

Story by Fuse, Illustration by Mitz Vah

# 転生したら スライム

That Time I Got  
Reincarnated  
as a SLIME

9

伏瀬 イラスト  
まつばー





The sound of the piano was calm and smooth. It was accompanied by the passionate play of the violin like flame. The nature of the song suddenly changed. Rather than a duet, it was more like a duel.

—But, beautiful nonetheless.

It's as if the tone reflecting the bad temper of Shion was being surrounded gently by the piano notes that reflect Shuna's temperament. Tender yet exciting, the two characters intertwine and support each other. Their incorporation was just right.

Ah ah, this is amazing. It's as if my soul was being shaken as I was overwhelmed by the rich music. This is something else. There's no way they could have reached this level of mastery by practicing on the spot. It must be skills practiced since young.



I've half guessed that it was her having seen how nervous Arno and the others looked. Looks like my guess was right. She was crossing her leg while sitting on a chair in her maid suit. The black stockings on her pale legs looked very sexy.

# That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime

## Volume 9

Author: Fuse

Illustration: Mitz Vah

Translation: DasRay, Anna

Editors: Voxel, Squishy, Censored, Sushi

Proofreaders: Dylan, Marli, Limitless\_Potential, Greygnome

Cleaning: Seikirin

Special thanks: Mimisan, Muggy, Neia\_Baraja

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# Founding of the Monster Capital

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**Prologue**

# The Shining Hero

*That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime*

## Prologue

### The Shining Hero

He—Honjou Masayuki—is a Chosen Hero.

Although Masayuki had never once proclaimed himself a Hero, for some odd reason, people he encountered just started referring to him as such. It hasn't even been a year since he first appeared in this world, just out of the blue, yet the name Masayuki was now renowned throughout the Western Nations. He's become a celebrity known to all.

*How did this happen?*

He felt puzzled from the bottom of his heart.

*How did things end up like this?*

In order to explain, we must go back one year in time.

.....

.....

...

Masayuki was on his way home from school with several friends, when suddenly, he laid eyes on an unbelievable sight, a nordic maiden with lustrous blue hair and skin fairer than that of any model or celebrity. Even from afar, the vibrant hues of her hair still managed to catch his eye. Masayuki had never once laid his eyes on such a beauty, one who could make everyone she passed by do a double-take.

“Hey, check out that babe—”

Masayuki called out to his friends with the frankness of any male high schooler. But—there was no response. *Hmm*, Masayuki thought to himself as he turned around—only to find himself in front of the scenery of an unfamiliar street.

“—W-wha?”

His mind couldn't help but go blank as he froze at the spot.

*S-sensei! I don't know what's going on!*

Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't care too much about the civic tutor that was his sensei, but in this situation, it was all his heart could ask for. But his prayers proved to be futile... Masayuki was at an impasse.

Masayuki sat by the water fountain at the town square, at a complete loss for what to do. As time trickled by, Masayuki finally began to regain some of his composure. After all, worrying about it wouldn't fix the problem. He resolved to give his current situation some thought, retracing his steps to figure out where it all went wrong.

Now that he thought about it, that woman was quite suspicious too. For all her dazzle, strangely enough no one else noticed her. Although he had no rational basis for that conclusion, he had a gut feeling that that was the case. But now she was gone. No matter where Masayuki looked, he couldn't spot her again. She was nowhere to be found.

*In times like these, isn't the beautiful girl who started the whole thing supposed to tag along? Speaking of which, ehh? Is this really not some kind of a prank? Have I really just been transported to something like an isekai?*

In a normal Isekai plot he'd at least have someone who had some inkling of what was going on come with him as well. But Masayuki didn't seem to be quite that fortunate.

The sun was about to set, and minus the school lunch that he had earlier, Masayuki was running on an empty stomach. It didn't take a genius to figure out that he was starving.

*Wait a minute*—Masayuki thought to himself seriously. *At least this is a town.* He was lucky enough to have not spawned in some forest or in front of a monster. But given how things had developed, it was still too much for him to take in.

*Normally under this type of circumstance, shouldn't there be a king or someone like that waiting for me in order to explain the whole ordeal, or at least help me start off?*

But alas, those were simply web novel fantasies found in the stories that he and his friends used to passionately discuss, he complained to himself. Reality was cruel, and sitting there sighing wasn't going to offer him any solutions, so Masayuki was once again forced to reevaluate his situation.

His name was Honjou Masayuki. Age 16. First year student at a renowned high school.

Although unrelated to the current topic, Masayuki had plans to make changes to his appearance after high school. In addition to tailoring his uniform, he had also dyed his hair.

He was quite the handsome lad, likely due to his Russian heritage. His mother was also a beauty, to which he guessed was the source of his good looks.

While it was nothing significant, dying his hair blonde had made him stand out. As a result, he was quite popular in school. While in truth he wasn't remarkable in any way, people nonetheless treated him differently.

In addition, Masayuki had some secret hobbies—watching anime and reading manga. He never really showed it at school, but in reality, he was actually a closet otaku. And so he wasn't really fazed in spite of the bizarre predicament he had found himself in... As Masayuki pondered, he checked the pockets of his uniform and rummaged through the contents in his backpack.

There was a wallet in his pocket. In it were one Yukichi-sama (A ten-thousand yen note), three Noguchi-san (Three one thousand yen notes), and some change.

As for his textbooks—he stowed them all away in the desk and locker at school. Given this to be the case, all he had in his backpack right now were the magazine he had just bought,

a smart phone, and gum. In other words, his act of clearing items from his backpack for the convenience of transportation had inadvertently caused him more trouble.

*Sigh. Had I known things would've turned out this way, I woulda prepared a bit more...*  
Masayuki lamented.

He had an apocalypse-kit for emergency situations. If he had brought it with him, he could have lasted for at least three days.

*At the very least, I shoulda brought a swiss army knife.* Perhaps that thought could have reassured him a little. Although he had no clue what to do with a single knife anyway.

All in all, he had nothing useful at hand.

If anything, perhaps the gum counted as something. He picked up the gum and put it in his mouth. At the very least it could help ease the gnawing hunger in his stomach.

And now, the only useful item he had was gone. A truly sad predicament.

Although Masayuki was able to get by for a couple hours, one thing became very apparent: he couldn't understand what anyone was saying, meaning that the language of this world was nothing like that of his original world. Even begging for food would be a difficult task in and of itself.

*This is just way too much... I can't continue like this. Worst-case scenario, I can use my phone and backpack as bargaining chips for food—*

Steeling himself, Masayuki stood up from the fountain.

Although he did not quite understand the laws and customs of this world, he came to the conclusion that the best course of action would be to find a public institution to seek asylum.

Before that however, he had to figure out a way to sustain a living—in other words, to somehow obtain food.

*Not being able to communicate with people sucks.*

And at this rate, he was definitely going to starve to death.

He might still be able to get water, but getting food, on the other hand, would prove no easy feat. Although he didn't wish to resort to such desperate measures, he had to see if there were any leftovers for him to salvage.

The best places to search, Masayuki deduced, would be areas with high food traffic, such as grocery stores and restaurants.

He had cast away any semblance of dignity that he once had over the course of just a mere couple of hours. That's the type of flexibility Masayuki has as a man.

