it could only be activated in conversation-length interactions. It was like a toxin with a delayed effect, which meant she needed to try multiple times in order for such an opportunity to emerge. However, it was difficult to avoid raising suspicion since, in the eyes of others, lasting conversations might appear unnatural.

In addition, not only did she need to find the right timing for these conversations, but the amount of ‘desire’¹⁰ she could insert into others’ minds was also limited. She needed patience to slowly achieve her goal in this way.

The second method worked much faster. She simply used her Unique Skill ‘Greed’ to forcefully dominate her target. It didn’t take as much time, as she could directly inject all the ‘desire’ required and completely destroy her target’s will, turning it into a walking puppet.

But this technique was too dangerous. Depending on the extent of her target’s desire, it might take different lengths of time. Even if it were for just a few seconds, for someone as strong as Demon Lord Rimuru, it would be enough time for him to kill Mariabell. It could be compared to how the young Mariabell aborted the idea when she met Granbell. She would need everything prepared in order to execute this method.

These were the two ways that Unique Skill ‘Greed’ could be used to manipulate others. It

¹⁰Ruby text reads ‘Poison’

was to be expected from a Skill that originated from humans' fundamental desires. No one could resist it.

The problem lay with the amount of time needed, as well as the extent of one's desire. No matter what method Mariabell decided to use, the prerequisites were always that the target's desire must exceed a certain amount. The greater their desires were, the easier it was for Mariabell to manipulate them.

But if her target had too little desire? Mariabell's 'Greed' manipulated others using their desires, and with little desire, her influence naturally would also be weaker. It was possible, however, for her to stimulate small desires until they were big enough for Mariabell to control, but it would also be time-consuming and could be a cause for suspicion.

That was why Mariabell could never control Hinata the Saint. It might have been different had there been more chances for the two to meet, but if she were to suddenly have a meeting with Hinata, surely, it would have raised her suspicion. Such a venture was not worth the risk, and so Mariabell gave up on manipulating Hinata.

Comparatively, Yuuki was introduced to Mariabell by Johann of the Five Great Elders, so that the two could hold secret meetings. He was easy to control.

Then, the problem here would be Demon Lord Rimuru.

Even though I got a look up close, Demon Lord Rimuru seemed to have very little desire. Yet considering all the feats he's accomplished prior, this is just straight-up cheating...

Mariabell had attended the night feast and seen Rimuru with her own eyes. During her stay, she determined that Rimuru's desire barely met the minimum requirement for manipulation. Even though she would probably be able to control him with a few attempts, her influence would be far from enough.

With that being said, as long as she could control him successfully, there was always a way in the future... If things went south, she could always use her trump card—

Moreover, if she were successful, Demon Lord Rimuru would be hers to command. In that way, Veldora, who had also been tamed by Demon Lord Rimuru, would also be at Mariabell's disposal. The evil dragon that even the *God* feared—that was truly a tempting thought to Mariabell.

But I will still have to observe for a while. Then I will come up with a plan to manipulate Demon Lord Rimuru more safely!

Mariabell made up her mind. Next, she needed to strategize the plan. Yuuki said that he would avoid antagonizing Demon Lord Rimuru. According to this plan, it was said that Demon Lord Kazalim—in other words, Kagali—would lead the way to the ruins. There seemed to be some dangerous facilities inside the ruins, but she planned to guide them safely without stirring up any trouble.

This could be utilized as part of her plan.

"I will send a letter to him. We should invite the demon lord to attend a council conference, where we can see how he reacts."

“Will the demon lord agree to the invitation?”

“Certainly. He expressly wants to join the Western States Council.”

“How very bizarre.”

“Rimuru-san wishes to coexist peacefully with humans. He will follow the rules of the association in order to show that monsters working under him are all friendly.”

Hearing Yuuki’s explanation, Mariabell suddenly understood Rimuru’s actions. But in realizing that, she decided that he was an idiot. To bind oneself to rules was the equivalent of losing one’s freedom. Mariabell thought it was an utterly moronic act for a demon lord to abandon his martial prowess and instead side with the humans.

“Then we shall grant his wish. I will corrupt him with my ‘desire.’”

“How terrifying. Although sensibly speaking, Yuuki Kagurazaka should be powerful enough to rival Hinata the Saint. If he had fought seriously, there should yet be a chance for him to defeat Demon Lord Rimuru. You’ve already controlled someone as strong as him, are you seriously going to do the same to a demon lord now?”

“Yuuki has too much ambition. He himself hasn’t even realized that I am manipulating him. He probably thinks that he’s negotiating by his own volition.”

In front of Yuuki’s face, Mariabell continued to say: “That’s something he should be happy about.”

The reason why Yuuki hadn’t been crushed by his excessive desire was because she controlled him. Yuuki, on the other hand, was silent, completely ignoring whatever Mariabell just said. That was how perfect Mariabell’s control was.

“—Demon Lord Rimuru probably will be none the wiser. Mariabell, wouldn’t he be like an infant in front of you? By the way, are you sure your control is flawless?”

“What does that mean?” Mariabell glared at him coldly.

“N-nothing. I’m just worried that someone may crack your control,” Johann answered rather nervously.

“Your fears are unfounded. Once corrupted, a desire can never be restored—as long as it does not surpass mine.”

Mariabell was greed personified, and even manifested the Unique Skill ‘Greed.’ There was probably no other man in this world that possessed greater desire than her. Mariabell believed this so deeply that she couldn’t help but laugh off Johann’s worries.

“Y-you have a point. I also have faith in you, Mariabell,” Johann said, hoping Mariabell wouldn’t take out her wrath on him.

Her status was next to Granbell’s, Mariabell was the authentic second in command. And so even Johann of the Five Great Elders couldn’t survive her wrath. And speaking of making Mariabell angry, Johann himself may also be subjected to mental domination. It was because of his blood bond with Granbell that he managed to escape such a fate. But if Mariabell were to become the person in charge one day, this might no longer be the case, Johann thought. So, he wouldn’t dare do anything to anger Mariabell.

“What has been said here, you will not repeat outside.”

“Of course not, Mariabell. I don’t want to die just yet.”

“Wise choice. Then, Johann, go send the letter to Demon Lord Rimuru of the Tempest Federation. I will draft the content later; please deliver it to him before the next conference.”

Without waiting for Johann’s reply, Mariabell got to work drafting the letter. Even though she wasn’t even ten years old yet, Johann couldn’t help but feel fear as she rapidly began writing on the parchment. But from her attitude alone, you could understand why Mariabell felt that it was only natural for her to manipulate other people.

In contrast to Mariabell, who gave off the air of a ruler, Johann, a member of the Five Great Elders, couldn’t even raise his head.

“I understand, Mariabell. Leave it to me.”

He then quietly left the room, accompanied by Yuuki, so as not to disturb Mariabell any longer...

Even after Yuuki and Johann had left, Mariabell continued to ponder.

Because she really had nothing much, except time. A lot of time.

She had schemed, plotted and executed her plans.

There had been many pawns for Mariabell to use.

This time was the same.

How exciting, how truly exciting.

Mariabell, who trusted no one, was lost in her thoughts yet again today.



Eyes wide open in shock, a man fell, blood streaming out of his mouth.

“WAHAHAHAHA! You were too careless, idiot!” Milim shouted gleefully.

At the sound of Milim’s delighted voice, the remaining five men tensed up. They huddled together, staying on guard, but to no avail.

“Blazing wind, turn into a whirling tornado and cut through your enemies! Blow, Tornado Blade!”

It was a mistake to have bunched together. As if laughing at those cautious foes, the Tornado Blade I unleashed cut right into them.

Tornado Blade was an area magic version of Wind Cutter. It cost a couple more magicules, but it could be used to attack multiple enemies in a specific area. It was great for taking on a full squad of enemies.

Milim ambushed the people in charge of checking traps as they were walking at the front. After quickly injuring her opponents, she had left the scene before I cast the magic.

The people to the rear of the squad had no clue what even happened. But as they became

altered, I followed up the attack with the Wind Cutter. It didn't affect Milim, and my magic took out the entire enemy squad.

"Shit, it's the Crimson Comet! Everyone, watch out!"

"Sonuvabitch, Majya and Najya have been taken out by the magic. Jean also stopped breathing!"

"Bastards! You whoresons! How dare you kill them?!"

The enemies roared in rage upon realizing what was going on. They were, in other words, the challengers of the labyrinth. It looked like a relatively balanced group of adventurers this time. However, our experience and strength were both far superior to them.

We took the initiative and took out the explorers within the enemy team. In order to make use of their being unaware of our presence, we made a preemptive attack using anti-group magic. Before discovering the enemy team, we would operate with invisibility magic applied. We would always see them coming first.

Once we attacked, the invisibility spell would deactivate, but by that time, we would have downed at least one or two men. They were usually the mage or healer at the back of the team, providing support. At this point, it's like the game had already been decided.

As we came out of our invisibility spell, the enraged vanguards quickly discovered us and charged.

"GAHAHAHA! YOU ARE ALL TOO NAIVE!"

"WO—HEHEHE! DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT LEAVING THIS PLACE!"

Veldora and Ramiris, fully immersed in their roles, handled the assault.

Since there was no need for me to show up, I decided to hang back and just provide aid for the two of them. I also used analysis magic to investigate the warriors charging at us. There were red health bars above all of their heads which had dropped below half at that point.

"These people have less than half of their HP. Surely, you two would be enough to handle these guys?"

It wasn't that I was getting ahead of myself, just confirming the state of our enemies.

Indeed, the red bar above the warriors' heads indicated their hit points. Only I could see it due to the analysis magic. To make everything clearer, I made it so that it would look like something that would be in a video game. Even if other people used the same type of magic, they would probably see it differently.

That aside, it was convenient enough for me to use. Seeing things being expressed in a familiar manner, I was able to quickly identify the situation and give the appropriate commands.

Considering how things had developed, we had this one in the bag.

Without the supporting aid from the back, the vanguard didn't stand a chance against Veldora and Ramiris. They had no defensive buffs, spell or healing. With their HP decreased, they had no chance.

If this were a more cautious team, they would have had a 'Barrier' set up at all times... But it seemed that the team wasn't really that type.

And so, Veldora and Ramiris happily slayed the three remaining foes.

It was an easy win.

With Milim's sneak attack on top of my magic, we were able to take out the scout and the rear guards—and that was our “gg ez” strategy.

However, we'd been picking too many fights lately, and it was inefficient. Even though the challengers' strategies hadn't been perfected, there were certainly more people thinking about them. The labyrinth challengers weren't stupid. They were trying hard every day to improve as well.

While that was certainly pleasant to hear, we also had to reconsider our engagement strategy with them.

—As I thought so, the last man in front of us disappeared, fading away in beams of light.

The battle was over.

I'd seen this scene a million times at this point.

“Amazing! These rookies were no match for us either!”

“WUHEHE, that's it! WE ARE THE STRONGEST, THE INVINCIBLE!”

“GAHAHAHA! THOSE ROOKIES WEREN'T EVEN ENOUGH AS MY APPETIZERS.”

My companions had gotten smug enough to brag about their achievement.

Indeed, we four made up the team.

—Eh, you want to know what we were up to all this time?

That goes without saying. We were using labyrinth challengers as the test subjects for our strategies.

We all loved learning and had been studying tirelessly every, single, day.

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Umm, but what about the whole Green Rebellion deal from last time?

It had been a great win, but we weren't satisfied just yet. We hadn't seen the team Green Rebellion ever since, either. They were apparently called back by their home nation, possibly never to return.

With that being said, it might also have been because they had difficulty obtaining new gear for new floors. I was not sure whether they would return one day or not, but we had to get ready to fight them, nonetheless.

That's why, even if we had defeated Green Rebellion, we were going to keep roaming the labyrinth in secret to fight off challengers. In addition, another reason was the increased popularity of the labyrinth.

Several days had passed after our fight to the death with the Green Rebellion. Masayuki's party managed to break through Floor 49.

Masayuki was the real lucky star as he managed to collect the Ogre weapon series. With it, they successfully defeated the tempest serpent, and now they aimed to challenge Floor 50.

With Masayuki's party making it beyond Floor 49, the other challengers became much more motivated. And as we'd hoped, many capable individuals set their sights on Floor 49.

We publicized the video footage of the guardian fight as a test and it was received very well. We used the video projector to record the fight between Masayuki's team and the tempest serpent. It became a hot topic even within the town as people kept on requesting to replay the clip.

There was money to be made with this—Myourmiles and I thought to ourselves. There was no television in this world, so the battle footage within the labyrinth was considered to be top tier entertainment. But, obviously, considering the potentially gruesome scenes that would be showcased, we considered editing the footage beforehand.

However, some people seemed to prefer the uncut version. Therefore, there was some room reserved for negotiation in that regard—mainly depending on how much the people asking would pay.

There were also issues regarding the broadcasting rights, portrait rights, etc. All of the cumbersome formalities were handed to Myourmiles.

Masayuki's smile could probably be its own merchandise. That patented smile alone would earn us a sweet sum of money. In that way, Masayuki would get some benefit, and Myourmiles and I would also be counting cash. Apart from learning from the mistakes, we were also looking forward to the future development of the labyrinth.

The video footage was not limited to the video directly recorded by the magic item. We had actually saved a lot of things. Raphael-san also extracted a large amount of data from the labyrinth. By conducting “Analyze and Assess” on it, it was possible to recreate the images. We also made video compilations of cool performances by the challengers and broadcasted them.

They turned out to be a big hit. Some people were even saying “Thanks to this footage, I got to have a girlfriend!” Many people who wanted to become famous were tempted to give it a try. Even people who weren't serious before, began to put in some hard work.

I mean, I knew the feeling.

Even though it might be cruel to say this, at least they put in more effort. But in front of them was a high wall called reality. Don't be too idealistic just yet! On the notion of giving tough love to our contestants, we began to interfere with the challengers' progress.

Nowadays we were called the ‘Dungeon Dominators’¹¹, feared by all.

Our appearance also had some drastic changes.

The ghost controlled by me now had youki surrounding it, engulfed in blue and white flames—a Fire Aura. I found this to be a very stylish look for me.

As for Veldora's skeleton swordsman, all of his bones were renewed. Seeing how Ramiris's armor changed, Veldora wanted to renew his bones as well.

I asked him what he wanted, and he responded rather recklessly, that “A gold skull suits me better.” I was just going to ignore his request at first. But since I also had Diablo's request

¹¹Kanji reads “Reapers of the labyrinth”

to handle, I tried to change my perspective on the matter and thought that I could use Veldora as an experiment for temporary flesh replacement. I wanted to test the metallic skeleton body's abilities, so I decided to exchange that with Veldora's avatar.

Ordinary gold wasn't very strong. That was why I decided to utilize the strongest material I had available instead, though it was still in the experimental phase.

It happened to be golden as well, so I decided to go ahead with it. It was called 'orichalcum'¹², a special alloy refined from a mixture of magisteel and gold, while also infused with an unusually dense concentration of magicules. I wanted to combine the immutability of gold on top of the traits of magisteel.

The result was very successful, not just in terms of strength. The overall performance of orichalcum exceeded magisteel; it was an incredible metal. And so, orichalcum was born.

The problem with it, however, was the difficulty of its production. Gold itself was already rare and could not be produced en masse.

However, this time I humored Veldora's request. Which was why I spent a hefty sum of money making the orichalcum and fabricating the humanoid skeleton.

As with Ramiris' outfit, all we needed was a Master Core, since it didn't matter what type of skeleton we had installed for Veldora. And in the blink of an eye, the golden skeleton swordsman was born in the labyrinth.

His bones were insanely strong, nothing like his previous skeleton.

I closely observed Veldora's skeleton swordsman to examine its durability, as well as any potential flaws.

Milim's reputation, on the other hand, was even more far-reaching. People were all afraid of the infamous 'Crimson Comet.' With her abnormal speed, her afterimage looked like a red comet.

She abandoned all her techniques besides speed and focused on landing critical hits to achieve victory. This fighting style instilled fear and made her a legend.

Ramiris's style also changed slowly. She became the brawn type and had been giving off an ominous energy around her. She glowed with purple flames—her heavy animated armor was enveloped in an aura of death.

She would wield her Grim Reaper's great axe to crush her enemy and never backed down from a fight. This ended up giving her the reputation of the crazed heavy animated armor.

Her avatar might be stronger than her... No, never mind.

For the sake of Ramiris's own reputation, it was best to let matters lie.

And so, in a span of a few days, we all became famous.

The challengers' response was pretty good as well. They all seemed to be afraid of us and kept their guard up against us. We were stronger than most low-level bosses, and also much meaner.

¹²Orichalcum or aurichalcum is a metal mentioned in several ancient writings, including the story of Atlantis in the Critias of Plato.

It was only natural for the challengers to react this way.

As I said before, our primary objective was to study how to fight within the labyrinth. We definitely weren't just messing around for fun. You MUST not confuse that. We had been working hard every day and diving into our research. Surely, with the hard work that we'd put in, it would be useful someday.

In fact, we had seen many challengers using rare Extra Skills as well as seemingly original magic spells. We had learned a lot from it.

Nowadays, Raphael-san could extract intelligence from the labyrinth directly, using 'Analyze and Assess,' and so the labyrinth had become a vault of information.

In addition, just as our own techniques would be reflected on the avatars, the things we learned via the avatars would also come back to our original bodies. This was an unexpected outcome, but was quickly considered as a new way to train.

And so, we performed our research every day.

Naturally, we made an ample number of new discoveries.

There was one time that we got a bit too arrogant and decided to challenge the entire labyrinth with our team.

We quickly met our disastrous defeat.

With our abilities alone, we could not even get past the guardian on the fiftieth floor—Gozer. We couldn't hold a candle to opponents above rank A if we were to fight fairly. And even if we were to sneak attack, it wouldn't have worked on Gozer. He was like a brick wall standing in front of us.

On one hand, we wanted to praise him for his competence, but on the other hand, we were thinking, "Now we will have to defeat him." And based on this thought, we began to train our avatars with great enthusiasm.

It was a form of learning one way or another. The process of training and self-improvement. And DEFINITELY not messing around for fun.

Seriously, please remember this point in particular!

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And like that, we watched the challengers as they gradually disappeared.

"That was an easy win."

Hearing my comment, the other three nodded in agreement.

This was around Floor 38. The rank A-minus tempest serpent was almost in front of us. Its power wasn't just for show, as its above average strength was much greater than that of most challengers. And to us in our avatars, if we were careless, we would also fall into a tough fight.

Considering our growth rate, this was the perfect hunting ground. It was best to continue at this pace.

Upon thinking so, my emergency contact 'Clone' in the office suddenly reached out to me.

What happened? As the thought crossed my mind, the message delivered by it to me was: “There is a guest that requires urgent attendance.”

Looks like this is no time for playin—

No, no. Learning, not playing.

This was important, we would remind everyone again to not mistake the two things.

Time to head to the office.



By the time I got there, Shuna and Rigurd were already waiting.

There was someone else. A familiar female, ah yes, her. Ex-Demon Lord Frey was sitting in my office. Apparently, the VIP was her.

She turned to me first as I entered. Her eyes then momentarily landed on Veldora before stopping on Milim, who entered the room last. She smiled.

Hm? Why did that smile look so unwholesome?

“Ara, Milim. So this is where you’ve been? Speaking of which, did you finish the work I assigned to you? The people who were supposedly guarding you were tied up and put down. Could you please explain to me what happened during that time?” Frey said, still smiling.

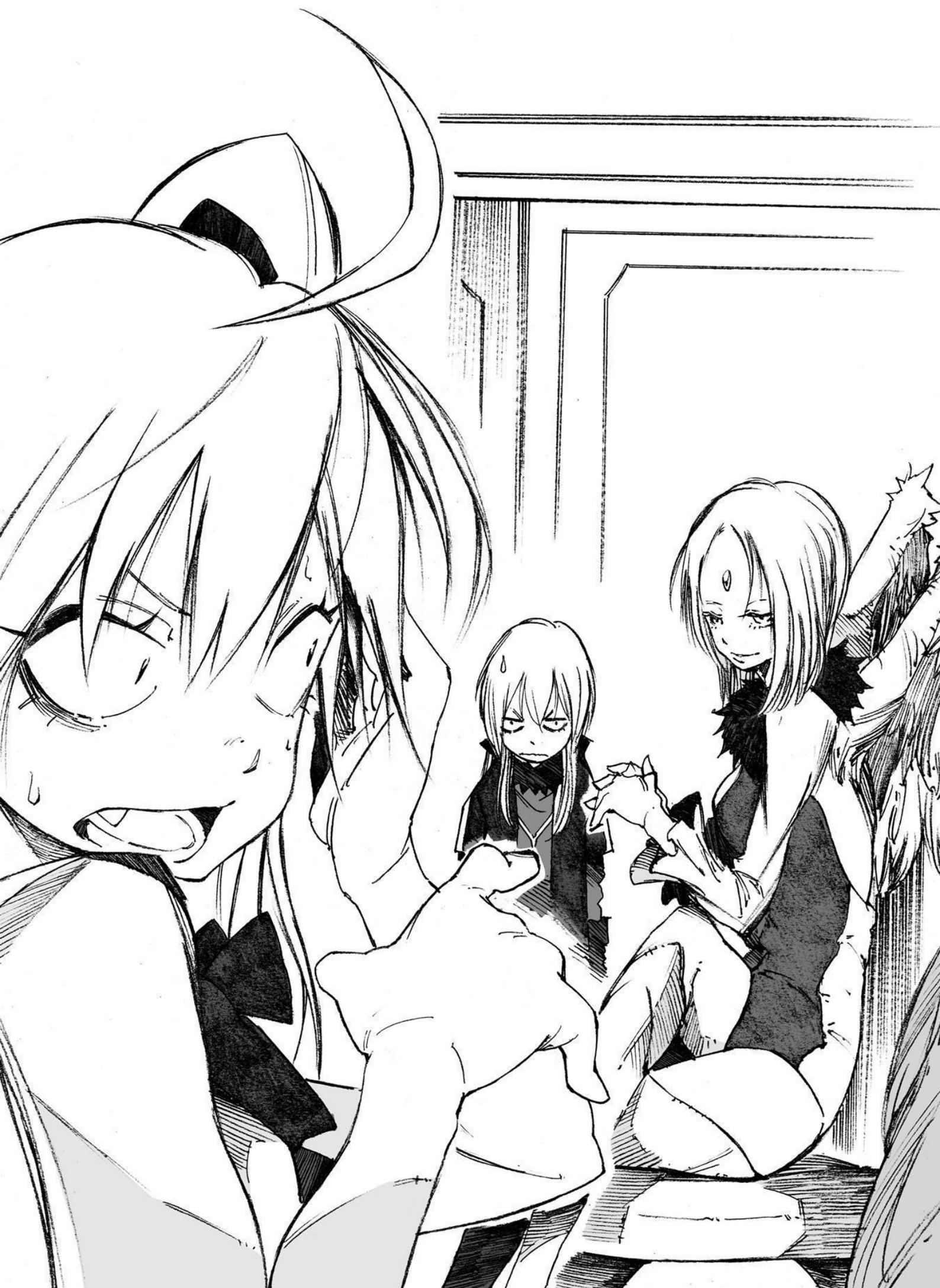
This was more like an interrogation. Honestly, super scary.

Even though I wasn’t the person being questioned, it still felt mighty uncomfortable sitting in the room.

Indeed, my friend should have finished all her homework before playing with us. But now she’d been caught, not even having started it yet, by her parent and was being scolded—that was the scene I saw before me... How very reminiscent.

But as for Milim—

As her eyes met with Frey’s, she began to panic. “EH! F-Frey? N-no, that’s not it at all. There’s an important reason for that—!”



I mean... You're done for, Milim.

I'm gonna put a disclaimer here. This whole incident had nothing to do with me—us—at all. *Right?*

“Ha-hahaha, Milim, you should have told us that you had work to do. I won’t be keeping you waiting, go back now and finish the work early!”

“U-umm, that’s right. I’m so sorry to have kept you around for our research. You should have told us if you had work to do. It was our mistake to have asked for your cooperation, we have to apologize!”

“R-right! I mean, aren’t we close and all, Milim? You should have just said it, we wouldn’t have kept you around like this!”

Sensing what was happening, Veldora and Ramiris also verbalized their support.

How very impressive. This was true teamwork here.

Now that we’d distanced ourselves from Milim, we were safe.

Milim looked at us with tears in her eyes. But all we could say was, “Sorry, the chances of you being saved seemed slim.”

Or rather, “Please don’t drag us down with you.”

“N-no, it’s not what it sounds like. H-hear me out, Frey!” she insisted, emphasizing her innocence to the very end. However, her defenses were futile in front of Frey’s fixed smile.

And so, Milim was captured by Frey. With Frey’s claws at her neck, Milim couldn’t fight back. In the end, Milim was dragged back to her kingdom.

Phew, that was horrifying. We almost got dragged down with her as well. It looked like we made it through.

And just when I felt reassured—

“Speaking of which, Rimuru-sama, where have you been and what have you been doing?”

Shuna asked harshly, suddenly appearing behind me.

Even though, in theory, I couldn’t sweat, I still felt the sensation of it flooding down my forehead.

No, it was all right. We would be fine. We were definitely not playing. Research, yes! We were doing research this whole time.

After settling on my defense, I tried to excuse myself.

Yet Veldora spoke before I could: “Looks like we’re getting in the way here. I should go back to my room to indulge in the intricacies of sorcery. Sorcery is profound and worth studying—“ he muttered before taking out his manga and walking away.

Is he trying to flee now?

I panicked as well, but it was too late.

Making up some nonsense excuse, even Ramiris betrayed me. “T-then I shall go too...”

Veldora and Ramiris teamed up and slipped away.

What the hell are these two doing?! Why are they especially cooperative at times like this? But I didn’t have time to think about these “great friends” of mine. If I didn’t come up with

a good excuse, Shuna's wrath would be terrifying. If I were to use any random excuse as filler, I could get myself killed here.

With how things had developed, I couldn't really defend the position that we were just studying.

Seeing that Veldora and Ramiris had fled, all of my brain cells switched into overdrive to find the most appropriate answer. Yet, nothing good came up. However, this was no time to lose my nerve. Since I'd reached this point, it was time to pull my trump card—*it's time for you to shine, Wisdom King Raphael-san!*

There was no need to be afraid at all. I had the shining beacon of wisdom known as Raphael-sensei at my aid.

Please help me through these tough times with an awesome excuse—I prayed to myself and asked Raphael-sensei.

Its response was as follows.

«Answer. There is no need for an excuse. The problem can be resolved by being confident.»

What? You say that there's no need for any excuse? The problem could be resolved by being confident, what did that mean—

Suddenly, someone ran into the office in a panic. “Ah, so there you are, Rimuru-sama, I've been looking for you!”

It was my good friend Myourmiles-kun.

I see, so that's what it meant. God was on my side with this one.

Myourmiles was my savior!

“Oh, oh, Myourmiles-kun. I figured that you would be here by now.”

Raphael-sensei wanted me to be confident with the thing, and I did what it suggested, playing along as if everything was according to plan.

Hearing my response, Myourmiles looked momentarily shocked. But he quickly realized what was going on and began to nod his head vigorously.

“How impressive, Rimuru-sama. The council just sent us a letter. Have you seen it already? The letter was sealed pretty tightly; my guess is that they want to invite you to attend the council meeting to judge whether our nation is fit to join—”

What, the council sent a letter, you say?

To judge whether our nation was fit to join—Did that mean they would be considering the addition of the Tempest Federation?

I would be looking forward to this.

Speaking of which, Raphael-sensei sure was impressive.

Could it have even predicted the time when the council would make a move?

No, how could that be possible? That was impossible—

«Answer. The team Green Rebellion was hired by the Kingdom of Ingracia. Deducing from the time frame, their main objective would be to investigate the internal affairs of Tempest. In addition, according to the investigation of the individual ‘Souei,’ all the espionage agencies of different nations reported back to their home countries at the same time. Based on this informa-

tion, the council would most likely take action during this period of time.»

S-so you can actually calculate that.

Everything was according to Raphael-sensei's calculations!

—Not to mention that Souei reported back. Why didn't I hear anything about that...?

«Answer. Master was busy playing games and likely chose to ignore his words at the time.»

It called it playing games!

It was impossible to lie to yourself, and it seemed that I couldn't lie to Raphael-sensei either.

That was fine, I guess.

Up until the time when we fought Green Rebellion, we were all very serious, but we ended up losing ourselves playing around. That was the truth. But there was one thing for sure—Raphael did save me this time. Thank goodness I didn't have to make up any weird excuses. I spoke as if I'd seen everything coming.

“That's indeed the case. Their investigation team was in the labyrinth as well, so I stayed there to have some fun with them. They went back to their home nation in a panic, so I assumed it was time for them to make their move.”

“OH, OH! Could you be referring to Green Rebellion?”

“That's it, Myourmiles-kun. They were a bit too strong, so I decided to investigate their suspicious activities.”

That was a huge lie.

All of which came from Raphael.

But that didn't matter.

“I see, so you were investigating in secret... As expected from Rimuru-sama!” Shuna smiled and nodded in satisfaction.

Thanks to my justification, I managed to fool her. Crisis averted. I took the letter from Myourmiles's hand to check its contents. It did state there that they are inviting us into the council. This proved Raphael right and saved my face as well.

However, this was a close one. Addictively playing games would lead to failure—I needed to remember this lesson well and swear to moderate my play time in the future. Everything should be in ‘moderation.’ I needed to be more careful in the future. I reflected to myself.



The council—the Western States Council—was made up of different nations surrounding the Great Jura Forest. The councilors elected by each nation would attend the meeting in Ingracia every month. Strictly speaking, unlike councils run by nations, the main goal of the council is to maintain everyone's financial interests.

They wouldn't put smaller nations on lower priority, and instead start off from the point of equality. People would cooperate with each other. All of the members aimed to uphold the idea of defending the good of all humanity.

The good of man referred to maintaining the circle of survival for humans. Apart from taking care of monsters, they also needed to handle droughts, plagues, typhoons and earthquakes. They had a duty to draft out plans to respond to crises.

Also, the policies on importing and exporting surplus food, specialties and other goods differed from nation to nation. Due to this reason, negotiation on these subjects became very difficult. Therefore, the council only discussed motions relating to actual rescue efforts.

If there was a famine, they would dispatch food to aid; if there was a large number of monsters, they would send reinforcements to aid them, and so on.

It was not easy, and it would potentially lead to a series of problems as well.

The council was funded by each nation, and the proportion obviously would differ. The fund would fluctuate depending on the size and scale of the nations, yet at the same time, all nations shared the same privileges. This led to some dissatisfaction, and therefore, the number of councilors for different nations needed to be increased when more responsibility was undertaken.

However, with no restrictions to this rule, nations were no longer equal to each other. Thus, another rule was set. For every new councilor added to the council, their percentage of the emergency fund would also be raised accordingly.

However, with more councilors in place, it obviously implied greater influence. The larger nations had long realized this point, and would give away several times more money than they normally would just to have more power within the council.

As mentioned, the council's actions were not directly related to national interests. However, it was still a convenient venue for the more powerful nations to show off their strength.

The more say a nation had in the council, the more likely they could turn things to the favor of their own nations. And in times of crises, they would also be able to protect their own nations first.

Motions, such as the distribution of acquired funds, would be decided by majority votes within the council.

For example, let's assume some highly dangerous monsters have appeared.

The Freedom Association under the command of the council would take on the monsters.

The council would issue missions to eliminate the monsters and have the association hire adventurers. However, the monsters would not appear alone.

What if these dangerous monsters were to appear simultaneously in several kingdoms?

Obviously, larger nations with greater authority would enjoy the privilege of receiving protection first and getting the better skilled adventurers.

That was only to be expected.

The fact alone that they offered greater funding contributions showed that they were of higher standing among the Western Nations.

People didn't invest their limited resources to protect the useless. When they could afford it, they would help them, but if they couldn't, they would be cut off—as it stood, the weak were simply abandoned. This was merely the reality played out as a game of numbers.

For that reason, the council did not tolerate council members delaying the payment of contributions, and had also drafted a minimum amount to be given. Inability to pay up was met with a swift eviction from the council.

For weaker nations, this meant that there would be no reinforcements in times of crisis.

The council had the duty to make these judgements. Hence, it was only natural for things to have developed this way due to the larger nations within the council having more authority.

That being said, these contributions were not cheap. They increased with the number of councilors sent by a nation. Even the kingdom of Farmus, which once had the largest number of councilors, could only send at most five. This made the destruction of Farmus a significant matter that the council could not ignore.

As they were about to make contact with the newly risen Farmenas, a more troubling issue came up—the rise of Tempest.

This naturally led to the council being shaken internally.

After the Tempest Founding Festival, the council held an emergency meeting.

It was pandemonium. The councilors argued in chaos.

Even Hinata Sakaguchi was invited to observe the chaotic state of the council. Since she knew Demon Lord Rimuru in person, she was invited as an eye-witness.

Hinata could have refused. Unlike the Freedom Association, the Western Holy Church was not a subdivision of the council. While both parties could mutually benefit from each other, they were two separate organizations functioning under different systems.

As the head of an external organization, Hinata had no reason to answer their invitation. However, after learning what the topic of discussion would be at the meeting this time, Hinata decided to participate.

The motion: whether to allow the Tempest Federation to join the council.

The topic this time would provide vital information about the future of the Western Nations. With that in mind, Hinata decided to show up.

She was rather repulsed by the council members that fell into disarray.

So, this is how much chaos ensues after a bunch of useless tools gather in the same room...

When it came to the Holy Knights' own meetings, Hinata was in charge of everything. As a result, there were no major conflicts, and less time was needed to settle the discussion.

In worst case scenarios, I can always shut everyone up by force—it had always been Hinata's policy to employ more practical means of persuasion in resolving issues during their own conferences.

She also attended the meeting in Tempest the other day. Even with all those shockingly important figures attending, the important motions were passed swiftly. Hinata couldn't have imagined such a scene prior. For the entire time she was there, she couldn't help but think:

But I suppose I can make that an exception. Isn't it about time that we have a more constructive way of discussing issues?

She had always experienced more constructive conferences. To her, the current conference was a complete mess.

"That nation is definitely worthy of our trust! I think we must let them join!"

"Even if you say so, this is the demon lord we are talking about here! He seems to be able to communicate with that Storm Dragon. If we were to piss him off, what's to say that he won't set that dragon against us?"

"There's no need to worry. As the saying goes, he's a donkey in a lion's hide. The demon lord himself probably doesn't have much power."

"How laughable! Then how would you explain how he managed to reach a tie with Hinata-san over there? We must assume that the demon lord himself is also very capable!"

And so, different parties with their own twisted opinions refused to reach a consensus.

What an idiot. You dare to talk about that when I'm right here. It's pretty impressive how empty-headed someone can be, Hinata thought to herself.

These people were seriously discussing who was stronger while Hinata herself was present. That was truly amazing to her.

"Listen carefully now, during their founding festival, Demon Lord Rimuru said that the whole of the Great Jura Forest is under his command. But at the same time, he also said that he wouldn't allow any monsters to go outside the forest. These words are highly significant. Everyone, please discuss with these considerations in mind!"

"Indeed. In our nations, many people have lived in fear of the monsters. What the demon lord has announced is the saving grace to them. In fact, since the birth of the Tempest Federation, the disasters brought upon us by the monsters have also been reduced."

"Quit spilling nonsense! Have you all been brainwashed by the demon lord?"

All of the monsters in the Great Jura Forest were managed by Demon Lord Rimuru. A lengthy border connected many different nations to the Great Jura Forest. And those along this border all benefited from the founding of the monster kingdom.

There were also the nations neighboring Tempest.

Some nations, on the other hand, felt threatened by other factors.

Others still were situated relatively safer in-land.

And due to these different geo-political predispositions, they all had different opinions as well.

The nations welcoming Demon Lord Rimuru's nation were all neighbors to Tempest. They all attended the founding festival and witnessed the prosperity of that nation.

It didn't matter if Tempest was the monster kingdom. If it could benefit their own nations, it was welcome to stay—that was the stance of these nations.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, the nations that had other threats to deal with were uncertain about their decision. These nations were under the protection of the Freedom Association and the Holy Knight Order, therefore they had less problems caused by the monsters. They

only had a small army and didn't want to make any reckless moves.

This was the same for every nation; it was already taxing enough to maintain their current status quo.

The sharper nations had already begun to strategize about how they could use Tempest to their own ends. However, some nations never participated in the nation's founding festival. And some nations didn't want to trust monsters from the get-go.

As they continued to argue, the weaker nations could only side with the majority.

As for the stronger nations and their vassals—they mostly agreed with Tempest's addition. With their own safety in mind, they also considered how much profit they could gain as well.

Those who were skeptical towards Demon Lord Rimuru's policies held the opposition. These people blindly believed that if anything were to happen, they would be the first to be attacked by the demon lord, and thus, frantically opposed the decision. Some even argued that the nations neighboring Tempest had all been bought by the demon lords and were traitors.

With such conflicts of interest, it was only natural that the council would be in turmoil.

If we were to take a step back and observe, there was nothing more idiotic than this. But with that being said, most councilors were merely trying to protect their own nation's well-being.

Hinata could relate to the feeling, which was why she kept silent, but...

"Then we should allow them to join. If they wanted to join our ranks, we should welcome them with open arms. Then we can ask them to bring offerings."

"Umm, that is a good idea. If we were to be hostile against them, we would only be repeating Farmus's mistake."

"However, we must make sure that they understand their standing. We should see if they were willing to abide by the international laws that we have drafted—"

"It shouldn't be a problem. Has everyone heard the tragedy of Duke Muze the Foolish? I thought not. ~~It's not a story the monsters would tell you. It's a Rosso legend.~~"

"Yes, we all knew about this."

The problems were mainly caused by councilors sent by the larger nations. They were already holding information that was not accessible to most. And with them fanning the flames of the already chaotic council meeting, it only made things messier.

Their goal, on the other hand, was plainly obvious. These people had already reached a conclusion and were simply luring everyone else onto that path. They were trying to make it seem natural.

Those poor small nation councilors. They were forced to make a choice without even knowing. It's no different than them forfeiting their votes...

Ignorance is a sin too, and not knowing the correct information would become a huge loss in itself.

The weak were tricked to forfeit their precious vote.

However—

Since their conclusion was to allow the Tempest Federation to join the council, it's exactly what I wanted.

The goal of the large nations aligned with Hinata. While this was certainly a disservice to the weaker nations, it was the right choice in Hinata's opinion to not help them out here. All she needed to do was endure for the time being.

"What Demon Lord Rimuru is planning doesn't matter. It matters whether he can be useful or not."

"Indeed. We are all worried about the movement of 'the East' these days. If the demon lord were to make up for our military strength, there's no reason for us to reject them."

It was then that one of the councilors of high-standing within the council, Johann Rostia, duke of the Kingdom of Rostia, suggested that the Eastern Empire was on the move.

"'The East'? Could you be referring to the Empire?"

"Do you mean they are on the move? But now, Veldora occupies the Great Jura Forest..."

Johann's words caused an uproar among the councilors.

And soon enough, all the attention in the room was on Johann alone.

Now we've gone down to the real business—Hinata thought.

It was all too typical of noblemen to hold lengthy preambles before addressing the heart of the matter. They would first beat around the bush with each other to probe what information others held, and how deep that understanding was. Once they were convinced of having the upper hand, they would show their true colors. This was how they operated.

And following this exact playbook, Johann had managed to dominate the scene.

"As you are all aware, the Eastern Empire—the Eastern Sovereign Alliance of the Nasca Namrium Ulmeria Empire's military units have moved out recently. According to reports by the merchants coming out of the area, they have been actively conducting military drills."

Johann's words calmed the hall down immediately.

Hinata knew about this as well. Dwarven King Gazel, whose nation shared a border with the Empire, also knew about this.

They probably were learning about the Empire's movement via the dealing of healing potions and equipment. The Dwarven Kingdom was a neutral nation. King Gazel must have kept silent in order to maintain their neutrality. In addition, Rimuru would obviously know this as well.

The proof was the technology he showcased during the nation's founding festival. Rimuru was playing dumb and said that "This was just the result of their liberal research," but that was not the case in reality.

It was probably a threat to King Gazel.

It may be a stretch to call it a threat, but Rimuru was implying that the Tempest Federation was now the one producing all of the healing potions.

They should not be underestimated. He knew of the Empire's movement, in spite of King Gazel hiding the truth away. So Rimuru wanted to restrain him as well. Just how far has he foreseen? All I can say is that you are impressive—

These were Hinata's thoughts.

Unbeknownst to Rimuru, she had spectacularly misunderstood him.

Hinata caught wind of this information long ago, but for most councilors gathered here, this was shocking news.

Everyone was waiting for Johann to continue, having experienced such shock. They wanted to gather sufficient information so that they could plan and protect their nations.

It may be the case for large nations with military reserves, but for smaller nations that couldn't spare the expense to train an army, they didn't have a large army.

Hiring mercenaries during wartime was not uncommon, but if all of the nations were to begin stockpiling their war effort at the same time, there wouldn't be enough soldiers to go around.