After walking for a few minutes, Masayuki successfully made his way to the town's banquet hall. He had no other reason to come here other than the enticement of food.

*Now I just gotta negotiate with them. Ask them if they'd let me work here... Ah crap... That's not gonna happen. I don't even know their language...*

The language barrier was insurmountable.

As someone who has read plenty of Isekai fiction, for god knows what reason, the protag-

onists always seemed capable of communicating with the Otherworlders. Looking back on it now, he realized just how lucky having that ability would be.

*I don't expect to become some OP powerhouse, but ahhh, at least spare me on the language—*

But regardless of how much he complained internally, no one would answer him.

Mustering his resolve, Masayuki made to push open the door.

Before he could do that, however, the door was suddenly pushed open from the inside. Masayuki's ears were assaulted by the din of numerous chattering voices from the inside of the store.

“?!”

Startled, he took a step back. He felt a soft sensation in his chest. The person coming out was a cute, petite lady, but her expression was a bit timid.

*Eh? Don't tell me I've got caught up in some trouble...?*

*No way,* Masayuki thought. But his prediction unfortunately came true.

“OxA...!”

The woman in front of him blurted out a bunch of words that sounded like complete gibberish to him. However, despite his complete ignorance, Masayuki flashed a warm, caring smile and nodded in response. Upon seeing Masayuki's expression, the woman quickly regained her composure. Her cheeks were flushed bright red as she drunkenly stared at Masayuki.

It would've been wonderful if things had just ended there, but of course, once again Masayuki got handed the short end of the stick.

A fierce-looking man barreled his way out. His target: the woman asking for Masayuki's help.

*Agh, if I slip up, I might just be a goner...*

Masayuki had a very good reason to believe so.

Although Masayuki himself stood over 170cm tall, the huge man in front towered over him by at least one whole head. The man's face was dyed a crimson red as if he were drunk. He was also armed, a longsword strapped about his waist.

Masayuki had no hope of winning in a fair fight in the first place, to say nothing of his chances with a weapons disadvantage. Even if he somehow managed to avoid screwing up, there was still a high probability that his opponent would end up killing him regardless.

Masayuki wanted to run away, but the woman clung onto his chest tightly.

*Shit, looks like I'm done for now...*

His smile was frozen on his face, and he couldn't quite keep his feet from shaking. Masayuki wanted to praise himself for not pissing his pants on the spot.

However, it was at this point that an inconceivable voice rang in his ears.

«Courageous act of heroism has been conducted... Unique Skill ‘Chosen One’ acquired. Would you like to activate it? YES/NO»

*Ummm, I guess?*—Masayuki answered with a fair bit of skepticism. This became the turning point of his fate.

«Confirmed. Under the effects of ‘Chosen One,’ language mastery...successful. Subsequently, ‘Heroic Spirit’ and ‘Heroic Coercion’ have been activated.»

Some strange words began to echo in Masayuki’s mind.

—*What? What happened...*

While his head was swimming with doubts, given his current situation, he had no time to worry about any of that.

“Oi oi, what’cha doin’ buddy??? Yer’ ain’t tryin’ to get in my way, are ya?”

He could suddenly understand what the large man was saying thanks to the effects of the Unique Skill ‘Chosen One’ that had just awakened within him. However, that was no cause for celebration.

What was more important was figuring out a way to get out of the pickle he found himself in. One wrong move and it might be game over.

*No, Little ol’ me doesn’t plan on that AT ALL*—Masayuki had planned to drop on his knees and apologize. But before he could do that, the woman holding on to Masayuki made her plea.

“That’s right! This person here promised he’d save me!”

“—Ho ho?”

Veins popped on the large man’s temple. He bulged out his muscles, exuding an aura of pure strength.

*Oh, he doesn’t even need to use his sword. I’ll be done for if he just smacks me down...*

Despite being overwhelmed with sheer terror, Masayuki was able to think calmly. But still, he could not think of a way out of his current predicament.

“Interesting!” the man yelled, “Let’s see you try taking me down and protecting that girl.”

The commotion attracted a crowd as passersby, along with the people from the surrounding shops, came to check out the ruckus.

“Oi oi, that kid’s picking a fight with Jinrai<sup>1</sup>, the ‘Crazed Wolf!’”

“Shouldn’t we stop them? He’s gonna get himself killed.”

“That bastard Jinrai... After failing the B-rank exam, his temper’s been flaring up. Even Katya refused to serve him, knowing that.”

“Damn...so that’s how it is. He’s gone into a rage after she cold shouldered him. Ah man... Nothing anyone does is gonna stop him now...”

“Ah, there’s no time for chit chat now. If an adventurer ends up killing civilians in town, it’s gonna be a huge problem. Quick, someone contact the guild!”

“Someone’s done that already. Moreover, rather than just talking, why don’t you go stop him?”

“What nonsense are you on about? Jinrai might only be ranked C-plus on paper, but his strength surpasses even B Rank! The only reason why he didn’t make it was due to inappropriate conduct during the test, but his strength is the real deal. That’s not someone I can take on—!”

The people bantering were likely colleagues of Jinrai.

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<sup>1</sup>Name means “thunderclap” or “thunderbolt.”

Overhearing their conversation, Masayuki's heart filled with a mixture of both hope and despair.

They seemed to have sent someone to inform some guild. Cavalry was on the way as long as he could stall for some time. However, without knowing when the rescue would arrive, and with the surrounding people not willing to help, Masayuki was left to fend for himself. That was the equivalent of a death sentence.

"Katya... How could she drag that innocent boy into this whole mess..." some bystander whispered.

*That's right! Why me?* Masayuki thought to himself, though he did recall nodding and smiling to the girl despite not understanding anything she was saying or what he was getting himself into. Considering the outcome, he had only himself to blame.

"You made up your mind yet?"

*Definitely not.*

Masayuki was far from making up his mind, but the burly man was running out of patience.

At the very least, he was going to go out in style.

He didn't mean to become an edgy delinquent when he changed his hairstyle during high school. He merely dyed his hair for the sake of it and had absolutely zero combat experience. Although he had learnt some basic kendo, it was of no help to an unarmed Masayuki at the moment.

With that being said, talk-no-jutsu was his best bet as of now.

"The weakest dog barks the loudest. Have YOU made up your mind? How dare you come bothering me?!"

Masayuki had already resigned himself to getting sent to the other side with just one punch from the guy. He threw out bluffs left and right in a desperate attempt to save his hide. Best case scenario, he got to stall for some time. Even if he couldn't, he might still get lucky and escape with only getting beaten to a pulp. If he weren't quite so fortunate, he'd be dead meat.

He was frozen with fear just a moment ago. Now, however, his feet had stopped shaking...

"...We got a badass here. Sure, then I won't hold back."

Jinrai glared at Masayuki with a devious smile. Masayuki immediately regretted his decision upon seeing the bloodthirsty look on Jinrai's face.

*I can try to slip away now—oh yeah, there's a girl called Katya behind me...*

"Can I ask you to leave for a moment?"

"All right!" Katya responded with enthusiasm. "That guy has been ogling at me like a pervert for quite some time. Please teach him a lesson, big bro!"

Masayuki only told Katya to stand aside so he could plan an escape. Katya probably thought that she would get in the way of Masayuki's fight. She left him to his own devices just as she was told, slipping back into the crowd.