"Everyone, please calm down. The Empire won't strike anytime soon. We need to discuss this calmly and strategize!" Johann announced.

Hinata's guess was spot on. *Now we are finally getting to the meat of it.*

"Then, what do you suggest we do?" one of the councilors asked, followed by many.

"Strategize? What good plans do we have even?"

"Farmus is gone now! Even if we were to place a defensive line, us small nations wouldn't be able to hold our ground!"

"Calm down! The reason why the Empire has held back all this time was entirely thanks to that beast lurking within the Great Jura Forest. It may be a different case if it were sealed again. Thank god for its resurrection!"

"Wait, hold on? Are we going to rely on that evil dragon now..."

"That's why you all have to stay calm! Hasn't Veldora been tamed by the demon lord—by His Majesty Rimuru? Surely, His Majesty Rimuru would want to join the council? And with that being the case, the answer should be settled."

The one who shouted this was Count Gavan. With Gavan's support, Johann kept on speaking.

"Councilor Gavan has a point. This is no time for us to argue now that we are facing the threat from the east. If Demon Lord Rimuru were to join the council, his military force, surely, would be at our aid."

"Oh, oh-oh..."

"That does seem to be the case..."

After hearing Johann's statement, the crowd began to gradually agree with his sentiment.

This seemed to cheer him up greatly. Johann added: "I believe that we should allow the Tempest Federation to join."

Johann announced this conclusion solemnly, saying it in a tone almost as if testing everyone's reaction.

This line alone was enough to change the atmosphere of the council.

Some people were afraid of the mysterious demon lord, but now they were reminded of the actual threat that was the Eastern Empire. Even though Tempest was a kingdom of monsters, it was still a negotiable partner where human common sense prevailed.

On the other hand, the Empire was the greedy enemy attempting to devour all. It was

because they were all humans, that the people foresaw the inevitable failure and fate of being vassalized, were they to fight against the Empire.

The ruling class would all be killed—that's most likely what awaited them.

The Empire was an enormous military nation. Reviewing its history, they had swallowed up countless nations and prospered off of it. They have never shown mercy to their oppositions, that was why the Western Nations were all afraid of them.

“Umm, councilor Johann has a point. I agree with his view.”

“Oh oh, so you understand my concern, councilor Gavan! I believe there are others out there who also agree with my view. That's why I hope to initiate a vote to see if we should allow the Tempest Federation to join. What are all of your thoughts on the matter?”

“Very well. First us Western Nations must unite.”

“Indeed. Now is not the time for us to fight amongst ourselves!”

Several senators voiced their approval for Johann's proposition. Now that things were heading in the intended direction, the speaker of the council shouted: “Silence!”

As the speaker passed the motion, everyone began to vote.

First, they riled up people's fear, then they pressured them with their common alliance. That really did seem like methods that noblemen would use, how clever.

Could this be part of their plan? Speaking of which, it did take considerably long before they cut to the chase...

It was obvious that Johann and Gavan were in on this together, and there were other people who were supporting their ploy as well. Hinata, as a by-stander to the situation, didn't have the right to vote. She calmly observed the meeting and discovered the truth of the matter.

All of this chaos was scripted, and now Hinata was inwardly relieved to know that it was finally over.

It had been eight hours since the start of the meeting. Even though there was an intermission to rest, the fatigue continued to accumulate, nonetheless. This was not only physical fatigue, but a mental one. That was why Hinata was tormented throughout the process.

Speaking of which, they asked a bunch of boring questions. They could have just asked us to monitor Demon Lord Rimuru directly to keep him in check—

At the end of the day, that was the reason why Hinata was summoned in the first place.

It may be different for people who knew Rimuru, but for those who didn't know him, they would only see Rimuru as a demon lord. They needed protection in case the demon lord would rampage after inviting him to this place. And with Hinata, who—supposedly—reached a draw with Rimuru, the councilors could rest assured.

It was simply the noble's way of dealing, to intentionally complicate things.

Much like how the Empire was seemingly stirring, but their intention was simply to generate fear. Perhaps they were really preparing something, but the act alone was purely demonstrative. After all, in order to invade the Western Nations, the Empire would first need to overcome a number of obstacles.

A few of them were the Great Jura Forest and the Armed Nation of Dwargon.

It might have been a different case had the Tempest Federation not allied with Dwargon, but considering the current circumstances, even the Empire would not dare to make a move without making proper preparations.

They should have at least tried to prepare before Rimuru could become a demon lord. That way, Veldora wouldn't have gotten revived, either. The Empire had its chance to rule the world...

Out of fear that they would break the seal on Veldora, the Empire dared not to make a move.

Even with Veldora's presence off the radar, they were still very cautious and didn't act on it.

And now, they no longer had a chance to do so.

Despite Rimuru and King Gazel's apparent attitudes on the matter, surely, they both were on high alert against the Empire. But to Hinata, even if the Empire were to make a move, they would pose no threat.

Both the councilors, Johann and Gavan believed so. They drew the small nation's councilors' attention to the external threats while secretly fortifying their own authority within the council. Their noble-like attitudes in doing things truly annoyed Hinata.

The result of the poll, naturally, showed a majority support towards the motion, agreeing to allow Tempest to join the council.

"Then, we approve for the Jura-Tempest Federation to become our ally and shall send an invitation letter. After confirming with Demon Lord Rimuru about the will of the council, we shall hold a second conference. That is all!" the speaker announced solemnly, concluding the meeting.

Never again, I will never get involved in noble affairs—Hinata vowed to herself.



After the extremely exhausting meeting, Hinata planned to return to the church.

However, her suffering for the day didn't seem to end there.

"Hinata-san, a moment of your time please."

Hinata was stopped by someone; a man surrounded by around ten bodyguards. He looked rather young, had clean-cut blonde hair and a bright smile. An extraordinarily handsome man, but not to Hinata's taste.

Her patience was already exhausted by the eight hours of misery she had endured. She just wanted to go back. Since Hinata had no interest in this man at all, his smile was pointless to her.

With that being said—this man's standing was a problem. The headquarters of the council were set in the Kingdom of Ingracia, and he was the first prince of Ingracia, Elric. Being rude to him would probably lead to a diplomatic incident. Therefore, from Hinata's perspective, she

couldn't simply ignore him.

"What is it? Did you need me for something?"

Hinata socialized to the best of her ability and returned the question to Prince Elric, who wore his pretentious smile a moment longer before answering.

"The thing is, Hinata-san, I have a request for you."

Speaking of which, they were not close enough for Elric to call her '-san,' even though this was a man of high standing. She knew his face and had heard of his name, but that's all there was to it.

This was also the first time that Elric conversed with her. The fact that he acted close to her made Hinata feel very unpleasant.

"What is your request for me then?" Hinata asked after the two of them moved to the reception room.

"During the next meeting, I intend to sound Demon Lord Rimuru out. Only the higher-ups know about this. That said, surely the commoners would still be deeply distressed to learn that a demon lord is joining the council. We have to let the demon lord take on a level of responsibility, and I wish to confirm how much of our words he would be willing to listen to. That's why I hope you would help me out."

Elric gave another bright smile as he finished.

To Hinata, this was just plain annoying right now.

"And I would help out with what exactly?"

Almost as if saying "Get to the point," Hinata hurried Elric.

"—Uhh!"

Elric was expecting her to show more willingness to help, yet Hinata's lack of interest was certainly unexpected. Still, he managed to pretend as if the situation was under his control and began to explain.

"W-well, allow me to explain. Even though we only intend to test the waters with him, this is still the demon lord we are talking about here. It would be problematic if he were to lose control. That's why we hope you would act as our bodyguard."

As the first prince, people had always bowed to his demands. This was something natural to Elric. He knew he was very handsome as well, so he thought that no woman in this world would reject his request. Elric had no doubt that Hinata would also agree. It was only natural for her to be Elric's bodyguard and stand by his side to observe as the matter transpired.

But all Hinata felt was confusion.

Naturally, Hinata had no reason to accept the request.

Does he seriously expect me to agree with that kind of attitude?

With that thought in mind, she couldn't help but ask, "Why me though?"

"Why? Obviously because we approve of your strength. You are the strongest commander of the Holy Knight Order in generations, the right hand of God, the 'Head Knight of the Pope's Imperial Regiment'; we truly recognize your strength! In the Western Nations, no one can match up against you. I heard that you even managed to square off with Demon Lord Rimuru. With

someone as strong as you by our side, we can provoke Demon Lord Rimuru to show his true colors, while also ensuring our personal safety!"

After praising Hinata at length, Elric expressed his "two-cents" confidently.

What is this guy on about—Hinata thought to herself.

Although Rimuru may seem very chill at times, he was still a real demon lord. Provoking him like that out of the blue would be a most foolish act. Moreover, the rumor that they reached a draw was deliberately spread. Hinata couldn't win against Rimuru. If Rimuru were to become seriously enraged, the only person that could possibly stop him would be Luminas, who was also a demon lord.

"I suggest you dismiss that thought this instant. That person is really strong, I can't guarantee that I would win if we were to fight again."

"Seriously, you are being too modest. You don't have to act like some gentle cutesy gal in front of me."

Hinata's smile disappeared completely after his comment. Elric's narcissistic remark genuinely annoyed her. While Hinata hadn't exhibited any physical change, the man in charge of protecting Elric suddenly stepped in.

This large man stood out from the crowd with his lofty attitude. His name was Reiner, the knight commander of the Kingdom of Ingracia. Reiner's reckless attitude had touched Hinata's nerve.

"Hahaha, Hinata-dono, no one will blame you for falling in love with Elric-sama, but now is not the time for that. The prince already has *me* as his bodyguard, so there's no need to worry. Though, with your help we would be able to ensure absolute safety, so—"

Hinata didn't have the patience to hear the end of this mockery.

"I refuse. The Western Holy Church, as well as the Holy Empire of Lubelius, have signed a nonaggression pact with the Tempest Federation. And also, a bit of advice for you...don't piss off Demon Lord Rimuru."

"—What did you say?"

"Y-you dare to give *me* an order!"

Neither of them expected her to refuse. Elric and his bodyguards all fell silent upon hearing this.

Hinata had no desire to interact with these two any longer.

If this had been a reasonable and formal request, Hinata probably couldn't have refused. It would be the right choice for the council to find someone like Hinata who was specialized in dealing with monsters.

Since the council had such an important role to play, they would probably file an official request through different branches of the Western Holy Church. Considering the future standing with the Western Nations, Hinata couldn't simply reject the matter purely because of her mood.

If that had been the case, it would've been a hassle in the future, Hinata thought to herself.

Nevertheless, in that case, the detailed conditions would have been negotiated, and Hinata would have managed to refuse any clear hostilities on the grounds that they violated the treaty.

Elric and his men wanted to skip that part of the discussion, that's why they came to talk with Hinata directly... But things didn't exactly go in their favor.

"You will regret this, Hinata-dono! Reiner-sama is the high commander of the Ingracia Knight Order. Are you really planning to be an enemy to him?"

"That's right! For the human race, you cannot allow the demon lord to do whatever he pleases. Wouldn't the church want to prevent him from running amok during a council meeting?!"

Their lackeys began to shout, which reassured Hinata in a way. Because she could tell from this, that the whole ordeal was impulsively arranged by a group of people without much consideration.

"How unfortunate, but personally, I trust Demon Lord Rimuru. So long now."

Thankfully she was dealing with idiots here, Hinata thought to herself as she walked away.

Hinata had shown the bare minimum level of civility, hopefully it wouldn't develop into a diplomatic issue. Keep in mind that it was not polite to negotiate with Hinata, who had been invited to the council meeting, without informing her in advance.

Considering this was the prince of a large nation, Hinata's response, while not perfect, was passable.

However—

These idiots, are they really going to play some tricks to provoke Rimuru...

A sense of unease crossed Hinata's mind.

As she just made up her mind to not get involved with noblemen again, she ran into such an ordeal.

I didn't join their plan, hopefully they can regain their cool...

They would need to mobilize the army in order to deal with the demon lord. If they wanted to rely on a smaller number of people, they would need to gather some reputable champions. They wouldn't have the time to prepare for that.

Having summoned the demon lord to their own domain could have been a wonderful opportunity. But if all they wanted to do was to play along as things progressed, the chances of success for their plan were pretty showing.

But perhaps—

All of this was planned from the start?

That seems impossible. However, I should probably be cautious next time—

On that closing thought, Hinata felt a sense of distress.



I had accepted the invitation from the Council to come to the kingdom of Ingracia. I seemed to

have been considered as a guest of honor, seeing that they prepared the most luxurious hotel for us. It would probably be fun to take a tour of the capital city that I had missed so much.

Benimaru, acting as my bodyguard, didn't dare to be careless.

There was also Souei receiving reports from the shadows.

Speaking of shadows, I felt pretty lonely without Ranga chilling in my shadow. He needed to find Gobta on occasion. Gobta had been utterly exhausted from his training with Milim. Even though he had recovered at this point, he didn't seem to have time to rest his body, since Milim had told him that he would be examined regularly. To be specific, he would be tested in the form of a mock-battle with Karion...

Gobta cried to Ranga before that he would be killed one day if this were to continue. Ranga, who did not know how to deal with Gobta, went away to get him. But his tail was wagging pretty wildly back then... While he did complain a lot about him, Ranga must've really had a soft spot for Gobta.

It's great that they were so close.

And so, I brought Benimaru and Shuna. Having too many people would be problematic anyway, so having as few companions as possible would instead be better.

I wanted to bring Shion, but taking her to a large city like this would be concerning. It was going to be troublesome If she were to behave as she usually did. That's why I ordered her to look after our HQ while training her subordinates.

Geld was the commanding officer of the construction project taking place in Milim's new capital and couldn't leave.

Diablo was still out there drifting about. He said he was going to find some people as his subordinates. *Did things go wrong or something?*

As for me, I'd managed to create the containers that I promised him. I hoped to get it done before he returns, so he could take his time coming back. But to be honest, Diablo would probably get back the moment I called him. I didn't have any urgent errands to run, so it wouldn't hurt if I just allowed him to do what he wanted.

Momiji had taken Hakurou to visit the hidden tengu village.

Gabil and Midley went to visit the City of the Forgotten Dragon. They heard that it was a habitat for wyverns, so they decided to tame some. Gabil had always wanted to improve the abilities of the Hiryyu, and as part of that plan, he apparently considered incorporating wyverns to create an airborne cavalry.

He had spent countless days researching lately, making it easy to forget that he was also an outstanding warrior trusted by his subordinates. Hopefully his test would go well. I was looking forward to the results. I'd reward him once he succeeded.

Just like that, my lieutenants had been hard at work.

This was why only the three of us were visiting Ingracia. We would be meeting up with Souei once we arrived.

The first place we visited was the clothing store.

Just like in modern Japan, there were all sorts of clothes on display inside glass cabinets and some passersby viewed the items as they walked past. It was a testament to how urban the capital of Ingracia was.

These windows were all insanely expensive. Despite glass wares being commonplace on the market, buying a single glass pane of this size would set you back as much as a run-down house. And given how the stores used them for their displays, it was a clear sign that their businesses were very profitable.

This was what Myourmiles taught me, though I could easily confirm such an idea from the number of customers alone.

By the way, our nation also adopted window displays. After I told everyone what I saw in the Kingdom of Ingracia, Shuna and the other female members begged me to import them. I couldn't come up with a reason to refuse them, so I talked to Mildo and had him handle the production of the glass. With the amazing assistance from Wisdom King Raphael-sensei, the production of the display windows came into fruition smoothly.

Putting that aside, the reason why we came here first was due to Shuna's demands. Propped up in the window displays were the latest fashion trends. She was observing them with great interest.

They truly were gorgeous.

We perused all kinds of shops and found many clothes with special designs that our nation didn't have. The clothes made by Shuna and the others were mostly based on my personal memories. But the place here was full of clothes designed by the artisans themselves. The items all had their own charms.

They were enough to have completely mesmerized Shuna.

"I'm not gonna be defeated like this, I will refine my skill even more—!" Shuna muttered, filled with determination.

"I'll be counting on you in the future! Then, everyone, please help yourself to any clothes of your liking. I'll pay."

"Eh! R-really?"

"I can choose as well?"

"...I'm fine with my outfit."

"Don't be so formal now! I haven't been paying you guys any salary. At least allow me to treat you in times like this."

As a token of appreciation for the care they had given me every day, I decided to buy them some clothes. Even though we had specially prepared suits for tomorrow's meeting, Benimaru and Souei would still be wearing their combat outfits. Adventurers would be on site during the meeting as well, so they couldn't really be blamed for their attire. But their outfits were still too eye-catching for wandering in the street. Shuna was also wearing her miko outfit, to which I had no issue if she were to have another pretty casual outfit.

Which was why I told everyone to pick their clothes.

Benimaru and Souei picked two sets of tailor-made jackets and shirts, with skinny jeans to

go along with it.

Very naisu, very naisu. It's a great fit for their style.

On the other hand, Shuna—OH OH!

She picked a soft white pantskirt with an icy-blue knitted vest.

How cute, it suited her perfectly!

“This looks great, it suits you perfectly, Shuna!”

“Thank you for your compliment! I’m so happy, Rimuru-sama.”

Mm-hmm.

Seriously, while her miko outfit was amazing, this type of casual outfit looked great as well. It was rare to see her dressed this way, so it was very refreshing. This was a rare opportunity, so I had her choose a couple different outfits and bought all of them. Surely, she would be able to tailor more clothes based on these outfits.

I also chose a pale-blue jumpsuit as a gift for Shion. That gal looked like an ice-cold beauty from the outside, I’m sure she will be able to wear this outfit to its fullest.

“She will definitely be overjoyed!”

“Will she now?”

Then I’m happy as well.

“Yes, definitely.”

Surely, it would be the case if even Shuna said so.

“You two looked great in your outfits as well, let’s buy all of them.”

“Don’t have any more words to spare on us?”

“—Indeed.”

Benimaru and Souei seemed to complain, but I ignored them.

Are you two implying that you want to choose more?

Their tone gave the impression that they were completely disinterested, yet they still scoured the selection of clothes with great enthusiasm. Handsome people look good in any clothes, so there’s really no need for you guys to worry.

I, on the other hand, came to a quick decision. I couldn’t tell the difference between good and bad clothes no matter how much I worried about it, so I asked the staff of the shop to help pick out clothes for me. Their choices would be undoubtedly reliable.

And so, we each picked out our clothes. The size measurements were done on the spot, and we changed into our new clothes immediately.

Shuna had a big smile on her face as she held the bag of clothes I bought her like a treasure. Unlike my secretary-in-name Shion, Shuna always worked very hard. To see this different side of her did bring a smile to my face.

Benimaru and Souei also seemed happy after changing into their new clothes.

Everyone looked happy about this, how wonderful.

These people had always been hard at work, I wanted to reward them to show my appreciation. Seeing how overjoyed they all were, perhaps I should have come here sooner.

On that note, I paid the bill.

After changing our outfits, we visited the cafe run by Yoshida-san. Nowadays, the cafe was run by his disciple. Business was very good. Since the ingredients they used were exported from our nation, we could buy the products they sold at a discounted price.

We were waiting for Hinata, who was also coming to Ingracia. Apart from the lunch I was looking forward to enjoying in Ingracia, Hinata would also brief us in detail about the meeting being held tomorrow.

During that period, I acquired some of Souei's information. Souei had been keeping tabs on what was going on in the Western Nations, so I thought he might know about the reason we were invited this time.

“Then, Souei, I'll trouble you to do the report.”

“Very well. Then I shall start with the feedback on the nation-founding festival—”

As he finished, Souei began to report the important bits of information from the local rumors and gossip.

The report was easily understood, and I was very satisfied.

The feedback on the founding festival had been glowing. From noblemen to common peasants, everyone was talking about it.

Speaking of rumors, the dungeon was mentioned frequently as well. The promotion we did towards the nobles worked like a charm. I heard that some were even forming teams of participants to challenge the labyrinth. Not only was this the case for residents near our nation, even in distant kingdoms, the interest was growing.

At this rate, the number of challengers would keep climbing.

And with that, after finishing the more enjoyable topic, we decided to discuss the more important matter.

“Then, tell us about the result of the investigations on those merchants, as well as the connections Duke Muze had behind him?”

“I've investigated them all, ran a thorough search on the family members and the trade partners of the merchants. The results show that they have not been in contact with any suspicious individuals of late. However, they did seem to share common benefactors when they were applying for the business license. After doing some research on the officers who helped these merchants, we discovered that they were all connected to Duke Muze.”

...And, what does that mean?

«Answer. The merchants were all acting according to the will of the individual “Muze.”»

I see. So no more important information would be revealed even if we were to continue investigating these merchants.

But what about Muze?

Perhaps there really was a shadow committee running the Western Nations. There was a possibility that they were planning for something. Muze seemed like a competent individual, we should probably continue surveilling the person.

“So, I've heard that Duke Muze's a cunning one, what happened to this pesky guy?”

No matter how cunning he was, he couldn't run from Souei's watchful eye. If he were to

come in contact with any suspicious organization or tried to pull something, we could probably catch their tail and turn it against them.

But just as I was thinking about it, Souei spilled a shocking fact.

“He’s dead.”

“Ah?”

“I suspect the cause of death was a ranged attack.”

Muze was the duke of the Kingdom of Guston and a man of high social standing. To be so daring as to kill Muze with such authority, this really made one doubt whether this had to do with some secret organization or not.

Moreover, if they really went to such lengths to cover their tracks, our opponent must’ve held tremendous power.

«Answer. It is estimated that they discovered that individual ‘Souei’ was tracking Muze.»

He was murdered to silence him, huh?

Then we needed to treat the matter more seriously. Our opponent was no easy foe to tackle.

“Even you did not notice?” Benimaru questioned, which was met with Souei’s calm answer, “Yes. Until Muze fell before my very eyes, I did not sense the slightest thing.”

It seemed that the only sound made during the event was Muze dropping to the ground. Even Souei did not see it coming. Seeing him reporting in an almost apologetic tone, I could only comfort him.

“Unbelievable. If Souei didn’t sense anything, the assassin must have attacked from several hundred meters away. If it really was magic, surely, you would’ve been able to sense mana, and if it was some projectile weapon, surely, there would’ve been remnants of youki as well?”

No, it couldn’t have been that simple.

With Raphael-san’s aid, I can sense most things with ‘Magic Perception’...

But in this case—

“It sounds like a sniper attack.”

“Sniper?”

“What is that?”

I see, so Benimaru didn’t know.

Shuna also looked at me with confusion. Come to think of it, there weren’t any firearms in this world, however, if it were to be an ‘Otherworlder,’ you couldn’t dismiss that possibility.

“You mean guns? I recall that Yuuki owns a pistol.”

“WAH!”

I almost fell off my chair as someone suddenly spoke behind me.

It was Hinata.

That gave me a good scare. She hid her aura before approaching me without a sound. Benimaru smiled, Souei also covered his mouth, seemingly to conceal his grin.

That was super embarrassing!

“Onii-sama! And Souei too!”

Shuna scolded them both on my behalf, so I didn’t voice my complaint.

But then again, Raphael-san should've reported to me in the first place—

«Report. The individual approaching bore no ill will.»

...I figured as much.

It was all because I tried too hard playing it cool. While thinking “Can’t help it with these guys,” I passed off the awkward moment with a wry smile.



Since Hinata had come, we began to order our lunch.

One silver coin was enough to get us a super luxurious meal. Mealtime is no time for business talk. We enjoyed the delicacies to our heart’s content.

After filling my tummy, I ordered a cup of coffee. The bitterness of coffee really is the most suitable for adults. With a bunch of sugar and milk added, the bitterness and sweetness started to tango—

“Isn’t this just café au lait¹³? How is it adult-like to drink something that sweet; at least order an espresso.”

A sharp point came flying from Hinata.

Looks like I accidentally spoke my mind.

“S-shush already! This is nothing really, I’m just drinking for the occasion!”

“Hmph, by the way, your outfit is tasteless for an adult, as well.”

Uhh, not only coffee, even my clothes were dissed.

Were her words true?

What the staff had chosen for me back at the shop was a stylish poncho-like clothing. Even though it did seem a bit childish, I thought that I should be confident in the staff’s taste...

And I thought “their choices would be undoubtedly reliable.”

“Damnit, is this outfit really for children?”

“No, no, no, it suits you really well, Rimuru-sama!”

“Y-yeah, it looks really good.”

“But, I thought this is the type of clothes you like.”

You saying that it suits me, does it mean that you think I am childish?

How should I put this; I feel hurt.

This outfit was very comfortable and I didn’t really dislike it. But speaking of which, that was not the point. The thing was my dandy-like appearance now...

Thankfully I had grown a bit taller now. I started to look like a middle school student.

“Cuteness is really your style, just give up and roll with it,” Hinata concluded, to which I felt very frustrated.

¹³French: hot milk coffee

Right.

The way I looked right now, I couldn't suggest the slightest bit of mature charm. I didn't understand why I was concerned about my height now, even though I used to be an adult. Perhaps I should just come to terms with reality.

By the way, Hinata hadn't dressed up beautifully like during the festival. She was wearing her holy knight outfit, going the route of the cross-dressing beauty. She looked quite dignified.

—Well, shouldn't I switch places with Hinata?

Whatever the case, I wasn't bold enough to say that out loud. Although I felt it was very difficult to let go of the matter, we went back to our previous topic.

While mourning the loss of Duke Muze, we began to investigate the circumstances of his murder.

"You mentioned that there are pistols in this world, so was he really killed by a sniper?"

"I'm not sure about the details regarding that, but a pistol doesn't even have an effective range of fifty meters, right?"

That seemed to be the case.

Surely, one would need a rifle in order to launch such a long-distance attack.

"Are there sniper rifles in this world then?"

"Beats me, I've never seen one, but I can't conclude that there aren't any."

I suppose.

It was best to assume that sniper rifles existed in this world and act accordingly. And so, I transferred the concept of firearms through 'Telepathy Net' to Benimaru and the others.

"Oh, so there's this type of weapon."

"I see, if this was utilized, I naturally would not have noticed."

"Perhaps I can use this as well. It shouldn't be a problem to research gunpowder, and the gun itself can be made by Dold-san."

I got three different responses from three different people.

In Benimaru's view, this type of weapon shouldn't even be considered as a threat.

But Souei feared a repeat of his last mission's failure, and the inability to ensure the safety of his target. For his type of missions, he seemed to consider guns a threat.

On the other side of this, we had Shuna. Her idea was to make the most dangerous gun... We could indeed make one, but what would be the consequences of doing so?

The production of firearms marked a dramatic shift in the way that wars were fought—that being said, this world adhered to quality over quantity in a lot of cases when it came to strategic design. Still, adding guns to our arsenal seemed very dangerous, we were better off not developing them just yet.

"In any case, in another world, this weapon's ferocity granted enough power to allow normally fragile people to dominate those around them. While I don't know how useful it will be in this world, it should be effective against magical beasts and the like of them."

"A gun can run out of ammo, but not mana. The higher the caliber, the more powerful the

guns are, and the greater the number, the more threatening it is. For these reasons, I hope that your nation will not mass produce them.”

Indeed, it's definitely viable.

Hinata had thrown in her two cents.

“Right, we'll see about it. I think magic is stronger, but an average person wielding a firearm is equally dangerous.”

Japan did not have a gun society, therefore such a feeling was even stronger for me. Unlike what foreign news claimed about being able to protect yourself by owning a gun, I believed that such incidents probably wouldn't happen if no one owned guns anyway. Upon thinking so, it indeed felt very dangerous to spread such dangerous weapons to everyone.

“Okay, then I shall keep it strictly as research.”

Shuna accepted that, which was reassuring.

However, even though it was generally considered as a threat, it shouldn't be able to harm us at all. Did we really need to give it such high regard?

«Report. To individuals with insufficient amounts of information, if they were to witness someone being gunned down in front of them, they wouldn't understand what happened. It is highly likely that the people around the deceased would be considered suspects.»

Hmm?

Raphael-san suddenly advised me, but what did that mean? *The people around the deceased would be considered suspects*—oh, I get it! It meant that if someone next to me were to be assassinated, people would start to suspect me.

After hearing so, it was indeed the case.

Since Hinata was already close to me, even her testimony would likely be rejected. If the criminal ran away without leaving behind any murder weapon, I would likely be the one held accountable.

How dangerous.

Had I not discussed this with someone beforehand, I would have fallen for it. Even though I was not sure whether our enemies had truly set up such a trap or not, if Raphael-san deemed it necessary to warn me about it, I'd just assume they have.

“Anyway, we best be careful during tomorrow's meeting.”

“Wouldn't we just feel a pinch after being hit by a lead bullet without mana? We shouldn't be so careful about it.”

“No, that's not discreet enough. Just as Hinata has said, the larger the caliber, the stronger the attack. There may even be something like a magic bullet. Moreover, if someone gets hit by one during the middle of the meeting, I will probably be the number one suspect.”

“I'm worried about that too. I will be deploying my ‘Clones’ around the meeting ground and be extra careful.”

As expected of Souei, he already thought of so without me bringing it up.

“Umm, I'll be counting on you!”

“Yes sir.”

In other words, should any suspicious individual appear, Souei would figure out a solution.

Now that I had been reassured, it was time to get to the main issue.

“By the way, Hinata, why did they invite me this time?”

I still hadn’t been informed what we would be discussing in tomorrow’s meeting. But I could predict it.

Perhaps it would be about a certain dragon running loose somewhere, or the sighting of a mysterious demon lord—Ramiris and Veldora’s predictions were absolutely idiotic. That couldn’t have been the reason. The topic of the meeting had to be about whether or not they should allow our nation to join the council.

It appeared that we would be treated as the nation’s guest this time. I looked forward to good news at the meeting.

“During the last temporary meeting, they agreed to let the Tempest Federation join the council. During tomorrow’s meeting, they plan to question you first before making the official verdict.”

Bingo!

Those two idiots were mostly oblivious of the situation and made nonsense predictions. It was correct of me to have ignored them.

“I see, as expected,” I nodded, pretending that I had been aware of the situation the whole time. Hinata looked at me somewhat doubtfully.

«Report. Based on the current situation, the only possible explanation is that individual ‘Hinata Sakaguchi’ seems to be saying “How very astute of you.”»

What—!

T-then wouldn’t my smug look just now have made me look like an idiot?

Regardless, since Hinata explained the proceeding, I couldn’t help but imagine what they would ask.

The council would probably ask about the magitrain, or perhaps to purchase the weapons displayed by Kurobee before, or even want us to showcase our research results. Now that I’d thought up all these different potential explanations for their summoning me, it was troubling.

However, Raphael-san said that it couldn’t think of any other reason. If that were the case, I would have preferred it to tell me from the beginning.

I coughed dryly before taking a sip of coffee.

Hopefully I could fool her with this...

“Never mind. Right now, you still aren’t officially acknowledged, so don’t get careless. You are a demon lord. I figure that there will be questions that would anger you during the meeting but I trust that you won’t fall for it?”

I was not sure if I managed to fool her, but Hinata didn’t seem to care.

If I were to make a mess of this meeting, it would make her position troublesome, since the Holy Empire of Lubelius supported the Tempest Federation and would suffer as well.

She was worried that such a thing would happen and reminded me beforehand.

I was quite surprised. I was as temperate as Buddha. It was not that easy to piss me off.

“You are worrying too much for nothing. I’m not like you. I’m a mature adult who knows how to socialize with people.”

“Huh? You want to fight or something? I’m game.”

“Ah, no, that’s not what I meant...”

See how easily she got pissed? That was the difference between Hinata and I. But it wasn’t good for my health to keep poking this hornet nest, so I decided to keep quiet on that out of fear.

“Umm, I suppose. They are treating us like their national guests, which, to be honest, concerns me. I’m guessing that they have some requests in mind. Surely, Souei has found some information as well?”

“Yes. I have some intel. This includes the views of all nations’ royalty as well as those of their subordinates...”

“Brief me in detail later on.”

“Understood.”

Not that I needed it, just Raphael-san.

“—However, there’s something I wish to ask Hinata-dono.”

“What is it?”

Oh? And just as I thought that things were about to settle, it seemed that Souei had his mind on something else.

He ordered his subordinates to travel around the continent to conduct all sorts of investigation. Apart from investigating the shadow committee that allegedly ruled the Western Nations, they were also collecting intelligence in other countries.

I’d gotten used to it at this point, to have Souei and the others investigate whenever I needed to know something. Because it was Souei on the job, surely, he must have heard some interesting rumors.

“There were plenty of ministers from different nations that wished to exploit our nation. Those people said that—”

“Let me guess—they want you guys to become a part of the defensive network against the Eastern Empire?”

“How impressive, that’s exactly the case, Hinata-dono.”

Hinata gave the correct answer before Souei even finished. In other words, Hinata knew full well about the situation.

“Do you mean that they wish for our aid with an upcoming war? Even so, aren’t we only obligated to help fortify Blumund?”

Benimaru also analyzed the situation by himself and teased Souei for worrying too much. Benimaru had a point as well, but the problem actually lied in the lead-up to the war.

Hinata had probably predicted how things would develop in the future. And since she didn’t seem concerned at all, it meant that her conclusion was the same as mine.

I fully relied on Raphael-san’s prediction, as it had very high credibility. And with Hinata’s prediction aligning with ours, that’s most likely how things would develop.

In order to prove that, I needed to verify it now.

“Benimaru has a point, we have only signed treaties with the Kingdom of Blumund. But before that, I don’t think we need to worry about going to war with the Empire.”

“Could you tell me the reason?” Souei asked me, looking very concerned.

This guy was, as usual, serious when it came to work. To reassure Souei, I decided to give him the conclusion deduced by Raphael.

“Hmm, first of all, the most important thing is that we must think in the Empire’s perspective. Assuming the Empire was to invade the Western Nations, what type of strategy would they employ—?”

Essentially, the key lay in the motive behind their invasion. But that was an issue for another time. If they were to go to war, the most important step was to choose how they would invade.

They would need to cross the Great Jura Forest.

Or cross the steep mountain roads of the Canaat Mountains.

Their last option was to take the sea route, which aligned with the old trade route we used before we constructed our roads.

While it also depended on the size and scale of the Empire’s expedition army, either route would pose problems.

The sea route would be challenging. Distance-wise it could lead them to the Kingdom of Blumund. While it was safe traveling near the coast, if you went too far into deeper waters, you would run into the nests of large sea monsters that were over rank A. Even if they were to navigate through them with a large fleet of ships, safety could not be guaranteed.

Even the tasty spear tuna was extremely dangerous in the sea. It could travel and attack at a speed of sixty knots—equivalent of thirty meters per second. This monster could create giant holes in a ship.

Moreover, don’t just think that you could ensure safety on a steel-armored ship. Because among the many giant sea monsters, the spear tuna was considered merely a third-rate monster.

A kraken might not be particularly intelligent, but it was rumored that their attack instincts against people invading their domain was very strong. If a ship were to be struck by its over ten meter long body, no battleship would be able to escape the fate of sinking.

Only traders who knew the sea route well would consider traveling by sea.

Then perhaps the mountain route would be preferable—but, near the Canaat Mountains, there was a hostile area called the den of dragons. If it were only a caravan, the dragons would probably close one eye. But if a large number of people were to approach, that would provoke the dragons. They were not humans, so it was impossible to negotiate. If the dragons thought that the visitors had harmful intent towards them, that would be their end.

The dragon clan were led by the prideful dragon lords. If the dragons decided to target them, the Eastern Empire’s army would already be half-dead before they could start a war against the Western Nations. That was if they won, however. It’d be absolutely hilarious if they were to lose.

Moreover, after defeating the dragons, they would have to face the Western Nations themselves, which from there on would be the start of the actual war.

The military operation of traversing the steep mountains would give them hell already. And it will also depend on the time period. They could only pass during the short summer period. During wintertime, the mountains would be sealed by extreme weather and snow, which was difficult to overcome even with magic.

Normally speaking, the army would avoid marching in this route.

In the end, this left only the Great Jura Forest route to be viable.

But that wasn't very simple either.

"Now I, the Demon Lord, run the Great Jura Forest. Moreover, there's also Veldora."

"Indeed, we have circulated rumors that Veldora-sama has been revived. And now even the Empire would not dare to take a move without much consideration. They were already afraid of a sealed Veldora-sama, so they wouldn't begin to know what to do now."

Indeed, it was.

We had spread the rumors that the Farmus army was wiped out by Veldora. Surely, the Empire heard this news as well, and its ambitions would be set back as a result. After all, for the longest time, the Empire had always been afraid of Veldora. That was why they had acted with extreme caution. Had they acted sooner, we possibly would have been devastated already.

But now we had Veldora at our back, Raphael-san therefore could conclude confidently that there was no reason for concern.

«Report. Not concluding, predicting. Situations change every day. With every additional piece of new information, new considerations will be added, and the situation must be reevaluated.»

Raphael-san sure worried a lot. But it had a point.

If we were to rely on such biased views, we might find ourselves in a huge set up later.

"The Empire is indeed acting weird. Perhaps my 'Shadows' were not competent enough. I wanted to investigate myself, it's just that..."

Souei was busy investigating the internal affairs of the Western Nations. His subordinates 'Dark Shadow' had their own missions as well.

That was why he could only let the low tier monster¹⁴ called a 'Shadow' handle the matter. Although they were rank D monsters, they were capable of using 'Shadow Movement' and 'Telepathy Net.' It was the perfect monster for reconnaissance. Yet these monsters were unable to break through the 'Barrier' that protected the Empire.

Moreover, it would be difficult to dispatch more people on the matter. Given the fact that he was sending people to places with unknown threats for their mission, Souei could only entrust the task to people he approved of. If he were to withdraw these people from their current mission, it would go against my orders.

Souei was a competent man, but he wasn't omnipotent.

¹⁴Specific species category: Youma 妖魔; Author really likes throwing some Youkai, Youma around to confuse me...

Even though Souei had evolved, he could only send out six ‘Clones’ at the same time. That was usually his trump card when dealing with dangerous jobs. He also needed some reserved as backups for unexpected situations. Souei was concerned that if he were to send out all of his clones to investigate the Empire, there wouldn’t be enough forces protecting me.

“The Empire’s intentions are really not that important. It’s just that some councilors were exaggerating things in the hope that the council would agree to the addition of Tempest into the council. With that being said, since Souei-dono is so concerned about the matter, allow us to help investigate.”

Oh, oh, it seemed that Hinata was just like Raphael-san. Neither would be too overconfident in their views. I knew she was very cautious, but to witness it with my own eyes truly made me respect her even more. I wished to learn from her and act more discreetly in the future.

Speaking of which, I didn’t expect her to suggest helping investigate herself.

Then do indulge me—

«Report. Please ask her to investigate the internal affairs of the Armed Nation of Dwargon, as well to confirm if military operation is possible in the underground capital.»

—What a savage Raphael-san was, it even dared to use Hinata.

Nonetheless, its view was very logical.

There were roads that crossed the Dwarven Kingdom within the Canaat Mountains. And that would be right under Gazel’s purview. While I doubted the Empire could really do anything there, I suppose I could ask Hinata to look into it.

“Hinata-san, then there’s something else I wish to request.”

“What is it?”

“Please investigate the structure of the Dwarven Kingdom as well.”

“Dwarven Kingdom you say? That city was constructed out of the large caves at the bottom of the Canaat Mountains. I see... There is that possibility. I knew it, though you look like a careless fellow, you are actually very cautious.”

“Aha-haha, right?”

“Got it. We will investigate the Dwarven Kingdom as well.”

I was not sure what quality of mine Hinata was admiring, but this should do.

Although I felt like Raphael-san may be worrying too much, there was no such thing as absolute certainty in this world. Not long ago, I made up my mind about acting more cautiously, and if there were any potential threats, I would need to remove them quickly.

And since Hinata agreed to help, there was no need to hold back.

We discussed further in detail for a while.

That afternoon, at that cafe, we casually went on about important matters that could be considered national secrets, although we did apply a ‘Sound Isolation Barrier’ to mute our conversation from the outside. Which was why no one else would hear about our very important conversation.

In times like these, having a Skill like that was really convenient.

Hinata explained many other things to me later as well. It ranged from many topics, not just military. Many people seemed to be tempted to manipulate our nation. All in all, their human caution was very strong. I could relate to them however, given I was once a human myself. Which was why I agreed with Hinata's view.

"Got it? There are people plotting to take advantage of you guys, so don't fall for their trap."

To her words, I simply nodded in response.

But whether I actually took her advice was a different matter.

"What do you mean? Are we going to get manipulated?"

"Yes, perhaps in terms of the military. But regarding that, I actually agree, wouldn't it be in your interest as well?"

There would be conditions for joining the council. They seemed to want to toss us the job of managing everything in the Great Jura Forest. We'd also act as the buffer for defending against the Empire. That seemed to be every nation's wish.

"No problem. With the number of wild monsters decreasing, there will be more people coming to the labyrinth. That's just what we want."

"Don't be too idealistic. The order has seen first-hand how many scheming old foxes are in the council. They may order you to dispatch soldiers to their nations in order to suppress the threat of monsters."

Normally speaking, no one wanted a foreign army in their land. But with monsters being a thing in this world, they were the common enemies of all humans. Therefore, it was only natural for everyone to try and reserve sufficient military forces.

It was just like the Templar Knight Order of the Western Holy Church. Many nations would go so far as to employ other nations' armies.

«Proposal. We can utilize this opportunity to offer them military force as a favor.»

So not only could we have the council acknowledge us as a nation, but we could even send our army directly to other nations with proper justification? If that were the case, if any backlash were to ensue, we could use the military force to show them what's good.

My homeland Japan used to do this as well.

"Oh, oh, I see. Why not? Let them have it then."

"But it does kind of piss me off to know that they are exploiting us."

"But wouldn't that actually greatly increase our influence?"

I gave an evil grin, to which Benimaru and Souei immediately understood my meaning. Shuna smiled without saying anything. I suppose that meant that she agreed as well. There was no objection.

In other words, we'd act according to my will tomorrow.

"Your expression looked super evil just now." Hinata looked at me, almost dumbfounded.

She seemed to see through our thoughts. But she didn't say anything more. In other words, she approved. And so, our talk ended.

Before leaving, Hinata suddenly recalled something and said this: “By the way, there were a bunch of idiots who were up to no good. Don’t you get careless now.” It was a cautious reminder, telling me not to get angry and lose control.

The council was divided. She was probably telling me not to judge everyone by a glimpse of what I would see.

Seriously. Why are you so worried about a pacifist like me?

I knew what to do even if Hinata hadn’t reminded me. My answer to her was, “You are worrying too much,” then we bid farewell to her.



The night passed and the day of the conference was afoot.

We headed to the venue. It was Benimaru, Souei, Shuna and I. Everyone put on their respective outfits, all looking dashing. And of course, all of our weapons were stored in my ‘Stomach.’ On the surface, we would appear unarmed.

I had not the slightest sense of unease, having obtained much information from Hinata beforehand. Someone seemed to want to exploit our nation. But that wouldn’t pose an issue for us joining the council.

If this allowed them to acknowledge us as a part of humanity, it would be one step closer to building the ideal society in my head. To form a relationship where both men and monsters can prosper and build a world on top of that. Quoting Myuran, it would be a circle of common prosperity for men and monsters.

On the monster side, we’d already established such a relationship among majins, dwarves, elves and many other races. This alone created a huge economic circle, but I was a human once myself, that’s why I wanted to prosper along with humans.

However, humans were greedy. Unlike monsters, they cared too much about gains and losses and were naturally xenophobic. But at the same time, because of their greed, their standards of living had been raised as a result. That was an undeniable fact. They have also become the source of power that pushed forward the entertainment industry across the world.

Unlike monsters, humans weren’t simple beings. Humans were complex.

I probably shouldn’t have high hopes and expect that everything would go smoothly from the get-go.

When we arrived at the venue, a number of councilors had already been waiting for some time. They began to greet us. They all seemed to come from nations that neighbored ours. Or perhaps they had heard things from the participants of the founding festival, which prompted them to come and establish some friendly relations with us.

I was very happy to hear how they praised our men.

As I responded kindly to their proposals for the future, they seemed to be reassured and began to smile.

“Wahahaha, I’ve heard that Your Majesty Rimuru is a demon lord, I never imagined you were so easy-going!”

“Let us continue our friendship in the future!”

“You are all too kind, this is my wish as well. In the future we will be holding events once in a while, as well. For those who are interested, do come and join us.”

During the festival, many people were still very afraid of us. But now they had warmed up and were willing to have discourse with us. This was all thanks to Rigurd, Myourmiles and the others’ diligent efforts.

Because of this, I was cheered up greatly.

And even though Hinata warned me a ton beforehand, by the current look of this, there really wasn’t any need for me to worry.

But just as I thought so, my mood was suddenly turned with the arrival of the next group of people.

“Hmph! You lot, stop troubling Rimuru-dono so much. Bunch of petty small nation scrubs with no real substance. What gave you the confidence to have spoken with him for so long?”

“Hah, that’s right. What a rude bunch, Rimuru-dono might get the wrong impression of the council. Know your place and beat it already.”

And just like that, a group of arrogant councilors showed up and chased away the people who were chatting with me.

Who’s the rude one! I really wanted to say that, but I managed to hold myself back.

Souei had informed me via ‘Telepathy Net’ that the people who had just arrived had a rather powerful nation supporting them.

The council claimed that all councilors were equal, but it seemed that these people weren’t exactly abiding by that rule. These people also saw their actions as justified, seemingly not feeling any guilt for their actions at all.

There was indeed a class difference as the result of their identities.

“Good day to you, Rimuru-dono, chatting with those people surely couldn’t have been constructive.”

“Good day to you too, what constructive topic were you referring to?”

While I didn’t really want to talk with these people, I still decided to cooperate and give him some room to back off.

“My, my, don’t beat around the bush now, how would Rimuru-dono understand if you put it that way!”

“Hahaha, you have a point. I see that Rimuru-dono is unfortunately devoid of noble etiquette. Then allow us to teach you in the future.”

I merely replied out of courtesy, yet their responses had sounded really malicious. To be honest, these people’s attitudes were way too natural, it’s hard to tell if they really had ill intent

or not. At the same time, they also seemed a bit too casual around me. I suppose it was better than them being afraid of me...right?

“By the way, Rimuru-dono, I heard that you were building some interesting things?”

“Indeed, I heard that you were developing something called a magitrain? We totally would approve if you would export this item to our nation!”

“Yes, that’s our thought exactly. We can give you our aid, but of course, for a price—but it would seem inappropriate to continue.”

Hmm, huh?

How should I put this; I was a bit astonished?

That was way beyond just ‘rude’!

I was thinking that I should act with a bit of humility since these were nobles that I was dealing with. However, it seemed that I had miscalculated. They’d had a huge misunderstanding because of how I’ve handled this.

But this was their domain, after all. If I didn’t play nice enough, things might turn problematic. I shall forgive them with my big heart. Since I’d promised Hinata with confidence, I couldn’t get angry at this point.

“The magitrain can’t be used without laying down the tracks first. Moreover, all of the construction plans have been pre-planned, so we can’t exactly export them just because there are demands.”

“Oh, never mind such details. I have already informed my home nation about it; all you need to do is to allow us to import the merchandise.”

Looks like they hadn’t even seen the actual thing and misunderstood.

They didn’t even seem to know what a magitrain was, so our conversation had been completely pointless. Moreover, they were giving us demands one-sidedly without even considering our opinion.

But I still chose to endure this time.

“No, no, no! I’ve already told you, there are sequences to—”

I suppressed my inner rage and tried to refuse them, but these people didn’t know when to stop with their demands.

“Then we wouldn’t mind switching to a different merchandise. We would love to purchase a large quantity of weapons and armor, so please help us arrange it. And of course, don’t forget to show some appreciation when the transaction is completed.”

Among the noblemen, the man with a big beard representing the duchy of Laquia was especially annoying. He seemed to have even implied that we should bribe them. I seriously questioned whether he had forgotten the fact that I was a demon lord.

The nations neighboring the Great Jura Forest were subjected to the threats of monsters, while the nations located in the in-land of the continent enjoyed peace and prosperity. It must have been because of the riches of these nations that they didn’t consider the demon lords a threat...

But I must say, these people were *really* annoying. The fact that I’d been trying to respond

to them seriously made me look like an idiot.

“By the way, how did you educate that person called Myourmiles? My contact went to deal trades with him, yet he has been pending without any response. Is it possible to change the correspondent?”

You are really, really annoying, you know?! I really wanted to yell this at him.

So Myourmiles had been dealing with this type of people all this time. He must have had plenty of hardship hiding this behind my back. Even though he seemed to have handled them with ease, surely it was still very annoying to deal with.

I gotta learn more from him in the future.

“I will handle this properly.”

Apart from saying so, I also gave them a smile.

Japanese was a very beautiful language.

Handle it properly—apart from what this line meant literally, there were no deadlines as to when the matter would be done. I never commented about how soon I’d handle the situation. It was the equivalent of me not promising anything.

This was a neat trick often used by the super elite—Japanese Bureaucrats. Now I could play dumb and make it through, as well as refuting this whole ordeal. What an excellent strategy.

“Oh, oh, that’s certainly reassuring to hear!”

“We will be looking forward to it.”

“Then, please allow us to excuse ourselves.”

“Regarding the merchandise, we can provide you aid at any time, please feel free to ask.”

“Looking forward to our future interactions.”

Completely fooled by my words, those idiots left with satisfied smiles.

Now that was a mature response.

If you want to buy it, just come and buy it yourselves.

“Indeed, we will be in your care when that time comes.”

I replied with some disingenuous lines and saw these councilors off.

What a troubling bunch.

There was no need to sell our goods to these guys, it was much more pragmatic to sell them through the Freedom Association. There were even more benefits, and the fact that the Association hadn’t told us to bribe them was a definite win for us.

The other councilors began to close in on me, but I only greeted them briefly before leaving. Chatting too long with them may lead to some unnecessary trouble.

My mood had already been ruined this early into the morning. But I suppose that’s an experience as well.

Had there been a problem before the meeting even started, there was no telling just how much Hinata would scold me afterward. It was best to just avoid all the squabble with them. We entered the venue soon after.

*

“Rimuru-sama, is it really okay to just let them go like this? Those arrogant bastards...” Benimaru asked me after we were seated following the council staff’s guide. Seeing me endure the encounter just now, Benimaru seemed to have restrained himself as well. I was going to complain about it to him, but someone spoke before I could.

It was Souei and Shuna.

“Don’t consider yourself to be on the same level as Rimuru-sama. Those were just taunting words of unimportant mobs, how could Rimuru-sama be troubled by them?”

“That’s right, Onii-sama, Rimuru-sama’s heart is broader than the widest sea. To think he would hold a grudge against insignificant characters like those would be most foolish.”

Oh, oh, oh.

I suppose I could only play along now that I’d been praised like that.

“I suppose. Benimaru, you are still too naive to be pissed off by things as minor as these.”

Even though I put it so nicely like that, I was still furious in heart. However, now that Shuna and Souei had misunderstood the situation and given a better explanation instead, I could only continue to push things in that direction.

I put on a pretense and lectured everyone. And so, some time passed by.

Some chairs were set up in the manner of a paper hand fan.

We were sitting on the seats meant originally for the speaker of the council. To put it simply, we were situated at the guard of the hand fan, where everyone could see us.

There was another table and an additional chair.

Benimaru and the others stood behind me awaiting orders.

The speaker of the council, who was hosting the event, was transferred to the safety of the second floor.

The so-called safety measure was meant to counter us. Since I was a demon lord, after all, people were still on guard against us. All the eyes of the councilors were now on us. It was rather uncomfortable sitting like this.

And so, the council conference began, but this was the start of the true hell.

Because I tried to play smart and made all the big claims, now I couldn’t get angry even if my belly were filled with rage. I had to endure the entire thing, listening to the councilors speaking.

I’d asked Hinata beforehand about the content of the conference.

First let’s look at the flow of the conference. The Tempest Federation wished to join the Western Council, and so the council listed a number of conditions.

We were to:

- First: Abide by international law.
- Second: Create an economic zone.
- Third: Provide military force.

These were the three main conditions.

There was nothing wrong with the first condition. Regardless of the size of the nation in the council, there was a duty to abide by international law. With that being said, the council had no authority to actually interfere with the internal affairs of its member states, which was reassuring to know.

Every merchant was to abide by the trade laws of the nations they were trading in. If there were any problems, the matter would be settled according to the laws of the aforementioned nation.

If the merchants were dissatisfied about the verdict, they could file a complaint at the embassy of their home nations. There, it would be decided whether the issue would be elevated to a national level, or the merchants would just take the losses themselves.

It seemed that we had handled the incident during the nation founding festival pretty well.

If it were to develop into a problem on a cross-national level, it would be trialed according to international law. We would need to proceed to the international court to seek a verdict, and there would have to be a third-party nation at the scene—in other words, it would be a matter to be judged by the council.

The only councilors who didn't have a say in the issue were the ones from the nation in question. It didn't seem all too complicated. However, to be fair, we needed to publish our national laws first. That was the main issue, but I did have the reliable Raphael-san.

We had gathered information about the laws in different nations and had a perfect, easily understood outline to act as the foundation of our nation's law.

We presented this as well, so there shouldn't be any problems.

As for opening the economic circle, that was gonna be problematic.

The concept of a patent had yet to be introduced to this world. The current trend is that whoever could copy the design the best wins the race.

But it was too early to be worrying about something small like advancing the patent industry. If any civilization became too advanced, they would be attacked by the 'Army of Heaven.' As many as a million angels would attack from the sky, ransacking any towns on their way.

That's why the Western Nations didn't have electricity or gas. There weren't even steam-powered machines.

But did that mean everything in this world was inconvenient? That isn't necessarily the case as we had magic and magic items to compensate for the lack of technology. The level of fashion in this world could rival that of Japan, and even though there weren't too many fresh food ingredients circulating on the market, the techniques of preserving the food were excellent.

On the other hand, in terms of buildings, people seemed to utilize magic for some more

advanced techniques than the modern world. It might not have been possible to create the castles and other impressive buildings using just modern techniques.

And so, people lived satisfied lives with an abundance of food, clothes and residences.

Living in the city was surprisingly comfortable.

If you had to point out where a problem was—

Vesta and Gabil's research publication, Kurobee's gear display, and the magitrain that even the bearded guy representing the Kingdom of Laquia knew about, had all been somewhat leaked at this point. It wouldn't even be a surprise if they knew about Youm and Myuran hiring a large labor force.

The problem was not with this information being known, but rather the fact that someone was trying to steal our technologies.

Correction, it's okay if they were just trying to steal it.

But these people were even worse, using the excuse of trading between nations to lay the tracks down in their nation first.

"You must lead the train to the duchy of Laquia first!"

"How can you make such a decision so rashly! Rimuru-dono, we at the Republic of Zamund are worthy as allies of the Tempest Federation."

"Silence! No one is asking the opinion of the nation's representatives; can't you see that His Majesty Rimuru is troubled by it now?!"

Had the white-bearded councilor not come out to mitigate, the meeting probably wouldn't have been able to continue.

It was all right for the market to expand, but I wasn't expecting to suddenly start providing new technologies to everyone. Moreover, if all of the nations were to treat us like a lackey and ask us to do every small favor for them, I had a bad feeling that they would call us for help constantly.

It turned out that my earlier worries were not for nothing. Even though, right now I felt quite frustrated, the conference needed to carry on.

About the last condition, which was to provide military force. I needed to consider that more carefully.

Hinata had already given me the advice, which was why I had re-examined the intelligence provided by Souei. Someone had tried to exploit our military force in the name of military assistance, which was why we wanted to take the opportunity to do the same.

Tempest would have full authority over the Great Jura Forest. They wanted us to act as a deterrent against monsters, which was fine. We were planning to do that anyway, which would be in our interests.

As a result of the meeting between Hinata and I, our nation would be in charge of defending the Great Jura Forest while the Holy Knight Order would defend the deserted land.

Our nation would be handling the expenses, so surely the council would be happy to see that. In order for economic activities to proceed smoothly, the world needed to be peaceful first.

There were several nations on guard against the Eastern Empire. To them, our nation's defense was like a lifeline to them. I must be worrying too much. If anything were to happen, our nation would be the one to take the first blow.

Based on these considerations, the third condition must be the council trying to exploit us. We could actually use this to our advantage.

The big prerequisite was that we would handle the defense of the Great Jura Forest. Smaller nations also hoped for us to use our extra military reserve to defend their nations.

Even if the number of monsters near the Great Jura Forest had decreased, there may still be unexpected monster attacks. Some dangerous monsters could even fly from the air. So, a nation couldn't be picky when it came to the national defense budget.

You also needed to issue salaries for the patrolling soldiers. Clients had to pay for monster slaying to take place. If the council couldn't respond fast enough, they needed to make up the fee with tax-payer money.

Moreover, you could only issue contracts at the Freedom Association after discovering the monsters. So, you could never really be fully prepared.

The Western Holy Church only dispatched the Holy Knight Order to nations that recognized their religion of Luminism as their national religion. But they had limited knights, and the amount of area to patrol was very broad. Often, there weren't enough people when needed.

That's where we'd come in.

Each nation will pay us for our defense fee. We would be happy to oblige any request. At the same time, our nation will play a significant role in national defense. No kingdom would be able to ignore our nation.

In other words, we would be able to demonstrate our strength and influence on the Western Nations with our strong military backing.

We can make money while also expanding our influence.

That's a plan that can kill two birds with one stone.

Moreover, if the empire really invaded—

Should I call it fortunate or unfortunate? Tempest sat in the middle of the Empire's invasion route. We'd have to fight them regardless, so we might as well unite with the people standing behind us. It is exactly what we wanted—for them to be not afraid of us and willingly accept our defense force.

It would require an absolute difference in terms of strength to make this a reality. We would need to show them they have no chance of winning. Or else, it would be extremely foolish to hand their entire national defense to another nation.

If we can't win by resisting, then we might as well use it—if we can have everyone think that way, this tactic may actually work.

The councilors were either making demands or interrupting people now. It was then that the speaker announced that his explanation concluded.

“—These are the conditions for the inclusion of the Tempest Federation in the council. Your

Majesty Rimuru, do you disagree with any of the items?”

Here, if you didn’t state any objection, you were considered to have agreed.

I may ignore the views of every councilor here, but I wouldn’t miss a single item on the list of conditions.

We wanted to exploit the council as well, so it’d be for nothing if we were to be bound by the treaty.

Don’t you normally draft these things in paper for us to ponder upon?

—I was quite displeased by this.

What should we do if we couldn’t give a response right after they demanded an answer?

I guess that this was their way of provoking us as well.

With that being said, I did have Raphael-san on hand. It would examine everything that was said in detail and use my hands to take notes. How omnipotent.

That’s why I got to ponder upon all of the items and raise objections.

“I have reviewed every item in detail and have drafted doubts as well as alternative plans. If you are willing to accept, we won’t have any problem either.”

I handed over the written document to Benimaru, to which he stood up and passed it to the speaker.

The speaker was forced to accept it.

“—What?”

I mostly agreed to their conditions. However, in order to benefit from their attempts at exploiting me, I changed some of the content.

Raphael-san very kindly took a record of the revised draft.

Unlike just a mere verbal delivery, you could understand everything even after the whole ordeal. The speaker seemed to have looked down upon us because we were monsters. When he saw that his speech just now had been copied down in ink exactly as he had delivered, his face went pale instantly. Moreover, his expression practically said, ‘Guess we can’t get away with this one.’ There were even revisions using red ink. No wonder why the speaker was so shocked.

But it’s all thanks to Raphael-san, not me. Although I did need to act all smug for the occasion.

“Feel free to speak up if there’s any problem.”

If they don’t accept the proposal we raised, we don’t have to join the council. I would choose to give up deliberately. After all, there hadn’t been enough time, and if the public wouldn’t accept us, all we needed to do was to change our policies and only have in depth interactions with the nations that recognize us.

“No, there is no problem… But I hope you may give us some time to discuss Your Majesty Rimuru’s proposal.”

Looks like the speaker is no fool. He realized we were not easy to deal with.

But he raised no objections against our proposal, instead he decided to examine the document in detail.

Didn’t you just deny us any time to ponder—even if I thought so, there was no benefit in

us objecting now. So, I decided to accept his demand.



How did things turn out this way?

The table that was kicked into the air landed slowly. Time seemed to have frozen. Hinata was glaring at me, her eyes looked so cold.

So you've finally done it—even if she didn't spell it out for me, that line pinched my heart like a needle.

With a massive crack, the table hit the ground hard. I slammed the table with my heel, and it shattered into pieces.

No use crying over spilled milk.

I crossed my legs on the chair casually, acting as if everything was going according to my plan. I glared around at the councilors, whose faces had all turned pale, and sighed internally.

To be honest, I managed to hold it back at first.

People called me a mature adult and a role model for Tempest. I was proud of my open heart. You can tell from my behavior lately alone.

People said that I was the embodiment of patience and was even good at handling Milim. It's because of my open heart that I was able to endure Milim's stubbornness with a smile.

However...

What happens when a kindhearted slime gets crossed by a bunch of disgusting and horrible middle-aged men whose eyes glimmer with greed?

They get what they deserve, AKA a large table smashed in front of them.

There had been a three-hour intermission before the meeting resumed once more. It was then that problems emerged.

Regarding the files I mentioned, some councilors handed a bizarre document titled 'Petition' to me. Seeing how tired the speaker looked, this was not his idea. But I had no time to feel sorry for him.

As I skimmed the proposal, I realized most of the content in it was baffling.

The items were as follows:

One, the magitrain was to lead to the kingdom of Ingracia, while the construction fees needed to be paid by the Tempest Federation itself.

Two, the Tempest Federation was required to supply high-grade equipment that would be used to strengthen the military reserves of the Western Nations, as a show of support.

Three, the Tempest Federation's labyrinth was a treasure for all humankind, and thus, it was necessary for the council to oversee its execution and running.

Four, as the Tempest Federation joined the council, it needed to pay a set amount of taxes

each year. Moreover, when it came to choosing a representative for Tempest, due to safety measures, only human candidates would be accepted.

And etc., etc.

They really went wild with their demands.

The rational side of me shattered within three seconds. These guys were truly impressive to have pissed me off in a mere three seconds.

Demands like these weren't worth more inspection. This was beyond an unfair treaty. If I were to sign such a treaty, I might as well give up on coexistence with humans.

"Ehh, fellows, are you looking down on me? I'll allow you to say whatever you want, but where did you get the impression that you can make demands of a demon lord?"

After kicking the table, I calmed down a bit.

I suppressed my anger and questioned the councilors with their heads low.

"Rimuru-sama is asking a question. Don't be so quiet now, please answer quickly," Shuna added on the assault with a smile, her words were even more effective than mine. All the councilors felt the immense pressure eating them alive and began to sweat.

"You all seem to have been mistaken. My nation is preparing to build a huge economic zone. But even so, I intend to join the Western Council. But this is for one reason—that is, we do not intend to antagonize humanity. But since you are clearly unwilling to cooperate, I don't suppose we should either—"



The meeting hall fell silent with my words echoing.

Even though my voice wasn't that loud, it went straight into every councilor's heart and inspired fear.

I did not use my 'Demon Lord Haki,' since if I used it on humans, the luckier ones would only fall in a state of fear, but for the unlucky, they would probably go mad, or even die in pain like a maniac. That's why I won't use it in a place like this.

And of course, I won't brainwash them either.

It will ruin any prospect of us befriending humans. I don't want to deal with boring puppet-like companions who would only say YES.

Anyhow, at least I only destroyed the table in anger this time before expressing my opinion.

Yet this alone was tremendously effective.

"N-no, that wasn't our intent when raising those terms, Rimuru-dono..."

"I-indeed! We were only trying to build a bridge of friendship with your nation, it was just a careless mistake that we got a bit too presumptuous."

The councilors started to panic and tried to find excuses.

But I only got angrier as I listened.

By the way—

You are still calling me 'dono' even though I'm the ruler of a nation.

If you were the king or chancellor of a nation, then I suppose I could give it a pass. But if you were to call me that without actually leading a nation, it is the equivalent of looking down on our kingdom. It's almost as if they were talking to the king of their vassal states, there wasn't a shred of respect in their tone. These people were clearly looking down on us, thinking that we were just some monsters.

I can tolerate it if I get looked down on, but I cannot tolerate my nation being looked down upon. I'm a demon lord after all.

I was hoping that they would at least treat us in a manner worthy of such a title. But things were much more severe than I expected.

We stayed in the most luxurious hotel, and many councilors were polite to us, but that's what made me careless.

Even with all this playing a part, their attitudes overall were still horrible.

"Huh? Then what exactly was your motive? It sounds to me that you want to make the people of my nation your slaves and work them into the ground for your sake?"

"N-no! That's not the case at all!"

"We have no such intention! That's not our motive at all—"

The councilors tried their hardest to explain.

So, these were the kinds of nobles representing their nations. What a pain to deal with. Even someone with an open heart like me was approaching the limit of my patience dealing with them.

I imagine Yuuki must be one sly fox to have been able to play these stinky ocelots in his

palm.¹⁵

I really want to learn from him, but I don't think I'd be able to manage.

«Proposal. Allow me to handle the situation and engage automatic response? YES/NO.»

Raphael-san seemed to have said something, or was I hearing things?

It is very outstanding, but a Skill is just a Skill, there's no way that it could have interjected freely like that. Maybe I'd relied on it too much every day, to be hallucinating its voice due to my wishes. If it were possible, it could even handle speech, then what the hell was all that I just suffered through?

I shook my head at such a ridiculous notion. And continued to glare at the councilors in front of me impatiently.

This was bad.

Now that I had regained my cool, I was troubled about how to salvage the situation. People always say that 'A hasty man is seldom out of trouble,' if anything were to go wrong here, it would be difficult to mend things.

The councilors were trying really hard, as was I.

«Report. There is no problem. Just as master has thought, it has been confirmed that the whole venue was under the influence of mental interference.»

Huh? What did you just say?!

I honestly wasn't thinking anything, not a single thought. I only acted because of my anger.

But—

«Report. Mental manipulation has been discovered after collecting several samples. Similar to the individual 'Gai,' it appears that the majority of the councilors here have been psychologically influenced by someone. Interrupt interference? YES/NO.»

Ehh, do I really have to spell it out...

I chose YES without hesitation. With that, the few councilors who had remained silent until now began to speak.

"Of course His Majesty Rimuru would be angered by this! This is an absolute disgrace on our side, how can we make it up to you—"

"Hold on, all of these terms were never mentioned prior to the meeting!"

"Who is it, who drafted this on their own?"

The situation suddenly changed.

Raphael-san sure was impressive, always so reliable.

"Fufu, looks like all the councilors have regained their reasoning."

I pretended as if I've seen through everything and mumbled rather pompously. I was just trying to play cool for a second, but Shuna reacted to it.

"I see how it is now! I was wondering why they were acting strange, could it have been some sort of mental interference?"

So, what happened exactly, Wisdom King Raphael-san?

¹⁵What a confusing line for the English readers, apparently Fuse liked it so much he lifted it straight from the web novel. "こういう狸どもを手玉に取っていたのなら、ユウキはなかなかの狐だと言う事"

«Answer. It was a form of mental interference. The source of interference was not from magicules, so it took some time to decrypt it, but there aren't that many people with the same wavelength at the same time. This one thought it would take more time to deactivate it, but the wavelength of master's anger caused a 'tear' in it.»

I see, so everything was within my expectation—I'll pretend that to be the case.

“Looks like the effect wasn't that strong. The mental interference was only strong enough to make some councilors short-sighted.” I commented casually.

Fooled by my words, Shuna and the other two looked at me with newfound respect.

“I see, so is that why Rimuru-sama just pressured the councilors to plunge them into chaos?”

“That was indeed the case, Benimaru. All done with deep considerations.”

Since I was afraid he would inherit the irritation of mine, I had to clarify first. It'd be great if I could explain this with Hinata as well.

I had enough time to take a breath at this point, but still I was confused, nonetheless.

Who was conducting the mental interference?

It was definitely not Yuuki.

Since it could have left evidence, I don't think he would have done it. If he were to risk leaving any possible trace, he would need a strong enough motive—to which I can't come up with one no matter how I think about it.

So, who was the one that orchestrated this incident?

This is no time to get to the bottom of that.

Right now, I had to resolve the problem at hand. Some of the councilors began to pressure those who regained their reasoning. It must have been these people who drafted the petition. The number was greater than I expected. Moreover, some of them still seemed very smug.

They have other tricks up their sleeves—that's the only explanation.

It was then that I felt something was wrong. Some of the councilors began to look towards the back door of the meeting hall.

I listened carefully and heard sounds of footsteps.

Have they called for the guards?

«Report. There was no such activity detected. It has likely been a pre-planned event.»

Hmm. Looks like they planned to provoke me on purpose and then send in people to suppress me?

They sure were confident—they were still fighting a demon lord, you know?

It was unbelievable how they decided to utilize such a flawed plan, but the residents that lived around Ingracia didn't seem to have enough sense of crisis. Perhaps it was because they lived too far away from the threat of monsters that these people had become too complacent.

The same went for these councilors, they were too happy-go-lucky.

Perhaps they were the “Idiots with ill intent” mentioned by Hinata...

When I realized this, the door happened to be open as a dozen soldiers and a large man walked inside.



“Oh oh, how very pretentious. So, you are the idiot who calls himself a demon lord? Are you really so arrogant as to only bring three servants?” The man yelled the moment he laid eyes on me. How unintelligent.

His laugh was pretty maniacal, completely looking down on me.

This was not something that could simply be described as just being rude. He was clearly here to cause trouble, there was no room for excuses. Even we were astonished to the point that we couldn’t help but look at each other.

No, hold up a minute. This must be the enemy’s strategy.

How very cunning—

«Answer. This man likely does not have such capabilities.»

—Eh, seriously?

Then this guy’s just a massive idiot—?

“Ehh… I suppose I am the demon lord called Rimuru. Did you mistake me for someone else?”

Just in case, yeah, just in case, I’ll confirm with him.

It’d be awkward if he said that he got the wrong guy, after all. Which was why I asked who he was looking for.

Shuna’s smile gradually faded. Benimaru seemed to be frozen in anger. Souei was ready to take out his hidden weapon. This would be bad if things ended in bloodshed.

While I was angry as well, I could still make a joke out of the situation.

I managed to stay calm and began to talk to him, in an attempt to work things out.

In the end, it was a wasted effort.

“Yeah, it’s you all right. I remember that the idiot’s name was Rimuru.”

So, he wasn’t mistaken. That meant it was okay to kill him then…

“—Oi, you there, don’t get ahead of yourself now! I don’t know why you are doing this, but this is a public area with a bunch of eye-witnesses. You think you can break the laws here and get away with it scot-free?”

I decided to use the law as my shield and force this idiot away.

Then again, I wasn’t exactly qualified to say something after destroying the table, but that was different.

Otherwise, I would’ve really killed him. And even if I managed to hold myself back, there was still the off chance that Benimaru would lose it.

However, this large man continued on his idiotic spiel.

“You fool! This is a great opportunity. I’ll give you a hard time with this thing. With it, you monsters will give us whatever we want!”

Eh? What was he on about? Did he plan to give me a hard time and make me give them whatever they wanted?

What was this guy talking about? Was I just dumb? What was he trying to achieve? How come I couldn't understand him...?

«Answer. This idiotic large man wishes to defeat master and make him answer to his commands.»

I know that already! You don't have to explain things seriously so often like I'm actually an idiot.

By the way, the item the large man was holding, I'd seen that magic artifact before when Milim was pretending to be manipulated—the Domination Orb. It seemed to be the real deal, but the question was if it would actually work on me.

«Answer. Domination Orb is ineffective in controlling master.»

Glad to hear.

I wasn't sure where he got an item like that, but it was best to completely destroy something so dangerous.

With that thought, I stood up from my chair.

Confused at the sudden turn of events, the speaker seemed to regain his senses and began to shout in panic.

“P-please hold on, Your Majesty Rimuru! This must be some misunderstanding. This is by no means what the council intends to do, please confirm with the fair and a just third party of Hinata-sama first—!”

The speaker was respectful towards me, he wouldn't have lied.

Hinata never mentioned this to me, but she did advise me to keep my guard up. However, I didn't expect it to turn out this stupidly straight-forward. I suppose it was best to just go with the flow at this point.

The speaker wasn't my enemy, and neither was Hinata.

Moreover, some of the councilors were also on our side.

“We've never heard of this. What is going on here?”

“Who sent these people?”

“That soldier's armor has the emblem of the Ingracia Royal family. Does that mean that it was the Kingdom of Ingracia who was behind this?”

The councilors fell in disarray at these comments.

Seeing this reaction, they obviously had nothing to do with the large man.

This was not the decision made by the council, but the action of some separate force.

Most people were very confused, but some were watching on calmly.

That being Hinata. After being named by the councilor, she immediately stood up from the chair and came between me and the large man.

“Reiner-dono, what is the meaning of this?”

So, the large man's name was Reiner.

If Hinata knew him, this person had to be famous, right?

“How dare you enter without permission! We are in session right now; this is no place for you soldiers to enter!”

Seeing how Hinata had taken action, the speaker also became emboldened and started to scold the soldiers.

The one who responded was not Reiner, but one of the councilors. If I recall correctly, he was the Count of the Kingdom of Ingracia, Gavan or something...

“Hahaha, speaker Leicester-sama, it’s no trouble. I called them in to punish those outlaws,” Gavan said with a smile. He sat on the second floor on a seat near the speaker.

The speaker’s face reddened as he shouted, “Count Gavan, have you lost your mind?!”

This was to be expected. Since one of the councilors was involved in the matter, he was no longer able to proclaim that this had nothing to do with the council.

With Hinata acting as an impartial third party, this ridiculous charade probably worked in my favor. Even though it pissed me off to have been looked down upon, I decided to tolerate it for now and see how things went.

“Gavan-dono! I’ve never heard of such a thing before!” shouted a man I was pretty sure was councilor Johann, the Duke of the Kingdom of Rostia.

He seemed rather reliable and was not affected by the mental interference. The commotion at the start of the meeting made him look ill as well. It seemed that he would be on my side.

He would likely agree to the Tempest Federation’s addition to the council as well.

“Everyone, please be calm. I’m sure that everyone here is actually afraid of Demon Lord Rimuru, are you not? Reiner-dono here is the strongest man in Ingracia. He will defeat Demon Lord Rimuru and control him. In this way, one among the Octagram will be ours to command, and even the Storm Dragon would be in our palm soon!”

Even though he was under fire from multiple councilors, Gavan still remained very relaxed as he announced his justification to stand against me.

Many councilors loudly declared their agreement with Gavan’s stance as well.

Surely, I didn’t have to tolerate this any longer... Yet the whole situation continued to spiral out of control without my involvement.

“H-how could you do this!”

“We won’t allow such a thing to happen! D-don’t you dare make light of the council now!”

“Yes! Y-you dare to ignore the will of the council and place your own interests first?”

More and more councilors put their own bit in.

But, for some reason, I had a bad feeling about this. Among the councilors, something about Gavan’s smug attitude made me think something else was up.

And my prediction came true.

A well-mannered man entered the venue. “Calm down, everyone. The knight of our kingdom, Reiner, has a point. Since the demon lord came here so carelessly, isn’t this a perfect opportunity for us?!”

This blond-haired newcomer clearly wasn’t a councilor, yet he was just as arrogant as one.

His words riled the venue up instantly.

Obviously, this guy had high authority.

Just as I thought so—

“Your Highness Elric, what are you doing here? Have I not advised you to not do anything foolish...?” Hinata’s words helped me clarify his true identity.

This man was the prince of this nation. Therefore, even the councilors could not afford to be rude. No wonder they looked so confused.

So this Prince Elric was the man behind this whole incident?

Some of the councilors seemed to have been instigated by him.

“Hinata, I am really disappointed in you. You fear the demon lords. You have given up on being the fearless guardian of humanity.”

“—What did you say?” Hinata’s tone was low and cold.

Ah, she looked pissed.

Now I probably wouldn’t get the chance to show off.

“Quit your squabbling, Hinata-san. How about it? I don’t know how strong the commander of the Holy Knight Order is, but I’m the commanding officer of the Ingracia Knight Order. You are no match for me. You couldn’t even win against that punk ass demon lord; how pathetic of you to be licking each other’s wounds over there. Are you pissing yourself to run away?”

With a mocking smile, Reiner turned his insults towards Hinata.

This guy was putting himself in danger as well.

Even I was losing it just by watching.

“You bastard...”

“Kukuku, no comeback? Did I hit the mark? Oh, Holy Knight Commander-sama, your position is probably for show as well, no? Did you seduce some horny cardinal to have gotten your job as well? Both sides are all trash, you all must have fought a shitty war. You don’t even have the resolve to kill, how laughable!”

Ah, even I got triggered.

Please stop doing this, would you?

“But, Hinata, you are not all bad-looking; if you are willing to be my woman, I could take you in as my concubine, you know?”

Ah, this guy... He had just dug his own grave.

Hinata still looked very calm. Her appearance was still that of an ice-cold beauty. However, while appearing emotionless, inside, she must be exploding with fury like a volcano.

Hinata seriously had amazing tolerance.

If it were me, I probably would have lost it already.

“Oi, oi, oi, Sir Reiner, don’t you feel a bit ashamed to say something so lewd? That said, I’m actually very fond of that demon lord. It’s not good to take every nice thing for yourself, don’t you think?”

An inexplicable chill went down my spine. I shivered.

This man, Gavan, wa-was he hitting on me?

What a disgusting old man. Very few things would push me to an emotional response, but he seriously gave me the creeps. This guy was truly horrifying.

Thankfully, Gavan was sitting far away from me. If he were to approach me, my body may move on its own to beat him up.

“—Your Highness Elric, after having this man—Reiner-dono, say such things and do all this, does the Kingdom of Ingracia intend to turn a blind eye to such behavior?” Hinata asked calmly, without leaking even the tiniest bit of anger.

Elric answered with a smile. “Hehehe, Hinata-san, had you been willing to provide us with your aid, we would have treated you with much greater respect. However, you can only blame yourself for provoking Reiner. Oh, I forgot to mention, Reiner is stronger than rank A adventurers. In addition—”

Elric snapped his fingers.

Having been waiting for the moment, the door opened, admitting a man in black. He was followed by a woman in green robes and a group of people wearing jackets embroidered with a familiar symbol.

I knew the man wearing black, too. Squinting, I realized it was Gai, the adventurer the dryad Delta decapitated back in the labyrinth.

As for the people in robes, they were the members of Green Rebellion. They were in a fierce battle with our avatars. Did that mean that the man in the green robe was connected to the Apostles of Verte?

The man covered his head with his robe’s hood while covering his face with a scarf. It made him look very suspicious. Judging by his arrogant demeanor, he was likely the leader of the mercenary band.

And my guess was right.

“Allow me to introduce you all. This is Gai-san, rank A adventurer. He’s currently Reiner’s adjutant. And this is—”

Elric laid his hand on the shoulder of the woman in the green robe. His every movement was very contrived, clearly narcissistic.

“—This is the commander of the famous mercenary band, Apostles of Verte. I am very wary of paying proper respect even when it comes to eliminating demon lords, so I found some truly impressive individuals. There are plenty of skilled fighters here who are stronger than you. Just because you’re all somewhat strong, I hope that you won’t be too full of yourself.”

Elric was very confident.

In my opinion, if he wanted to fight, I was definitely game—

«Report. This will destroy your reputation by one hundred percent.»

I suppose.

With all these eyes watching, it was probably a bit of an overkill for the demon lord to fight so rashly.

Moreover, I’d already made a promise—I would only fight against the person that made it through the entire labyrinth. If I broke my promise so carelessly, I would have to handle

countless idiots in the future.

More importantly—someone was angrier than me now.

Human beings were truly amazing creatures. When someone started to lose their cool, the person before them would naturally regain their own cool.

“Then let me ask you this, Prince Elric-sama, do you intend to be hostile not only against me, but the entire Western Holy Church? Are you truly prepared for such consequences?”

“Rest assured, neither the Western Holy Church nor the Holy Empire of Lubelius will be affected. As long as you stand aside and watch quietly, I can ensure your personal safety.”

Seeing how hard Hinata was trying to suppress her anger, I even forgot what I was angry about.

Besides the speaker, there were other people who were also trying their hardest to protest against Elric and his lackeys. We hadn’t been rejected by the council, so we weren’t completely isolated.

It was just one idiot who decided to play dirty.

And because of that, there was no need for us to argue until our faces turned red with anger.

“That’s not the issue. I was invited by the council to act as a third party this time. My goal was to maintain justness and fairness in the meeting. Therefore, I cannot simply remain silent in light of your actions. It would be a different case had it been the will of the council, but for you alone to intrude like this, don’t think I will just sit and watch.”

Hinata was likely still mindful of Elric’s status and tried to persuade him. Yet Elric was not listening.

“Hinata-sama has a point, please tread carefully and cease this disruption!”

“I’ve never heard of such a thing, Your Highness Elric! And Count Gavan, did you think you would be able to get away with what you just did?”

“It’s rare for His Majesty Rimuru to appear in person, your actions are clearly the issue here!”

“I will not allow such a thing to happen, how dare the Kingdom of Ingracia be so outrageous!”

Some were furious, some were passionate. And the number of councilors raising their voices increased. With these developments, I felt like I was an audience. I was glad that someone else was acting as the protagonist now.

“If there was no justice and fairness, why would the council be needed in the first place?!” the speaker shouted.

Keep going! I cheered internally.

“A bunch of old geezers, quit yapping about. You guys can run your mouth however you want when I’m finished dominating the demon lord.”

Reiner seemed confident in his victory.

That guy already pissed off Hinata. I probably wasn’t needed.

Just gonna pretend I didn’t see that.

“Elric-sama, according to our contract, we only agreed to be your bodyguards. If you intend

to tread this path yourself, I will see this as a breach in contract!"

Oh, even the commander of Apostles of Verte didn't want to intervene? I almost treated them the same. It was good that he let us know early enough.