*...Ugh. No matter what I do, I'm already surrounded by people. Now I'm definitely done for—that was an absolutely wrong call,* thought Masayuki. The only reason Jinrai didn't attack before, was because Katya was around. Masayuki thought she'd interfere with his escape plans

and told her to go, but doing so only seemed to have hastened his death.

“Hehe!”

Jinrai’s smile deepened.

With how things had developed, Masayuki had to utilize his last resort. He’d need to use the chewing gum in his mouth as a distraction and then find a way to turn tail and run.

«Initiation of Heroism ‘Bravery Aura’ has been confirmed. Effects of Unique Skill ‘Chosen One’—‘Heroic Charisma’ and ‘Heroic Action’ have been realized. As such, the Unique Skill ‘Chosen One’ of individual “Masayuki” has been fully unleashed.»

*No no no, I was just thinking about running away!*—But Masayuki’s wish was ignored.

*Speaking of which, what’s up with that voice I’ve been hearing for a while now?*

Masayuki was a bit perplexed despite hearing the phrase “fully unleashed.” Unique Skill sounded pretty strong, but there was no way a skill that could be so easily obtained would be any big deal, Masayuki concluded.

*Seriously though, I don’t have any time to be worrying about all that.*

Masayuki was not trying to fight Jinrai at all. As a matter of fact, his escape plan was quite despicable. He intended to spit out his gum to startle his opponent, which quite frankly didn’t sound anything close to being heroic at all.

Yet all those concerns were of the past. There had been a new development.

“—Woah, su-such an oppressive aura...who are you really...?!”

Jinrai, who was brimming with confidence just moments ago, was now covered in cold sweat.

Masayuki unconsciously chewed on his gum. He thought chewing gum would calm himself down, but all it did was further intimidate Jinrai.

“Ugh, what type of weird sorcery is this?! It doesn’t matter who you are! Just watch as I slaughter you!”

After his declaration, Jinrai immediately set himself upon Masayuki.

As for Masayuki, he was caught completely off guard.

“?”

Confused, Jinrai froze on the spot. He then took a step forward with the intent of striking Masayuki down. Masayuki gawked dumbly at Jinrai’s giant fist slowly approaching him right in front of his eyes.

*Shit, it’s over! Whatever I do now is already too late,* Masayuki thought to himself as he shut his eyes and ducked his head, attempting to dodge the fist and ease the pain.

Yet the worst-case scenario that Masayuki imagined did not happen. Pain began to set in, but it was only limited to a small part of his forehead. He opened his eyes, full of surprise and fear. Before him was a Jinrai, who, for some reason, was sprawled on the ground with his eyes rolled to the back of their sockets.

“Eh?” Masayuki mumbled in confusion.

Masayuki had no clue what had just happened.

The crowd erupted into cheers, drowning out his own voice, much to his surprise. Then—

“S-so strong! That guy didn’t even move a finger and he defeated Jinrai the Crazed Wolf!”

“Unbelievable! Did you catch his movement just now?”

“Yeah… He avoided the punch by a hair’s breadth and went on to deliver a headbutt to Jinrai. He’s no doubt a master of combat.”

“Just who the hell is this kid—?” the bystanders murmured amongst themselves.

In reality, this was the result of Masayuki’s Unique Skill ‘Chosen One’ being activated.

**Hero’s Haki:** A Skill that Dwarf King Gazel also possesses. It’s an aura that only heroes (eiyuu) are capable of exuding. Opponents who are weaker than them would be rendered motionless under the imposing aura. It is a Skill that responds to only the Skill holder, a special aura of sorts.

**Hero’s Blessing:** User experiences a great boost to his luck stat. Even a normal attack will become a critical strike<sup>2</sup>. This effect is also applied to party members. In addition, onlookers will remember all actions committed by the user (Chosen One), in a positive light. Its power is astounding.

**Hero’s Charisma:** Onlookers who witness the actions of the hero will be inspired. Any sense of fear will be replaced by courage. In the end they will be filled with confidence to fight alongside the user. Another effect is that anyone who the hero defeats will automatically become a follower, barring death of course. This effect also applies to sentient monsters.

**Heroic Action:** The first step to becoming a hero. The user will become a role model for his companions and will eventually earn the praise of everyone around him. Moreover…

—These are the abilities of the Unique Skill ‘Chosen One.’

As a matter of fact, this was an especially rare Skill even among the Unique Skills. It was comparable to ‘Absolute Severance’ and ‘Unlimited Imprisonment,’ both previously used by other chosen heroes in the past. Although it was only a Unique Skill, its real power was akin to an Ultimate Skill. It possessed extraordinary capabilities.

Although Jinrai was considered to be among the strongest in the town, he was still no match for Masayuki’s Skill.

Unfortunately, Masayuki was not aware of any of this. He was completely oblivious to the fact that he unleashed an astonishing power.

But that wasn’t a big deal, since ‘Chosen One’ was a passive Skill.

‘Chosen One’ manifested itself from Masayuki’s wish to become a hero. However, it was now ignoring his personal will, ferociously pushing Masayuki down the path to a hero…

“So he is the blonde chosen hero…”

“Oh! Oh ho, I’ve heard of him—”

“Was that the chosen hero that was rather active in the past? I heard he went missing—”

“Could it be that he has been resurrected?”

The clamoring in the crowd gradually grew louder.

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<sup>2</sup>Not to be confused with Crit attack in video game/table top, here it only means “deadly/lethal.”

“The chosen hero?”

“He’s *the* chosen hero?”

“There’s no way—”

“But look at those skills. He’s definitely the real deal!”

It didn’t take long for the crowd to come to the consensus that Masayuki was indeed the chosen hero.

*Actually, my hair was only dyed...*

By the time Masayuki noticed, however, it was already too late. The bystanders were all staring at him with sparkling eyes, as if their biggest idol were standing right there in front of them.

“Huh? A-about that, y-you’ve got the wrong guy—” Masayuki tried to deny in panic, yet his voice was suddenly drowned out by a booming voice erupting next to him: “Back down all of you! How dare you all try to befriend the mighty chosen hero who defeated me in one blow!”

It was Jinrai, who just moments ago was on the ground, now bellowing at the crowd gathered around them. He then turned to Masayuki and bowed with great respect.

“I am sorry to have offended you,” Jinrai apologized. “I didn’t know that you were the chosen hero...”

“Hold up! I just said you got the wrong—”

“My name is Jinrai. People around here call me the ‘Crazed Wolf,’ and I’m quite the well-known adventurer. But I was too full of myself and I sincerely apologize. Having experienced the truly wonderful techniques of the chosen hero, I realized that I still have much to learn. While I am far from being a master, I still wish that you may take me in as your subordinate.”

Jinrai bowed even more earnestly.

Masayuki was at a complete loss. He didn’t know what to do with this bulky man suddenly wishing to become his subordinate either.

“No, I’m telling you,” Masayuki pleaded, “I’m not a hero—”

“Oh ho, are you trying to hide your identity? Then how should I address you? And if you’re ok with it, could you tell me your name?”

Ignoring Masayuki’s words of denial, Jinrai bombarded him with questions while putting on a big smile.

Masayuki had no way of shaking him off.