"T-that's right! In my opinion, Demon Lord Rimuru-sama is an extremely dangerous character. He's definitely not to be underestimated after having created a labyrinth with those insane monsters!"

...

Was she praising me?

Our fight to the death was not for nothing. The captain of Green Rebellion, the spirit wielder, seemed to be maintaining great caution against me.

"Hmph, how boring, cowards will only get in our way."

So, Gai was the same kind of person as Reiner? The type of person that was overconfident and ignored other people's opinions?

He looked at me with great hatred, but I couldn't recall anything that I'd done to deserve such hate.

Either way, the venue was on the brink of war. However, perhaps because it lacked a key factor, no one had taken any action.

I sighed internally about the helplessness of the situation and decided to observe quietly.



Just as things were about to escalate, Elric suddenly raised his hand.

"Silence! Everybody listen carefully now, Elric-sama has something to say!" Gavan yelled. Somehow, he had moved down from the second floor to right next to Elric without anyone noticing.

Elric nodded his head in satisfaction. Slowly glancing at the surroundings, he began to speak: "Members of the council! At this moment, in this place, you may express your opinion freely! Will you join us and become the champions that will eliminate the demon lord? Or will you seek alliance with the demon lord and stand against humanity? I, Elric von Ingracia, believe that the fellow representatives of the Western Nations will make the right call!"

Elric's eyes shone, almost as if presenting on a stage.

"Oi, oi, oi, are you deciding to vote on the subject now?" I asked unconsciously.

Elric nodded as if this was only natural.

So, with all the mess he was making, he still wanted to save some face?

Moreover, even if they started voting, they wouldn't get over half of the supporting votes—

"Hehe, isn't that only natural? Of course, we will determine the issue democratically with the majority vote. However, it won't matter whether or not we even hold a vote since I am

certain that the council will agree to my plan.”

That line caught my attention.

His confidence almost implied that the result had been fixed internally. Actually, now that I thought about it, a lot of things were strange about this guy. Even if he was a prince, where did he get the balls to mess around in the venue where all the nations’ representatives were gathered? Normally, such an act would not be tolerated.

Then what was the reason for his confidence?

«Answer. There is a high likelihood that most of the councilors have been bribed.»

Ahh, no wonder.

I didn’t expect him to bribe even foreign councilors. If this were handled poorly, it could lead to an international incident which was why I didn’t think he would resort to such a dangerous tactic.

It was my miscalculation that led to this mistake.

“Then, let us vote. Let’s have a fair and just verdict! We shall defeat the demon lord and dominate him. Those who approve of this idea, please stand up!”

As the prince’s voice rang, several sneering councilors stood up.

I see, so they were all in on this from the get-go.

If this was the case, then it really couldn’t be helped. Even though the situation wasn’t ideal, we still had plenty of time. Even if we were to be rejected, we would just have to go from there. Now we can only accept the result of the vote.

«Report. There are no issues. Everything is within expectations.»

Eh, within expectations?

Raphael-san sent me the impression of an evil grin.

On that note, didn’t Souei’s investigation reveal a lot of things? For instance, the world’s view on our nation, the treasury of different kingdoms, as well as the reactions of different royal families to the event. There were even records of each nation’s meetings.

All of this was investigated thoroughly by Wisdom King Raphael-san. I quickly formulated a file of documents inside my ‘Stomach.’ I took it out and found that they were several ledgers.

Ah, it’s the ledger under the counter!

So, you really got everything under the control, Raphael-san.

Before I knew it, Raphael-san had grasped the weak points of the colluding councilors. The ledger had detailed information about who had taken bribes. If this were to go public, it would severely affect their careers. Once we had hard evidence of their embezzling, all of this would just be a silly drama.

We worked discreetly.

As expected from Wisdom King Raphael-san, how fearsome.

«Report. There is no need to present this evidence; master has already won.»

Hmm?

As I was just wondering what that meant, the result came.

Several councilors stood up and began to applaud. Seeing this, Elric began to deliver his

victory speech.

“The verdict is decided. The votes are over half, and the motion has been passed!” Elric said smugly.

Gavan and Reiner also held disgusting smiles and prepared to arrest us.

However, they got a bit too ahead of themselves. Most councilors were actually still seated, and there were less than a third of the members standing. That idiot Elric, being so confident in his scheme, had begun bragging about his victory without even checking.

Even the councilors who supported Elric realized that there weren’t enough votes for the motion. They looked around in panic, pale, as they realized they were the minority.

The result was obvious.

Those who were against the idea of defeating the demon lord—AKA me—were the majority.

The number of pages in the ledger was greater than the number of councilors who have stood up for Elric. That number was enough to make the majority, but some of the councilors seemed to have changed their minds.

«Answer. It seems that with the deactivation of mental interference, they have recovered their conscience.»

I see.

So, they realized how stupid they were after regaining reason.

That was certainly good to know.

So, all the fellow councilors had decided to join forces with me based on the rules of justice and fairness.

Even though some were moved by bribery before—

«Answer. That was likely an effect of mental interference. It could evoke people’s ‘desire.’ It seems to have an extraordinarily strong influence.»

Ah, then I kind of felt sorry for them.

It was just like Masayuki’s Unique Skill Hero. Similarly, that Skill affected the mind which was very difficult to deal with. Masayuki, however, had no control over it. But this time, the people who orchestrated this incident seemed to be selective with their targets. I wasn’t sure who did this, but it was definitely a problematic opponent.

Could it be that blonde...?

Anyway, surely those councilors who have regained their reason were able to tell what’s right and wrong. Then I would treat them with the same courtesy and keep their embezzlement a secret.

But if one councilor’s judgement could determine the fate of a nation, then there was something wrong with the system. If organizations like the League of Nations or the United Nations couldn’t maintain their integrity and assess themselves accordingly, it would become corrupt.

If the councilor representing a nation turned corrupt, people would also think ill of the nation they represented. If the fate of a nation were so closely tied to one individual’s personality and dignity, I hoped they would choose them more carefully.

But that shouldn't really be of my concern.
The problem lay with the people standing in front of us.
People who committed illegal acts needed to pay.

But before that, I needed to sort this delusional idiot out and make him realize the predicament he'd landed in.

"Oi, will you calm down now, take a look at what is really going on," I said casually to Elric.

"Hmph, what are you—?"

He still hadn't realized his situation.

His sheer stupidity was embarrassing to watch.

"Are you a clown, *honk honk?*" Hinata suddenly called out.

"WHAT?!"

"Oops, how rude of me. Prince Elric-sama is just too hilarious."

Hinata had watched this whole charade with cold eyes. Even as she began to come to my aid, she still looked calm. However, she had already entered her fighting mode.

I didn't want to lose my momentum, but Hinata simply wouldn't stop.

"Looks like more than half of the people here voted against you. As the third party who stands on a fair and just ground, I shall announce this verdict as final. And regarding the matter of whether you have the authority to initiate such a vote, the council shall hold an investigative inquiry later on."

"Uhh, how can this be?! You guys, are you betraying me?!" Elric complained loudly.

Hah, funny, funny.

Things turned out pretty different from how he imagined. His narcissism made his actions even more laudable. Hinata seemed pleased at this, just as I was, to see all the unpleasantness gone.

"I-indeed, Elric-sama has a point!" Gavan said. "Do you have any idea what you are doing?! To have the guts to do something like this, I'll see to it that our nation's aid will—"

"Hold on, what's that supposed to mean? Count Gavan, could you elaborate on that?" interrupted the tired-looking speaker.

While Gavan's protests were almost incomprehensible, it was mixed with phrases that couldn't be unheard. Like 'our nation's aid.'

«Report. There is available information about it from the documents.»

Hearing Raphael-san's words, I checked the files and found detailed records there.

"Anti-flooding construction in the Kingdom of Raibach. Food support for the drought in Carnada. There are other nations here as well, and they seemed to have promised them all sorts of aids in payment. So, were they all tasked with what is happening today? By the way, if you were to cancel these aids just because they won't proceed with your plans, it will basically be a public announcement that your actions were nothing but despicable bribery."

"What—?!"

“How do you know such classified information?”

Elric was unable to respond, while Gavan began to shout, trying to hide his panic.

I, on the other hand, was not in a rush nor panic. I merely gave them a smug smile. By doing so, surely, they would have a wrong impression of me. Since I didn’t really know what was going on, either. I only did that because Raphael-san said so, and that was about it.

Elric’s party was in shock.

The speaker seemed to realize what was going on as he began to glare at Elric and his men.

The tide had quickly turned and now we had the high ground.

A councilor attempted to sit down in the chaos, but I refused to allow that.

Souei used ‘Sticky Steel Web’ to stop their movements.

“I already warned you. We aren’t going to clean up the mess idiots like you make,” said the commander of the Apostles of Verte. I couldn’t tell if it was a man or a woman from the voice.

It appeared that they had severed ties with Elric completely.

The victor had been decided.

And at that moment, my goal was practically complete.

But what I didn’t realize then was that there were still fools who couldn’t admit defeat.



“Quit joking around! Elric-sama, don’t worry. When I defeat the demon lord, all these problems will be resolved.”

“Oh-oh, oh Reiner!”

“S-Sir Reiner, you have a point. You’re still our strongest trump card. You are the most reliable!”

They were relentless. At this point, did they still want to continue what they were doing and ignore the council’s will? That might be a bit too reckless. What was going through these idiots’ minds?

“Do you guys seriously think you can defeat me?”

“What kind of stupid line is that—of course we are! Are you scared or something? If you come and lick my boots right now, I might let you live and without torture,” Reiner responded crudely.

He was dangling the Domination Orb as he spoke, looking like he wanted to control me with that.

Following Reiner’s lead, Gai gave some sort of order to the soldiers.

At that, the soldiers quickly began to block the doors. By the looks of it, they didn’t plan to let anyone escape the room, and had determined to remedy their previous miscalculation by force.

The members of the Apostles of Verte all stepped back, but there were some other high-level adventurers present as well. They began to draw their weapons against us.

“Y-you people, how dare you show weapons here, what kind of lunacy is this—?!” the speaker shouted; however, the second floor was soon blocked by the soldiers as well. His voice quietened quickly after that, seemingly having been kidnapped by a couple of councilors.

Please don't blame me for this—I thought, ready to take action, but then, Hinata got there before me.

“How barbaric. As the witness, I cannot sit and watch this transpire, moreover—”

“Haven’t you insulted me enough already?” Hinata finished, smiling dangerously at Reiner.

The venue prohibited any weapon, so instead, she began to fight with her fists. She fought just as ferociously as she would have with her sword.

This guy was toasted.

“Rimuru, leave this fellow to me.”

“Kukuku, that’s pretty funny. I am the strongest man in Ingracia, I’m gonna rip that smile off your face! Saint, my ass. People praise you as humanity’s guardian, and now you’ve let it all get to your head. Well, that ends today, I shall teach you to face reality!”

Reiner bit off more than he could chew in saying this to Hinata.

He wasn’t that weak, to be honest. Being above rank A, if he were to battle Majin Gelmud, I was sure they would end up in a tie.

But he didn’t know the sheer distance between heaven and earth. Perhaps his talent seemed impressive in a peaceful kingdom. While he was strong, he wasn’t really subjected to battle against monsters often. And so, Reiner had no idea how strong monsters really were.

Gai was just like him in that aspect.

“Hmph, then let me handle the demon lord.”

“Okay! Don’t kill him, Gai. We’ve given you the holy sword, use it to its full potential.”

“That goes without saying. With gear like this, I’ll never lose.”

Gai planned to fight me.

He seemed to have received some amazing weapon and was showing it off. But that kind of stuff was, at most, around unique-grade. Moreover, if Gai was relying on skills and gear, the challenger himself probably wouldn’t be too strong himself. Gai might have been above rank A, but he still posed no threat against me now.

It would be pretty troublesome to have to deal with a guy like this at this point—that was my genuine thought.

But it seemed that I wasn’t needed, after all.

“I cannot take this anymore… You have been truly too rude to our beloved Rimuru-sama,” said Shuna, stepping in front of me.

Her aura couldn’t be ignored.

She walked towards Gai without a word.

Ah, ah, Shuna looked more pissed than me.

I looked around and saw Benimaru frozen with one step out. He was too late, and now that

our eyes met, it was awkward.

Hmm, I understood that.

I felt the same way. I communicated this thought to Benimaru with my eyes; we truly shared a bond.

“Hehe, HAHAHAHAHA! Just how much are you looking down on us here! Demon Lord Rimuru. To hide behind such a weak woman, have you no shame?” Gai laughed at me in front of Shuna’s face.

There was no use saying this to me... Since Shuna wanted to go, I didn’t want to take away her chance to show herself.

Benimaru was displeased but held back. So, I could only do the same.

“Silence. Trash like you doesn’t require Rimuru-sama or Onii-sama to handle. I alone should be sufficient.”

“Hmph, don’t you regret saying something like that now! I won’t show mercy even to women and children.”

Gai unsheathed his sword as he finished. As expected from a holy sword, it looked awesome.

Seeing that weapon, Shuna’s smile intensified. Her Unique Skill ‘Analyzer’ must have seen through Gai’s true abilities.

Then I didn’t need to worry anymore.



Souei had already been waiting for orders for a while. He would handle any other problem. I decided to focus on cheering for Shuna.

And so, under the eyes of the many authority figures within the council, the two groups confronted each other.

—While just a second ago, one of the two groups was quite confident and menacing.

Yet the confrontation ended almost instantly.

First off, the duel between Hinata and Reiner was like a wrestle between an elephant and an ant.

Hinata was in her formal outfit in order to attend the conference. Her outfit seemed to restrict her movements somewhat, but she still approached Reiner in an extremely agile manner.

“—Huh?”

Reiner, on the other hand, was unable to even react at all.

That was kind of expected to be honest. Even though Hinata had no intention of fighting him seriously, she was still stronger than third-rate demon lords.

She made her way right in front of Reiner before grabbing his arm and shoulder and throwing him away.

Shuna did not hold back, either. Just as Gai had announced, he swung at Shuna without mercy. Yet Shuna did not even flinch before she used her fan to make one smooth slash.

That slash alone shattered Gai’s sword.

“—What the fuck?”

As he made this almost comical response, Shuna took the chance to follow up.

“What a piece of trash. I’m not going to kill you that easily. Didn’t you just go on about yourself being rank A? Isn’t it about time to show me what you’ve got? Are you giving up already after breaking your sword?” Shuna taunted as she pointed her fan at Gai.

“D-damnit! How dare a mere monster look down on me—!” Gai shouted angrily. No matter how you looked at it, Shuna was playing with him.

The difference in strength was obvious. But for him to think he still had a chance to win, I couldn’t help but wonder just how delusional he could be.

By the way—

“So Shuna is good at martial arts as well...”

“Yeah, Hakuro taught her Jujitsu.”

The miko princess sure was talented.

Speaking of Hakuro’s jujitsu, it was like the ancient martial arts used for combat. It was a dangerous style that contained many lethal techniques. It was definitely beyond ordinary arts of self-defense.

To have taught the princess such a dangerous martial art—I finally got more insight to the aggressive nature of the ogre clan.

Shuna continued her attack.

Gai pulled out his backup sword, yet Shuna, teasing her opponent, tripped Gai over his feet.

The weight of his armor completely obliterated Gai's attack. He desperately tried to get to his feet with no success.

Shuna glared coldly at Gai on the ground.

Her petite mouth began to chant spells.

"I pray to thy god, grant me thy holy power, lend me thy ears to hear my wishes—"

Her words, in the form of prayer, went beyond time and space to be channeled to me.

Although I was standing next to her, it didn't matter at this point.

"Huh? What the hell is going on?"

Gai was shocked as layers of magic circles began to close around him.

"Wait! T-this magic is—!"

Ah hah, so Gai knew.

I guess he really was above rank A. But even if you knew, there was no way he could deal with this. At this point of the casting, he couldn't possibly escape. He had no choice but to tough it out or try to defend himself.

Although, I doubted he would be able to do either. After all, this spell—

"EWWEEEEEE—! P-please stop—!"

"—All things in life shall come to an end! 'Disintegration'!"

—Was the strongest spell in all holy magic.

A stream of light devoured Gai, and there was nothing left—or so it seemed.

Woah, it looked like Shuna had killed the guy—or so I thought. She didn't, however.

"Guu...guu...guuu..."

The light faded, leaving behind a half-naked Gai. He probably lost all the strength in his legs and couldn't stand up as he collapsed on the ground, exhausted. His intelligence seemed to have devolved to that of an infant as he started bawling with tears and snot all over his face.

But he lived. Congrats, congrats.

"Ara, looks like my technique *was not masterful enough*. The spell didn't seem to work. I see that spells that I'm still practicing really are quite useless."

Shuna grinned as she said all that nonsense. I almost couldn't hold back my tease of 'Seriously?' After all, to use 'Disintegration' so precisely as to only destroy the armor, it only could have only been done with absolutely perfect execution.

—Even better, it hadn't even been a few days since I asked Shuna to study 'Holy Magic' with Adalmann. Yet somehow, she had already mastered the most difficult spell. It seemed like she really was talented in magic. Her Unique Skill 'Analyzer' must have played a vital role in assisting her study.

Anyway, that aside, with Shuna easily taking care of Gai, it was just Hinata now. Yet the result of her fight went without saying.

"S-Sir Reiner! What's the hold up now?!"

"Shut that arrogant woman up right now. You also have to defeat the demon lord as well."

Now it's not the time to slack around!"

Gavan and Elric did not understand what was going on as they shouted at Reiner.

Yet, Reiner didn't move at all. In fact, he was frozen. His ego deflated as Hinata stared him down. Having been sent flying away just before, Reiner must have realized the immense difference between his and Hinata's strength.

"Ehh, you are not approaching me? Instead of coming to me, you are just gonna stand there? I'm coming to you then."

Hinata took one step forward—

"HYA-HYAAAAA—!"

While making what was perhaps the most embarrassing sound in the world, Reiner covered his head up with his hands and squatted down on the ground.

A liquid leaked out of his crotch, steaming slightly.

Oi, oi, oi, so he ended up pissing himself.

He wasn't just a clown, but the entire circus.

"R-Reiner-dono!"

"W-what is happening? You are supposed to be the strongest, even stronger than Hinata the Saint!"

Delusional people sure were scary. After all, they could give out such a cruel order so casually.

Reiner began to cry like a child as tears and drool went down his face. He did not move an inch from his fetal position.

He was done for.

It'd be pretty silly to keep worrying about him.

Anyway, that was one less problem for us.

After the victor had been decided, I stood up from my seat on the first floor and glanced around at the councilors.

The person who stood out was Elric, who was standing in the front and behaving most bizarrely.

The members of the Apostles of Verte stood beside him, but they probably had no intention of antagonizing me. They casually began to distance themselves, indicating they had no tie to Elric.

"Then, Elric—aren't you Your Highness the prince? Why exactly did you plan to trouble me like this? Do you wish to continue?"

"Ah, no..."

"You guys over there as well, it's quite obvious that your nations acknowledge this whole charade as well, right? Should you all not be considered as accomplices?" I asked, smiling.

"N-no, it's because..."

"P-please hold on a second, Rimuru-dono, I mean, Your Majesty—"

"P-please allow me to say something!"

They, however, looked pale and kept their heads down. A few of them tried their hardest to find excuses but I ignored them.

Because of Souei, they were unable to move from their current positions. Having been locked in motion, the councilors who were against me could only beg for mercy. There was no need for me to deal with them anymore; they wouldn't be able to do any more harm.

And so, I was sure that I had got the upper hand.

To the others, I was like a calm bishoujo pressuring a bunch of middle-aged men. It was a rare sight, a hilarious one as well.

How could any of these cheap-shots ever manage to suppress a demon lord?

They had no common sense—or should I say that they were too retarded to understand the reality of the situation. Which was why they failed.

With that being said, their plan was a bit too rough around the edges. Were they seriously thinking about beating and controlling me? Perhaps it was just like what Hinata said, their goal was to provoke me to use force...

“Now then, how would you compensate me—”

Wait, hold on.

Most of the councilors were under mental interference. Someone had stimulated the councilors' desire. If that had continued, Elric's proposal would probably have passed.

That wouldn't have been good for us. Regardless of what was going on, it was not easy to reverse what had been approved by the council.

It was thanks to Raphael-san that it devolved to the charade just now.

In other words, someone held hostile intent towards me—

«Report. Killing intent detected, directed towards the individual ‘Elric.’»

Shit!

I sensed that with my ‘Magic Perception’ as well. Somewhere two kilometers away from here, someone was directing killing intent towards the conference.

It was so far away, what could they be planning—?

I immediately executed ‘Thought Acceleration’ and confirmed the situation. ‘Magic Perception’ showed a wild-looking red-haired woman. She was holding a small black iron block—a pistol.

Huh? Why was she using a pistol when she was so far away?

What was the effective range of that gun—?

«Answer. Official name for the weapon is Walther P99—small in size but extremely competent. Light in weight, high in proficiency. Its effective range is sixty meters.»

—Right, knowing this information wouldn't help much either.

Even if it were extremely proficient, when its effective range was sixty meters, it wouldn't matter.

Right now, the building we were in was located in the central area of the Kingdom of Ingracia and it was a special-alert zone. The walls of the surrounding area had been processed with magic-resisting enchantments. It was extremely firm and couldn't be pierced by any weaker

attacks.

Moreover, the bullet that would be shot would still obey the laws of physics, being affected by gravity and air resistance. You could strengthen it with magic or Skills, but you might as well have just prepared a sniper rifle.

On top of that, even if you were using a sniper rifle, there was no use if you couldn't see the target.

The woman could not see Elric directly from that position. Even if she had my 'Magic Perception' and locked onto a target, sniping wasn't possible as there were many walls in its direct path.

That wasn't even adding on the fact that with the recent assassination of Duke Muze, the conference building was well guarded. I was also cautious and had made preparations beforehand. I'd confirmed that it would be difficult to snipe from an area that far away from the conference. That was why her action would be meaningless...logically speaking.

Could it be that she could deflect bullets and change their path—?

Just as that thought crossed my mind, the red-haired woman pulled the trigger.

In a moment's delay, as if in a frame-by-frame animation, I watched the bullet leaving the chamber at an incredible speed before suddenly being sucked into a black hole that appeared out of nowhere.

—Eh!

To my shock, the bullet disappeared without a trace.

«Report. It's a form of 'Spatial Movement,' called 'Spatial Connection.'»

'Spatial Connection' apparently was a Skill that could connect two recognized points. The distance between the two points couldn't be too far away, and the area of effect was very narrow, so it didn't need much effort to perform.

But right now, I had no time to listen to explanations like that.

The red-haired woman was comprehending the space through 'Magic Perception.' The next second, the bullet reemerged next to Elric. She launched the Skill at the location with precision.

As a result—she completely ignored the two kilometers in between us as well as the outer walls. The assassination plan was about to succeed.

A small black hole appeared around fifty centimeters away from Elric's head. And from it flew the lethal bullet traveling at over four hundred meters per second.

It was just as powerful as if it were shot nearby. There was no obstacle in its path, and the bullet was closing in on Elric.

Slowly, but surely. I could see it traveling.

Yet in this situation, there was nothing I could do. I didn't have time to warn him, and even if I were to take action, I wouldn't be fast enough to stop the bullet.

«...There is no problem. Activate Ultimate Skill 'Gluttonous King Beelzebuth?' YES/NO.»

Eh, will it seriously make it? That was just my own doubt, but I still listened to Raphael-san's proposal.

And the next moment—woah, incredible.

Ignoring space-time, the bullet lay in my hand, motionless.

“…!! Are you okay?”

Hinata’s expression changed drastically as she ran up to check on Elric.

The captain of the Apostles of Verte also looked shocked and gave me an inconspicuous glance. She didn’t say anything and turned to check if Elric was fine as well.

Elric was baffled, having been asked all these questions when he had no idea what had happened.

Only a few people realized what just transpired. However, it seemed that the magic just now triggered the alert system as the building began to echo with an alarm.

Because of this incident, the conference was cut short.



“Souei, go after the culprit.”

“I’ve already sent my ‘Clone’ after her.”

While the councilors were calming down, we acted on our own.

The people around us also began to examine what had happened. Speaker Leicester, the captain of the guards, the captain of Apostles of Verte and Hinata, in particular, discussed amongst themselves.

“Did they try to kill someone with this?”

“This is a bullet, you need a certain item to fire it, something that we don’t really have around here.”

“Then, could the culprit’s target be His Highness Elric? And their goal was…”

“You can guess that he wants to pin the blame on Demon Lord Rimuru.”

“I see. If Prince Elric were killed under those circumstances, people would surely direct their suspicion towards His Majesty Rimuru. Tempest’s inclusion into the council would prove to be difficult.”

“Indeed. Perhaps that was their true intention. These fools were used as disposable pawns.”

Hinata answered everyone’s questions and proceeded with the investigation smoothly.

It was most fortunate that I wasn’t considered a suspect.

Elric was saved, but for disrupting the council conference this time, he would still be sentenced afterward.

“S-someone was trying to kill me?” he muttered anxiously.

While this guy did do stupid things, I didn’t want him to die.

“Ah, don’t worry. Since you—my apologies, Elric-dono wasn’t killed, these unknown cul-

pirts have failed, and their plan was disrupted. There's no reason for them to attempt it again now."

Mainly because it would be impossible to try and pin the crime on me. In this way, Elric had lost his value.

That's why he didn't need to be afraid of that assassination anymore.

"B-but, I'm a prince of a powerful nation, this talk of value—"

Hmm—that was a hard question to answer, actually.

Before his charade today, as an heir to the crown, his value would have been quite high. However, he wasn't actually the crown prince, as there were other possible successors as well. Moreover, with today's events...

It may have been different had their plan succeeded, but given what actually took place, the Kingdom of Ingracia wouldn't be naive enough to put an idiot prince on the throne. And even if his home nation didn't go after him for doing something like this, they would probably not allow the prince to fail, either.

The chances of Elric becoming the king had plummeted down to zero.

"Anyhow, a person's life is not only about becoming the king. You must still somehow make up for what happened today, but perhaps you can reflect afterward and examine your life slowly. I also became a demon lord because of a series of unexpected events. After all, I never really wanted to become a demon lord, anyway. Now that I am one, there's no going back, so I suppose I will just utilize my position properly."

"Hehe, is Your Majesty the Demon Lord trying to comfort the prince, I mean, me? I thought you'd be scarier and more malicious to humans..."

"I'm not comforting you. But about your question, I'm basically a pacifist."

Hearing my words, Elric huffed, frustrated. It seemed that he had accepted reality and had fallen silent.

"I was so foolish to have been deceived. Gavan, we must take responsibility."

"Y-Your Highness!"

"You're the one who came up with this plan. I will probably be trialed for having been deceived by you as well. You should prepare yourself for what's coming, Count Gavan."

Elric really seemed to have come to terms with reality. He cooperated and followed the guards.

That's right, Gavan was the conspirator behind all this—anyone could see that now. It was he who instigated Elric and caused the commotion this time.

My guess was that Gavan was being used as well. There was quite the mysterious organization behind him. But I couldn't just stop and accept this conspiracy theory. It was better to investigate seriously. But to this day, Souei had not been able to find any clues.

However, if he could catch that sniper, maybe we would get some answers.

Other than her, there was someone else I could question as well.

"Well now, Gavan-san, may I ask you something?"

I turned to the arrested Gavan.

“W-what is it? What could you, a demon lord, want from me?”

Even now, Gavan’s attitude did not change.

“Please tell me, what was your intention in manipulating Prince Elric?”

“Ahaha, what are you on about? No idea, I know nothing.”

“W-what are you on about! You’re the one who deceived me—!”

“Where’s your proof? I was indeed asked by His Highness the Prince to invite you here, but I had no idea that you were up to some plot like this.”

“Gavan-dono, there’s no use finding excuses now. Not just me, but every councilor here saw what happened.”

Johann wouldn’t allow Gavan to find any excuses. Most of the councilors agreed. Even the people who were tied up and arrested nodded along. We had our witnesses.

“Uhh, but I really don’t know anything. The prince was the one behind everything—I was just following orders!”

“Bullshit! You’re the one who got that orb and pledged it to me!”

“That wasn’t me at all. I’ve already said this once, please show some evidence—”

It looked like Gavan planned to play dumb until the very end.

He was too cunning for the circumstances, surely, he was confident enough that he wouldn’t leave any clues. If that were the case, would that mean it’d be difficult to incriminate him as well? He would probably have a horrible reputation for a while, but probably intended to shamelessly come back some time after.

This was why noblemen were so annoying.

You can’t get careless, or else you won’t be able to defeat them completely. I could just resort to force and end the matter easily, but that was our last resort.

Suddenly, the gate opened.

“His Majesty Aegil has arrived! All present, salute at once!”

As the servant shouted, people began to kneel.

I almost knelt alongside them, but thankfully Shuna and Benimaru stopped me. If I really did that, that would’ve been an actual problem.

Apart from us and Hinata, everyone immediately began to show their respect. Even the speaker of the council lowered his head a bit.

As expected from the King of Ingracia.

Ingracia King Aegil disinterestedly glanced at the few councilors Souei had tied up and then turned his eyes back to look at me.

This middle-aged man had a beautiful face. The thick blonde hair and the tilting moustache suited him very well.

“It seems that my son has given you much trouble.”

“I suppose so. But the misunderstanding has been resolved.”

I didn’t want the matter to get any more severe. If the human society were willing to accept

us, I suppose I could turn a blind eye to some rudeness.

“—Is that so? I have not come as king, but as a father to apologize to you, as well as to thank you.” As he finished, King Aegil nodded to me lightly.

If even the king was willing to lower his head in apology, this whole ordeal was likely resolved.

“I accept your apologies, but hopefully this won’t happen again.”

“Yes, I understand. I wish to build a healthy relationship with you, too.”

King Aegil’s eyes were sharp and straight when he said this. I could tell he was genuine.

It was best to not ponder too much this time and just believe him. If he were to betray us, we’d worry about that in time.

“Then I look forward to hearing from you.”

“Likewise.”

We shook hands. By the way, he seemed to have ignored the table I just broke.

And thus, we made amends.

“Everyone, please raise your heads.”

Hearing this, people began to do so. Everyone here understood full well what had just transpired, but it didn’t mean that anything would ever be on the official record. After all, a king shouldn’t lower his head to anyone. This was probably King Aegil’s last resort¹⁶.

“F-Father...”

“Enough, I shall reeducate you.”

“—Yes, I understand.”

“Good.”

King Aegil nodded before turning to Gavan.

“Count Gavan.”

“Yes, sir!”

“Weren’t you going on about wanting evidence? Do you think you can do whatever you want because I’m not around?”

“No, no, there is no such thing...”

“I’ve contacted the magical inquisitors. You will be handed to them.”

“AHHH!”

Gavan’s face paled and he started to plead.

“I-I beg your forgiveness! I’ll confess everything, please have mercy!”

His expression was convincing enough, but King Aegil’s reaction was rather cruel.

“Take him away.”

“ “ “Yes, sir!” ” ”

His servants eyed the knights protecting the king and began to move. The knights also moved to arrest Reiner and the others as well.

“Reiner-dono, Gai-dono, please turn yourself in as well.”

¹⁶Original phrase was “苦肉の策,” which is a tactic used in the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. It is to harm your ally intentionally in order to deceive your enemy.

“Stop this, get off me!”

“Do you know who I am!”

Reiner and the others were shouting and trying to resist before a group of men in black hoods showed up. They immediately fell silent.

These people were probably the so-called magical inquisitors.

Even though Reiner and Gai tried to resist, the newcomers effortlessly took care of them. While the two were not weak, they were like infants to these hooded figures. It was obvious that these inquisitors were no ordinary people.

As expected from the Kingdom of Ingracia, they were, indeed, a powerful nation. They had kept leashes on some very impressive fellows.

«Report. It has been deduced that this is likely a demonstration of force. In order to inform master that this kingdom possesses strong individuals as well.»

In other words, he was probably saying “don’t look down on us.” It was a public announcement to remind us that Reiner was not the strongest that Ingracia could offer so as to save the face for their nation.

Being a king sure looked hard. He had to plan something like this just so that the demon lord wouldn’t get the better of them.

If Elric’s plan actually worked, the king would probably have wanted to use me to fortify the authority of Ingracia. But to be honest, if they didn’t have even the slightest evil intentions, there was no way they could pitch a fight against any other cunning noblemen.

“Sorry for the interruption. Our nation shall take care of the remaining matters.”

Leaving this line, the king and his men left.

They were smart and even took the Domination Orb. But that wasn’t a problem. It’d be problematic if they used it for evil causes, so I secretly broke a core functioning part.

I didn’t want to get more involved in the matter, so I saw them off quietly.

We rested a bit in the afternoon and reconvened the conference thereafter.

Unlike the morning conference, the councilors all seemed highly unmotivated. There was no need to threaten these exhausted noblemen. They needed to examine and pass important motions.

First, acknowledge the Tempest Federation as a nation.

Second, allowing the inclusion of the Tempest Federation into the council.

Thirdly, sharing the military authority of the council with the Tempest Federation.

Those were the three main items that passed.

The document I forced them to examine was passed as well. There was a unanimous agreement. Although it was a lengthy process with various complications, my document was still passed. And the matter was set in stone.

I wasn’t good at dealing with the cunning councilors. It was very tiring scheming and detecting words in words.

I handed all that to Raphael-san.

«...Understood.»

In terms of results, we kind of used brute force to resolve the issues.

But I didn't really participate. It was Hinata, and our precious little Shuna-chan. I, on the other hand, would be considered the benefactor who rescued Elric. That was enough to prove my generous heart. I was personally very satisfied.

Apart from that—

It was a fool's errand to use force against the demon lord—they all knew this, so I suppose it was very meaningful.

The conference ended smoothly, and we all left.

And so, the conference, filled with twists and turns, had finally concluded.

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

**Chapter
4**

**The True
Identity of the
Mastermind**

Chapter 4

The True Identity of the Mastermind

The beautiful ex-mercenary—Glenda Attley. Every time she pulled her trigger, a life was taken.

Ever since she was summoned to this world, she held onto her beloved firearm. It had never betrayed Glenda's expectations. It became a part of her, so much so that shooting became second nature. With the addition of the Unique Skill 'Sniper,' Glenda was invincible.

Unique Skill 'Sniper'—this Skill has three main functions: 'Magic Perception' for the amazing ability to identify any target, 'Outcome Calculation' to analyze actions, and 'Space Manipulation.'

The last function in particular, 'Space Manipulation,' made Glenda almost invincible. Within her field of vision, Glenda could connect the space between any two points. In other words, her effective range of fire was anywhere within her eyesight. She could fire a bullet right next to the enemy's head, making bullets pass through any obstacles at will to hit the intended target. Factors such as gravity and air resistance could be neglected by her, allowing her to perform long-distance sniping even without a sniper rifle.

These conditions made her emerge victorious in every fight.

However, the misstep she made last time made her realize that there were stronger individuals out there.

It wouldn't work. Monsters like that are too strong for me.

With a single glance, Glenda had immediately recognized how dangerous her enemy was. That opponent—Diablo—was someone Glenda couldn't hurt with her pistol. This wasn't simply about physical attacks being ineffective against Diablo, however.

There were two different types of bullets in her arsenal that Glenda could fire: normal bullets and magic bullets. If she didn't want to leave any magical trace, she would use the normal bullets. Faced by monsters that were resistant to physical attacks, she would concentrate her own mana into bullets and fire them as a magical attack. It was a universal mechanism that was designed to be effective against all manner of opponents. Therefore, one would assume that Glenda had no blind spots in that regard.

However, her fight against Diablo was different.

Glenda's instincts were screaming at her to run away. Her 'Outcome Calculation' she had relied on predicted no other outcome but her demise.

Even with her overpowered abilities, there were still opponents in this world that she couldn't defeat. On that day, this fact was laid bare in front of her eyes. It was hard for her to swallow.

And today—

Glenda started to work on the assassination as her target came within range of her 'Magic Perception.'

The bullet she shot would appear around fifty centimeters away from the target. In a blink of an eye, her target would receive a headshot—that was common sense.

Fifty centimeters was a wonderful distance. When connecting dimensions, there could only be a certain amount of mass overlapping with the wormhole, anything exceeding a certain threshold would cause the connection to fail. In other words, if her target moved around, the space that Glenda connected between them could be disrupted.

That's why she chose fifty centimeters.

No matter how strong her opponent was, no one could deal with such a small object suddenly appearing at such a short distance. The bullet would tear through the air at supersonic speed; her target probably wouldn't even catch a glimpse of it.

It may be a different case for a monster like Diablo, but some prince of a large state is much easier to deal with. Never mind, there's no use for me to sigh at this point. Let's just prepare for the next encounter.

At that moment, Glenda was calm and composed, but in the next second, something shocking occurred. The bullet that was meant to pierce through the prince's skull disappeared.

"How can this be! What happened?!"

The unexpected situation of paranormal activity became her reality. She didn't understand the reason, but if someone were to have done this, it must've been the demon lord.

"Is it that guy? I've underestimated the master of that asshole demon!"

Glenda's instincts told her so. She fired once more.

If the perfect ambush didn't work, taking more shots would be in vain. Even though she knew this in her heart, the mission would fail if she did not do so. Her master Mariabell and Elder Granbell would not tolerate such a misstep.

This, ultimately, made her miss her chance to flee.

"Heh, indeed. You have underestimated Rimuru-sama. That is unforgivable, and I don't intend to forgive you either."

"Tsk, who is there?"

"My name is Souei, Demon Lord Rimuru-sama's loyal 'Secret Spy.'"

Glenda was shocked, but she realized something. He didn't ask for her name. Glenda judged that it was not because he wasn't interested, but that he had planned to capture her before interrogating her.

If that was the case, all that was left for her was to flee in order to hide the information she held.

The assassination had failed.

And now, the worst outcome would be her capture. If she were to continue making mistakes, she would be executed for incompetence. There had been several colleagues of hers who suffered that fate. She had to prioritize running away.

After making up her mind, she engaged a stand-off against her enemy.

“...He knew about my planned attack?”

“I spoke too much, but Rimuru-sama has already seen through everything. You can resist all you want; I don’t plan to kill you anyway. But the more you resist, the more you will suffer.”

“Hmph! How generous of you. Then I shall not hold back.”

Without hesitation, Glenda pulled her trigger as she finished her sentence.

She only shot one normal bullet. There were sixteen more rounds left. However, she figured that it wouldn’t work on this majin called Souei.

Magic bullets might work... As she thought so, Glenda pulled out her army knife. It was clean and swift. There was elegance in her ferocious strike as Glenda slashed at Souei. He dodged the attack with minimal movement, Glenda grinned as she saw that.

The knife was enchanted with her mana. Not only did her weapon deal physical damage, she also gave the knife a magic effect. This was specifically used to deal with opponents who were resistant to physical attacks. Souei surely wouldn’t have thought that the knife was of any threat.

Moreover, Glenda had seen through Souei’s preference in combat.

This guy doesn’t like dragging on with combat. If that’s the case, he probably would get tricked by a simple attack like this. I’ll break your calm demeanor.

As she thought, Glenda continued her attack. Her right hand had her knife while her left hand held her gun. She didn’t hesitate to continue shooting as she observed Souei’s reaction. As she predicted, he didn’t react much, since Souei thought that even if the attack were to connect, it wouldn’t deal much damage.

But he wasn’t getting careless, he was still very cautious of Glenda’s right hand.

I’ve still got one more card up my sleeve. But among the people I’ve battled, he’s probably the strongest.

As far as she was concerned, Diablo didn’t count. Her logic was that opponents she couldn’t fight at all should not be included.

It was then that Souei’s left index finger twitched. Glenda didn’t miss it, she immediately backflipped away upon sensing the danger. She quickly distanced herself from her opponent.

It was the right call. In the next second, extremely thin strings closed in on where Glenda was just a moment ago.

“Ho, you are quite sharp.”

“Thanks for the compliment, you ain’t half bad.”

While exchanging praise, Glenda didn’t forget to shoot in return of the favor.

It was not too big of a threat to Souei. As opposed to dodging, he was more focused on approaching her head on.

As expected, he's pretty naive. That's great, this type of enemy is easy to take care of.

Magic bullets didn't require gunpowder. They could be shot while suppressed, and you could mix them in while shooting normal bullets.

Her opponent, who had gotten used to her tactic, would be too careless to defend himself. She would be able to defeat him when he least expected it. That was Glenda's strategy.

The attack that he thought was incapable of harming him would become the fatal blow. Even if her opponent were on guard, such a sudden strike would still be difficult to react to.

Glenda had defeated some strong people before, and Souei's reaction was just like theirs. As his right shoulder was hit by the magic bullet, he was sent flying spectacularly.

"Ahahahaha, how embarrassing for a handsome man like you. Lamar fell for the same trick. The more confident you are, the easier it is to be played by a simple trick such as this."

Glenda laughed out loud. But her eyes weren't slacking. She was inspecting Souei's wound.

You shouldn't be careless when hunting your prey. That was the ironclad rule of warfare. Until she made sure that her opponent was dead, Glenda would not let her guard down.

After all, she didn't think that one bullet would be able to kill Souei.

"...I see you are more difficult to handle than I expected."

"You a sore loser or something? Sorry, but since you've seen my face, I'll have to eliminate you."

Souei stood up, his right arm missing. Glenda could see her victory before her. Still, she was even more cautious as she pointed the gun in front of her.

Magic bullet worked. And now for my trump card, I'm gonna make sure to blow his head off.

Glenda activated her Unique Skill 'Sniper' and aimed cautiously.

"Heh, rest assured, the order I received was to capture you. I suppose the goal was to interrogate you for information, but Rimuru-sama is a kind man. If you were to tell us everything we wanted to know, he wouldn't take your life."

"You've got balls talking all big at this point!" Glenda roared as she pulled the trigger.

Three bullets aimed for his head and two for his heart. Five magic bullets in total were fired as planned. The bullets were shot and instantly warped in space, appearing in front of Souei, as well as the right of his head. There were also bullets shot directly in front of his heart and to his left flank.

All five bullets tore into his body.

Warp Bullet—Glenda's ultimate technique. The magic bullets spawned from mana were different from normal bullets and would disrupt magicule. Even if her opponent could regenerate, they wouldn't be able to revive after being hit.

No matter if her opponent were a master of knife and gun play, when getting hit by supersonic bullets coming from all directions, even the best amongst the elite would not be able to handle it.

Glenda had come to understand her capabilities from her past experiences. That was the secret to her survival. For this reason, Glenda was certain that Souei had met his end.

Souei's body crumbled into black smoke in front of Glenda's eyes. She was relieved. Since she had laid eyes on Souei, she had felt a deep feeling of unease. Even though it was not as sharp as when she ran into Diablo, her instinct told her that her opponent was dangerous.

"You are done. Since you were strong, I didn't want to hold back," Glenda muttered after feeling greatly reassured.

Yet it seemed that she had done so too early.

A voice that, by all common sense, should not have been heard was raised behind her.

"Is that so? Then you shall promptly admit defeat and let me capture you."

Glenda jumped away subconsciously. She turned back quickly and found Souei standing there.

"H-how is this possible! Didn't you just die...?"

"Heh, you're just full of jokes, aren't you? How could that weak of an attack have killed me? In the first place, there's no reason for me to lose to a cheap shot like you."

"Then I'll do it again—eh, what?!"

Glenda's line was cut short.

It was to be expected. To her disbelief, Souei's aura began to spread all around her. She quickly initiated 'Magic Perception' and saw a reality that she didn't want to face.

"N-no way! How can this be, why are you everywhere? What kind of joke is this! What kind of Skill is this!"

"It's very simple. I have a Skill called 'Clone.' And that was it. They are not as strong as me, but since you were able to defeat one of my 'Clones,' you should be proud of yourself," Souei praised Glenda. Yet there were still four other Soueis standing. Glenda had nowhere to run.

"Damn it all—!"

After shouting in a tone devoid of womanly charm, she launched her attack at Souei.

The battle that would teach her despair, began.



On a balcony overlooking the blooming flowers in the courtyard, a young girl, a young man, and an old man stood around a round table, looking intently at each other.

These three were Mariabell, Yuuki and Johann.

"It failed, it really failed."

This line came out of Mariabell's lips in a sad tone. All the while, her face was casual as always. It was expected of her, as it was a part of her plan.

“Gavan sure is unlucky. What a waste of your efforts he’s been.”

Johann, who sat in front of Mariabell, sighed with wine in his hand. Although he didn’t really mean it, he did feel some sympathy towards Gavan. After all, just like Johann, Gavan was a member of the Five Great Elders.

Correction, former member of the Five Great Elders. The miscalculation this time had led to Gavan’s complete loss of authority.

“Gavan was so useless. It’s probably because he has stayed in Ingracia for too long, that he has become somewhat attached to the king. Or else he would have had full control over the royal family long ago.”

“...Don’t ask for the impossible. Even us Rossos were not able to influence the central power of Ingracia, let alone Gavan—”

“No, that’s not correct. It’s a piece of cake to control the core of their power. All we need to do is to kill everyone else and leave one heir and one only. It would be perfect if the child had Gavan’s blood in him.”

“I...suppose you have a point...”

Mariabell knew the history of bloodshed in that dark era of time, so she thought such a method was fairly mild. In fact, in terms of the amount of blood that would be spilled, this was relatively peaceful, she thought.

But to Johann, he wanted to comment that “A large nation’s security won’t be that slacking.” Even if she could come up with such an idea, to execute it would not be as simple.

“However, I am interested in the magical inquisitors.”

“—Are you referring to the heathens under the command of the king of Ingracia?”

“Yep, how annoying, how very annoying. They must have been desperate to build up their military just to stand against us Rossos.”

“Well then, what do you think?”

“They seemed pretty strong. Gavan has experienced them firsthand and informed me about it.”

To subjects dominated by her ‘Greed,’ Mariabell could share intelligence with them to some extent. Any information obtained by an individual would inform Mariabell. That’s why she used Gavan as a disposable pawn. She did so to draw out the magical inquisitors to handle the situation, so she could investigate their secret.

The incident that led to all of this was the stupid action Gavan had directed at Demon Lord Rimuru. Since Gavan was a count of the Kingdom of Ingracia, surely, it would have lured out the magical inquisitors.

Mariabell had foreseen that. And just as she predicted, she uncovered the secret of the magical inquisitors. The revelation made it apparent. They were merely humans who became majins after absorbing the power of monsters.

This was quite unlike Majin Razen of the old Kingdom of Farmus, who had entered a higher state of being through his own training.

Due to the repulsive reaction with the monster elements, magical inquisitors even had their

self-consciousness erased. To Mariabell, they were simply uninteresting toys. However, before they transformed into majins, they still seemed to possess consciousness. Depending on the amount of elements absorbed, they could fight in almost any circumstances. Their strength would be close to flawless as they broke through rank A.

That does seem kind of useful—Mariabell thought.

“How terrifying. In order to gain such information, you knew from the start that Gavan’s plan would have failed, yet you still permitted it anyway?”

“Not at all. My goal was to raise your credibility. Demon Lord Rimuru would now think that you are worthy of trust.”

“That’s...”

No, even if he didn’t ask, he understood. Mariabell’s goal from the start was to eliminate Demon Lord Rimuru; the magical inquisitors were just a bonus.

She wanted Johann to investigate Rimuru.

If I were to fail as well, am I going to end up with the same fate as Gavan and be eliminated by her...?

He wasn’t as incompetent as Gavan, yet in addition to this thought, Johann had now gained an unspeakable horror towards Mariabell.

Y-you gotta be kidding me. I became one of the Five Great Elders and stood at the top of the seven seas, how can some child like this...

But that was just in his mind, these were words he couldn’t speak out loud.

Johann returned to the previous topic.

“Then how about we let the magical inquisitors handle Demon Lord Rimuru? We could frame Demon Lord Rimuru with some crime and—”

“No, no, that would only anger the demon lord. The magical inquisitors may be tough, but they’re only so strong. It’s impossible for them to stand against the demon lord. Such a plan won’t work.”

“That’s sad to hear... So, our best option is to cooperate with the demon lord, after all?”

Mariabell shook her head upon hearing so, dismissing that option.

“No use, that’s no use. Basically, except for grandfather, everyone has had a huge misunderstanding towards the situation, including you.”

“Misunderstanding?”

“Yes, that’s right. Humans and demon lords are equal—that’s your misunderstanding. Do you know why I proposed to grandfather to eliminate the demon lord?”

“Was it because the demon lord would create a new economic circle and will threaten us economically?”

“Yes. But that was simply on the surface level. The real reason is that we can do nothing about the demon lord.”

Johann was deeply afraid of the young girl, Mariabell. And just now, Mariabell responded with a face of displeasure. Feeling uneasy, Johann hurried her to continue her explanation.

“What does that mean?”

“Demon Lord Rimuru’s military might is truly frightening. What do you think will happen if this demon lord uses military force to negotiate with us?”

“T-that would be...!”

Upon hearing her explanation, Johann finally realized the severity of the matter.

In this world, due to the common threat of monsters, kingdoms seldom battled amongst themselves. Even if there were to be a dispute, the council would intervene to mitigate. The nation with greater economic capabilities normally spoke with greater impact.

However, even for large nations such as the old Farmus, or Ingracia, their military alone would not be able to stand against the combined force of all the council’s member states.

“Moreover, the strength of this nation is not their military alone. To be bound by rules is the equivalent of losing freedom. However, if they were to make the rules themselves, surely, that would mean their nation would not be at any loss, wouldn’t it?”

Even if Tempest decided to follow the rules set up by the council, the future remained unknown. If everyone learned the economic value of the Tempest Federation, the Western Nations would be their puppets to toy with.

The demon lord could achieve domination through peaceful means.

Or through military force.

Or with economic pressure.

The strong nations would have the authority to dictate—that was an unchanging truth.

“Pathetic, how very pathetic. The council can lay some impressive rhetoric on the negotiation table, but all of that depends on the generosity of the demon lord. Time will pass and a new era will begin, our fate will rest on the demon lord’s whims, when the time comes.”

“T-that’s...”

Johann understood, he knew this was how things may develop.

“But, the demon lord said that he wished to coexist with humans—”

As he was halfway through his sentence, Johann found Mariabell’s cold eyes glaring at him.

“Fools, how foolish, not just you, the same goes for all of the council. What a bunch of idiots.”

Unimpressed, Mariabell began to explain further so that Johann could understand.

Even if there hadn’t been a problem now, what did the future hold? If humans who had forgotten the threat the Storm Dragon posed, pissed off Demon Lord Rimuru...

“I don’t know how long a demon lord can live, however, I know that human lives *are* limited. If we cannot stop the demon lord’s ambition now, the dream of us Rossos would practically be destroyed.”

That demon lord could always change his mind. It may be a different case for humans, but to expect those with longevity to share the same value as humans—how could something that stupid happen, Mariabell explained.

“So, the idea of cooperating with the demon lord, or even exploiting the demon lord, are both huge misjudgments. They are impossible.”

Johann was at a loss of words.

Almost as if to pour salt on Johann's wounds, the 'Blood Shadow' under his command reported back to him through 'Magic Communication.' The message was that Glenda had been defeated.

"How is that possible! Glenda was captured?"

Johann was shocked.

"—Is this true?"

Even Mariabell was unable to hide her surprise. Glenda was praised for her discretion. Mariabell was confident that she could survive during any crises. She didn't put her trust in Glenda's personality or anything, but rather on her desire to survive.

"How unbelievable, that cunning fox was..."

Glenda was one of the successful cases of the Rosso's secret summonings. Through sorcery, they forced otherworlders to pledge their loyalty to them. They were renowned for their strength and were treated like tactical weapons.

And someone as capable as Glenda was not only defeated, but captured. Johann couldn't believe that was the case. He was a mere mortal despite his position among the Five Great Elders. Unlike Granbell and Mariabell, he could only process human logic.

Ignoring Johann, Mariabell began to strategize.

There's no way we can defeat him, but perhaps I can dominate him.

That would have to do. Mariabell made up her mind.

"—I'm setting up a trap."

"A trap? What do you plan to do?"

Johann had been passive for the most part until now. This was the first time he asked Mariabell a proper question.

"Yes, a trap," Mariabell said as she turned to Yuuki. "Aren't you and your subordinate going to explore some ancient sites with Demon Lord Rimuru? I will set it there."

It was not merely a confirmation; it was her order.

"Yes, Kagali is going, but it may be dangerous!"

"What do you mean?"

"Demon Lord Milim is coming as well, that's why setting up a trap there would be dangerous," Yuuki advised.

He believed that they should try to win Demon Lord Rimuru's trust this time. The plan needed to aim for the long term.

However, Mariabell had made her decision.

"No no. Given more time, that demon lord would only become more difficult to deal with. That's what my instinct tells me. Yuuki, can you prevent Demon Lord Milim from coming?"

"There is no way. They seemed to be suspecting me. At this point if I were to reject her, it would be the equivalent of me confessing that I'm the villain."

"You have a point, then we shall take care of Demon Lord Milim as well."

"Ah?"

"This is madness! This is not merely reckless, you don't even have any card to play here,

Mariabell!”

Yuuki listened to Mariabell’s words in disbelief, while Johann stood up to oppose them.

That was only natural. To defeat a single demon lord alone was already something to be cautious about. Yet now she wanted to deal with two demon lords at the same time. This was essentially driving the chance of success down to zero.

Yet Mariabell was still smiling.

“We’ve got to give it all we have and go all-out!”

“No, that won’t do! Even if I were to give it your all, my subordinates, the Moderate Clown Troupe, they are currently unavailable. Moreover—”

“I’m not sure how strong they are, but they can’t help if they aren’t around—”

Yuuki’s retort was cut short by Mariabell. To her, the Moderate Clown Troupe was nothing. No, actually.

That was because Mariabell had laid eyes on a power much stronger—something that was strong enough to combat the demon lord.

“—However, Yuuki, I did ask you to get me ‘a certain something’ from the ‘Dragon’s Nest.’ That can be useful now.”

“‘Certain something’—could you be referring to that?! You want to use that thing? No way! That’s something even I can’t control!”

“No problem. That thing belonged to Demon Lord Milim anyway, we are just giving it back to her. That’s how the plot will go, Demon Lord Clayman kept that thing as his trump card, and it was utilized by the remaining force of his faction. That way, Demon Lord Milim won’t get mad at us.”

“This may end up inflicting great harm on humans as well...”

“And?”

“N-nothing...”

Johann brought this up in the hope of changing Mariabell’s mind. Yet she disregarded it with the wave of a hand. She may have given it some thought if he had some other plan to suggest, but that alone was not enough to pique Mariabell’s interest. Moreover, Johann couldn’t think of an alternative plan anyway. Mariabell’s plan was therefore finalized.

While Johann was continuing his meaningless struggle, Yuuki tried to understand Mariabell’s thought process. In the end, he realized that this plan had a higher chance of success than he had first imagined.

“...It makes sense. With that, we can draw Demon Lord Milim away to fight her own battle. Rimuru-san wouldn’t be able to intervene, it would be great to isolate the demon lord.”

“Hehehe, smart boy, how very smart. And while Demon Lord Milim is distracted by that toy—”

“We will focus on controlling Rimuru-san, is that correct?”

“Yes, that’s the idea.”

“But I have one concern.”

“You mean the Storm Dragon?”

“—Impressive, indeed. If we fail to dominate Rimuru-san and cause Veldora to lose control, what should we do?”

If their target resisted more intensely than imagined, and they had no chance of controlling him, Yuuki would have to kill Rimuru. Yuuki was afraid that things would lead down that path, and tried to hint at the possibility. Yet Mariabell seemed to have expected this as well.

“You don’t have to worry about that, Yuuki. There’s no need for you to worry about anything. Just focus on how to defeat Demon Lord Rimuru.”

Yuuki was unable to disobey Mariabell. He could only follow her order.

“—I understand. If you say so, I shall trust you.”

Mariabell nodded after hearing Yuuki’s answer.

Mariabell had a thorough understanding of the affairs in this world. It came from everything Great Elder Granbell had taught her about demon lords.

If Demon Lord Rimuru were to be eliminated, Storm Dragon Veldora would start ravaging the land. Surely, Demon Lord Luminas would figure out a way to deal with the Storm Dragon.

No, paradoxically, that would be better than allowing Demon Lord Rimuru to exploit the current affairs.

Demon Lord Rimuru and Demon Lord Luminas formed an alliance. This meant that Demon Lord Luminas had handed the running of the Western Nations over to Demon Lord Rimuru.

The Queen of Nightmare that saw humans as mere food had until now, handed that mission to the Seven Luminary Clerics.

Yet, it did not last.

With the fall of Granbell, the Seven Luminaries had fallen as well. Granbell lost the protection of Demon Lord Luminas and could no longer reign over the Western Nations with her strength.

Surely, in the future, the power of Hinata the Saint would only increase. By manipulating Hinata, Demon Lord Rimuru’s system of domination would be set in stone...

I cannot allow that to happen. And for that cause, I’d subject the whole world to the threat of Veldora—Mariabell made her resolve in her heart.

After this, Mariabell and Yuuki paired up to initialize a detailed attack plan.

At this point, Johann had no room to intervene. He could only pray for the success of their plan.

Thus, the majins cautiously planned out their malicious assault to eliminate Rimuru.



After the lengthy meeting, we met up at the café.

Changing out of the suit, I was back in my casual clothes. Since our business here was done, I could just use ‘Spatial Movement’ to go back home. But Souei had not brought back the culprit yet. Afraid that something may have gone wrong, I decided to stay a little longer.

By the way, the meeting was super tiring.

The prince of Ingracia, Elric, forced his way in mid-meeting. There was also that middle aged man, Gavan, pulling the strings. Moreover, there were all those councilors who were on their side.

Things ended up in failure, causing all of them to be stunned.

Gavan seemed to be a noble of high standing, yet he was taken away by some dangerous guys called magical inquisitors. The other councilors enjoyed diplomatic immunity, but with the document I provided, their home nations would probably judge them. Disgrace was all that awaited them, no doubt.

They seemed frightened by the gravity of the situation, but they got what they deserved.

Even though I wasn’t part of the ruckus, some people were still looking down on me with their noble mindset. If these people were innocent, I wouldn’t hold them accountable. However, after taking one look at the ledger, I realized they were all corrupt to the core. That’s why I wanted to use this opportunity to punish them and sent the ledger to their home nations.

Now that it had been done, even those rude idiots would get taken care of. Some people used their position as councilors to enrich their personal lives. For the good of the future, it was best to make them disappear.

I sipped on my coffee as I reflected on the meeting.

“Anyway, a lot of things have happened. Thankfully, Hinata and Shuna got pissed off first. I’m the demon lord after all, it’s not exactly appropriate for me to go and deal with them.”

“I didn’t get pissed off, I just thought that they were rather rude with their diplomatic approach and wanted to teach them a bit about manners.”

“Me too, Rimuru-sama. I was merely punishing those rude individuals. If I had really gotten mad, I would have made them disappear from this world, not a speck of dust left.”

Hinata and Shuna both gave off a smile. They were so synchronized that it was scary.

To such a ferocious response, I could only nod and reply “A啊, I see.”



“To be honest, this has been a great experience,” Benimaru interjected.

“Hmm?”

“It’s nothing, but I was so angry that my head went blank and didn’t know how to let out the anger. Had Shuna not done anything sooner, I would have burnt every human in that room to ash.”

“Phew!” Hearing this, I almost spat out all my coffee.

I thought that Benimaru was just quietly observing on the side. I was even impressed, thinking that he had become more mature. But in reality, he was just so angry that he forgot about himself.

What a waste of my praise.

Or perhaps it was a close call. Had I let him go on a rampage, we would have become the nemesis of humanity.

“Oi oi oi, you, do not do something like that, absolutely not!”

“Hahaha, I was just joking!”

Benimaru tried to get past the conversation with his bright laughter, but he couldn’t fool me. This guy was serious.

Before the next council meeting, we must nominate a councilor for our nation. I needed to be cautious about the candidate.

As we chatted, I finished my coffee.

“Rimuru-sama, I have captured the culprit,” Souei reported to me.

I knew he would do just fine, it looked like he got the job done. As always, he was so competent and did his job perfectly.

“The culprit was a very strong enemy. She didn’t announce her name after I demanded to know, so her identity is still unclear. However, she did call Rimuru-sama ‘the master of the asshole demon.’”

Hmm, that was okay. There was no way a professional assassin on a mission would reveal her identity like that.

Though, was the asshole demon she referred to…

“Was she talking about Diablo?”

“I believe so.”

Uh—so that’s how it is.

Diablo didn’t report this back to me—but since even Razen was a cheap shot in his book, it was very likely that he didn’t feel the need to mention her. At times like this, I was forced to realize, yet again, that Diablo’s standards were pretty weird.

That Razen guy was so strong as to be called a Majin. According to Hinata, there wasn’t anyone stronger than Razen in the Western Nations. To call someone like that a cheap shot, Diablo had some odd measures. I needed to educate him more about this kind of common sense.

Trying to memorize all these points, I ordered a second cup of coffee.

Shuna, Hinata and Benimaru were having black tea with cakes.

Uh, Benimaru, even you ordered it?

In that case, I wanted one too. Fruit cake was the best.

I tried to persuade Souei to order some too, but he ordered “hot coffee” from the staff. The waitress was blushing as she left. Souei didn’t seem to notice, drinking the coffee without adding anything.

This guy sure looked handsome just sipping his cup.

While I was feeling a close kinship to Benimaru, who enjoys sweets, I got the detailed report from Souei, the perfect handsome man.

“—That was how it went down.”

Souei’s report was done by the time I finished the second cup of coffee. I shared everything Souei saw through ‘Telepathy Net’ with everyone else as well.

It looked like Souei managed to draw out all his opponents’ tricks. Even though his target was an amazing beauty, Souei didn’t spare any punches.

This kind of reminded me. There was some online game in the past where you could cheat through game exploits. You could change your health points to infinite, giving your opponent the hope of winning while you grinned behind the screen.

I’m so close to winning—that was the most sinister thing to make your opponent think. And your opponent would try so hard during the fight, using every last one of their items.

That’s exactly what Souei did, but he must have been trying to get relevant information about the culprit.

Fine, this was not a video game we were talking about here. Moreover, espionage was all about testing out what your opponent had in store. So, Souei did nothing wrong. In fact, I should be praising him.

“Good work, Souei, you sure are amazing.”

“I tried out some methods I learned from Rimuru-sama; it was surprisingly effective. Indeed, at times, it is important to pretend as though I am having trouble in battle.”

Eh-eh...eh?

Oh yeah, now that he’d mentioned it, I *did* say something like that to him. I recalled that it might have been the plot of some spy movies...or was it video games? Didn’t really matter since I seemed to have forgotten about it.

Sorry for calling you sinister just now, I apologized to Souei internally.

“Ahaha, looks like it helped out, how wonderful.”

“Not entirely, I am still not strong enough. Three of my ‘Clones’ were eliminated by her.”

“I-is that so? Anyway, now we’ve got dirt on them.”

“Indeed. Please leave interrogation work to me.”

Interrogation, eh? Uh—what to do now?

While I was mulling it over, Hinata interjected: “I wasn’t going to say this, but I imagine this will come out in time anyway, so I’m just gonna bring it up with you guys. Souei-san’s

opponent, that woman, was one of my subordinates. Although I do not know what sort of power she has hidden, her Skills were surprisingly problematic. No wonder Lamar was beaten. With bullets appearing so close to him, he probably wasn't able to react.”

“So, who is this guy called Lamar?”

“Uh, sorry. That guy used to be my subordinate, an ex-'Three Martial Sages.' He lost to that woman called Glenda and became her subordinate.”

Maybe Hinata could dodge a bullet that close to her, but most people couldn't. There was no doubting the danger Glenda's Skill posed.

Hinata gave a rough explanation, saying that the assassin's strength was at 'Sage' level, and was strong enough to battle a 'Demon Lord Seed.' No wonder she was that ridiculously strong.

Moreover—

“She sent one of Souei's 'Clones' flying, was she using a grenade?”

“Do you mean the exploding ball?”

“Yes, that's it. It doesn't seem like magic. I assumed that it was a weapon from another world.”

«Answer. It is likely that the individual 'Glenda' used mana to craft it. It may be slightly different, but with Skills such as 'Weapon Specification,' one can construct weapons from memory.»

W-weapon specification? So not only does she have sniper skills, she even had a trump card like that?

By the way, if it was the authentic 'Weapon Specification,' she would've been able to reconstruct weapons from her memory perfectly. Yet what Glenda had recreated didn't seem delicate enough and could only act as a pale imitation. Nonetheless, it still posed a threat.

“I thought so as well. Even though I've not seen the real thing, it was just like how it is described in the movie. In other words, Glenda could be an 'Otherworlder.'”

“I think that may be the case, because she seems to have used her memory to recreate these weapons.”

As I proudly explained this, Hinata looked at me suspiciously.

“How do you know that?”

Uh, busted.

I had yet to publicly disclose the existence of Wisdom King Raphael-san. Right now, I could only try to play dumb. I shouldn't have pretended that I knew all of these things. I tried to come up with an excuse to deal with Hinata.

“It's instinct! When you reach my level, your instincts become super sharp.”

My words evoked looks of admiration from Benimaru and the others. It really warmed my heart, but I also kept on peeking at Hinata.

“Never mind. Putting that aside, can I interrogate her as well? If it is truly Glenda, I have something to ask her. Sare and Grigori both haven't returned. I'm guessing she may know what has happened to them.”

Looks like she ignored me.

If she had things to ask Glenda, she should go ahead. We weren't going to hide anything anymore, unlike what Shion did last time—that was too *excessive*.

Glenda's claims suggest that she had fought against Diablo in the past, but she managed to run away early on. As for the matter regarding Prince Elric, it actually didn't concern us anymore. That's why, if she was willing to be honest with us, we didn't plan on doing any harm to her.

—Moreover, Souei said that he had already let her have a taste of fear.

Not physically, but mentally. Surely, Glenda's pride must be in tatters.

That said, whether we should let her go was also a difficult choice. She was stronger than we expected, so it would be dangerous to just let her run wild. In any case, it didn't seem right to hand her over to the Kingdom of Ingracia. For now, I figured we should keep her.

“Okay, are you coming with us?” I asked Hinata.

“Then do indulge me,” she nodded.

Anyhow, depending on her attitude, we would decide what to do after we checked up on her.

On that note, we decided to switch venues.

—By the way, I was the one to pay the bill at the café.

Yesterday as well.

I didn't really understand why Hinata slipped her bill to me. Should I forgive her with my generous heart, or should I be salty about it? But then again, I didn't want to be considered stingy.

To be annoyed by something as minor as this, I must be a petty bourgeoisie.

On my way home from Ingracia, those were the thoughts running through my head.



“Eh, Head Knight—!”

Once we met up with Souei's ‘Clone,’ we went home together. Glenda, who had been in his custody, woke up as well and shouted upon seeing Hinata.

We were not in some interrogation chamber, but a normal reception hall. Benimaru and Souei stood guard beside me, and Hinata was there too. Shuna prepared some tea for us to drink while we interrogated her.

“Long time no see, Glenda, you seem well.”

Hinata spoke first as she greeted Glenda with a cold eye. She was, as usual, merciless against her enemies. Glenda was rather nervous, but she quickly regained her cool.

“Hmph! Looks like I'm done for, then. Kill me if you must. When a spy is captured, it

always ends up like that, one way or another.”

She still managed to say something like that without shame.

“Silence. You shall only answer Rimuru-sama’s questions.”

Souei pointedly said without any trace of sympathy.

“Rimuru-sama, shall I cut off this woman’s limbs as punishment to make her behave better?”

Please don’t. Souei was really going to do that.

“No no no, even though we have healing potions—”

“I see, so you are saying that we should make her feel pain a couple of times? I didn’t know that’s—”

“No! I wanted to say that we shouldn’t overdo it even *with* the healing potions!”

Seriously, could you not?

Even though Shuna was agreeing with a smile, Hinata was eyeing me hard.

I didn’t intend to do that kind of thing to a woman. Moreover, Glenda didn’t seem so stubborn as to not reveal anything. Perhaps with negotiation, we could get her to reveal the truth.

“Then, Glenda-san. Nice to meet you, I suppose? I’m Demon Lord Rimuru.”

“—Hello. I am Glenda. Subordinate to Hinata-sama over there, one of the ‘Three Martial Sages.’”

Glenda seemed to understand that there was no use retorting to Souei or trying to negotiate. Perhaps she felt it would just be better to answer my questions, starting off straight-forward by introducing herself.

Glenda knew Diablo, so I figured that she must have escaped knowing she wouldn’t win. Even among those people who vigorously asked for their lives to be taken, few earnestly wished to die. I was sure that she still had a strong will to survive.

I was also curious about why Glenda betrayed Hinata. Even if she didn’t reveal the identity of the employer behind this assassination, she might reveal some other information. In any case, I didn’t know the extent to which she would come clean, so let’s just ask as many things as we could.

After settling down with that idea, I posed the first question in a calm tone.

“You were going to assassinate Prince Elric, is that correct?”

“Yes.”

“You were going to create the illusion that it was my doing to chase us out of the Western Nations, is that why?”

“Perhaps. I didn’t ask for the reasons. Someone just ordered me to do that.”

I see, she didn’t seem to be lying.

“Can I ask the next questions?”

Hinata’s question made Glenda tense up nervously.

“What are you going to ask?”

“I put you in charge of the business hub cities, gave you the freedom of operating in an

environment where you wouldn't be bound, and told you 'not to trust words of merchants' easily. But you were already bribed at that point, weren't you?"

"No comment."

"You were going to betray us from the start, weren't you? Was it from someone's order?"

"—No comment."

"I figure that your employer is probably also running the council behind the scenes, so what's his true identity?"

"..."

"I have been onto you for some time. When the council took action, sometimes, it seemed as though they knew the plans of the Western Holy Church. Obviously, there was a traitor, and you were the most suspicious. I was waiting for an opportunity to take care of you. If you are willing to tell me who your employer is, I may lighten your sentence."

"Didn't I just say? No comment!"

"Is that so? Then let me ask you this one last thing, do you believe in Luminas-sama?"

"Tsk, there's no such thing as God in this world. As opposed to believing that, you might as well believe in money—"

The next second, Hinata unsheathed her rapier. A sharp clang rang out as my sword stopped her rapier.

"Hold on, Hinata! Not her neck. Are you not just interrogating, but actually trying to kill her?"

"—That's not what I have in mind."

"Liar! I can see the bloodlust burning in your eyes!"

Seriously, I couldn't be careless for one second.

Right now, all Hinata wanted was to kill her. Thankfully, I was on guard and able to react, or we could have lost a valuable source of information.

"Don't worry, Rimuru-sama, I can use her to test my resurrection magic," Shuna said with a smile.

"Right, Rimuru. I can also use the god's miracle 'Resurrection.' There is no problem at all."

I couldn't tell if this was all an act or not.

After Shuna, even Hinata said something that outrageous. I suppose it was fine to kill, if you could revive her, but it just didn't sit right with me.

—That's how I felt, but to be honest, I was willing to let them go ahead and do it.

"Anyway, Hinata, let me handle this for a bit."

Time to switch out the contestant.

This was not gonna end well if I were to let it continue. For now, Hinata needed to take a chill pill.

And so, it was my turn again.

Come on, Wisdom King Raphael-san, it is time for you to shine!

«—Understood.» Raphael-san readily agreed.

I began to quote Raphael-san's words verbatim, "It is futile to ask a professional hitman like yourself to divulge information. Therefore, you merely need to listen to what I have to say."

Oh, I see. If we said something to shake her confidence, we could derive some information from her body language?

"Try to keep up your poker face."

"Hah! Don't look down to me like that, it goes without saying!"

Hmm, Glenda accepted the challenge. So, who is gonna be the winner of this contest? I thought to myself, as if I were part of the audience.

"Unique Skills are often etched onto one's soul, you are no exception; your Skill is deeply imprinted upon it."

"Huh, that's the first time I've heard of that, so what?"

"Hmm, during the meeting just now, many councilors were corrupted by their 'desire.'"

"Oh..."

"Those 'desires' were forcibly implanted, some Skills can have an influence on one's soul, so I assume they must have been affected."

"..."

"Glenda, you were also affected."

"What do you mean?"

"Luckily you had your Unique Skill protecting your soul, so it wasn't corrupted completely."

"Uh—"

She probably couldn't deny what I said. Glenda glared at me silently.

In fact, that was the first time I heard about it, as well.

"But even for such an impressive Unique Skill, there are still people who can tell its existence."

"—You mean like the 'Appraisal Eye'?"

"Yeah, like Demon Lord Milim's notorious 'Dragon Eyes.' I don't know how it actually works, but wasn't there a rumor that 'Demon Lord Milim can see through everything'? It isn't far from the truth, with a mere glance, Milim can tell what type of Skills her opponent has."

That was true. Though, that said, she couldn't reveal the details of the Skills if her opponent didn't activate them. She could, nonetheless, still tell the strength of her opponent's Skills and identify whether it was an Extra Skill or a Unique Skill.

But when a single person possessed more than two Unique Skills, it became hard to discern whether you were dealing with one extremely powerful Unique Skill, or multiple—the details seemed to be more difficult to obtain.

I had similar Skills myself. The accuracy of my 'Analyze and Assess' had increased, and now I could vaguely read my opponent's Skills. Furthermore, I also learned of ways to counter this and keep mine hidden.

It was like how Guy Crimson disguised his magicule capacity. When I met Guy, I thought that there was no need to actively conceal Skills that I wasn't currently using.

But that was not the case at all. A trained 'Analyze and Assess' could discover what Skills

you had.

In retrospect, I was lucky. With my four Ultimate Skills back then, Guy probably saw me as a rival that should not be underestimated.

I could not let ‘Wisdom King Raphael’ be known to the public. I must act cautiously in the future. I had thought it was impossible to hide your Skills, when in fact, it could be done. With enough practice, I seemed to be able to fool analytical Skills.

Even though it wasn’t perfect yet, after experimenting with many things, this was the conclusion.

“What are you on about? I *do* have a Unique Skill. So how is it that, thanks to it, I haven’t been corrupted by ‘desire’?”

I had paused for a second, when Glenda asked anxiously.

She probably couldn’t help but ask, after hearing that she had been under the influence of ‘desire.’

I wanted to answer her quickly, but Raphael-san’s explanation was a bit too difficult. It was taking some time to digest the information before regurgitating it.

«Proposal. Activate ‘Thought Acceleration’? YES/NO»

I forgot this was available. I wished I had used that from the beginning; I quietly chose YES.

From here on out, we moved on to the speed round with Glenda.

“Whether you have been corrupted by desire or not, is none of my business, but there’s one thing I can say for sure from this. Your employer has a very powerful Unique Skill. Am I correct?”

“No comment—even though I want to say this, I have to admit that you are correct.”

“Thank you. Then let us continue. There was a guy who was corrupted by ‘desire’ during the nation founding festival as well. That man’s name was Gai. He was defeated by Shuna today. Only a few of the merchants were affected while the rest of the guests remained fine. In order to spread the influence to multiple individuals, I figure the probability of the caster being present in close proximity was very high.”

“...”

It may be a different case for someone as completely corrupted as Gai, but as the distance increased, the effect of the Skill would weaken.

Masayuki’s Skill was very strong too. However, it had a synergistic effect mostly due to the power of the rumor mill. From the basis of his Skill, rumors spread his influence further even without his notice.

However, the effect of ‘desire’ purely relied on the power of the Skill. You could probably intensify the influence with the clever use of sophistry and the like.

To put it simply, it was highly likely that this individual had attended the nation founding festival. This did make a lot of sense. In this way, I could only think of one suspect. I had found the individual suspicious for some time and had asked Souei to investigate.

“Mariabell Rosso, have you heard of the name?”

Raphael-san sure was straight to the point. It picked out the name directly from Souei’s investigation report.

“—UH!”

Seemingly trying to conceal information till the bitter end, this was the only reaction Glenda made.

It must have meant that she knew something.

“My ‘Analyze and Assess’ is pretty good. Not only can I detect Skills, I can also see when someone is trying to hide something. Plus, I sensed an unusual presence during the nation founding festival. And one of them was this young girl called Mariabell.”

Glenda’s face looked worse as she listened to my words. Cold sweat seemed to be dripping down her cheeks, or was it just normal sweat? Either way, Glenda looked very nervous.

“H-how did you—”

“You said Mariabell Rosso?” Hinata interjected once more, cutting off Glenda. “Rosso—it must be the Rosso family. So that’s how it was.”

“EHH!”

Normally, she would have been mad after I told her not to speak. Yet from her expression, that didn’t seem to be the case. After all, the line “All of the mysteries have been solved” was written on Hinata’s face.

Besides, it was obvious from Glenda’s attitude that something was amiss.

“Granbell Rosso. He is the progenitor of the Rosso family. He was a great man that used to be a Hero. Glenda, surely you knew this as well, that the true identity of the leader of the Seven Luminous Clerics, the Sun Sage, was Granbell—”

As expected, it looked like Hinata had arrived at the truth.

Her words have revealed the people behind this whole ordeal and their specific role in the matter.

“You meant the Seven Luminaries, those people from before? I heard that they were all killed, so that guy called Granbell is still alive?”

“Nicolaus said that he has sent him six feet under, but that strange man has led the Western Holy Church for over hundreds of years. It wouldn’t be strange if he had managed to escape his certain death.”

Mariabell seemed to be the caster of the ‘desire’ Skill.

There was also the Great Elder Granbell Rosso—no, the head of the Seven Luminaries, Gran.

I see, if Granbell really was this monster that had lived for hundreds of years, then the likelihood of him dominating the council was very high.

“So, Gran is behind all this?”

“It must be him. He’s probably manipulating powerful individuals such as Mariabell in an attempt to achieve something?”

We ignored Glenda at this point and began to share what information each of us had our

hands on.

The answer to the mystery was almost out.

Glenda had no more value to us.

“Dammit! I didn’t say anything, how come you all know so much! What kind of joke is this, isn’t this the same as me revealing everything—!”

Umm—what bad luck. I can only say that you have met too strong an opponent.

Wisdom King Raphael-san is ridiculously competent, it’s not someone you can hope to rival.

“Even if you think that way, it can’t be helped.”

“That’s okay, Glenda. You meet a traitor’s end, and deservedly so.”

“Damnit, if this continues, I-I’m gonna die...” Glenda moaned, her face now ashen.

I started to feel bad for her. I didn’t really plan to kill her. I was thinking about handing her to the Kingdom of Ingracia after getting the information, but surely, she would be executed now.

I thought Glenda would be able to escape, but seeing how scared she was, the person pulling her strings must’ve been very powerful.

“Is this Mariabell really that strong?” I asked out of curiosity.

“—That’s not the issue. ‘Summoned Ones’ like us are shackled by a curse that prevents us from disobeying. Therefore, if our summoners thought that we had betrayed them, they would crush our souls. That will be my end.”

Ah, that’s just...

“So, you weren’t betraying Luminas-sama out of your own free will, it’s just that you can’t disobey?”

“About that, it’s more complex than you think. I wanted to beg for mercy from God, but Granbell-sama’s eyes were sharp and saw everything. To be honest, I had no choice.”

Hearing this, I felt an inkling of sympathy towards Glenda.

Hinata was still glaring at her coldly, but her fury didn’t appear as intense as before. Her killing intent seemed to have subsided.

“Indeed, there is no use seeking refuge in God, either. People with their soul shattered cannot be resurrected.”

Ah ah, so Hinata has her kind side as well.

Even though she still seemed cold, she was actually thinking about ways to save Glenda.

I wonder, could I unbind the curse?

«Answer. No problem, do you wish to lift it? YES/NO»

Ara, here we go.

And so, we undid the curse with ease.



"It's all over. That girl—Mariabell—can read all my emotions. Even if I had no intent of betraying her, she will still know and eliminate me," Glenda lamented regretfully.

Seeing her in this mood, I told her that the curse has been destroyed.

"Wh...what now?"

"Anyhow, don't worry about it. We are done with you and you can live your life freely. They probably think you are dead as well."

"N-no, that's not it. You managed to unbind the 'curse' that dominated me?"

"Umm, sort of. I'm not going to further elaborate. Just remember that I won't be so kind in the future if you stand against us."

"I suppose I will turn a blind eye as well. I'd catch a lot of flak for harming people released by Rimuru. However, remember this. You betrayed Luminas-sama, the Western Holy Church will never forgive you."

Glenda was strong and posed quite the threat. Despite this, now that she was no longer under Mariabell's control, there was no reason why she would antagonize us.

If she were to insist on remaining hostile towards us, I would just take care of her in time. I didn't feel all that troubled by her actions, so I decided to forgive her this time.

Hinata also seemed to have decided to let Glenda off the hook. Since I had forgiven her, she probably couldn't do something that meant otherwise.

In some sense, Glenda was merely following orders. She was not making decisions herself, but was acting under the restrictive control of the 'Curse.' Therefore, we should be light with her punishment.

"That's all, you are free to go. Feel free to stay in our nation if you feel like it, but if you were to cause any trouble—"

"W-wait a minute—no, please hold on a second! Are you really letting me go?"

"Umm, killing you doesn't seem all that meaningful."

"Since Rimuru-sama is letting you live, we don't have any reason to oppose the idea."

"You alone won't pose too much of a threat anyway," Souei and Benimaru added on to my words.

Even though the way they put it was rather off, they seemed to be okay with this verdict. They probably felt that Glenda posed no threat. While that may sound harsh, it was, in truth, the reality of the situation. She didn't stand a chance against a serious Souei, and she obviously wouldn't win against Benimaru. Glenda herself seemed to be mindful of keeping her life. She wouldn't be stupid enough to challenge someone she couldn't beat. That was why we were fine with letting her go.

Facing me, Glenda suddenly dropped to her knees.

The words she then spilled were shocking.

"I-I have a request! I will tell you everything I know, so can you please hire me? I'll do any dirty work you have, anything, please!"