The onlookers, silenced by Jinrai’s scolding, were also watching with bated breath. Masayuki couldn’t help but think, *whatever goes now, I guess.*

“My name is Masayuki, and just calling me Masayuki is fine. I only recently arrived at this town—”

Since this man called Jinrai had put things this way, Masayuki figured that he would at the very least treat him to a meal. Masayuki planned on acting dumb in order to gather information. It wouldn’t be that bad of an idea.

But it was a lot smoother sailing than he had expected.

“I understand,” Jinrai nodded with clarity.

He squeezed his face next to Masayuki's ear and whispered: "Hero-sama, you've only been revived recently, right?"

This made Masayuki go "Huh?!" internally at first, but he immediately turned around, realizing that he might be able to exploit Jinrai's misunderstanding. The man looked as if he would take whatever Masayuki said as gospel.

Moreover—

*If I stop pretending that he lost to a chosen hero, this guy will probably be dishonored for life. It's probably better to play along.*

And so from that moment on Masayuki no longer denied the "Chosen Hero" claim.

This would become a painful miscalculation later. Because...

At this moment, the "Chosen Hero"—the legend of the Shining Hero Masayuki was about to unfold.

Later on, Masayuki was escorted to the capital of the Kingdom of Ingracia by the staff of the Freedom Association.

There, he met Yuuki Kagurazaka.

"You've been through a lot too," Yuuki said.

Hearing this, Masayuki couldn't help but choke up a bit. However, after learning a bit more, he realized that this young man called Yuuki had been in this world for nearly ten years. His body's age was frozen, causing his appearance to remain like a teen. From his actual age, Masayuki deduced he should have been here since secondary school.

*He's been through a lot more than me...*

Realizing this, he felt that he shouldn't be the one tearing up right now. It gave him a sense of encouragement and inspired him to keep on fighting.

After his talk with Yuuki, Masayuki decided to become an adventurer. Fortunately, Jinrai was willing to be his companion, and Yuuki approved. Masayuki didn't want to be dependent on Yuuki and instead wanted to earn his own living by being an adventurer.

"For some reason I can understand their language, so I'm probably a little bit luckier than Yuuki-san."

"That's my line! You can't imagine the hardships I had to go through at first... Although, fortunately, I got my mentor to take care of me, so it wasn't that bad for me, to be honest. There's magic in this world, which makes communicating with others surprisingly simple."

Learning to read and write seemed daunting to Masayuki, but Yuuki explained to him that pure oral dialogue could be resolved through magic. Yuuki then read through the document in his hand which contained potential candidates for being Masayuki's adventuring companions.

"Oh yeah, Bernie here also used magic to learn the language."

It seemed that the young man named Bernie also relied on magic to talk to people. He was a graduate of Ingracia Academy and an otherworlder under Yuuki's protection. Apparently, he could only speak English, having been born in the United States, making communication with Yuuki completely impossible. That's when magic came in handy, and ever since then, Bernie

became obsessed with magic, hoping to study at the academy. He became an adventurer rather recently, and he was looking for companions. It just so happened that Masayuki's party came along at that time.

This was how the three-man squad was formed.

Masayuki and his crew progressed at an overwhelming rate. In only about half a year, his squad was already given the nickname "The Shining."

Although Jinrai was ranked C-plus, his strength was comparable to that of a Rank B. With the additional aid of Bernie's magic, they were able to safely handle any quest they attempted.

Masayuki was only an amateur with a bare minimum knowledge of kendo, yet he possessed the ultra-rare Skill, the "Chosen One." This Skill also applied to his teammates, causing all of their attacks to be deadly (critical strikes). Under the effects of this Skill, his companions were able to perform beyond their actual capabilities. Jinrai could display strength beyond even Rank A. With the additional buff that increased their dodge chance, they were practically invincible.

And so, the "Chosen one" was utilized to its fullest.

It was such an amazing Skill to him.

Even the good deeds of his companions were ultimately attributed to Masayuki.

With all the positive opinions of the team "Shining" directed towards Masayuki alone, his title "Masayuki the Shining" eventually became a household name.

Later, they happened to participate in the martial tournament held in the Kingdom of Ingracia, causing Masayuki to accumulate even more fame.

They entered the tournament hoping to win the prize money given to the champion in order to purchase new gear for themselves, but it was a lot easier than expected. As soon as Masayuki unsheathed his sword, his opponents had already surrendered, declaring "I've lost."

The audience was under the impression that Masayuki's attacks were too fast to follow. But in reality, he didn't do anything at all.

However, the audience was unaware and proceeded to overhype Masayuki due to his title, the "Shining" (like a flash of light).

All in a day's work for the Unique Skill 'Chosen One.'

Masayuki had become aware of it at this point, but he couldn't stop, wouldn't stop.

In order to stand a chance against this Skill, his opponent needed to, at the bare minimum, possess a Unique Skill. Since Masayuki was unable to stop it with his own will, rumors began to spread. This gave Masayuki quite the headache, but it didn't cause him any harm, so he gave up on resisting it. He decided to play along with the public's expectations of the "Chosen Hero."

It was around that time that a fourth companion joined the party.

It was a girl named Jiwu. She was a high-level Spirit Magic user. She came to see them for herself after hearing the rumors about Masayuki.

At first, Jiwu called Masayuki a scumbag that waved around the name of "Chosen Hero." But for some reason, Jiwu began to worship Masayuki over time.

Although Jiwu had a strange temperament, she turned out to be adept with healing magic, and soon became an integral part of the team.

And so, Masayuki and his companions flew up the ranks, kicking ass during martial tournaments and achieving A rank with ease.

With the Kingdom of Ingracia as their base of operations, they joined the ranks of heroes in less than a year.

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...

Under these circumstances, a year filled with fierce progress passed.

Although Masayuki was quite dumbfounded himself, he had gotten used to being called a chosen hero by others. *Humans are indeed creatures that possess strong adaptability*, Masayuki casually thought to himself.

Masayuki was always filled with doubt even though he was praised by tens of thousands of people every day.

It was then that Masayuki ran into the opportunity that would forever change his life.

Chapter  
1

# Eve of the Opening Ceremony

*That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime*

# Chapter 1

## Eve of the Opening Ceremony

Masayuki's team got a request from Yuuki to move out.

They had uncovered evidence of a massive slave trade market operating in Balakia, one of the small nations surrounding the Kingdom of Ingracia. There was a lucky slave who managed to escape and subsequently called for help, which made it necessary to dispatch an investigation.

There was a chance that the whole nation might be involved, however small the possibility. The estimated threat level was above rank B-plus, which would prove no easy feat even for the most seasoned of adventurers.

"Personally, I wanted to refuse, but I couldn't defy the sponsor's request. I would like you guys to be the bait since you're famous," was the request Yuuki gave Masayuki.

The task was too difficult for investigators to handle alone, so they wanted Masayuki's party to accompany them. While the investigators gathered evidence of the slave trade, Masayuki's team would act as bait to grab Balakia's attention.

That was the task given by Yuuki.

Even a nation such as Balakia couldn't underestimate an A rank adventurer like Masayuki. Since the investigation would be carried out by fellow travelers, one could even call it a relaxing work vacation.

Masayuki didn't think there would be any major issues.

"Masayuki-san, let's agree to help them with this request. Even if this leads to war, our strength alone would be enough to topple such a small nation!" Jinrai proclaimed with a strong sense of justice. Ever since his defeat against Masayuki, his personality had changed, becoming so heroic that he only vaguely resembled his past self.

"He's right. Slaves in this day and age, that is unforgivable. The opponent might think twice if someone as strong as Masayuki has been dispatched."

Bernie was neither famous nor well known, despite being an otherworlder and possessing a Unique Skill. The latter probably allowed him to resist 'Heroic Act,' but he seemed to respect Masayuki regardless.

From Masayuki's perspective, he still couldn't understand why he was respected. Instead

of showing a respectable side, he often spouted nothing but complaints. Even so, Masayuki was trusted and was often given a lot of advice, something he always took to heart; especially coming from Bernie, someone who constantly looked out for him.

So naturally, his words became the deciding factor this time as well.

“Yes, I’ll follow Masayuki-sama wherever he may lead us,” Jiwu affirmed as always. Apparently holding blind faith in Masayuki, she seldom voiced objections.

Just like that, Masayuki’s team accepted the request and headed for the kingdom of Balakia.

Held in the Kingdom of Balakia’s Royal parlor house was a luxurious ball attended by royalty and nobility from the surrounding nations.

Masayuki, who was invited to the ball, stumbled into a situation so sinister he wanted to escape reality: he was able to witness the slave trade in action.

*Please leave me out of this. Isn’t this the investigator’s job??*

*I can’t believe this is happening again,* the thought alone made Masayuki want to cry.

He had made his way to the restroom, and on the way back while walking past a room, purely by chance, he had heard people whispering. He didn’t really plan on eavesdropping, but he ended up doing it anyway. That’s when he saw the man who welcomed him to this country, Count Braver, and ended up locking eyes with him.

“...”

“...”

It happened in an instant.

“Uh, this is—”

“This complicates things,” Count Braver said with an unwavering smile, “there’s not much I can do if you’ve already heard the story. Talented guards were set up so we wouldn’t be bothered, but who knew they would be beaten so easily. Should I say that it should be expected of Hero-sama?”

*No, No, there was no such person to begin with??*

“Wait a momen—!!!”

Masayuki was interrupted before he could make an attempt to refute it.

“En garde! Hero-sama doesn’t seem to be in his right mind—we cannot let him get away. Go, men!!! Take him down!!”

The person who was speaking with Count Braver grabbed a sword that was placed on the wall and suddenly stabbed the count. He then tossed away the sword and started frantically shouting for the guards, trying to frame Masayuki for this murder.

What followed was all too familiar for Masayuki.

Jinrai, who stood at his side, stared at the soldiers who came swarming together.

“Ho ho, they’re really coming out of the woodwork. However, you guys are not even close to being a match for Masayuki. Let me take care of you.”

Jinrai sprang into action while laughing with a vicious face. Receiving Masayuki’s blessing, his movements were almost superhuman.

“Tsk, monster. No, the hero who trained him is a bother to me too.”

The man who stabbed Count Braver—Marquis Gossel—glared at Masayuki.

“It seems like the game’s over? Put down your arms and surren—”

Masayuki suggested, thinking that the winner had already been decided. Jinrai had already defeated all of the soldiers who seemed to have been on standby in the other room. But he had underestimated the situation.

“Hehehe, Hero-sama has a reputation for being considerate. But look at this situation; anyone who lays eyes on this atrocity will be on *my* side!”

Hearing this, Masayuki thought of Count Braver laying on the ground.

The hurried footsteps of people coming to check out the commotion could be heard down the hallway.

“Tch. This is bad, Masayuki-san...”

This was the kingdom of Balakia. Even if the Hero’s fame was widely known, Masayuki wasn’t anything more than a guest. If you were to compare the credibility of Marquis Gossel, who was a prominent figure of the country, to Masayuki, then the former would be higher.

That explained Marquis Gossel’s lax attitude, and why Jinrai was anxious.

However, Masayuki wasn’t too worried. Although he had a ton of complaints about this whole ordeal, he realized that this flow of events was something he had become accustomed to.

Unique Skill, ‘Chosen One’ was a terrifying Skill that always guided the situation towards Masayuki coming out as a hero.

This time proved to be no different.

Observers who came to see the commotion could see the faces of the Kingdom of Balakia’s nobles and guests from other nations.

At first Marquis Gossel glanced at them, brimming with confidence, but his face quickly distorted with dismay.

“—Uh, um. What just happened to me...” Count Braver moaned, starting to regain consciousness.

“Masayuki-sama, this person is an important witness, right? We’ll treat him since he’s still alive.”

Jiwu had suddenly come running and had cast a healing spell on Count Braver, and then turned to look at Masayuki, fishing for some praise.

“Hey, brother, be glad that Masayuki is a nice guy. If we were to make an honest testimony it’ll end with you getting punished for the slave trade. However, if you decide to keep hiding it—you’ll probably just end up getting eliminated by that guy there. So, how do you wanna do this?”

The reality of the situation struck Marquis Gossel as he heard those words come out of Jinrai’s mouth, who had a cunning smile on his face.

Apparently taking in the whole situation and realizing that there was no escape, he decided to give up. Count Braver confessed everything right on the spot with his head hung low.

“What happened? What is all this for?”

And as if right on cue, the King of Balakia appeared.

Even the clamoring of the nobles was silenced in the presence of the king, and the situation settled. It was as Masayuki had expected. After that, the situation rapidly developed.

The dispatched military police secured evidence of the slave trade by searching Count Braver and Marquis Gossel's residences. With that evidence, they were able to uncover the surprising fact that Marquis Gossel was one of the chiefs of an illegal organization. But it didn't end there, it was also discovered that the main base of the illegal organization was within Balakia.

The nation took this situation seriously. The illegal organization 'Orthrus (Slave Trade Union),' that had been a thorn in the side of the Western Nations, had its headquarters in Balakia. This was a problem that the kingdom just couldn't sweep aside.

Slaves weren't the only product that Orthrus had either. Their offerings of weapons, shields, suspicious potions, drugs, monsters, and trinkets from magic items to artifacts were widely spread.

It was something to be expected from this kind of organization, but it wasn't something a small country could handle. So that was why the Kingdom of Balakia had decided to bring the Freedom Association into it.

Needless to say, that was Masayuki's party.

Being used to something happening was a scary mindset to have, but Masayuki still expected things to play out like this.

*Ah, so it really did end up like this again...* Yet he had still accepted the Kingdom of Balakia's request.

Following that—

After Masayuki's party, which was A rank, got involved, a large number of lesser ranked adventurers decided to help with the subjugation of Orthrus (Slave Trade Union).

Combined with Balakia's royal army, it was over 2,000 men, and with Masayuki heading the group, everyone in it went under the effects of 'Heroic Act' and were able to obtain skills beyond their previous abilities.

Orthrus's headquarters had hundreds of members as well, among them were bruisers who could be considered equal to A rank, and the captured monsters were no less dangerous.

A power worthy of being a nation. Even so, the illegal organization 'Orthrus' was purged by the subjugation army lead by Masayuki. In truth, Masayuki didn't get a chance to do anything. All he needed to do for them to win was to be there, yet he wasn't aware of it.

The subjugation plan that Masayuki's party lead had ended in success. And so, this was how the infamous Orthrus collapsed.