Hearing this, Benimaru and I looked at each other, dumbstruck.

What should I do?

It's your call.

We were exchanging information with our eyes.

Even if she wanted us to hire her, we didn't really have the money. My pocket money had increased by a lot, but we were still reviewing our executives' paychecks.

We were a super sweat-shoppy corporation—I mean nation.

“Uhh—I’m glad to hear your enthusiasm, but we are still developing. We are slow in terms of designing systems, so there is no salary for now...”

You gotta be clear when it came to this type of question. It wouldn’t help if I were to act rich, so I told her the truth.

“—Eh?”

Glenda was frozen in disbelief.

Be that as it may—what Glenda said next shocked us instead.

“Oh, I’m used to that already. Even though I was a member of the Pope’s Imperial Order and a member of the Holy Empire of Lubelius, I wasn’t getting paid anyway...”

I didn’t expect that someone with such high status as the ‘Three Martial Sages’ wasn’t even getting paid.

As it turns out, everything was paid with actual goods; any money they had, was collected by themselves. However, they could use their reputation to get a national guest level of treatment in the Western Nations. They could also receive prizes for stopping crimes, and overall, it sounded like they were well off.

“Eh, does that mean Hinata hasn’t collected much money either?”

But didn’t she spend a ton during the festival?

“—Tsk, yeah. In Lubelius, we promote the idea that everyone is equal, so we won’t pay in cash in public trades. Everyone just uses goods as currency.”

I was surprised, but also reassured. If a kingdom as long-lived as Lubelius could work without paying salaries, surely, we were not in a hurry to design our own systems.

By the way, Hinata was in charge of running the Holy Knight Order, with the additional role as the head knight of the imperial order. She seemed to be able to access the national treasury to some extent. With the additional earnings from fulfilling monster contracts throughout the day, she could earn plenty of money.

“So, you are still asking me to pay even when you are making so much money?”

“Why do you care so much! It’s called being frugal, frugal!”

She was willing to spend money treating the kids but was super stingy with me.

By the way, have I given any bonus to Myourmiles?

I thought to myself, but I figured it would be too much trouble and decided not to dwell on it.

“Despite how I look, I’m quite infamous among the Western Nations,” Glenda exclaimed. “That’s why, even if you let me go, I probably won’t find a single job offer. After all, most nations probably wouldn’t dare to hire me. The adventurer lifestyle doesn’t really suit me either. Moreover, this place probably has the highest level of culture around. I’ll be satisfied if you just

provide me with the basic necessities,” Glenda said with apparent desperation. She didn’t seem to be lying.

This did seem reasonable. No matter how you saw it, a ‘Martial Sage’ who was chased out of Lubelius would appear to be a traitor to the world’s eyes. There was no way any nation would dare to hire someone as dangerous as that.

Even if she were to hide her identity and become an adventurer, it would still be a life of unending fear. If she were to expose her identity accidentally, either Lubelius or Granbell would likely send people after her.

Either way, she wouldn’t be able to live a peaceful life.

“That’s true, you probably will have a hard time surviving if no one wants to help you.”

“Tell me about it. So please, Demon Lord-sama! You may not believe me, but I swear I’ll pledge my loyalty to you!”

How could I believe you?

But to be honest, you couldn’t exactly hate her. She was like the unfortunate woman that appeared in the spy movies. You just couldn’t leave her behind.

“Souei, can you handle this?”

“If Rimuru-sama wishes so, I will not object.”

“Then I’ll be counting on you. It’ll be troublesome if she were to betray us, so please prepare accordingly.”

“Understood. Her combat prowess outshines Souka, therefore she can be under my command and help expand our secret services.”

“A secret service that exclusively recruits problem children?”

“Well, sort of. I want to use what is available in front of me as opposed to spending the effort recruiting otherwise.”

Even Diablo had gone to search for subordinates. It would be unfair to stop Souei now.

So I let him go ahead.

“Then you shall handle this in its entirety! Discuss with Myourmiles about your budget.”

“Understood!”

The matter was settled quickly.

“Oi, how can you call me a problem child when I’m right here...” I heard Glenda muttering.

If you have a problem with that, try winning over my trust first.

And just like that, I decided to recruit Glenda.



I asked Souei to manage Glenda, but before that, I needed her to give us all the information she knew. Since this was no longer an interrogation, we simply had a normal conversation over

dinner.

“You grab one of these wooden tags with the type of meals written on it and exchange it for food at the window over there. There are three different types of meals, which we switch up every day. There are special meal sets as well. If you were to become an officer of some sort, you can order any food you like.”

“Eh, is that so? They have been preparing meals for me every time?”

They always seemed to have a lot of fun eating, but had never used the wooden tag to order anything. But this was the lieutenants’ canteen, someone would prepare meals for them even if they didn’t order anything.

The creation of new dishes by Shion’s and Gobichi’s own kitchens was a story for another day.

“This is our most popular dish. You need to make an appointment using your effort points or come early to wait in line to get it. It’s a specially made dish,” Shuna explained with a smile.

I was gonna say that the dessert in the combo made it seem very extravagant. I realized why that was the case after hearing her explanation.

“We can all have this set.”

“Yes. We’ve ordered people to reserve them for us.”

I saw that Benimaru and Souei both were ordering the special meal. I was caught on the fact that Souei just said something about ‘Ordering people to reserve them.’ Could it be that he had ordered his subordinates to wait in line for him? I should probably just believe in the idea that he wouldn’t be stupid enough to order people to fight over meals at the canteen.

With the meals served to our table, we began to dine.

“Now then, let’s talk—”

I turned to Glenda as I was about to ask her something. There I saw that her eyes had lit up and all her attention was focused on the meal.

It was really delicious. No wonder it was listed as a special. I supposed it was best to talk about happier topics during the meal. So I questioned her after we ate.

After we finished dining.

“I used to put money above all, but that thought was changed today. From today onward, I’m gonna live for points!”

Just to clarify, in case you were being serious, they are not that easy to collect.

But, fine, whatever. If it made her put in her best efforts, I’d say *go for it*.

“What secrets do you know? Do not hide anything, tell us everything,” Souei prompted Glenda, which finally got her to open up about the secrets she knew.

The contents she revealed gave us a surprise.

First, regarding the council. It was under the control of the five leaders of an organization called the Five Great Elders. The head of the Five Great Elders was the aforementioned Granbell.

As for the remaining four, to our surprise, we learned that today’s prime suspect, count Gavan, was one of them. And in contrast, the duke of the Kingdom of Rostia, Johann, was also

a member of the Five Great Elders.

“How come the Five Great Elders were in disagreement with each other?”

“That was Mariabell’s plan. She intentionally organized an opposition while also keeping someone aligned with the majority view. In truth, this was her faking disputes, but to the people involved, this was a real battle where the stakes were life or death.”

I see... Was she doing so to make her organization more effective?

At first, it could seem to be efficient to make an organization with one sole goal. However, it was likely to eventually stagnate and become a breeding bed of corruption.

For example, it was often seen that one bad leader could bring down a whole business.

Also, if Johann managed to win my trust, it would’ve been easier for them to keep tabs on me. For them, it would have been great if they were able to eliminate me, but now, they would probably make plans for Johann to conspire from inside the council.

“That feels so shady.”

“I seriously don’t want to deal with these people, I want to burn them all.”

It was annoying just to hear about these kinds of things.

This was probably how the nobles operated, to eliminate people whose alignment was unclear. I might have trusted Johann if I had not heard about this information. It was the correct choice to have absolved Glenda.

The other two members of the five were the count of Cidre, who was in charge of guarding the northern border of the Kingdom of Ingracia, and King Dolan, who was from a small kingdom in the west. His nation was a military nation guarded by soldiers of the Dolan family.

With these two power houses stationed in Ingracia, it was obvious how much thought Granbell had put into the structure of this land. It was next to the Holy Empire of Lubelius and far from the Great Jura Forest. It would be the safest place on this continent. Granbell thought it was the most suitable location to act as the center hub of politics and economy.

“But why is he antagonizing me? I’m such a friendly demon lord, after all,” I blurted out without thinking, and, for whatever reason, everyone looked at me with surprise.

“Eh? With all of the provocations you’ve issued, it’s enough to turn anyone against you.”

What?

“I thought you were provoking them as well. Diablo mentioned that Rimuru-sama wishes to dominate the world economy. I thought that you were going to control the council as well.”

What do you mean? Also, you were discussing that with Diablo?

“I thought so too, and figured intelligence gathering was a part of that.”

Yeah, I can’t deny that it was one of the goals.

“...Surely it can’t be that you have been doing this unconsciously the whole time?”

Even Hinata is saying so!

I never knew this was how everyone thought of me.

“N-not at all. Although I can’t deny that I had absolutely no intention to do that, I also wasn’t that anxious to get it done! That’s why I wanted to negotiate peacefully with others...”

Hearing my excuse, Hinata let out a stunned sigh.

“I doubt there are any good-natured merchants that would allow some new guys to just come around and mess with their trades, don’t you think?”

Uh, she has a point.

“I-it’s all right. We will probably have to confront each other at some point. Let’s work towards controlling the economic activities of the Western Nations from now on!”

“I had that idea in mind from the very start. However, my duty is to fortify defense.”

“I shall go investigate the Rosso clan and the Five Great Elders.”

It was a good thing to be able to see our enemies clearly.

As our new companion, Glenda, said: “You guys sure are lucky to have gotten all this for free.” Now we knew what to work towards from now on.

“Okay, you guys should be cautious as well. Pay extra attention. Don’t accidentally get sandwiched by Yuuki and the Rosso clan.”

“Understood.”

Benimaru nodded as Souei also agreed.

We still needed to wait on Yuuki’s side while we fought an intelligence and economic warfare against the Rossos. We didn’t have to shed any blood for now, so it was relatively more relaxed.

There was a part of me that felt as though I was worrying too much, so I decided to end the conversation.

“Hold on,” Hinata suddenly interjected. “Yuuki and the Rosso clan? Why are you cautious about Yuuki?”

I was confused for a second and quickly realized that I had forgotten to bring this matter up to Hinata’s attention.

“It’s nothing. It’s just that I thought about it a lot, and the only person I could come up with who knew about my identity as a ‘Reincarnated One,’ my relationship with Shizu-san, and is able to leak this information to the eastern merchants, was—”

“Right, only Yuuki fits the bill?”

“Umm, that’s right. By the way, that majin called Laplace from that moderate clown gang, I’m guessing that Roy, who was pretending to be the demon lord, may have been beaten by him. No guarantee though.”

“It’s all right, thanks anyway. I’m not interested in that matter, but I can’t just sit back and watch if he’s hostile against us.”

It looked like Hinata was treating Laplace and the others as enemies. She gave off a chillingly cold laugh.

Oooh, how horrifying.

I really had to watch myself to not piss off Hinata.

After disclosing what I discovered to Hinata, she stood up and made an effort to leave—

“U-uh, about that...” Glenda opened up timidly.

It looked like she had something else to say to me.

“What is it? Feel free to speak what’s on your mind. Did you just remember something?”

Just as I finished asking, Glenda dropped the bombshell of the day.

“You were talking about the leader of the Freedom Association, Yuuki, weren’t you? That guy’s connected to the Five Great Elders Johann. He’s completely under the control of Mariabell.”

Eh? Yuuki is being controlled?

“Is this true?”

“I’m not bold enough to make jokes under these circumstances.”

I suppose so.

“—Eh, why didn’t you say something so important earlier?!”

“W-well, technically speaking, I am Granbell’s direct subordinate...”

There were two people who had authority over Glenda. They seemed to be Granbell and Mariabell. And Glenda’s orders mainly came from Granbell. Therefore, Glenda never really had the chance to guess Mariabell’s thoughts.

I wasn’t sure if Glenda knew anything else. She claimed she told us everything she knew.

With that, I heard Mariabell had subordinates known as the ‘Blood Shadows’ who specialized in doing the dirty work for the Rossos.

“But,” Shuna mumbled, “there’s another problem now. If Yuuki was manipulated, he may have leaked secrets of Rimuru-sama involuntarily.”

Hinata also fell deep into her own thoughts. It looked like we needed to re-evaluate the situation.

«...»

How rare, even Raphael-san fell silent. This is really rare, if even Raphael-san can’t find the answer, then maybe it’s no use for me to bother.

Right now, the most important thing was to let the thought go.

Since I couldn’t figure out anything now, I would just think about it at another time. Just like during the exams, it would be better to put harder questions on hold and solve them later. You shouldn’t waste all your valuable time.

“Anyways, let’s list Yuuki as a suspect and see what happens next—eh, hold on?”

Yuuki always acted very cautiously, so he probably wouldn’t do anything to us on his own. However, it would be different if he had been manipulated by someone else. If his controller were Mariabell, who wished to antagonize us, wouldn’t that just topple everything we assumed before?

“If I may, if Yuuki can’t disobey Mariabell’s orders, is it possible that he would disregard his own stance and do something unnatural?”

Yes, that was it.

Mariabell wanted to eliminate all of us. So, she could utilize Yuuki to plot against us. In other words, we would most likely be cornered.

“Doesn’t that make things pretty bad for us?”

“They will need to collect intelligence, so the Rosso clan probably won’t do anything, how-

ever..."

"Nii-san and Souei have a point. Aren't you going to go explore some ruins with the vice president of the Freedom Association, Kagali-san? Perhaps they have some devious scheme behind it..."

Umm, it seemed as though everyone shared the same view.

We might have been too optimistic about our situation.

"There's no need to worry about that—it's too early to say anything. Mariabell—the Rosso clan—they would sever ties with Yuuki and claim that they had no idea about his actions. They could push all of the blame to the Freedom Association and let us fight it out with them."

"—That way, Rimuru-sama's plan would be compromised."

"If we were to just observe, we may lose our chance to strike first."

Umm—with that being said, we were already very cautious. The town was heavily guarded, and it wouldn't be easy to instigate our residents, either.

If that is the case...

«Proposal, we can intentionally show weak points to lure out the enemies.»

That's it!

"Should we cancel the ruin exploration?" Benimaru proposed. I shook my head in response.

"No, we can use this to our advantage. If we were to cancel it, Milim would be super annoyed. Let's proceed as planned, but we should be prepared to confront our enemies no matter what happens."

Milim seemed to be looking forward to the expedition. It was like a hike where she could temporarily escape from her homework. Cancelling it now would likely anger her. That would be troublesome. If possible, I wouldn't want to cancel the expedition either.

"Wouldn't it be dangerous?"

"Milim would come. I also want to bring Shion as my bodyguard."

"Okay, that's no problem. Shion wasn't too happy about staying behind this time. This would surely cheer her up."

Since Benimaru had no problems with the plan, Shion would be my bodyguard.

"I will also bring Gobta and Ranga along. Shouldn't that be enough force?"

"Understood. Leave the town's security to me in case anything happens during Rimuru-sama's departure."

"I will help Nii-san. First, I will fortify the 'Barrier.'"

"I will be in charge of surveillance and see if anyone acts suspiciously in the different nations. Especially the Five Great Elders mentioned by Glenda."

"I'll be counting on you guys. Veldora is in the labyrinth; ask him for help if anything were to happen."

As I finished, everyone nodded in agreement.

"Then I will report back to Luminas-sama. You are really careless sometimes, so be extra cautious."

"You talk too much!"

After she finished chatting with me, Hinata used magic to return home. Even though she was usually very cold, Hinata would occasionally show some care for me in her own way.

*Is this what a tsundere is?*¹⁷

«Answer, no.»

Ah, yeah, totally.

I was daydreaming a bit, but oh the cruel reality.

Anyways, our plan was settled.

All we had to do was to be prepared for action when the day arrived.

¹⁷The source here states ‘これが、デレカ,’ which mean, “Is this what they call ‘dere.’” This is a reference to ‘dere dere,’ lovestruck, I initially thought the text means Rimuru thought Hinata is a tsundere (someone who is initially cold and rude but gradually showing affection to others), and her caring for him is an expression of the ‘dere’ part of tsundere, but considering the later context, it can also be interpreted that Rimuru just thinks that Hinata has a crush on him. Take either as you wish.

**Chapter
5**

**The Trap
of Greed**

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Chapter 5

The Trap of Greed

I gathered all of my lieutenants and shared the information with them.

I also introduced Glenda to everyone. Of course, this also meant that she was under surveillance from now on. Glenda would have to win our trust through her own effort in the future.

I introduced her to Kaijin and Kurobee as well and let them inspect Glenda's pistol. Now, they could probably help supply some ammo for her.

Perhaps we could end up mass-producing pistols?

I really wanted to own guns, to be honest, but I had no interest in letting them flow freely in the market. Instead, I would only distribute it to important people through a license system.

It looked very cool, so I wanted one.

As I was getting dorky with these ideas, time passed on quickly.

It was the day to explore the ancient ruin. Everything was ready.

I looked great in my explorer outfit. I even had a prototype of the pistol. Kaijin took an interest in the matter and used the free time in between his research and made the model. Dold engraved the model and installed a mechanism that could cause small explosions via mana.

Since gunpowder wasn't being used, there was no need to discharge a shell casing. Now all you needed to do was to insert the oval-shaped bullets. Its caliber was around nine millimeters, and you could load sixteen rounds. The blowback that happened every time you shot had the purpose of reducing the sudden recoil of firing as well as chambering the next bullet.

It was crafted like a toy, but its power could rival that of a .44 magnum. This was all because of the magisteel that was used to craft the gun, allowing it to withstand a high enough impact. The engravings that delivered the magical explosion were tuned to the maximum force possible, which is what granted the weapon its devastating power.

Different types of ammo had different magnitudes of power. Under normal circumstances, one could use the plain lead bullet. The mithril bullets, which were enchanted with mana, were specially made to deal with monsters. The amount of mana infused would change the strength of the bullet, meaning the weapon was highly adaptable depending on what target you were

fighting.

The weapon's rating was rare-grade, but it could attack with the firepower of a unique-grade weapon. It was an interesting choice of arms for sure.

It even surprised Kaijin and the others who made it. Its power had made us consider listing it as the official gear for our new recruits. However, just as I stated prior, this decision needed to be contemplated carefully. To put it bluntly, it was hardly a noteworthy addition to our arsenal. In a sense, it was just a fanciful weapon.

I was hesitant to make it an official sidearm. The idea was to only lend them out if it was deemed necessary, depending on the circumstances.

Yep, like this time.

The right gear is what gave us a certain flare.

Pursuing the fantastical is man's aesthetic¹⁸.

"This thing looks so cool! The recoil after firing also feels super nice!"

Mm-hmm, I see Gobta and I share the same taste.

I made this to lend to people, but I suppose I can give one to Gobta.

"You know your stuff, Gobta-kun. But this is very dangerous, so do not point it at people."

"Of course! I will cherish it with my life!"

Gobta seemed delighted. Ranga was watching Gobta enviously.

But, Ranga-chan, you can't exactly use that gun. That's why I've put this handsome scarf on you, so please forgive me.

"Hehe, I've got 'Hercules Ex' with the clothes chosen for me by Rimuru-sama."

"Shion, you can't wear that during an exploration. You gotta consider your personal safety."

Shion was so excited about the clothes I gave her that she wanted to try them on at the nearest opportunity. However, those clothes were for fun, not suitable for doing exploration.

"What a pity..."

An upset Shion switched back to her usual suit. That one looked pretty weird as well, but it was Shion's combat suit, so it would have to do.

"Rimuru, how do I look in this?" Milim asked me excitedly.

"Oh, this one suits you well. All the preparation for today has been worth it."

Just like me and Gobta, she switched to the newly made explorer outfit.

"Hmm! This feels so comfortable, I'm so agile in this! It also has so many pockets, it feels so cool!"

Milim was wearing a short-sleeve shirt and shorts. I didn't really feel it was that appropriate, but I figured it'd be fine since it suited her so well.

¹⁸Refer to previous explanation of 'Men's romance'



“That’s right, you gotta thank Shuna for that!”

“Whoo!”

“Yeah!”

We were all very satisfied.

And so, we headed off for our destination in high spirits. Our destination was the home base of the Freedom Association located at the capital of the Kingdom of Ingracia. We were planning to meet up with the others and head straight to the Puppet Nation Jistav.

I didn’t even need to go through the headquarters’ door, as Kagali-san was already waiting at the entrance.

“Long time no see, thank you for having us today!”

“Nice to meet you, I am Milim.”

“Nice to meet you, my name is Kagali. It’s a pleasure to see you.”

We exchanged warm greetings with a smile as Kagali-san led us to another venue.

“Milim?”

“Uh, nothing’s wrong, but, it’s just that...”

“...?”

Kagali-san looked confused about our conversation.

She was Yuuki’s subordinate, so just in case, we listed her as a suspect. Just now, my conversation with Milim was to have her confirm whether there was anything fishy about our suspect using her ‘Dragon Eye.’

Milim seemed to have noticed something strange, but apparently there was no major issue. I still wasn’t entirely reassured, so I thought that I’d best stay on guard for now.

“My team has gathered as well, allow me to introduce you to them.”

After gazing at us in a rather unexplainable way, Kagali-san began to introduce the teammates.

At the square near the HQ, a line of people was awaiting orders. Kagali-san had trained an exploration team and had hand-picked some of the most outstanding individuals to accompany us during the upcoming exploration operation.

Even though I made it clear to them that we may get ambushed, these people still came nonetheless, almost fearless. They were a mixed group of around ten members. All the passersby were looking at them curiously, but none of the teammates took note of the stares. They looked to be well trained.

Their attire could only be described as “Armed to the teeth.”

They were all heavily geared, unlike our “casual equipment.”

Covered in very thick and heavy clothes from head to toe, they were carrying all sorts of bulky backpacks. Among their tools, they brought canes, crowbars, shovels, and many other useful items.

“Then, Rimuru-sama, I shall have someone carry your luggage for you. Where have you put it?”

We didn't bring any luggage, just new clothes.

“No, we didn’t really prepare anything in particular, this will do.”

“What? Surely you jest.”

No no no, it’s no use telling me that now...

“It’s not a good idea to show your bare skin. With all those bug bites and stuff, you’re more likely to get hurt, aren’t you?”

The explorer outfits excelled at covering their skin. Sloppy clothing was also a no-go.

“Uh—will it though? My skin’s protected by youki, so it shouldn’t matter!”

“Umm—but Kagali-san is angry though!”

“You too! In my opinion, your gear is way too light! Both of you are underestimating the exploration business.”

I don’t get it. They are nitpicking problems with such a fervor, but what were our mistakes?

“Ahh, please calm down, it’s all right. Despite how I look, I’m actually a fairly experienced adventurer!”

To be fair, since we weren’t going camping, it would be fine to wear light clothing. But I didn’t need to say it out loud, I’d just show her when the time comes, surely, they would understand.

“Since you say so… However, if you run into any trouble, please tell me immediately.”

We probably won’t run into any trouble.

I only considered this a hike, but I did keep my guard up.

I had also warned Gobta, Ranga, and Shion, as well.

Now then, let’s get on with our hike.

“Then let’s prepare the horse carriages—”

“Eh? Do we really need that?”

Kagali-san gazed at me with a baffled look.

I was confused as well. Because it would take around two months to travel to Jistav by horse-drawn carriage, I didn’t intend to do that from the start.

“What do you mean by that?” Kagali-san asked.

I then asked them to move to the outskirts of the city first. Near a less populated area, I opened up a ‘Portal’ with ‘Spatial Domination’ to connect to Jistav. I had gotten pretty handy using this now and could link up locations I had already been to very quickly.

“Please go through this. It won’t disappear anytime soon, so you guys can walk through just fine.”

Upon finishing my sentence, the members of the exploration team who had been watching the outcome in stunned amazement began to stir.

“You gotta be kidding! I don’t even know how far it is from here to there...”

“Demon lord… So strong, too strong...”

“This is such overkill. So, all of our preparations have been for nothing...”

I heard these murmurs run through the crows. I suddenly felt pretty bad for them, but also kind of smug myself at the same time.



And so, we arrived at the Puppet Nation Jistav.

The dark elf tribesmen came out to welcome us. They lined up in front of the entrance of the castle and bowed deeply to us.

“Welcome to Jistav! You must all be very tired from your long journey?” said the chief¹⁹, who was acting as the representative, as she came to greet us. While she was the chief in name, she looked like she was in her twenties. The chief was a female, a blonde beauty with tanned skin, nonetheless.

“Ahh, that’s not exactly the case. Oh yeah, have the rooms been prepared?”

“Of course, everyone should get their own room. If need be, we’ve also prepared a bigger room.”

I informed them beforehand that we would visit, but it looked like everything was in order.

Let’s drop the luggage off in the bigger room first, shall we?

“Let’s head to the big room to put down our luggage. Today I wish for you to show us around the castle.”

“Understood, please follow me.”

With the chief’s instructions, we let her guide us to the large room. There I had all the teammates put down their luggage. They did as they were told and put down their luggage in an almost robotic fashion.

“Eh, what just happened? Has it even been an hour since we gathered? We seem to have already reached our destination!”

“This is too bizarre! It’s gotta be a trick!”

“Eh, eh? One room per person, eh? Are we being treated as guests in this castle?”

Just now I was saying that they were acting like robots, but it seemed they were just unable to catch up with what was going on. Their heads must’ve been spinning as their whole world was turned upside-down.

“Rimuru-sama ordered me to take care of everyone here, if you were to experience any inconvenience, there is no need to restrain yourself. Please let us know,” the chief said with a gentle smile to assuage the flabbergasted teammates.

That was the moment it clicked for them, and they finally decided to accept the reality of the situation. Seeing them like this, I couldn’t help but giggle.

Afterwards, I took the group to check out the castle with a guide.

As expected from the home base of Demon Lord Clayman, I could only describe it as extravagant. The dark elves were managing the castle with care. Not a speck of dust could be

¹⁹Or Elder

found.

“Milim, when the expedition is over, you will be in charge of this place. However, the local residents asked to continue living here.”

“Umm, I know, I will have people deliver food and supplies regularly.”

“Thank you, Demon Lord Milim-sama.”

“You’re welcome. You are my citizens as well; I’m just doing my job.”

Oh oh, even Milim has become an astute ruler. It must all be thanks to Frey-san’s efforts.

Apart from being impressed by Milim, I also asked some other questions, such as whether there would be any inconveniences.

This castle was vast, big enough for all the dark elves to live in. There were no castle towns to speak of. There seemed to be places for majins to live in, but they were all working for Geld now. I heard that the dark elves were managing these residential areas as well, for them to live in the day they returned.

“This is the entrance to the ruins. There are three levels in total, the bottom floor seems to be a tomb. We were only able to enter the upper floor, since for the middle floor and below, only Demon Lord Clayman knew what was held there.”

Hakurou also reported that the entrance to the ruins was inside the castle.

“Then have you figured out the layout of the upper floor?”

“Yes, all of the treasure from the upper floor was collected. Right now, we are using it as living quarters.”

I heard that there were many empty rooms, enough to easily fit over a thousand men.

I opened the door and walked straight inside. In spite of this location being underground, it was filled with a gentle glow.

“What is this light—?”

“Your Majesty, this is the permanent effect of magic creation. It seems to be linked with the orbit of the sun as it does get dimmer at night.”

“What? So ancient magic is still at work here!”

“Th-this alone should be a major discovery. Even though it’s being utilized so naturally, I still want to investigate it thoroughly.”

“Then, is there also magic like this present in the middle floor and below as well?”

“Yes, when we sent off Clayman-sama, I secretly had a peek at it. The middle floor was very bright as well.”

The chief answered my every question. This lasted for a while.

The exploration team was ecstatic. This excitement must’ve been contagious, as we began to feel it too.

“Gobta-kun, don’t you be a troublemaker now!”

“Understood! But I am feeling a bit nervous.”

We talked amongst ourselves in hushed voices as we began to tour the first floor. It was very lively, showing signs that the dark elves really were living down here.

“Won’t monsters emerge from underground if you guys were to reside here? The word tomb alone makes me feel that there may be ghosts.”

Gobta’s question prompted the chief to crack a wry smile.

“No, we wouldn’t be concerned about that. There’s only one entrance to the underground, and only Clayman-sama was able to open it.”

“Oh—then why not just break it if you can’t open it!”

“Leave it to me, I’ll slash it open right away!”

“No! We have to investigate carefully, not just wrecking things!”

I stopped such an aggressive suggestion.

“Y-you have a point. Let’s be careful now, Shion!”

“That was close. I would have cut it down had you not warned me.”

This made me feel rather uneasy, but it seemed everything would be fine as long as I explained things well to them.

And so, we headed through the cavernous ruins.

Passing the residential area of the dark elves, a giant gate appeared before us. Its size was about the same as the first gate. Only this time, the door seemed to have been enchanted with some sort of spell.

“—I see. This appears to have been enchanted with an ancient magic defense mechanism. If you accidentally disturb this contraption, the defensive mechanisms within the city may activate.”

“Defensive mechanisms? Are they still functioning?”

“Yes, please be very careful. If we were to trigger it accidentally, we may no longer be able to investigate the ruins,” Kagali-san advised everyone with a serious face. The team also seemed rather tense upon hearing her words.

I was more curious about how Clayman opened this gate.

“Is Clayman connected to these ruins in any way?”

“That guy only rose to power recently; he shouldn’t have anything to do with such ancient ruins.”

“Perhaps he was able to decode the sorcery and open the door with the correct procedure.”

Hmm-hmm.

That’s right, even if it were Clayman, surely, he would’ve been able to undo the sorcery with enough time.

By the way, I recall that Clayman had a Unique Skill as well.

«Correct. He possessed Unique Skill ‘Manipulator’; he could receive or transmit information in encoded signals.»

Yeah yeah yeah, that’s it.

It was some ability about analyzing intelligence, surely, it would be just as simple to analyze magic spells.

By the way, did I obtain the Skill as well?

«Answer. It is an inferior version of master's Skill; thus, it has been decomposed into energy and absorbed. If anything, the Skill 'Ley Line Manipulation' has been added to 'Law Manipulation.'»

I see, no wonder it didn't report it to me.

Because it wasn't worth mentioning. That's why Raphael-san never brought it up. But if Clayman could do it, so could I. Even though this would be Raphael-san doing all the actual work.

“We may be stuck figuring this thing out for a long time.”

“We ran headfirst into a mighty challenging task. But our circumstances are already a lot better than what we've done in the past. Let's calm down and analyze it carefully!”

The members of the exploration team talked amongst themselves in a display of motivation.

Ignoring them all, I put my hand on the gate. I instantly got a picture of the energy coming from the 'ley lines' permeating the wall in the form of magic spells.

“I get it now. If we were to destroy this door, the lights on this level would all vanish. All of the energy would be used to repel the invaders before reconstructing itself. It's still functioning normally even after more than a thousand years. Looks like this is a super advanced product born from the magic-wielding civilization.”

It was all Greek to me, but thanks to the help of the all-talented Raphael-san, I was able to unravel the matter easily. It was like playing a puzzle game, making it somewhat intriguing.

Like solving an arithmetic problem. I undid the magic expressions one by one and finally found the way to open the gate.

“Ah, there you go. By channeling magic here, we should be able to open the input window of the coded spell.”

I finished my sentence only to turn around and see the expedition team with their mouths hanging open.

Oh snap, I overdid that a bit—I suddenly realized.

I accidentally started analyzing due to it being so interesting. This was supposed to be their job.

“Sorry, I got ahead of myself...”

“I-it's okay, don't worry about it,” Kagali-san said to comfort me, but I still felt that I owed an apology to everyone.

I reflected upon what I'd done while petting Ranga as I patiently waited.

—That's what I should have done. But my own teammates couldn't contain themselves.

“WAHAHAHA! I want to solve it as well!”

“I give up.”

Milim started shouting loudly, prancing before the gate, while Gobta couldn't figure out a thing.

That seemed to cheer up the other teammates and they began to discuss. The spark to drive the situation was the question Kagali-san asked, “Rimuru-sama, could I ask you about something? How did you analyze the puzzle?”

By then I was stroking Ranga's fur. But since she'd asked, I couldn't very well withhold an answer. To quench her thirst for clarification, I explained the analysis method in detail.

"First, we need to investigate what sort of magical expressions were used before it came to be, then we could sort those expressions into different stages."

"Do you mean to identify the most recently used magical expression?"

"Right, we then probe what should be removed from the end-product to prevent that magical expression from activating. Repeat this process for the expression before it and so on until you grasp the foundation—that is the underlying flow, the nucleus, of this mechanism. Then, after that, it will conversely give you only the right answers."

"I see..."

"Ruling out false leads and only preserving the expressions that are functioning correctly, is it?"

No wonder why everyone present here was an elite, they immediately understood the method merely from listening to my short suggestion.

"Aren't trap-type expressions complete on their own in many cases? They are like branches and leaves of a large tree that grow close together, parts that do not belong to the central roots and the trunk. This is, assuming that the expressions are not primarily intended to trigger the trap."

"...I see. So even if it's the main stem of the expressions, we still shouldn't let our guard down."

My teaching style seemed to be easy to understand, maybe because I had experience teaching kids. I was pleased to see that it was pretty well received, so I continued to demonstrate more and more of the puzzle analysis.

During this time, Milim opened the gate almost immediately. Later on, a couple of our teammates managed to open the door successfully as well. It was then that the chief called us.

"Everyone, we have prepared meals. You must be tired after your arduous journey; shall we call it a day?"

Having it pointed out, I realized it was already evening.

She had a point, we could begin our exploration officially tomorrow. We would open the gate tomorrow and close up shop for now.

"Shall we stop for the day?"

"I concur. Her saying that we've been on 'an arduous journey' still feels bizarre, nonetheless. We shall begin the investigation officially tomorrow."

With Kagali-san's consent, the day came to a close.



The next day.

Our team lined up and prepared for marching. Kagali-san unsealed the gate on our behalf. The blue light flashed repeatedly as the gate silently opened.

“Looks like it was a success.”

The folks began to cheer.

“Good job,” I praised everyone as I took a step inside the gate.

The middle floor had a different level of luminosity compared to the upper floor. There were candlesticks on the stone walls emitting faint light that couldn’t be extinguished. This was some fantastic magic technology. But they were not actual candles, rather, illumination created by magic.

While feeling impressed, I walked towards the floor as Milim came to my side.

“I feel like there’s suddenly a really strong sense of oppression here.”

“It’s true. Because unlike the upper floor, the ceiling is really low, and the hallway is surrounded by stone walls. The passage is really narrow as well, it almost feels like a labyrinth.”

The ceiling was only two meters tall. A larger man would have to bend his back. The hallway was only two meters wide as well. It was a bit narrow for two people to stand shoulder to shoulder.

Not like that was a problem for me and Milim due to our petite figures. But the teammates behind us carrying large backpacks may have some trouble doing the same.

“Rimuru-sama, how’re things looking ahead?”

If this floor was truly built like a maze, we may have to ponder which road to choose every time we encountered a split. Moreover, there may be traps.

“If there were to be any traps, we’d be able to sense them, so is it okay to allow us to continue leading the team?”

“Are you guys truly able to handle it?”

“Just count on me! With my presence, there’s nothing to worry about!”

The person who nodded heavily was Milim, not me.

If no one objects, then we should do just that.

With us leading the charge, Kagali-san and her vice-captain followed. Shion and Gobta were walking at the back of the team to protect the other teammates. Ranga was hidden in my shadow, whereas the chief had stayed behind to stand guard.

I was looking forward to today’s supper.

I used ‘Magic Perception’ to confirm the status ahead of the road as I casually walked onward. The passages were surrounded by stone walls, which occasionally had murals painted on them. These were some fine drawings.

“They are so beautiful. These murals on their own are already valuable art pieces.”

“Is that so?”

“Indeed. Looks like they are depictions of the living conditions in ancient times. We may be able to gain some understanding of ancient civilization. This alone makes it priceless.”

“Oh—now that you’ve put it that way, it does remind me of the sceneries I’ve seen in the past.”

Ah yes, this by-gone past to me were nostalgic memories for Milim. She must have many feelings passing through here.

I should try to keep them in their original conditions and be cautious during our investigation.

The traps that I was worried about did not trigger. The exploration went smoothly.

It was already noon and we decided to rest for a moment.

“Now then, let’s prepare lunch.”

“Ah, hold up. I asked the chief to prepare bento for us, let’s eat that.”

I stopped the teammates who were about to start a fire and took out bento for everyone. It looked as if they appeared out of thin air, but I’d actually stored them all in my ‘Stomach.’ It even kept them warm, what a great Skill for traveling.

“W-well...”

“You can do that?”

Mutters such as these began to spread around, but I ignored all that.

While still feeling confused, the teammates took the bento.

“Umm, this does look very tasty,” Milim said happily after opening up the bento.

It was lunch time.

Scrumptious sandwiches with fresh vegetables, eggs and bacon, that was today’s lunch.

Speaking of the dark elves’ cuisine, their unique sauce was incredible. It tasted like mayonnaise and could even turn crumbly bread soft. And for people who still thought the bread was too tough, they could drink the warm vegetable soup from a large wooden bowl. The stock seemed to have been finely drawn from chicken bones, and it had a rich, savory taste. The vegetables had also thoroughly absorbed the fragrant aroma, and drinking it felt delightfully satisfying.

“No need to hold back, there’s more soup for everyone!”

As I finished, some teammates rushed over with their bowls. Milim came in first though, and looked like she really enjoyed the soup.

“It’s quite rare to have such delicious delicacies in the wilderness. Everyone must be very pleased about it,” Kagali-san said, but she sounded kind of salty.

She was probably implying that I shouldn’t get too ahead of myself like this. *I totally get her meaning, but please forgive my little trick this time.*

“I actually didn’t want you guys to start a fire here.”

“Fire you say?”

“Yes. I didn’t want there to accidentally be any fire hazard. Moreover, this is underground. Even though there is air flowing, I just want to be cautious.”

“I see that you have foreseen far ahead...”

“I wouldn’t mind if we are outdoors.”

I was genuine. In truth, this passage was narrow and had no water source. If anything were

to happen, we probably would have nowhere to run. That's why I had someone prepare bento.

Also, people would probably need to visit the toilet.

"Ah, I had suspected people would probably want to use the toilet. So, I'm going to open a 'Portal' that connects to the entrance. Everyone, please use the lunch break period to relieve yourself."

I quickly opened the 'Portal' after saying so.

I received a round of baffled stares shouting, "This is insane." But I couldn't just compromise because of that.

Seriously, I was sure they were planning to sneak off in the darker parts of the passageways and get their business done, but I didn't wish them to do so. After all, this was the road leading to a tomb, such sacrilege would just be too much.

"Maybe I'm overthinking it, perhaps the deceased won't mind it after all."

"...No, your way of thinking is admirable," Kagali-san agreed, which I was pleased to hear as well.

Right, as everyone went to take a toilet break—

"I want to try something, is it okay?"

"Try what? Please do tell."

"Nothing significant, but we are actually running a labyrinth, and right now the most popular strategy has been 'Spirit Communication.' It's a spell that only a shaman or spirit wielder can use, it allows you to find your desired path right away."

"Is there really magic that convenient?"

Oh, so even Kagali-san didn't know. Actually, it was probably normal that she didn't know anything outside her own specialty.

"U-uh, well! I am a shaman! Can you tell me in detail about this 'Spirit Communication'?"

Oh, wonderful timing.

I was going to say that it wouldn't seem appropriate if I did it myself, this was perfect. A female teammate volunteered herself, saying that she could use 'Spirit Magic.' I then explained 'Spirit Communication' to her.

"Ah, I see. I understand now!"

She was skilled in the attribute of 'Wind,' and her communication with the spirit was very successful.

"Woah, now we won't get lost! If we were to continue, we will meet a dead end, we should go back to the crossroads three blocks behind them on the way back and take a turn to the east. But it's gonna be a huge project to construct the map..."

That's true. The caster would be exhausted after hearing the voice of the spirit for a prolonged period of time, so it was better to draft a map.

In my case, Raphael-sensei would handle all that for me. It could print out the map and draft it almost as if it were using high-precision rendering software.

Eh, hold on?

“If that’s the case, I recall a magic that can print out the image in your brain onto paper.”

That’s right, there was magic like that. There was a spell book in the library called “Mischief Magic Illustrated,” a rather silly name.

«Report. Search complete—it is illusion magic ‘Sketch Thought.’»

That’s it!

I didn’t remember proper spells, but for some reason, I could memorize this type of spell instantly. A slime’s cells are very great, and its memory is a lot better. It’s almost the same as when I was human.

“Can anyone use ‘Illusion Magic’?”

“A—although I’m still an apprentice, I *am* a sorcerer!”

“Then can you try to learn this spell, also—”

Regarding the means of sharing information, making use of ‘Telepathy Net’ made things a lot easier. But for something that any average human could use, perhaps a spell would be more convenient. And it was then that—

«Proposal. The most suitable alternative would be illusion magic ‘Share Thought.’»

Oh oh, so you can do that.

I taught ‘Sketch Thought’ and ‘Share Thought’ to the young man who claimed himself to be a sorcerer. He put them to work and found that map making became incredibly simple.

“Woah, now we won’t get lost!”

“Perhaps we can even easily sketch the structure of the ruins using this magic!”

“Investigations from now on will be so much easier!”