This time as well, as expected, even if Masayuki didn't do anything himself it could be said that the situation was still improved due to his involvement. And Masayuki's title of 'hero' was spread far and wide, not only in Ingracia but to the surrounding kingdoms as well.

As always everything was well.

It would have been nice if the story ended there, however, this time there was one more problem.

It turned out that among the monsters that Orthrus was keeping there weren't just vicious beasts, who were killed on the spot, but also some who they couldn't just kill like that.

Those were elves. And the problem was how they would handle these elves, who, for their part, were hoping to return to the Jura Great Forest, but they couldn't just free them. The reason for this was due to the current situation of the world. It hadn't been long since the Jura Great Forest was taken over by Demon Lord Rimuru, and they couldn't predict how said demon lord would react if the elves were to report the cruelty of getting enslaved by humans.

He might retaliate to show off his power.

The misery of the Kingdom of Farmus was widely known. If even a massive nation the likes of Farmus was annihilated, there was no chance that such a small kingdom like Balakia could hope to resist.

“Ma-Masayuki-dono. Please, please help us solve this problem!!”

The King, who was usually full of majesty, had escaped the eyes of others to plead to Masayuki while crying in a private room. Receiving the request, Masayuki felt too sorry for him to decline and ended up accepting it.

*We're only bringing them to Tempest so there probably won't be any problems, right?*

That naive thought was the beginning of his problems.

Hero Masayuki was heading to Tempest—the people who heard this news assumed Masayuki was going there to defeat the monsters. This rumor spread like wildfire.

However, Masayuki didn't think much of this. He assumed that this problem would just solve itself like it always had, and he consequently adopted a mindset that had grown accustomed to this process.

Unique Skill ‘Heroic Act’ was a terrifyingly effective skill. And while that was an undoubtedly fact, it also had its pitfalls. That was equally true.

Masayuki had become so confident in himself that he had forgotten this fact...

*All right, then we'll go with that and let's meet on-site.*

After confirming his plans, the magic communication with Yuuki ended.

Masayuki reported what had happened this time and discussed their future plans. Because the Kingdom of Ingracia was being protected by multiple ‘Barriers,’ ‘Magic Communications’ were only connected through encrypted transmissions on specific wavelengths. It was somewhat complicated to set up, which was why they had to arrange a date in advance to make it happen.

After the communication was cut, Masayuki shook his head and let out a sigh.

“Yuuki sure worries a lot.”

“Yeah, you’re right. If Masayuki-san were to fully make use of his skills even demon lords wouldn’t be something to be afraid of.”

“What he said was right. You must be the sword of justice.”

Masayuki touched on these topics in a conversation with his party members. In such an atmosphere, only Bernie remained level-headed.

“However, Masayuki-kun, even *that* woman ended in a draw against Demon Lord Rimuru. It’s probably better to stay cautious.”

Upon hearing that, Masayuki reluctantly nodded. And then he thought, *up until now, everything had gone well without any problems, and I never actually had to do anything myself.* Masayuki didn’t know Hinata and never met her either, but Yuuki, who he respected, seemed to think very highly of her. If this Hinata person wasn’t able to defeat him, Demon Lord Rimuru may be more dangerous than he imagined.

Having such doubts, he felt like he needed to be more prudent.

“Yeah, he’s right. It’s said that Demon Lord Rimuru wishes to be friends with humans so we should probably refrain from attacking first.”

“Hah! So the demon lord begged for his life.”

“Demon lords are evil—this is an irrefutable fact!”

“Well, we have no choice but to see how he will respond before we act. Whatever the case right now, since Saint Hinata reconciled with the demon lord, there is no one else who fits the title “hero” but Masayuki-kun. We must proceed with care.”

After hearing that, Masayuki nodded as well.

“Yeah, that’s right. If everyone lends me their strength, I believe we can beat the demon lord, but right now we have to act with caution,” saying that, Masayuki placed his option to fight against Demon Lord Rimuru on hold.

They had decided to first see how things turned out.

Jinrai, Bernie and also Jiwu—these three colleagues were strong like beasts in Masayuki’s eyes. Masayuki himself wasn’t amazing but the three of them losing was unthinkable.

*Well, I think we can win if we end up fighting, but it’s not like we have any grudges against Demon Lord Rimuru... Nothing good would probably come from it if we were to deliberately pick a fight,* he pondered idly.

And so Masayuki’s party triumphantly began their trip to Tempest.



Even after the Reception Ceremony, my schedule was fully booked.

This time we had to greet these distinguished guests. The representatives of each country were currently arriving one after another.

I heard that the early arrivals had already stayed here all week. Not only the people who received my invitations were showing up, but also merchants who merely heard rumors of the

festival, making the town quite lively. It seemed like the people who had been here before were guiding the newcomers throughout the town with a proud expression. The prominent figures and royalty of other nations seemed intrigued by the unfamiliar novelties and sights on display in our country.

Seeing all that, our plan of making this land into a tourist destination appeared to be going well.

That being said, the maximum number of nobles we could accommodate in this city was around 3,000. In regard to the common folk, we had enough facilities to take in up to 10,000, but we only had a few for the upper class.

The cost of providing meals, lodging and entertainment for the nobility was significantly different than the cost of providing for the common people. Considering the fact that these facilities were used by aristocrats, there had been a thorough investment in security as well. Therefore, an ample amount of living space was reserved.

We were exclusively accepting royalty and nobility this time, meaning we declined normal customers even when they offered a large sum of money. It seemed that there were also several business tycoons visiting, so I was worried that there would be complaints concerning that policy when receiving them.

However, these worries were unfounded. Myourmiles had already prepared for those cases in advance, going so far as to set aside rooms for the wealthy.

“Amazing. As expected from Myourmiles-kun.”

“Hehehe, Rimuru-sama. This is nothing. It’s thanks to Rigurd’s achievements and everyone in the city who handled things with a polite attitude!”

Myourmiles really was a trustworthy guy.

Those that worked under Rigurd and Rigur did well enough to be worthy of praise. But the ability to receive guests without any significant complaints was probably only possible thanks to Myourmiles’s efforts.

Everyone’s hard work and Myourmiles’s resourcefulness in harmony was what had started this event off on the right foot.

“I hope you can keep up with this.”

“You can leave it to me!”

I left the rest of the work to Myourmiles and focused my attention on receiving more of the important guests.



The location was the conference room.

Shuna and Shion were busy getting various things ready, as they had to prepare a lot in advance to arrange meals for so many people.

Gabil and Kurobee were busy as well, making their final rounds and checking on their exhibitions.

We were not receiving monsters this time, so we didn't have to be so overbearing with our presence. Therefore, not all of the executive officers had to come out for the greetings. There was no distinct relationship showing who was superior and inferior, similar to the reception ceremony, so the atmosphere was far less dangerous in comparison.

Of course, I would be greeting the guests in my human form, as my intention was to dress up and show off my wealth and power.

And frankly, it was a real pain in the ass.

Although it was more comfortable to be in slime form, for this specific occasion I gave up on it, thinking that there was really nothing I could do about it.

And as such, I was able to greet the royals and nobles from the Western Nations without a hitch.

While this was going on, the King of Blumund had come looking for me. As always, he looked like a pleasant man, like someone straight from a fairytale. A young-looking queen stood at his side. Although I didn't know her actual age, it was said that it had been 20 years since their marriage. They might not have looked like a good match at first glance, but in truth, it was said that they were adored by the people of Blumund for being love birds.

“I apologize for taking so long to show my gratitude. Appeasing the Farmus nobles Marquis Müller and Earl Hermann, as well as prompting the Freedom Association and the Western Holy Church to make a move, was highly beneficial to our country.”

It was thanks to this man's consent that Fuze was able to act freely. My plans were able to succeed because he followed the contract. Their efforts in spreading beneficial news about us is the cause of my current reputation not being a poor one. Seeing the steady increase in the number of merchants coming to our country, it outlined to me just how significant the Kingdom of Blumund's influence really was.

As I was showing my gratitude, the King of Blumund shook my hand with a smile.

“You're welcome, Rimuru-dono,” he said with a hint of reluctance, “this isn't something to be thanked for. All I did was abide by an agreement with another nation. And you also heard from Fuze, right? I put all my bets on you. Our luck, I placed it in this country. And of course, there are also reasons for profit in those bets, so you don't have to thank me.”

Although he had the smile of a good man, he was someone not to be careless against—that was the King of Blumund.

He had straight up claimed that the reasons for helping our country were because of profit and that we didn't need to thank him, with a smile.

“But still, I'm happy that you trusted us.”

It is important to express gratitude.

I didn't plan to continue pestering him, but I expressed my gratitude, nonetheless.

After hearing that, the King let out a bitter smile while saying: "I can't help but wonder whether you really are a demon lord."

After that, his expression changed, looking me straight in the eyes, and he told me: "I heard this time that Kazak from our county has caused you trouble. It's a relief that your people were rescued."

He was talking about the case of Viscount Kazak. Myourmiles bore the brunt of that incident, and about the nasty things they did in the Great Forest of Jura, that happened before I rose to power as a demon lord.

However, a sliver of responsibility could possibly still be pinned on the kingdom of Blumund. Even when all the fault squarely fell on Viscount Kazak.

Ultimately, he was just playing a small role in the whole debacle; even if his personality was the worst, he never *personally* did anything.

Be that as it may, a crime was a crime. Moreover, Kazak allegedly said something along the lines of 'Do whatever you want with those lowly monsters, but there is no reason for me to be punished!!'

Innocence would be an absurdity.

"As long as the problem has been taken care of safely, we have no plans to make it an issue."

"That, I'm thankful for."

"By the way, what will happen to Viscount Kazak?"

As long as he remained a noble of the Kingdom of Blumund, we couldn't punish him under the rules of our country. Even then, not being punished at all would be unacceptable. I didn't want to cause further problems, but this depended on how the King of Blumund would handle it. And the King, who seemed to have understood that well enough, replied in a voice that abandoned all mercy.

"Kazak is a Viscount. That man has done things tantamount to abandonment of his duties as a nobleman, such as helping local criminal organizations, to say the least. We cannot allow such a person to be a noble of Blumund. We deprived him of his title and wealth and exiled him from the country. In truth, we concluded this case with the ruination of his entire family."

If that was the case, then we had no problems with it.

This might seem like a draconian punishment, but slave trade is an international criminal act. It would be deeply disparaging to Blumund if they were to give any lighter punishment.

Thinking of it that way, the Viscount's punishment wouldn't seem like a harsh one anymore. As someone who had lived their whole life as a nobleman, it would be hard for Kazak to adapt his lifestyle. After losing his title and wealth, and being exiled from the country he lived in, it would probably be difficult enough for him to barely live through it.

However, as long as he was alive, he could turn over a new leaf.

I had no further opinion on the matter because I deemed it a punishment befitting of his crimes.

"I understand, I shall see it as a punishment fit for him."

“It’s a relief to hear those words. Then, can I take this as us maintaining the agreement between our countries?”

“That is something I would want as well. Then I’ll be in your care from now on.”

The King of Blumund and I held our hands tightly and shook.

And with this, the case came to a close.

After that, we went on to the main topic.

The King of Blumund put on a pleasant smile and asked, cutting to the chase, “By the way, Rimuru-dono, I heard back from Fuze. I believe he had told me that you had a grand plan in play?”

He seemed to have heard about it in detail from Fuze.

“This isn’t something that would end with just my country and your country. I think we should gather representatives for all countries involved and hold a meeting. I have considered stepping forward and explaining it to other nations, but...”

“Hohoho, you’re quite reserved about it. I have heard a brief explanation from Fuze, but this could put our country in an awkward position. We cannot just leave this to the civil servants.”

“Then, maybe a little bit—”

I planned to open a formal meeting later on. Therefore, I ended my explanation stating that my plan was to make the Kingdom of Blumund the logistics hub.

That’s what I did, but...

“—Indeed. So that’s it.”

“Sire, I believe we must carry out this plan regardless of its difficulties.”

I only explained things loosely but the look in the King’s eyes had changed; they revealed his true nature full of burning ambitions. And even the Queen, who had been holding back from saying anything, couldn’t hide her excitement. It seemed like the Queen could keep up quite well too. It looked like they were able to calculate just how much profit they stood to gain from merely hearing my story.

*Maybe there are more people to watch out for than just the King of Blumund.*

The King of Blumund with a gambler’s instinct, able to make rational snap decisions, and the composed and calculative queen. It’s because these two combined their strength that Blumund was able to maintain its influence despite being a small country.

“We would have to discuss that after we conclude the Founding Festival, without issues, in three days.”

“If that’s so then I don’t think we need to worry. It’s already this prosperous when we haven’t even started. Without a doubt, this plan will require us to reach a consensus with the other countries involved. In preparation for that, we’ll be sure to solidify the public opinion in our country.”

“Hmm, my Queen is right. Rimuru-dono, I’m glad to hear such good news. Then, we’ll excuse ourselves.”

“We wish you the best for the Founding Festival,” the two of them said in unison, standing

up.

The nobles were just going around talking with each other, not wanting to waste our time. After hearing everything they needed from me, it probably meant that they had nothing else to see me for.

In fact, they were easy to understand, and so I felt like they were good people.

“Please do enjoy your stay in our kingdom.”

“I will do so.”

“Yes, I have great expectations.”

The two left, leaving those words.



It was the next day after meeting the royal couple of Blumund.

The person who came looking for me was the Dwarf King Gazel.

“I have come, Rimuru. Having not ridden the carriage in a long time seems to have tired me out.”



He sat down opposite to me, acting as dignified and confident as always, and reached out for the snacks placed on the table like it was normal.

“Wait, leave some for me too.”

Turns out that I was too late in stopping him. Every last donut I had saved for later had disappeared into Gazel’s mouth in the blink of an eye.

*So he indulges in alcohol but curiously enough has a sweet tooth as well... It seems I can't underestimate this man known as Gazel, either.*

“What a small-minded guy. Seeing how you sweat the small details; you still have a lot to learn.”

*What do you mean “I have a lot to learn.” You’re the one who inhaled someone else’s entire plate of donuts.*

I narrowed my eyes and stared at him. However, Gazel didn’t flinch in the slightest and accepted the stare.

“The elders spontaneously requested to come along, increasing the number of carriages dramatically. This is all your fault, Rimuru!” Gazel said.

If they were to use the pegasi they could arrive within a day from Dwargon. But since this was a formal visit, they couldn’t use the pegasus knights.