Well, it’s great that my proposals were appreciated so much.

“We still won’t be able to detect traps or magic mechanisms with the map! So don’t get careless!”

While the teammates were cheering, Kagali-san scolded them and quieted them down.

She sure is something else.

Without the need of my reminder, she didn’t overlook the remaining risk.

We headed down for the gate leading to the lowest level that day.

And we reached our destination before dark.



Day three.

Today we started from the gate leading to the bottom floor.

We split up, with one group of people trying to decode the magic cast on the gate, and another group exploring the middle floor. I demonstrated how to do it yesterday, and today I would only be observing. Milim, Gobta and Ranga would join the exploration team.

“There’s nothing to do, Rimuru-sama.”

“How about making some tea for the people working.”

“Understood!”

Just as Shion said, there really was nothing to do. However, I sometimes got questions from the team, so I felt satisfied in a way.

Shion excitedly prepared the table and put down all the cups before pouring coffee into them from a magic flask.

I had many feelings witnessing this scene.

Not too long ago, I wouldn’t permit Shion to prepare any food.

“Here it is! Does anyone want to have a drink?”

Shion’s words set us into a short break.

Hot coffee was quite popular, we spent a short and peaceful time together. Despite how casual I looked, I was still on guard against any ambushes. Although there wasn’t any sign of that just yet.

I hope this is just me overthinking things.

However, now that I was no longer with Veldora, this would be the perfect opportunity for Mariabell and her conspirators to strike. I should remain vigilant and observe quietly.

I didn’t forget to keep an extra eye on Kagali-san and her team. I checked with my ‘Analyze and Assess’ and didn’t detect any suspicious individuals. Their abilities were just as they were told, they weren’t corrupted by ‘Desire’ either, therefore there was no sign of them being manipulated.

If one of these people were indeed brainwashed, then my eyes—or rather, the eyes of Wisdom King Raphael—must have been deceived.

But that’s highly unlikely to have happened.

However, it would be different if they were obeying willingly rather than having been brainwashed. There was that possibility as well, so I couldn’t be careless. Although I didn’t think they would pose much threat with their abilities.

Based on these considerations, I sipped on my coffee nonchalantly.

After some time, Milim came back with a bunch of stuff in hand.

“Rimuru, check this out! I’ve got so many trophies!”

To be more accurate, her hands were empty as she sat on Ranga. A couple members of the team as well as Gobta were forced to hold onto all sorts of items.

“See, all of these have a bunch of magicule. These alone should make us bank, right?”

Milim was right, most of her trophies were gear. This was already elite gear crafted by master smiths when they were first made. With the times they have endured, their magisteel has completely matured, making their quality skyrocket.

“Oh oh, it’s true. Even though they won’t be worth much as artwork, there are still many impressive weapons here.”

“Right? Check this out, this one is unique-grade!”

This stuff was for real. We couldn't just leave them lying around, these were highly valuable.

"Where did you find all these?" I asked Milim, as I was a bit confused. "There's no way Clayman would just leave this stuff laying around..."

"Actually, I accidentally triggered some traps and a bunch of golems came out. These guys had this gear on 'em."

Hold up, now I can't just ignore what she said.

"You triggered a trap?"

"UH! N-not like that! It was triggered as soon as I entered the hallway, even you wouldn't be able to evade that!"

"Right! We were using magic to investigate every hallway for traps. We definitely weren't being careless!"

According to Milim and Gobta's accounts, they did not slip up. The other teammates testified for them as well, so it was the truth. It looked like the location had stored some sort of response patterns of specific types of creatures. The trap would be triggered when anyone outside of the registered patterns entered. In that way, unless the visitors knew the wavelengths needed to pass beforehand, there was no way anyone could have decoded that. You could only fight your way through.

"Then that can't be helped. By the way, I didn't know there were such complex traps."

"Umm, that taught us a great lesson. We should set traps like these in our labyrinth as well." So only the registered individuals could pass through the hallway.

Perhaps this entire floor was used to battle against invaders of the tomb.

"In other words, it is reasonable to deduce that there are many other golems wearing unique-grade gear. I never expected that when left alone for so long, the weapons would be able to evolve, how surprising..."

Kagali-san was right.

Luckily, Milim and Gobta followed them, or the teammates might have been killed by the golems.

"Nothing happened yesterday, so I was rather reassured. But there may be other traps on this floor. However, don't panic just yet, from tomorrow onward, we need to be much more cautious in doing our work."

"You have a point. Analyzing this door seems to need more time, tomorrow—" Kagali-san was abruptly cut off as the earth suddenly began to shake. Including the ruins, the area suddenly experienced a huge energy reaction. Bits of stone were falling from the ceiling, which only added to the feeling of oppression and fear.

"What is happening—?!"

"Let's get out now, this place is gonna collapse!"

The teammates began to panic before Kagali-san scolded them loudly and told them to calm down.

"Quiet! The duration of the vibration was short, it was not an earthquake. A solid structure

like this wouldn't collapse so easily. Let's all stay calm and find a place for shelter.”

Her shout calmed them down. These teammates were pretty mature.

“What was that just now?” Gobta asked me in a calm voice.

“Uh—the shock wave seemed to come from the surface, and it was quite strong. The castle may have been affected as well...”

If anything were to happen, we still have ‘Portals’ to help us, so there’s no need to panic. Upon thinking so, I gave my answer to Gobta.

But, with that being said...

Kagali-san hit the nail on the head, it was not an earthquake. It was a local energy reaction, it must’ve been man-made. I was also concerned about the situation on the surface, to the point that I was considering whether I should take a look outside.

It was then that I had a certain intuition.

«Report. Hostile intent detected. The defense mechanisms within the ruins seemed to have been activated. It has been confirmed that multiple golems were on the move. In addition, someone was invading the ruins.»

The alarm bells were set off.

Some sort of mechanical voice suddenly began to blare.

“AMALITA HAS BEEN INFILTRATED. EXTERMINATE INVADERS! AMALITA HAS BEEN INFILTRATED, EXTERMINATE INVADERS!”

The repetition of the voice gave me nothing but a premonition of danger. The situation just went downhill real fast.

The surface also wouldn’t be safe, and the insides of the ruins were also in a state of emergency.

“How can this be! The entire ruins—all of Amalita’s defense mechanisms have been activated on their own?”

Now even Kagali-san was panicking, her calm demeanor just now disappeared.

“There seemed to be invaders. They must have triggered the traps. But, even if we stress that we weren’t the ones who triggered them, the golems won’t understand.”

I answered this way, yet I was starting to suspect Kagali-san. She was standing close to the door, could she have triggered the defensive mechanisms without my seeing?

Moreover, the timing seemed too good to be true. As soon as the invaders came, the alarm went off. This seemed calculated no matter how you see it.

“Milim, is there a problem?”

“No, I haven’t picked up anything yet.”

Secret conversations using ‘Telepathy Net’ or ‘Magic Communication’ would be picked up by Milim. So there was no use hiding it, yet there didn’t seem to be any reaction this time.

I was suspecting that Kagali-san was working with the invaders, looked like I was over-thinking things.

Then, is Kagali-san innocent?

«Answer. Cannot be determined. If ‘Soul Corridor’ is connected, they can utilize secret

channels of ‘Telepathy Net.’»

I see, so I still can't put my guard down.

I didn’t want to start fighting my enemies while in the company of a suspected spy... It’d be pretty convenient if they would abandon and leave us alone, but that wouldn’t be right.

“This is not looking good. The invaders were probably the same organization that got their eyes on us.”

“Ah ah, can’t believe they are real...”

“That earthquake must have been them—!”

“But they decided to target a demon lord, just how stupid can they be?”

Their reactions seemed genuine. There weren’t any suspicious teammates. *If that’s the case, I think I kinda get the picture now. Let’s protect everyone here and defeat the enemies.*

“Rest assured, I promise that I will protect every one of you guys.”

This surprised a couple of teammates. They probably thought that I would leave them to their death. I’d be hurt that way. We only just managed to become close, I hoped they would put more trust in me.

“Rimuru, is it just like what you expected?”

“Yes. Whether it is them taking the bait, or me, let’s find out.”

Just as Raphael-san had predicted, the enemies had been lured out by us. But how did they manage to get in—*I guess I’m not gonna ask about that.*

If they were hand-picked elites, it was probably a piece of cake sneaking past the dark elves on the surface and inside the castle and then getting into the ruins.

This time, let’s decide who’s the victor here.

I expected this to happen a long time ago. I had planned out the strategies in response, so there was no need to panic. We would be facing our enemies as planned.



The second shockwave hit.

“What is going on? I have a bad feeling about this.”

It seemed that even Gobta was mindful of what was going on outside as he raised his doubts.

But, right now, I didn’t have time to answer that. Because I saw it. A vicious dragon was closing in from the sky afar.

“Shit, that thing looks strong...”

It was difficult doing this from inside the ruins, but I managed to use my magicule to have ‘Magic Perception’ expand to the outer region. It was then that I saw this vicious dragon.

It looked a lot like Veldora, but its size was a lot bigger. Its skin had rotted and its enormous youki was leaking out.

It looked like it possessed a great amount of magicule. It may even far exceed that of an awokened demon lord, its danger level must have reached Catastrophe class.

“I-is that bad?”

“Yes, looks like it’s a dragon. But not just any greater dragon—it’s probably stronger than a dragon lord. Could that be Veldora’s brother...?”

“Y-you mean, Veldora-sama?”

It has already exceeded the size of a regular wyvern and could only be explained to be a True Dragon. However, it didn’t look like Veldora either. It had no sense of majesty or grace...

Actually, that idiot dragon had no grace or majesty, either. That’s not the point. I suppose the right thing to say is that they seemed different. They were similar but different at the same time.

“That’s—!” Milim suddenly went wide eyed.

“Rimuru, I’ve got something urgent to do. Th-that dragon is—”

As she finished, Milim stared at the sky and left with ‘Spatial Movement.’

Seeing how panicked she looked, I could sort of guess what had happened. The fact that she panicked meant things were dire. In other words, our enemy had brought out something incredible.

“Unbelievable, that seemed to be Milim’s friend, the dragon she sealed in the past. It wasn’t revived, but it seemed like someone had broken the seal and attempted to control it.”

“What! Is this true, Rimuru-sama?”

“Umm. I felt an incredibly strong shockwave. I don’t think even I have a chance of winning this.”

This was a fact. Not even Charybdis, who was born from the dregs of Veldora’s power, could compare to this. I was sensing a fearsome aura of hatred and spite. It probably wouldn’t stop until it destroyed the whole world.

Moreover, this emotion was under someone else’s control. In other words, this dragon’s emotion was being manipulated by Mariabell and it was her puppet.

“—Chaos Dragon, I never expected to see this tyrant in this day and age...”

Hearing Kagali-san’s mutter, I felt the same.

Thankfully, Milim was here. She should be able to defeat it and put the Chaos Dragon back to sleep. There was no need for me to worry here. I needed to handle what’s coming for me instead.

“Gobta, Shion, we’ve got company.”

“Understood!”

“Just leave it to me, these third-rate golems won’t stand a chance against me!”

I was planning to use a ‘Portal’ to let the teammates flee to the outside, but it looked like I wouldn’t have the time. We were huddled near the gate, and platoons of golems were marching towards us.

Shion lunged forward and swung her odachi.

The sad thing was, the ceiling was too low, and it got stuck.

“Idiot! You gotta check your surroundings carefully before engaging!”

“S-sorry! That was a slight miscalculation.”

This slight miscalculation could have cost someone’s life.

Shion was pierced by the lance of the golems, but she didn’t seem to have died from that. She must have slipped up because of her recklessness, hopefully she would be more careful next time.

“It’s gonna be difficult to fight in tight spaces like this. But we don’t know what’s ahead of us, perhaps the bottom floor will be quite spacious.”

“Then I’ll have someone undo the seal fast—”

“No, at this point, let me handle it.”

Sorry, I’ve got no time for this.

“Ranga, go and help those two.”

Gobta, Shion and Ranga—those three would buy some time while I tried to finish the work at hand.

The alarm was raised, and the traps were activated. Based on the hope of preserving the ruins, I didn’t want to be reckless. Yet in the end, I didn’t have to worry too much about the door as it opened up almost instantly.

“Come on, let’s get inside!”

The teammates followed my lead and quickly ran down the stairs. No one was in a panic and their evacuation was smooth. Kagali-san was the last in line. I protected her from the back and went down the stairs as well.

And so, everyone made it to the bottom floor.

The floor where the dead slumbered.

It did not quite look like a tomb, as a bright light filled the place. It was a large and spacious meadow. This serene scenery almost made me forget about our situation upon reaching it. I couldn’t help but be mesmerized.

But this was not the time to be amazed.

The next second, Gobta fell down the stairs. We began to battle against the golems that were coming after him.

However, the tables turned quickly. Now that Shion could move freely, she began to smash all the golems into pieces.

At this point, there wasn’t gonna be any mercy for anyone. If the opportunity presents itself, then we must crush our enemies. Surely, our opponents shared the same sentiment.

Provoking Milim—they were willing to take on such a risk in order to isolate me. I didn’t expect them to go to this length. Honestly, I might have underestimated Mariabell.

However, it’s not gonna happen again from now on.

«—Roger that. Converting to full battle mode.»

I calmly prepared myself. Removing all limits that I had layered onto myself, I prepared for the enemies coming our way.

Now we just had to wait for the mastermind to arrive.



There were hordes of golems, but the situation was looking good for us.

Shion had completely gone wild while Ranga provided support and disruptions. Gobta took the chance to use his gun to destroy the golems and even had plenty of time to reload.

It looked like they were all handling the fights quite well. The other teammates were relieved as well.

“About that, I’m really surprised that someone actually attacked. Who would be so daring as to launch an attack on the demon lord? And they even awakened that Chaos Dragon—“ Kagali-san asked me out of curiosity.

She seemed rather panicked and sounded quite worried. It’d be impressive if all of this were just an act, but I honestly had no idea about what was going on in her heart.

“Sorry to have dragged you guys into this matter.”

“There’s no such thing! Now that the Chaos Dragon has been revived, it is rather reassuring to have Rimuru-sama at our aid.”

“That’s right! We need to report this back to HQ as soon as possible so that they can figure out a solution.”

“But, if Demon Lord Milim were to be defeated, wouldn’t that leave us with no solution at all...”

“Rather than thinking about that, it’s more important to overcome the trouble brewing right before us! We have no idea who did this, but intentionally triggering the traps is terribly wicked.”

Some people brought up optimistic views, it seemed that they had adjusted their mood quite fast.

“Didn’t I just say that I’ll protect you all? That being said, I have to win first.”

To reassure the teammates, I intentionally joked about the situation.

We had Gobta, Ranga and Shion here. The strongest among the demon lords, Milim, also wouldn’t lose to the Chaos Dragon.

Our situation may not exactly look bright, but it was definitely not the worst. We were gonna defeat all of our enemies and clear the burdens at hand. Then we would have to worry about what came next. It was fairly simple.

Kagali-san probably was reassured as well after hearing my words, she hadn’t spoken much since.

I turned to Gobta and the others who were fighting while waiting for the people that were to arrive.

“—Rimuru-sama sure has a lot of enemies. Is it because you became a demon lord?” Kagali-

san suddenly said lightly.

I happened to be available while waiting for my enemies, so I answered casually, “I suppose so, not that I wanted any of them.”

“Why?”

“The Kingdom of Farmus pissed me off. Demon Lord Clayman played dirty and forced me to defend myself. Hinata the Saint had problems with me because of a misunderstanding. It’s always been someone else trying to pick a fight with me, that’s why I was willing to confront them. In a sense, they were justified self-defense.”

“I see. Then, has Rimuru-sama never actively set up a scheme?”

“Not exactly true. There was a conflict of interest between my opponents and me this time, after all. Our beliefs clashed, and it became a competition of who would strike first. That’s how things have developed to this point.”

“Can you resolve the conflict without violence—?”

“Perhaps. But, if the only way to win in this fight is to absorb your opponent, under the circumstances that my opponent doesn’t exactly want to be absorbed by me, I suppose this is the right call.”

Dwargon and Sarion—Tempest had forged an alliance with these two megastates, there was no reason why we would lose in an economic battle with the Western Nations.

If our enemies were to not do anything, I would surely expand my influence fully in terms of economy all over the Western Nations. Do not underestimate Wisdom King Raphael-san that trumps a quantum computer.

“—Eh? In other words, you thought that what your enemies were doing was the correct thing?”

Hmmm, I’m not so sure about that.

If we were to recognize the difference in our ideology and both take a step back, things may have worked if the both of us steered clear from each other’s business.

Our enemy had justifications, but so did I. I wanted to have control over my opponent, yet they did not wish to be controlled, so confrontation was the only solution. In some sense, economic warfare was far more horrifying than war fought with men. There was no concept of surrender. It wouldn’t stop until one of the players was absorbed.

That’s why I was lucky that they decided to use violence to confront me. In this way, they would admit defeat once they realized they had no chance of winning. Even though that was the only method left for our opponents, whether they were justified in doing so was another issue entirely.

“We have different stances, and so-called justice also has infinite forms. I can’t say that I am definitely the one in the right, but to quit here means that we will be at a disadvantage. That’s why all we can do is to fight our enemies with everything we have...”

Of course, we could also yield and beg for mercy.

Though, if I admitted defeat, all my companions would suffer.

“But you can still respect their perspective, exchange opinions and try to establish good

relationships. Wouldn't there be no need to be hostile against each other then?"

That was a difficult question to answer.

How should I put it—but before I could concern myself with the question, a young girl spoke up and answered it for me.

"No way, that wouldn't work. Man's desire is limitless and will not simply endure. Once your opponent decides to step back, you would obviously make more demands. That's simply human nature."

Yes. If we were to take a step back, our opponent would be understanding as well—I wish that were true, but that wasn't realistic in the slightest. If I were just a mere citizen of the world, perhaps I could look forward to a dream like that, perhaps I could've praised such idealism.

But—as the ruler, there was no way I could believe such a fairy tale.

It seemed that the head of our enemies thought the same as me.

"We seem to understand each other. I thought so too. I am Demon Lord Rimuru, and you are?"

"Nice to meet you. I am Mariabell, your enemy."

Almost in an instant, all of the golems were destroyed.

In front of me was the young girl that I had seen before during the nation founding festival. As I suspected, she was the enemy. And she was a lot bolder than I expected. I thought she would be more cunning and would stay off the frontline. It was rather amazing to see her leading the charge at the scene.

She wasn't alone, however. There were three more people around her.

Gai, with wounds all over his body, and another man in a knight uniform.

In addition, Yuuki Kagurazaka was by her side as well.

Kagali-san and her teammates were all shocked by his presence.

"P-President! What are you doing here?"

"Could...you be the one that's been trying to kill the demon lord?"

"This has gotta be a lie? If that's the case, why would he order us to investigate the ruins?"

They started chattering, yet Yuuki had no reaction. It was probably just like what Glenda said, he had been completely dominated.

"Yuuki-sama, what is going on? Are you betraying us?" Kagali-san's voice was filled with anger.

I thought that might have been genuine, but it didn't matter at this point. I just wanted to end this whole charade and go to support Milim. But we would have things to deal with before that.

"I thought so too. You are indeed my enemy. But, before we fight, is it okay for me to confirm something with you?" I looked at the blonde, young girl and asked.

The teammates were rather confused about my attitude, but none of them said a thing. At this point, they had all probably put their trust in me.

No, perhaps it was something else. Perhaps they were consumed by the eerie aura from the

young girl. She has soft blonde hair and pink lips. Her cheeks were smooth and energized, as cute as a doll. The young girl called Mariabell looks to be around ten years old. Yet her cruel personality truly contrasted her appearance.

“What do you wish to confirm?”

“Become my subject. Then we can avoid unnecessary conflicts.”

“Laughable, how laughable. That’s supposed to be my line. Demon Lord Rimuru, you will be defeated here. If you wish to avoid that fate, then let me dominate you.”

“Your policy is in direct contrast with mine and will result in unnecessary conflicts. Wouldn’t it lead to the suffering of many innocent people just so that a minority of people would keep their wealth?”

“Yes, I admit it. But then, so what? The weak deserves to be drained, that is only natural. Doesn’t might make right in the monster world?”

“I suppose, but I dislike that.”

“Foolish, how foolish. Do you believe in the idealistic view that all men are equal as well?”

“No, I’m not that foolish. But everyone deserves a chance. Some people may never excel in a certain craft, but that shouldn’t be the determination of one’s value.”

Some people would come to master things late, some possess talents that no one knows. Some people may hate work, but still display artistic talents. But with Mariabell’s logic, you would never have a chance to turn the table just because of your wealth. That I could not accept.

People are not born equal. That is only natural, perhaps even inheriting wealth from your parents can be considered as a talent. But you can’t therefore deny a whole population for that reason. If they are denied their chances to receive education, they would only be left to be exploited by other people. This would be the outcome of neglecting human possibilities.

To put it shortly, I found that to be regretful.

Human talents are capable of infinite possibilities. How could you give up on them like that.

However—

“Boring, how boring. I can’t believe a demon lord would be such a naive idealist, you are so incredibly foolish.”

My thoughts couldn’t reach Mariabell.

“Is that so? It can’t be helped. Then we should settle who’s right with simpler means.”

“My thoughts exactly. I’ll give you a reality check.”

Our discussion would never lead to a conclusion. From the very start, we could only reach a result with combat. On one hand, I felt the situation to be rather sad, but on the other hand, I approved of it.

Perhaps the day that all humans could understand each other would never come, but that does prove the diversity of humanity.

It’s the unavoidable conflict in evolution.

Only the winner’s claim is correct.

Mariabell and I, two opposing forms of justice, at that moment, went toe to toe.

*

“Go get him!”

On Mariabell’s order, Gai struck first. He charged ahead with a deranged look in his eyes. He probably hated me a lot. Could it be that he escaped after being taken away by the magical inquisitors?

“Hmph! Someone like you dare to challenge Rimuru-sama—“ Shion growled as she planned to disrupt Gai, but was blocked by Yuuki.

“Your opponent is me.”

“Oh, interesting, a weakling that is being controlled by that woman, you are not worthy of my time!” Shion shouted, her eyes reddened.

That meant she was getting serious. A strong aura of youki burst out of her as she raised her odachi. Then she began to combat Yuuki.

She would handle that for now, the problem was the other man. In my opinion, he was stronger than a Holy Knight. Gobta would handle him. Even though Ranga was still around, I still felt a bit uneasy.

“Gobta, it’s time to show them the prowess of the Four Heavenly Kings!” Shion exclaimed. I almost forgot that that character setting was a thing.

“Right!” Gobta replied. “Then I’m gonna use my hidden trump card!”

The next second, Gobta shouted “Transformation!”

Transformation—aka ‘Magic Wolf Transformation.’ Gobta and Ranga merged together, forming the handsome werewolf that had no element of Gobta left.

This should do it.

Unlike one month ago, Gobta seemed to have learned how to control his power. He was not being led by Ranga this time and was doing fine.

My guess was that their opponent was some tough enemy stronger than the ‘Ten Great Saints.’ But Gobta right now should be able to handle it. I was confident he would, and decided to focus on my enemy at hand.

Oh yeah, before that—

I concentrated my youki in my left hand and threw it at Gai. That hit alone obliterated Gai from this world.

Having been corrupted by Mariabell’s ‘Greed,’ his power seemed to have exceeded his actual ability. But to me, he was just some random guy in my way.

“You want to fight me? Fine, then I’ll give you what you want before you die.”

It was pretty cruel to say this to someone who was about to die. However, he needed to learn a lesson.

“Liar! What is this, what is this, how can there be power like this—!”

“What is what? This is who I am when I’m serious. You’ll be next. You should know what type of enemy you are fucking. I’m gonna devour you whole until you won’t be able to reincarnate. Just sit tight and be my food.”

This is what I called pre-battle etiquette.

I was already getting serious, so don’t expect me to show any mercy.

I had recognized Mariabell as my enemy.

And an enemy had to be eliminated. This was only natural.

I needed to take care of her fast and go reinforce Milim. That’s what I told myself as I took a step towards Mariabell.



Mariabell suddenly realized she was confronting one of the strongest people in this world, the Octagram.

“I get the feeling that Rimuru-sama is now quite terrifying.”

“Idiot, why are you so useless after becoming a Heavenly King. Listen now, Gobta. This is the true form of Demon Lord Rimuru-sama. Ah ah, to be able to witness such a handsome display, I am truly lucky!”

“I-is that so? I feel like the Rimuru-sama we see every day is the true him...”

“I’ll admit that Rimuru-sama is very beautiful in daily life. Hehe, speaking of which, even secretary number two, Diablo, is not fortunate enough to see Rimuru-sama now. He will probably feel very regretful. Hehehe, I can brag about this in front of him.”

Hearing this type of conversation, Mariabell only thought they sounded idiotic. But she didn’t have time for that. She had to focus on dealing with Rimuru in front of her.

This has gotta be a joke, this has to be. What happened during the council meeting should have been perceived as extremely rude to Demon Lord Rimuru. Yet somehow, he wasn’t that pissed off, and that’s why he was called ‘Mild.’ But that is woefully far from the truth.

Indeed, when a demon lord became serious, it was an opponent that even Mariabell couldn’t underestimate.

Mariabell had strengthened Gai to her fullest capabilities. He was stronger than third-rate majin. His abilities were already beyond that of humans. In fact, even demon lords such as Frey or Karion would fall into a hard battle against Gai. After all, Mariabell had burnt all of Gai’s remaining life force and soul to allow him to wield such incredible strength.

But alas—Demon Lord Rimuru sent Gai to hell with a flick of his hand, as if he were casually burning trash. That’s how unfathomably large the chasm in between their power levels was. This wasn’t an adult versus a child, their difference was like an elephant to an ant.

Mariabell’s soul possessed power greater than Gai’s. Having survived the reincarnation

across worlds, she had reached an abnormal state of being. Even so, Mariabell still thought the demon lord posed a significant threat.

That's why she had laid down her trump card long ago.

'Holy Purification Barrier'—the ultimate skill against monsters, the strongest 'Killing Barrier.' Mariabell had prepared meticulously and arranged 'Blood Shadows' hiding on the outskirts of the castle.

"Before you start bragging, you better know your weight. Know the difference between the intellect of a monster and a human!" She shouted at Rimuru.

At the same time, she gave the order through 'Magic Communication.'

"Eh! My body feels so heavy—"

"I remember this feeling. It's even stronger than back then, is this the true power of the barrier?"

The werewolf looked confused, while the oni laughed and commented arrogantly.

This just pisses me off—Mariabell gritted her teeth.

They were both worthy of the title "Heavenly King." These two were extremely powerful. The werewolf there—Gobta—seemed to be the one who almost attained championship during the tournament. Surely, the oni who had the same rank as him was also a majin that could not be underestimated.

There were also the majins that accompanied Demon Lord Rimuru during the council meeting.

This force is simply insane. If we were to confront all of them, we wouldn't stand a chance, even without Veldora's presence. But—

But now, things were different.

The demon lord was way too confident in his abilities. Under these circumstances, he had his guard down completely. *This will cost him his life.* Mariabell gave a light, smug smile.

Yet her thoughts were too naive.

"As suspected, I knew you would use this. That's why I've already made plans for that."

Demon Lord Rimuru smiled fearlessly.

A moment later, the 'Holy Purification Barrier' that was just activated, was gone.

"What! What did you do?"

"Seriously, do you imagine that I would just stroll around in the open like this with the note 'Come and attack me' stuck on my back? Of course I would have guards securing the surroundings of the castle. You were probably thinking about setting me up, just as we did. That's why I was the bait to lure you out. In order to control me, the user of 'Greed' herself must step out of the shadows," came the answer Rimuru gave to Mariabell.

It was at that point, Mariabell understood everything. She realized that the missing Glenda was not eliminated, but that she had betrayed her.

Yes, he is correct. It wasn't the demon lord who's overconfident, it was me...

Now that her trump card had been destroyed, the situation was dire.

Gai was dead.

Yuuki seemed to have the upper hand but could not take down the oni.

There was someone else, ex-'Martial Sage' Lamar just wanted to avenge Glenda, and he had fallen into a tough fight against werewolf Gobta.

Both were fortified by Mariabell's 'Greed,' but they were unable to win. This revealed a great deal about the abilities of their enemies. Given the circumstances, Mariabell was the only one who could change the situation. This young girl—almost as delicate as a doll—was about to show her true colors...

Mariabell was burning her 'soul' to push her abilities past their limits.

All for victory.

She couldn't change the fact that they had been set up, but this was still a favorable situation in her eyes. She wouldn't get a second chance like this. She was well aware of that, that's why Mariabell had no regrets.

"Then I shall show my true abilities. I'll gamble all I have and kill you!"

"Fine, I shall go all out as well."

As she finished, Mariabell charged ahead.

She stomped the ground and threw a mean kick at Rimuru. That kind of physical prowess wasn't that of a little girl. It was more ferocious than a cannonball, its power was enough to break a steel rod in two.

But it was nothing to Rimuru. He easily blocked the kick and sent his opponent flying away.

Mariabell supported herself on the ground and used the recoil to dodge instantly. She avoided Rimuru's next strike and returned the jab with her 'Greed.'

"Die! —'Death Wish'!—"

A wave of darkness rippled over Rimuru.

The desire to survive is every creature's instinct—reversing that instinct became Mariabell's ultimate technique. She has pushed her Unique Skill to the extreme with her own will.

That was Mariabell Rosso.

Her Unique skill was one of the Deadly Sin Skills that originated from humans' fundamental emotions. No one could resist this strengthened desire, Mariabell had every reason to win.

Indeed, the situation has forced me to do this. I didn't want to kill him, but this is not such a bad choice. It's more stupid to do nothing against a threat like this—

Mariabell wanted to dominate Rimuru, but an opponent of that caliber couldn't be conquered so simply with a naive thought like that. What Mariabell had decided to do, was to ensure her victory.

Demon Lord Rimuru was surrounded by the wave of darkness. He wasn't resisting, simply not moving while standing there.

"How disappointing. No matter how strong you are, you ultimately cannot throw away your desire to live. Then I am truly invincible."

In fact, Mariabell could indeed be called one of the strongest. She could probably even win against an awakened Clayman, Frey or Karion. Even Hinata the Saint could only yield before

Mariabell's Skill.

That was how strong Mariabell was.

All with her Unique Skill 'Greed.' With that being said—

"Sorry to disappoint you, the analysis has been complete. Your power won't be able to harm me."

Rimuru had long awoken his Ultimate Skill.

From that point onward, Mariabell had no chance of winning.

—Because even Mariabell's strongest Skill was but at the level of Unique—



Just as Raphael-san predicted, Mariabell had prepared a 'Holy Purification Barrier.' Granbell used to be the head of the Western Holy Church, we expected that she would inherit his technique. And it went as we predicted.

Even though it was almost scarily strong, it was right down my alley.

Because of it, Gabil, Hakurou, and Souka, who had been preparing for days, finally had a chance to act. They didn't have anything to do lately and it was difficult trying to comfort them.

What an occasion worthy of celebration—I felt very reassured upon thinking so.

By the way, this girl called Mariabell, she was strong, truly strong.

After exchanging blows with her, I experienced her strength firsthand. And when I was surrounded by that wave of darkness, I felt a shiver go down my spine. Even though I was not afraid of dying, the thought of any of my subordinates being hit by the same Skill did terrify me.

Anyone other than me would have died.

My guess was that Diablo probably would've been able to take it, actually, Shion may as well. But for people like Benimaru, they would, surely, have died. The best solution was probably to have them train their mental states—their 'souls.' I couldn't help but think so.

Following the proposal of Raphael-san, I conducted 'Analyze and Assess' and gave the ultimatum to Mariabell.

"Sorry to disappoint you, the analysis has been completed. Your power won't be able to harm me."

Even though she could control other people, I could leave her alive if she no longer troubled other people. I said that with these thoughts in mind.

This was definitely a notion that even I felt was naive, but this was a ten-year-old girl we are talking about here. Killing her would sow tremendous guilt in my heart. If she is willing to surrender, I would be very happy to oblige.

With that being said, I was straying further away from humanity more and more. So perhaps I could be a bit cold-blooded.

“—Quit joking around. This is not enough, not enough. Even if this were to cost everything I have, I am going to win here!”

Unfortunately, Mariabell did not want to listen to my words.

Our ideologies fundamentally opposed each other. I had seen this coming from the start, yet with how things had developed, I kind of felt sad.

Mariabell launched a series of attacks like a maniac.

But the sad thing was, she no longer posed any threat to me.

Since we couldn’t understand each other, there was no other way.

“I’ll send you on your way with no pain. Reflect a bit inside my body—”

As I said to Mariabell, I decided to activate ‘Soul Devouring’ of ‘Gluttonous King Beelzebuth.’

Yet at that instant—

“Clang!” I heard a loud noise just as I saw Shion being flung away. I turned to where the incident occurred subconsciously and realized it was Yuuki who sent Shion flying with a kick. Normally, Shion should have ‘Ultraspeed Regeneration,’ yet she was injured and was unable to get up.

There’s something wrong.

“Shion—!”

“ “AHAHAA-HAHAHAA!” ”

My shout was overshadowed by a wave of mad laughter. It was Mariabell—and Yuuki. The two started laughing almost simultaneously.

“Impressive, how impressive, Demon Lord Rimuru. I underestimated you, I saw you as so much less. I never expected you to be a monster like that...”

“Indeed. I didn’t expect you would have won against Mariabell. But don’t forget about me.”

Yuuki stood before me after defeating Shion.

Mariabell unleashed her dark wave onto Yuuki, his power seemed to have increased.

«Answer. Strength of Individual ‘Yuuki Kagurazaka’ has increased. Suspect individual ‘Mariabell Rosso’ has transferred her power through Unique Skill ‘Greed.’»

Just how many more trump cards does she have?

It was Yuuki this time.

He’s only under the control of ‘Greed,’ hopefully I can suppress him as opposed to killing him.

“Tsk, don’t blame me if you die.”

“That should be my line!”

After that quick exchange, both Yuuki and I struck. Our legs crossed in the process, both of us were sent flying away. It seemed to have happened before, both this time both of us were serious.

Yuuki was surprisingly strong. In terms of his physique, he may even be stronger than Mariabell. Shion was neutralized even before she could pull any of her techniques off, Yuuki

must be on a completely different level.

I wasn't planning to give him a pass, but right now, even a speedy victory may be problematic.

As I thought so, I began to confront Yuuki.

Interestingly enough—during the time we fought, Mariabell had some secret plan brewing.

Not good, this is not good. But I was too distracted fighting Yuuki now. Mariabell turned her back to us and began to run for the center of the tomb. I wanted to pursue her but was blocked by Yuuki.

Never mind.

Mariabell wouldn't be able to escape anyway. Now that I had full control over the wavelength of her soul, no matter where she ran to, I could find her.

As opposed to Mariabell, I was more concerned about dealing with Yuuki right now. After settling down with the idea, I turned my eyes back onto him.



In the corner of my eyes, Kagali-san and the other teammates were taking care of Shion. She was still conscious, but didn't seem able to stand up. She didn't look defeated, but could do nothing about the situation. To have forced Shion to such a state, Yuuki must've been strong. But I wasn't worried at all.

Just as Raphael-san had said, Unique Skills can't best Ultimate Skills. It's a matter of the strength of your 'soul.' In order to awaken strength greater than a Unique Skill, you seem to need the mental strength that corresponds to it. Against such a strong mental state, a Unique Skill appeared powerless.

That's why, in order to beat someone who had awakened their Ultimate Skill, you also required an Ultimate Skill. In other words, even if Mariabell transferred her strength to Yuuki, he wouldn't have been able to defeat me. Meaning, this is my win—but my confidence was quickly shattered in the next instant.

"Then I'm gonna show you my true strength."

After saying so, Yuuki unleashed a right spin kick. It was no different from the strike just now, so I calmly blocked it with my left arm.

The next second, everything below my left elbow was blown to pieces.

"—HUH?"

While feeling shocked, I backed off to make more distance. I looked at my hand in disbelief.

«Unexpected. 'Universal Barrier' of 'Covenant King Uriel' was destroyed. Deduce individual 'Yuuki Kagurazaka' has unusual attribute—'Anti-Skill.'»

Eh, hold on?

Does that mean that my ‘Absolute Defense’ won’t work on Yuuki.

No, more importantly, does that mean most of my attacks would be rendered ineffective?

«Correct. ‘Anti-Skill’ is a spiritual attribute and can shut down magic and Skills. Only techniques such as saint sword techniques may be effective.»

In other words, melt slash may work?

This was not some joke, my Ultimate Skill seemed to have been cracked. I probably wouldn’t have understood even if it were explained to me in detail. But I still knew that this was a difficult attribute to deal with.

“Didn’t you say that you don’t have any Unique Skill or special abilities?”

“I was honest. But didn’t I also tell you that my physical abilities are unusually advanced?”

I wanted to complain to him “What kind of joke was that.” He wasn’t lying, and it wouldn’t matter complaining to someone who had been controlled.

But then, what should I do now?

Yuuki’s attack worked on me, but my attack wouldn’t work on him. This was only going to waste more time, and with how things had turned out, I may not be able to keep him alive anymore.

But if possible, for the sake that we were both Japanese, I wanted to spare his life. It would be a different case if he were antagonizing us out of his own will, but it was just sad that he was being manipulated.

However—Yuuki was not an opponent that I could beat while pulling punches.

I pulled out my straight sword. I infused my youki into the dark blade.

“Oh...nice sword,” Yuuki said and pulled out a dagger from his belt using his right hand as well as a rather short single-edged sword using his left hand.

He began to dual wield, lowering his body to display a unique stance. This was not any style that I’d seen before, it was his original style.

Seeing Yuuki’s fighting style, I realized something. It was concerning that magic and Skills didn’t work on him, but Yuuki didn’t have ‘Physical Attack Nullification.’ Even though he had the special attribute of ‘Anti Skill,’ I could still harm him with the sword.

I get it now, no wonder why part of my Skills are still functional. When it comes to me, every strike I make is, in some capacity, affected by my Skills, that’s why I couldn’t harm him. Perhaps it would be more effective if I don’t apply any youki?

«No, insufficient information in that regard, no correct answer can be deduced.»

Got it, then let’s test it out here.

I stamped the ground and slashed at Yuuki. He blocked my sword with his left hand. His body sure was tough, he could follow my speed with ease. But I’d had some intense sword fights with Hinata as well. That has helped me improve my technique and boost my confidence.

I didn’t panic as I had long seen step two and three. Even though my Skills wouldn’t work on Yuuki, my ‘Future Attack Prediction’ was not affected. That was because Raphael-san was the one doing the calculations to predict Yuuki’s actions.

Yuuki’s left hand sword was mainly for defense, while the dagger in his right hand was for

attacking. Normally, it would be the other way around; I found it pretty strange how he wielded them.

Let's take a look at the weapons' quality now.

Both swords seemed to be crafted out of high density magisteel. The metal had experienced some evolution, and the status of the weapons also increased by orders of magnitude. These were rare weapons even among special-grade class. They may even be considered legendary-grade.

While dueling, I made an unexpected revelation.

«Report. ‘Anti-Skill’ does not apply to weapons.»

I didn't expect that Yuuki actually became weaker while wielding weapons. This was only known to me as well, so I supposed it was a blind spot for Yuuki.

Against his normal attacks, I had ‘Absolute Defense’ to protect me.

I intentionally let Yuuki hit me.

“Haha, Rimuru-san has gotten sloppy!”

I pretended that my balance was off and showed an opening. Yuuki struck at the opening. His dagger seemed special as well, it could extend or retract to disrupt my defense.

To Yuuki's eyes, that must have been a sneak attack. Nonetheless, all of this was part of my plan. His dagger was stopped midway as it was plunging at my heart.

I touched its blade to confirm that the dagger was imbued with a strong poison that could inflict great psychological damage. Had I been stabbed, even I would've been hurt.

But such an assumption was meaningless.

“This is it, what a waste! You were hurting me more fighting with your bare hand.”

“What the hell, this is bullshit—!” Yuuki's eyes widened as he shouted.

I had no obligation to listen to his complaints.

I launched the technique I just developed during the festival without saying a thing. That was the Storm Breaker—a technique based on Hinata's Melt Slash that combined magic and sword technique. The magic used was ‘Storm Magic’ from ‘Storm King Veldora.’ Speaking of Veldora's magic, as opposed to its direct damage, its prolonged effect was way scarier. The injured wound would start to decay and corrode the entire body.

The same went for Storm Breaker. This deadly sword technique could corrode my opponent's life force. However, likely due to his special attribute, Yuuki's wound didn't start to decay. His chest was slashed open, leaving a large gash, but it didn't seem lethal.

“Uhh...” Yuuki moaned as he glared at me.

I wanted to see what was really going on, but the dark fog around was disrupting my senses. He had been completely corrupted by Mariabell's ‘Greed.’ If I could remove it, I wouldn't have to kill him.

«Answer. Due to the disruption of ‘Anti-Skill,’ interference is impossible.»

That won't work.

This left me with no other choice.

“I am the victor. I really want to help you get out of Mariabell's control, but it seems I won't be able to manage that. I will have to do it the hard way, don't blame me.”

I'm going to severely wound him and knock him out. When Yuuki goes unconscious, I'll take care of Mariabell. If her influence disappears as a result, everyone gets to enjoy the happy ending. But if it doesn't, we'll see about that then.

I pointed my sword towards Yuuki. The sad thing was, I wouldn't be able to hurt him, even if I tried, using my bare hands, because it would be canceled by the power of 'Anti-Skill.'

I was calling this bullshit internally, but that was just Yuuki's specialty.

Using strength just shy of hitting my limit, I infused it in my sword. My goal was to hit him with the blunt edge. Luckily, this sword was very tough and wouldn't break easily. If I were to use too much force, I would chop Yuuki in two. It was difficult controlling my strength.

And so, I reversed the blade, turning the sharp edge toward me, and just as I was about to swing—

"H-have mercy!" Kagali-san suddenly shouted. "Please reconsider for a second and don't kill Yuuki-sama—"

I turned to her and realized that she had, in fact, stood up and rushed to Yuuki's side.

"Oi, that's dangerous! Yuuki's being controlled by Mariabell!"

"I-it's okay! Yuuki-sama has an extremely firm will, his mental strength wouldn't be so easily defeated by that little girl!"

Ignoring my advice, Kagali-san held onto Yuuki tightly.

In addition to her, there were also the members of the investigation group following Kagali-san.

"Right, that's right! President's not that weak!"

"Indeed! He's always rebellious and would never show weakness to anyone."

"Just to act tough in front of us, he would go slay a dragon by himself!"

Looks like Yuuki's really admired.

With all these people protecting him, I ended up becoming the villain. No, I wanted to do the same had it been an option to resolve the ordeal without killing him. But right now, there was no time for something so naive, it was best that I'd choose the most appropriate approach under these circumstances.

Look at me, guys, my blade is already reversed!

I wanted to see this clearly as I glanced towards Kagali-san and the others. They ran behind Yuuki and began to talk to him. *If doing that could remove Mariabell's influence, what do you think I've been trying to do all this time?*

But to my surprise—

"I don't want to kill him either, but right now—"

I was about to say this to remind them not to get in my way.

It was then that—

"Y-you guys..."

Yuuki began to mumble and showed a pained expression.

«Report. Individual 'Yuuki Kagurazaka' is confirmed to show signs of change. Mental influence of 'Greed' seems to have been removed»

...Eh?

Are you serious? It just happened out of nowhere, and at such a timing, no less?

I was not entirely convinced, though Yuuki's killing intent did seem to have disappeared.
Is this real? Although I thought so to myself, I could only accept this result.



Since Yuuki had returned to normal, the only remaining foes were Mariabell and the Chaos Dragon.

"I seem to have been a burden, I'm so sorry. But I've been saved, Rimuru-san!"

"Uh, right. It's great that you're okay..."

I definitely did not have the idea that you shouldn't blame me even if you had died—that was my message to Yuuki.

"Oi, Gobta! Finish things up already!"

I channeled my anger towards Gobta and successfully changed the topic.

And so, we quickly finished the battle here.

Shion was all right. Yuuki's 'Anti-Skill' was not permanent. After some time, she was revived by her 'Ultraspeed Regeneration.'

She was still glaring at Yuuki angrily before I comforted her.

"How embarrassing, my skills were still not there yet..."

Shion was very frustrated after throwing a tantrum.

I tried to comfort her again saying "There're plenty of chances in the future."

I turned to Gobta.

"I told him that Glenda-san is still alive, but this guy just won't listen..."

He looked exhausted. Against a Gobta who had fully unleashed his potential with Ranga's strength, Lamar was no match for him. With Gobta's fighting style and Ranga's superb instincts, the two worked well to support each other. Werewolf Gobta was truly strong.

Ranga's consciousness didn't disappear either, it was focused on surveying the surroundings. Learning about their different roles in a fight, it was kind of like the relationship between me and Raphael-san.

No wonder they were so strong.

The reason why Gobta fell into a tough fight was because he discovered his opponent Lamar was committed to avenging Glenda. Gobta's kindhearted nature prevented him from killing him.

I asked Raphael-san to help shut down Lamar's mental interference. He had overused the strength of his soul, but he wasn't in any critical condition. He had come back to his senses and seemed relieved to learn Glenda was all right.

That's one less thing to deal with—unfortunately our situation was no less dire in the slightest.

Now wasn't the time to rest. The violent earthquake continued, indicating that Milim was unable to seal the Chaos Dragon. I needed to hurry and back her up.

"Rimuru-san, I want to chase after Mariabell," Yuuki announced, despite still being wounded... *Eh, hold on, when did his wounds heal?*

"Your wounds are all healed?"

"Ah, well, Kagali knows healing magic."

Eh? And he said that so casually?

"Hmm, doesn't magic not work on you..."

"Oh, it's not a problem. I can turn off that attribute with my own will."

"..."

I was pretty baffled. Yuuki even replied with a bright smile, that's just cheating.

When Hinata mentioned that she possessed a special attribute that would purify magicule, even she said she couldn't switch it off herself. And somehow the much more problematic 'Anti-Skill' could be switched on and off by his own will...

That's some bullshit right there.

Never mind, it doesn't matter for now. Let's see what Yuuki has to propose.

"Do you have the slightest winning chance?"

"I will easily win if I am careful enough. Even though she has been controlling me, my pride would not allow such a thing to happen."

"Rimuru-sama, I have a request for you as well. Mariabell is likely contemplating destroying this ruin. The ruins of 'Soma' that I investigated were suspected to have some sort of a magic engine device that powered the city. This city is very similar to the structure of that. If the device were to be overloaded, it may decimate everything in the surrounding area."

"...Are you suggesting that Mariabell knows how to overload the device?"

"You only need to inject too much mana into it, and the device would overload. Moreover, it being located within a ruin that hasn't been utilized for thousands of years, god knows what type of reaction it would provoke..."

Even though I was not sure whether such an artifact existed or not, it would be bad if her guess were right.

"Do you know about its structure?"

"I have done a thorough investigation at 'Soma.' If there really were to be an issue, I can prevent it!"

This beauty's serious expression sure has some tenacity in it.

I didn't agree because of her beauty, but her tenacity.

"Then I'll let you handle it. Yuuki, I'll be counting on you!"

"Very well. I shall return that dishonor several times over."

What an attitude, Yuuki sure is confident.

And so, the matter of chasing Mariabell was handed to Yuuki and Kagali.

“Shion, Gobta, lead the team and meet up with the dark elves. Protect them on the way!”

“Understood!”

“What about Rimuru-sama?”

“I’m going to reinforce Milim. If I’m not fast enough, we may all end up being attacked by the Chaos Dragon.”

Milim was trying her best to suppress the dragon, but even a stray shot from it would be devastating. There was no time to rest, I needed to decide what to do and get to work.

“Then I’m going too!”

“No, even though your flesh wound has healed, your internal wounds have not. Don’t follow me, please protect everyone else!”

“Uh, understood...”

Even though Shion was unwilling, she accepted.

Yuuki and Kagali-san departed immediately to chase after Mariabell who fled to the center of the tomb.

After entrusting the other matters to Gobta and Shion, I left to support Milim.



Mariabell was on the run. However, she had not given up on achieving victory. She would not allow her plan to fail now that she had unleashed her last trump card, ‘The Sealed Chaos Dragon.’ She still had one more option.

Deep inside the tomb—at the heart of the ancient elven capital—there lay the fruit of the old world’s magic technology. She has heard of this and planned to overload the device in order to kill Rimuru.

This is the way to defeat that monster. My strongest pawn Yuuki will win me some time. I will use this time to find the magic core and overload it—

Yuuki’s report included information about the ancient ruins ‘Soma.’ She heard that ‘Amalita’ was also an ancient city built by this race. If their structure was similar, even Mariabell could operate the device with ease.

By destabilizing the central control of the magic reactor core, it would cause a large-scale magic destruction. Right now, Rimuru was focused on fighting Yuuki, detonating the device would kill Rimuru. He wouldn’t have a chance to resist.

It will be a surprise attack, one that’s powerful enough to take down even Demon Lord Rimuru—Mariabell thought to herself.

She arrived at the center of the tomb. Yet there was no device mentioned in the report. Moreover, the entire place was empty. The graves were empty, and there weren't even any decorations or jewels. Actually, there was some treasure lying around, but the real valuables—the magic gear—were all missing.

“Strange, how strange. H-how is this possible—?” she couldn’t help but ask.

There’s no one who can answer that—or so she thought.

“Ahahaha! There was never such a thing as a central control of the magic engine reactor in this ruin.”

“—UH!”

“By the way, neither was there anything like that in ‘Soma.’”

“…Yuuki, is that you?”

“Yep, it’s me,” someone replied to Mariabell’s call. There was no doubt about it, it was Yuuki.

He casually presented himself with Kagali by his side.

“Aren’t you fighting Demon Lord Rimuru—?”

“We are done fighting. I was fighting him seriously but couldn’t win. While Rimuru-san was still holding back there, I wasn’t. If I had had a chance, I would have wanted to beat him there.”

“I was almost sweating watching it happen. I was seriously worried that you had really betrayed us.”

“Ahaha, sorry, sorry. I figured that it would be more authentic if I had tricked you as well. Although I trusted that you would have seen through my act instantly.”

“I suppose, it doesn’t matter now. The result was probably the most ideal. If that was Yuuki-sama’s original plan, I have nothing else to say.”

Yuuki chatted with Kagali happily.

Seeing this, Mariabell finally realized that she had been deceived by Yuuki.

“You are lying, this is not real. But… Yuuki, did you crack my power?”

It was unbelievable, but Mariabell could only accept this reality. At this point, she was more interested as to how and when Yuuki found a way to overcome the ‘Greed’ of the ‘Greed.’

“—How did you overcome ‘Greed’?”

“Are you that curious?”

“Get to the point, answer my question!”

“Hehe, okay then. I’ll tell you.”

Yuuki looked at Mariabell sympathetically before demonstrating the answer before her.

His emotion had been extremely pure just now, yet suddenly it was clouded by a layer of dark fog—that’s what Mariabell saw.



“How can this be... This can’t be true, can’t be...”

“Ahahahaha! Are you really that surprised? Unfortunately, that’s the reality. The answer is that I cracked it from the very beginning. I’ve been pretending to be under your control the entire time. How about that, wasn’t my acting Oscar-worthy?” Yuuki laughed smugly.

In contrast, Mariabell didn’t look so good.

“How is this possible, my ‘Greed’ is...that’s the strongest power originating from human emotions—”

Mumbling, Mariabell tried her hardest to make sense of the situation.

Yuuki’s laughter didn’t fade, even as he concluded, “Your desire was pretty strong, BUT, too bad that my ‘Greed’ was stronger. My ambition is to become the king of this world and have it as my plaything. I didn’t even need to use my ‘Anti-Skill’ to crack your pathetic ‘Greed.’”

Yuuki’s laughter wasn’t diminishing as he concluded.

To Mariabell, that was her death sentence.

“Don’t you look down on me now! I am Mariabell. Mariabell of ‘Greed.’ People like you are no match for me!” Mariabell shouted as she began to drain all of her soul’s energy to attack Yuuki.

Greed Flare—a destructive physical force formed from her strong will struck at Yuuki.

However, it did nothing to him. Yuuki took Mariabell’s attack head-on. He mocked her as the dark fog created by the wave dissipated.

“It’s useless, you can’t win against me.”

The next second—

“Cough!”

He pierced through Mariabell’s heart with his hand.

It was not over yet, however. Mariabell’s power began to leak out and Yuuki started to absorb it.

“Uhh, guha... Could it be...that...you want my power...”

“Bingo.”

“H-how... How is that...possible...?”

The light in Mariabell’s eyes began to fade. Her hand that held onto Yuuki’s wrist lost strength as well.

“Had you been born ten years earlier in this world, perhaps you would already be dominating it. But you were unlucky. Your young body could not use your skill to its full potential, could it?”

“...”

Mariabell did not answer. She looked troubled, and simply stared at Yuuki. And then—

The last shred of light in Mariabell’s soul faded and died out.

This is the truth of this world—the weak are doomed to be defeated.

“Didn’t you say it yourself, that my ambition is too large. Goodnight, Mariabell. I’ll make good use of your greed—”

Mariabell could no longer hear Yuuki’s words.

And so, Mariabell's second life in this era of unrest came to an end.



After handing the rest of the matter to Shion and the others, I headed out to reinforce Milim.

Right now, I was gazing at the Chaos Dragon.

It was huge, to the point of excessive. By my estimate it was about one hundred meters long. Its gigantic body could even outmatch Charybdis. It was a shocking sight. It also looked like it was consuming the magicule in its surroundings and gradually gaining in size.

It could decimate a mountain with a single breath. It was some tyrant, indeed.

With a monster such as this as our opponent, even we would have to surrender.

However, Milim was different. She used her ultra-large pool of magicule to restrain the Chaos Dragon and prevent it from attacking.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting, Milim!”

“There you are, Rimuru. I've been waiting for you! This is really frustrating for me, because this here is my friend. I was trying to seal him but couldn't do it. If this were to continue it will result in casualties... But I also can't kill my friend!” Milim shouted, sounding upset.

Unlike Charybdis, the Chaos Dragon was one of Milim's valued friends. It was only natural that she didn't want to kill it... Moreover, the Dragon was too large. Even with Milim's power, sealing it had proven difficult.

It was easy to achieve victory, but Milim couldn't bring herself to kill her friend.

I could understand her feelings. I like this Milim.

Which was why I gave her a big smile and told her to rest assured.

“It's all right, I've got a plan!”

“How reliable! What should I do then?”

Milim faced me with shining eyes. She trusted me a lot, even under a lot of stress.

Don't panic, me.

I continued to put on a confident air and explained my plan to Milim.

“Listen to me now, no matter how large a monster is, it must have a ‘Core.’ Why don't you use your precision attacks to knock out the rest of its body until only the core is left?”

It was just like when we tried to save Phobio who was possessed by Charybdis. Milim should be able to avoid attacking the Chaos Dragon's soul.

The astral body and spiritual body that were responsible for protecting the Chaos Dragon's soul had been completely corrupted. Actually, it was the opposite case. It was because of the damage both bodies had suffered that led to it being corrupted by hatred to this extent.

On top of that, with the corruption of Mariabell's ‘Greed,’ it was incurable.

But perhaps, it was possible to preserve its soul alone.

It used to be Milim's friend, and it could be seen, even if it was just a tiny bit, that its core was fighting hard so that it wouldn't diminish the remaining light in it.

"B-but...it has become so powerful; I probably won't be able to penetrate it without applying enough strength. I may accidentally destroy it completely..."

"Didn't you learn how to control your strength before? Your friend is trying very hard, so you should show the same courage as well!"

I wasn't going to let her find any excuses now.

The most important thing here was courage. If we fail—if we were to have such a notion in mind—what could have been a success, would fail anyway.

"I will assist you. Just follow my instructions and concentrate on unleashing the full force of your magic!"

I was playing cool when I said that I had a plan, but there actually wasn't any. It would all hinge on Milim just toughing it out.

But this was not her first try. I had witnessed her doing it once before and it was very successful. The scale this time was different, but it's the same thing.

"Okay. I have faith in you, Rimuru!"

"Right, just count on me!" I acted all confident.

This would have a huge impact on everyone's mood. The thought of failure alone was extremely scary. But there was no other way. Only I could do this.

I'll be counting on you, Raphael!

«Understood. Leave it to me, my master!»²⁰

I always pushed my responsibilities to other people and was pretty powerless in this situation. Now I really gotta put on an act.

Don't be afraid of failure. Everything will be fine. I tried to convince myself.

"It's all right, last time you were successful almost immediately. This time will be the same! Let's go Milim!"

"Yeah! You are right, then here I go, my friend. Watch carefully now, behold the brightness of all the stars in the galaxy! Drago Bustaaa!"

A blinding light was shot out. It felt as if my brain would be burnt to ash even if I closed my eyes.

Milim unleashed a gigantic swirl of power and it went straight at the Chaos Dragon.

Its unknown power formed a barrier that impacted Milim's lightning.

The two powers began to clash.

I analyzed the wave of energy and found the source of the Chaos Dragon's power. I was doing this simultaneously while Raphael-san's analysis helped Milim control her power.

It was so heavy. The power was so heavy. I could tell that my magicles were going down. With this much energy input, the Chaos Dragon still didn't seem to have weakened. What a tough foe. I was almost losing hope, but if we gave up here, everything would go south. All my

²⁰Ruby text: YES MY LORD (never change Fuse)

planning had been for times like these. I believed this deeply and gave it all I had.

On one hand, I tried to calm myself down, and on the other, I slowly tried to get rid of the evil spirit trapping the Chaos Dragon.

The entire process lasted around one second...

However, the heavy, oppressive aura I felt in that one instant seemed to last an eternity.

I see it!

The uncontaminated core of the Chaos Dragon. It was still glowing with a dim light.

I can't just rest yet.

There was a black fog formed by ‘Greed’ and an evil spirit of hatred. Even if I extracted all of those, it might still cause some mental corruption later. I had to proceed with extreme caution.

The operation continued.

All of a sudden, the black fog disappeared. Yuuki must have defeated Mariabell!

“Okay, now we have a chance!”

I'll use this to win.

I activated ‘Gluttonous King Beelzebuth.’

“Milim, let’s take this chance to get it done, can you increase your input?”

“Just leave it to me! Raaah, Drago Nova!”

Following my instruction, Milim began to show her true abilities.

This, once again, made me realize just how strong Milim was. How was it possible for her to put in even more power at that point? The fact that she could casually pull off ultimate techniques like these showed that she was on a different level to me.

Ahh, no no. This is no time to get all impressed.

“Okay, Chaos Dragon. We will set you free now,” I muttered, beginning the final step.

Timing was key.

The spiritual body of the Chaos Dragon had leaked out, and Milim’s magic had destroyed it, along with its astral body.

I witnessed all that, and before Milim crushed its core, I needed to execute ‘Devour Soul.’

Ignoring time and space, ‘Gluttonous King Beelzebuth’ was activated.

As long as I could see, it would finish the job faster than Milim’s magic.

And, my plan worked. I successfully obtained the Chaos Dragon’s broken core.

As the ‘core’ that managed its enormous magicle content disappeared, the Chaos Dragon began to collapse.

But that was precisely the issue.

“R-Rimuru, this is bad! It’s going to explode!”

Seeing my signal, Milim stopped her magic. But there was still a gigantic energy field that was powerful enough to warp space left.

The clashing power’s collisions had created a super dense energy cluster. It would start to

destabilize soon. Sooner or later, it'd cause a huge explosion. Even Milim wouldn't be able to deflect it.

She looked at me anxiously.

But I was not panicking at all. According to Raphael's calculation, I should be able to manage things.

“Don’t worry, I’ll figure something out!”

“Do you really have a plan?”

Milim was quite shocked.

Her admiring glances were very satisfying, but if I messed this up it would be truly embarrassing—but let’s not talk about that possibility now.

It’s gonna be all right, no, Raphael-sensei? I accidentally asked internally. *Will it get angry at me?*

«No, there is no problem.»

As usual, sensei replied calmly. It seemed that it had gone all out as well, how very reassuring.

I gave a smile and set my eyes on what used to be the Chaos Dragon. Nothing but a carcass was left. So, there was no need to hold back.

“Devour it all, Gluttonous King Beelzebuth!”

Considering how large the energy cluster is, can it really consume it all?

Beelzebuth began to show its strength, devouring my worries as well. It far exceeded my expectations and ate the thing whole. It’s as if nothing had happened.

“Is it over...?”

“No, not yet, we still need to try and save your friend.”

“Eh? Can we really save it?”

“Yes. I’ve prepared just the thing for this type of situation!”

That’s totally a lie!

I took out an Emulated Soul.

“...?”

Ignoring a confused Milim, I concentrated my will.

Theoretically, it will work. Indeed, Raphael-san can guarantee that. I just need to put my faith in it. Straightening my back, I had faith that it would be successful as I began to work.

I needed to pick up every single shred of its broken core and put them in the Emulated Soul. Before that, I utilized my ‘Devour Soul’ to combine the shreds. It was easier than I had imagined.

The problem was afterward.

Whether the core could safely possess the Emulated Soul...

It wasn’t reacting.

I was losing my cool. Even though I looked calm, I was trying my hardest to resolve the matter.

What should I do now?

A cliché in many fictions suddenly crossed my mind.

“Milim, does the Chaos Dragon have a name?”

“You mean...a name? That’s—”

It didn’t? Shit, I gotta stay calm and figure out something else then...

“It’s called Gaia! I thought of that long ago and was going to name it one day. Its ‘name’ is Gaia!”

So it did have one. That was reassuring. I whispered the name ‘Gaia.’ That was a pretty good name.

Your name is Gaia.

Why don’t you wake up before your friend starts crying.

Finally, the Emulated Soul began to glow lightly.

It succeeded. The soul now had a core. I used a Master Core to cover Gaia’s Emulated Soul. And there, the Avatar Core was completed. And my work here was finally done.

At this point, time would resolve everything. When the wounds on Gaia’s core healed, it would be revived in its ideal form. Gaia wasn’t using an avatar; this was its actual body. It would morph into a brand-new monster and be reborn in front of Milim.

“It worked, Milim. This is a brand-new Gaia. It hasn’t been born yet, it’s like an egg.”

I finished as I handed the Avatar Core to Milim.

“Hmm, hmm! I know everything will work out if I leave it to you. I have confidence in you, Rimuru. Thank you, thank you!”

It was great to see how happy she was. Luckily, I didn’t fail this time.

But more importantly, I could see Milim’s happy smile. It made me happy too.

“Let’s head back. Surely, everyone is worried.”

“Yeah! I’m gonna tell everyone about my epic battle!”

Yeah yeah.

That being said, thank god Milim was here.

This was not something I could have handled.

The castle emerged on the horizon. I could see all my companions. They were all waiting eagerly, and I was glad that everyone was all right.

Now the issue had been resolved.

I really wanted to go back and relax a bit.

Take a shower and have a cup of beer.

Filled with joy, Milim and I returned to our party.



Epilogue

**The Final
Winner**

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

Epilogue

The Final Winner

Yuuki had obtained Mariabell's power.

"I wish you'd told us this from the start."

"Hahaha, didn't I already tell you that it wasn't possible? It was thanks to my method that even Mariabell was caught in the loop."

"But it was awfully tiring for me to keep all my subordinates away!"

While Yuuki was fighting Rimuru, in order to preserve the secret of Yuuki's power, Kagali had tried to draw the attention of her crew. She was afraid that Rimuru would see through her act if she did anything suspicious, so she had been very careful.

Getting seen through by others wouldn't even pose any problems, in Yuuki's personal opinion. Even if his enemies found out about his ability to nullify Skills, they still wouldn't be able to counter it easily. It was an ace in the hole for Yuuki, but definitely not his trump card.

"I did that because I had faith in you. We managed to pull through successfully anyway, so just quit complaining."

"You seem to have robbed Mariabell of her power, was that part of your plan as well?"

"Yes, I mean, sort of. The Deadly Sins are the strongest Skills among the Unique Skills. That's why I always wanted one. I heard that the amount of 'Desire' one has is what fuels the power of 'Greed,' therefore I would be the better owner of it. And that's how things went."

"You can be really absurd sometimes. Normal people can't just rob other people's Skills, you know?!"

"Probably. But this time it was the 'Greed' that chose me. With that being said, I still can't win against that Demon Lord Rimuru with it."

"—You have a point. That demon lord was beyond common sense."

"Seriously. But now, we can put the blame onto Mariabell for all our evil deeds. I get to walk free of any suspicion. For now, we'll have to quiet down, but we'll have more fun, nonetheless."

"Given how things have developed, rushing it wouldn't help. That demon lord really was meticulous, to the point of it being disgusting. I've got quite a lot of complaints about our plan

this time, but I suppose I'll have to accept it."

Kagali's complaint was mainly towards the destruction of the tomb.

Yuuki explained to Rimuru that Mariabell committed suicide by turning on the engine reactor. He wanted to destroy the evidence. The explosion only covered the lowest level, and the damage was less severe than expected—that was Yuuki's explanation.

The truth was that he detonated a pre-placed magic bomb, but he twisted the narrative by saying: "The explosion was smaller because the residual energy within the engine reactor was relatively low." In order to make himself more believable, he had even scattered scraps of the actual engine reactor. No matter how their opponents were to question them, Yuuki was ready to lie until the end.

This was what Kagali had a problem with.

"Didn't you plan to abandon the place anyway? Don't think about it too much," Yuuki reassured.

To Kagali, it was the city that she had lived in for a long time. After she had handled everything, she planned to turn it back into a lively city, like it was in the past. Yet now the most important part, the tomb, was gone. No wonder why she was upset.

"—That's not true. This was still like our second home," Kagali shrugged, which Yuuki met with a bitter smile.

"You have a point. But thanks to this, we have profited, nonetheless. Getting my name cleared was our goal in the first place. Moreover, we learnt that the 'Blood Shadows' sent by Mariabell were capable of 'Holy Magic.' That's a major breakthrough."

"Indeed. I noticed it too. The reason behind the Council's connection to the Western Holy Church was due to the secret true identity of the head of the Council of Five Elders."

"That's right. It was covered on the news as well. It was quite the hot topic for a while, as a matter of fact—the civil war of Farmus caused the reputation of the champions to go downhill. It also heavily reduced the influence of the Council on the Western Holy Church. This also points to another fact! Mariabell's great-grandfather, Granbell Rosso, was probably one of the Seven Luminous Clerics."

"I see... As expected from Yuuki-sama, such sharp observation."

Kagali had keen observation as well. Yuuki's deduction was, in a sense, the same as what she'd been suspecting. Therefore, she could now confirm the matter.

Yuuki then looked at Kagali with an evil smile on his face. "I suppose, I can still handle this level of deduction. Compared to that, I found something of even greater significance, do you know what it is?"

He looked at Kagali as he finished, seemingly observing her reaction. Kagali only knew so much information, so she raised her hands as if saying, "I give up."

"I was trying to figure out Mariabell's operation this time. She was acting particularly hastily, wasn't she? Even if she had killed Demon Lord Rimuru, Veldora might've come out to rain chaos. Manipulating the Chaos Dragon would also enrage Demon Lord Milim. Weren't you nervous as well? You were afraid that Milim would have seen through your disguise, right?"

I thought that she was being too reckless to have pitched herself against such a dangerous demon lord, as well as a True Dragon.”

“Now that you’ve laid it out, it does sound a little...”

“There was no way that Mariabell could have overlooked such risks. By her logic, every outcome should have had its solution planned out. Then, what would be the solution in this case?” Yuuki looked straight at Kagali as he asked. He didn’t actually have an answer, but instead was merely trying to organize his thoughts with the question raised.

“You’re right... My guess is that perhaps she was already certain that her own safety was ensured?”

“There’s that, but I don’t think that’s all.”

“Perhaps she realized she had to make a sacrifice, and steeled her resolve to give up the minimum amount? She seemed to be afraid of Demon Lord Rimuru’s rise to power. Perhaps it would make sense for her to suffer some losses at this stage, in order to benefit in the long term...”

Hearing this, Yuuki nodded with a “Hmm.”

“Well, in my opinion, there’s no way that she would have resorted to those tactics had she not known how much sacrifice was required. It was most likely the opposite. If you could predict what level of damage your actions would cause, you would probably be able to tell the cost and benefit of your actions immediately.”

“—And that would mean?”

“Even if Veldora and Milim were to lose control, Mariabell had a way to deal with both—I have sufficient evidence to back up that claim.”

“...”

“And what would that be?”

“Is it Granbell—?”

“No.” At this point, Yuuki had already found the answer. A smile emerged on his face as he looked at Kagali. “Who fought against Laplace at the Holy Land?”

“Demon Lord Valentine—AH!”

Seeing Kagali’s reaction, Yuuki’s smile widened with satisfaction.

“Indeed. Demon Lord Valentine is already dead, yet among the Octagram, there’s another Valentine. Surely, the real demon lord is stronger than the fake one.”

“Even the deceased Valentine could stand toe-to-toe with me during my prime... That would mean...”

“The real deal is much stronger! In addition, I am certain that the demon lord’s base is within the church—”

“Are you saying that Demon Lord Valentine is also the god Luminas? No way, how can that be...?”

“It *can* be, and most likely is the case,” Yuuki said with certainty as Kagali also realized the truth.

“I see, that would explain... For someone like Granbell, it wouldn’t be strange if he had

known the truth.”

“You are correct. Mariabell was in on it as well. It was precisely because she knew that when she had made the judgement, believing that the god Luminas would be there to protect the Western Nations.”

With Yuuki’s explanation, all of this made sense.

Kagali could only accept it. There was no room for her to argue.

“If that’s the case, we need to design a new strategy.”

“Right. But first, we will temporarily move our base of operations to ‘The East.’”

“Hehehe, you sure are a scary guy. Talking about keeping things quiet while also running around so energetically.”

“That’s only natural, since I’m gonna be the ruler of this world. Didn’t I promise you guys already? I’m gonna rule this world!”

“You’re right. Hehe, hehehehe, I’m looking forward to it. Really, really looking forward to it. Clayman would be happy about it too.”

“Right, that’s why you need to actually assist me.”

“That’s for sure. And you too. Don’t you dare betray us now, Yuuki-sama.”

“Of course I won’t. I am definitely going to rule the world. And everyone will live happily ever after!”

Yuuki and Kagali laughed, and laughed, and laughed.

Like playing a game, the majins conspired to take over the world.

To rule the world—such a childish ambition—one that they would stop at nothing to achieve...



We had taken out the Chaos Dragon and saved Milim’s friend.

After going back to check, we discovered that the bottom floor of the ruin was buried. According to Yuuki, who seemed to be in one piece, Mariabell blew herself up upon being forced into desperation. She seemed to have wanted to take me down with her—*was she really going that far just to take care of me?*

Upon thinking so, that kind of made me sad.

But we were enemies, and I couldn’t really help how things turned out...

It was no use for me to constantly fall into this emotional low point. I needed to go talk to Kagali-san and see if we could restore the ruins. It would take some time, but we planned to dig out the entire bottom floor. We would do it one bit at a time, and display the devices dug out from the ruins. This castle was planned to be decorated into a museum.

We also planned to create more tracks for the magitrain to connect here and make this a

tourist site. I wasn't sure how many years this would take, on top of the many issues I already had on my to-do list. The least that I could be sure of now, however, was that until we signed a nonaggression pact with the Eastern Empire, this would be the foremost frontline of the battlefield. Even though this was part of Milim's territory, we still couldn't be careless.

Therefore, we only planned to conduct the restoration work.

The negotiations with the Council were proceeding smoothly as well. After our moderation of the Council members, their authority had reduced greatly. On the other hand, the Western Holy Church had flourished, and Yuuki, no longer under Mariabell's control, also grew more influential.

With how things had developed, the Council called for a new unifying force.

And that would be us—or rather, me. Tempest had become the biggest faction within the Council. We had the Freedom Association led by Yuuki behind our back. The terms of such support were to provide funds for the Freedom Association, and in turn they declared their cooperation with Tempest.

Hinata also agreed to the matter. She justified that it would be beneficial for peace among the Western Nations.

And so, I was able to cultivate great influence in the Western Nations.

On another note, I was glad that Yuuki could finally be washed off his suspicion.

Thanks to that, we can confidently build a mutually supportive relationship.

«Negative. The suspicion is confirmed. Individual “Yuuki Kagurazaka” was indeed acting according to his own will.»

Eh? Hold up, why didn't you say anything until now?!

«Answer. Because that principle of action was convenient and available.»

That's why? No, I get it now, I finally get it now... Did Raphael-san not mention this for my sake?

«...»

It's all because I was too naive. I hesitated about whether to kill Mariabell or not. I should not have hesitated for the sake of the future. If she had tried to inflict harm on me, my doubt would have disappeared. But, since they hadn't really made too much trouble for us, I felt that it was unnecessary to kill her.

There was also Gai. I also felt that I had gone overboard, after killing him. That was also one of the reasons for me to be discouraged from doing the same to Mariabell.

I couldn't kill Mariabell—so ‘You’ made the judgement to not tell me about that thing.

«...Yes. I felt that it was necessary.»

How dare you act on your own—! I couldn't really say that.

In fact, just as Raphael-san predicted, Yuuki killed Mariabell without so much as a flinch. And with all the evidence successfully destroyed, he had nothing to worry about. Raphael-san must have thought someone like this would be easy to deal with.

I had no reason to complain. But I also felt frustrated. It was all because of my own incompetence that Raphael-san had to worry about me...

«Negative. That was not the case. I simply did not want Master to put too much mind on the matter.»

Thanks. For helping me avoid the guilt afterward too.

While I was happy about this outcome, I couldn't let this happen in the future. I had to face what was coming and make decisions based on my own will. Or else how would I be qualified to be Raphael's master? I wouldn't be able to grow if I always acted childish and relied on others.

Always tell me the truth from now on, I told Raphael. And I will face it seriously.

«Understood. As Master wishes.»

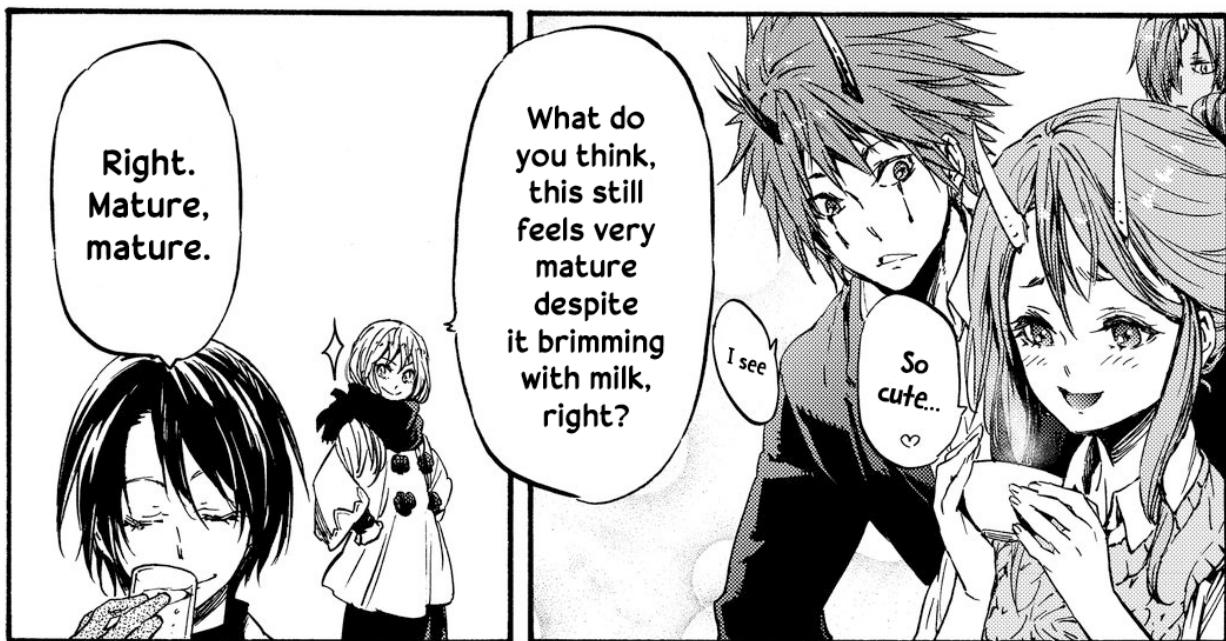
No matter what Yuuki's motive was, I would crush his ambition. I was not alone on this journey; I had companions and a reliable partner.

Right? With Wisdom King Raphael, I wouldn't stray away from the right path. I believed this from the bottom of my heart.

And in that moment, while only just for a little, I thought I felt Raphael "smile" happily.

LATTE ART

ILLUSTRATION BY TAIKI KAWAKAMI





VELDORATTE ART



IT SEEMS THAT 3D LATTE ART WAS NOT YET POPULAR
WHEN HINATA WAS STILL IN JAPAN.

Afterword

Long time no see, everyone. This is Fuse.

I was going to forgo writing an afterword this time. The reason being that this volume has been the one with the most added pages in the history of Tensura light novels, even after attempts at cutting things.

The sound of Editor I-san giving up the struggle was really unforgettable.

But! It turned out, in the end, there were a couple pages left. They told me to write an afterword of around five pages.

I mentioned this before, when I go to a bookshop to read light novels, I would first read the blurb before checking the afterword. Sometimes I will even determine whether the work is interesting or not on the merits of the afterword.

Moreover, even if the work is part of a big series, I'll still read the afterword to first check whether there is any new information, when the next volume will be released, etc. That's my habit of checking before reading the actual book.

That's why personally I felt that "the afterword is important," but when it came to my time to write one, it was a different story...

No, actually, I suppose even if I were to write about the author's personal life, not a lot of people would be interested. And if I discussed something related to the series, it would become a spoiler. As opposed to writing an afterword, it's probably better to write more in the main story. That's probably what a lot of people's thoughts are right now.

If the readers want to hear about things like this in particular, please contact the GC Novels editorial department!

It will probably be reflected in the book.

Now, let's have a little chat about this time's volume.



Regarding the pistol that was introduced in this volume, there's an untold story behind it.

This is the first time I used Arabic numerals. That was the pistol name that actually exists in

real life, “Walther P99.” We were going to use kanji for the numbers, but it seems that weapons from the real world are an exception to that.

The weapon that Glenda used in the novel was a semi-automatic pistol developed by the German weapon manufacturer Walther. And of course, it is real.

At first, I was considering whether I should use a pistol produced by Beretta, such as the M92 or PX4, but if I did, it may get mixed up with the character Beretta. That’s why I got pretty frustrated trying to decide which gun to choose, before finally settling on the P99.

Speaking of Walther, their P38 is quite famous. The highly popular master thief (Lupin III)²¹ also uses this weapon, so it’s very well known. I initially wanted to get some of his clout but decided not to in the end.

Glenda-san is a female, so a smaller and more compact weapon is probably more suited for her. Based on this consideration, I settled on the gun that was introduced this time, the “Walther P99.”

Its name only appeared once, but in order to write about it, I researched a bunch and even bought an airsoft version of it. It was then that I recalled I wanted one when I was a kid. I suppose this can be considered as me fulfilling a childhood dream, now that I have the money as an adult—uh, but I digress.

That’s the type of gun it was. I plan to make it show up a couple of times in the future as well.

There are mechanical and magic type pistols. While the pistols in question have the same names, the two are very different from each other. For instance, the gun Rimuru brought to the exploration was only a recreated copy. It only looked similar in appearance. It also seemed to require gunpowder, but I felt that there was too much complication. Can’t we make it a bit simpler? That’s why I gave the final pistol some magic modification.

Furthermore, in the book I hinted at the fact that the Empire had guns as well. So, I plan to write something completely different for them. I only made the magic-modified guns with reference to the way that Rimuru and the others thought.

That’s how I felt. But there are also other problems.

On the demon side, I planned that for the same clan, they will be named after supercars. On the other hand, the series of magic dolls, like Beretta, would be named after gun manufacturers.

In the web novel, Beretta didn’t have any brothers.

So, what should we do?

The reason why we mentioned naming Walther was in hope that Rimuru would recall the matter...

Sig, Colt, Glock, Mauser, Mateba, Remington. There are also the twins, Heckler and Koch. There are also tons of other candidates, but these are the only ones that made it in. These people, as Beretta’s peers, will surely shine in Tempest.

Figuring out their backstories alone would be tiring, so please don’t let them be intro-

²¹Lupin the Third is a Japanese manga series.

duced—I could almost hear someone’s cry along this line, so there’s probably no need to introduce them. However, I hope that, in the future, they can be introduced in side stories and other Tensura IP.

And these are the untold stories about guns.



Here at the end of the volume, I want to express my gratitude to everyone that I’ve accumulated from my daily life.

First of all, I want to thank Editor I-san who was always helpful with providing information to me. With the increase in pages, I apologize for the extra work. But since you said that it was good for the readers, as the author, I was therefore relieved. My mood really improves whenever I’m talking to you over the phone, so I’ll be counting on you in the future as well!

There’s also Mitz Vah-sensei who has provided the series with beautiful illustrations every time. Thank you for your hard work on designing Mariabell. Thanks to you, the character was created excellently. As I am writing this afterword, you must be working hard on Volume 10’s cover and illustration.

Even as the author, I am also looking forward to it!

The series only got to be published with the support of the proofreaders, designers, and other people.

Thank you all so much!

I would also like to thank all the readers. “That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime” managed to make it through the tenth volume at last. Thanks to all the readers for following the series to this day. To repay everyone’s support, I will work harder in the future with the goal of concluding the series one day.

Please continue to support “That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime”!

Congrats on Volume 10!



WE ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO
YOUR SUPPORT OF THE SPIN-OFF
MANGA 'A TRAVEL GUIDE
TO THE LAND OF
MONSTERS'!

—
Mab

That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime 10

Story by Fuse, Illustration by Mitz Vah