This wasn’t just for the escorts. There was a need for a large and powerful country like Dwargon to show its majesty to the nobles of other countries that would be visiting the festival. And for that reason, not only did they prepare multiple outfits to change into, but they also had to bring aides to manage all the clothes and servants to help change into them. Because there was a need to bring them all they had to plan a large-scale visit.

“To act like a king, there needs to be a preparation to its scale. It was a relief that at least the roads were properly maintained but the last few days still made for a very tiring trip.”

So that’s why Gazel often snuck away to visit here with a small number of people.

Speaking of which, I received a report from Souei that the road to Blumund had been jam-packed. It was so crowded that they needed traffic enforcement and all the inns were full.

This was a report gleefully calling for a larger scale of transportation.

Modern Japan didn’t have problems with cars breaking down often. And even when it happened, there would be insurance agencies that would respond. However, it was always a big problem when carriages broke down in this world. Just clearing the carriage off of the road to not obstruct traffic took a lot of effort.

You also had to take care of the horse’s condition, meaning you couldn’t use it however you wish.

We had constructed the roads with extra width in preparation, but as expected, problems still arose. Though I did instruct them to collect information on how we could handle these problems in the future.

Just now, after hearing what Gazel said, it dawned on me how big of a deal it was for nobles to travel.

The current problem with congestion seemed to come down to there being a higher number of aristocrats participating than expected. So, next time it would be better to take more things into consideration.

Though it would be better if we could invent the train and transport them using that... Well, putting that aside.

"I didn't know you would come in person. I had thought that you would send an emissary instead."

It was true that I didn't expect Gazel to come. In hopes that he wouldn't get angry, I responded honestly. But Gazel was not convinced.

"Hmph! How could I *not* come! You seemed to be plotting something again, so I couldn't have peace of mind until I saw it with my own eyes to judge it myself! And... I have something to ask."

"What is it?"

"You seem to have fought with Hinata Sakaguchi...the rumor that you ended in a draw is a lie, right?"

I did expect to be exposed but, as expected, Gazel seemed to know everything about my fight with Hinata already. Not only that, but he seemed to be completely convinced that the official statement was false.

"Well, that is true. Although I did win the match, I feel like I lost the game, I guess a win is a win."

After firmly stating that this was a secret, I told Gazel the full story of the fight between Hinata and me.

"Unbelievable. That woman...in honesty is stronger than me. It would be another story if we were to talk just about swordsmanship, but in overall strength, I'd be pushed back. Yet you really still won?"

Taking my lead, Gazel spoke honestly as well. There was no way the Hero King Gazel would actually fight with Hinata. Therefore, he probably had a covert agent gather information and analyze her strength and concluded that he would be at a disadvantage.

He must have been genuinely shocked that I had beaten someone of that caliber.

"Luck also played a role in it. Truthfully, Hinata was even stronger than Demon Lord Clayman, who I had beaten. I believe the reason I was able to win was mostly because of my Skills."

Honestly, if it weren't for Raphael-sensei I would have lost.

Although Raphael-sensei was also one of my Skills, it was really the one that was managing all my strength. If Raphael had not utilized the strength even I didn't know I had, my loss to Hinata would've been inevitable.

"Hmph, luck is still part of your skill. Although I'm happy for your progress it feels bitter that you accepted your defeat so easily."

"Even if you say that... My real skills still can't beat Hakurou."

“You sure are a weird guy. Whatever your real abilities are, aren’t your Skills still part of your skillset?” King Gazel uttered with a dumbfounded look, but I was being honest. If it weren’t for Raphael-sensei I would probably just be at Gobta’s level.

Of course, I would never actually tell this to anyone.

“All right, fine. That’s that, but what are you planning this time?” he started to ask while changing his dumbfounded expression to a more serious one.

This was probably the main topic. Nevertheless, even if he asked what I was thinking, I couldn’t...

“What do you mean?”

I couldn’t understand at all what Gazel was trying to say.

“What do you mean...that’s not it! The Western Holy Church is trying to formally open a window for future negotiations with our Dwargon. Why did the Western Holy Church, who viewed us as something akin to monsters, change their doctrines *now*? This sudden change reeks of your doing!!”

Ah!

Hearing Gazel getting angry at me, I remembered my talk with Hinata and her crew. Looking back, I remembered advising them that bringing King Gazel into this would probably be a good idea.

The Dwarven Kingdom was a nation that had stayed neutral for over a thousand years. Because of its remarkably high credibility, even the Western Holy Church’s most devout believers probably didn’t regard dwarves as monsters. And even if some did, it was probably a really small minority.

The reason I suggested it to Hinata was that I believed this, but I seemed to have forgotten to get King Gazel’s approval of it. It’s probably more accurate to say that I didn’t seek his approval because I didn’t think I needed to.

I didn’t reckon Gazel would get this mad.

*Hinata probably won’t say that it was my idea, so I’ll just feign ignorance.*

“Hey, hey. I have no idea what you are saying. W-well, I think we had a spark of friendship with Hinata after fighting for real with her. And because of that, we made up, and we decided to get along. So, maybe they wanted to get along with not only us but also wished to formally establish a friendly relationship with Gazel’s side too?”

“—Ho?”

Gazel looked at me suspiciously. I honestly thought that I should be in slime form for situations like this. I could feel cold sweat dripping everywhere, despite being unable to.

«Notice. Individual Gazel Dwargo is reading your mental state with ‘Dictator.’ It was left alone because there was no hostility or harm, but do you want to interrupt it? YES/NO»

YES! Of course YES!!

*Please tell me something as important as that right away Raphael-sensei!!*

I understood now. I had thought about it a few times before, but Gazel could really read

people's minds. No wonder I felt like he was looking through me since the first time we met. Like the way he seemed to have expected my speech, and the time he accurately predicted my attacks during our battle; it all made sense if he could read minds.

It must have realized 'Mind Read' being invoked ever since Great Sage's evolution to Raphael. I was glad that it didn't seem like an ability that's always active, but I wonder how much of my mind he read in that short moment just now...

I snuck a glance at Gazel; he smirked as veins throbbed on his forehead.

"Ha, haha, so you figured out my 'Mind Read,' huh. I will praise you for that, but interrupting that means you have something to hide, now doesn't it?"

"N-no no. I don't think that's it."

"You dummy! I caught a quick peek of you thinking that it would be a good idea to bring me into this!"

Bad deeds are not easy to commit.

Because of how furious Gazel was, I had no choice but to spill the beans on every detail of my conversation with Hinata. And then—

"So that's it. The ones to claim to support Human supremacy were the 'Seven Luminary Clerics'..."

"Right. So Hinata's side is considering purging everyone who was under the influence of the 'Seven Luminary Clerics.' With them gone, they would probably think that all power is under Hinata's authority."

I hid Luminas's identity and only explained the internal situation of the Western Holy Church and Holy Empire of Lubelius to Gazel.

He nodded and took a while to contemplate.

"—That does make sense. Then it would be foolish to turn down the offer."

And so, his decision, in the end, was to accept Hinata's—the Western Holy Church's—proposal.

"I knew you would say that."

"Shut up, you even acted on your own without permission... Well, fine. Since we're at a festival and all, we shall end our boring discussion here. You *did* prepare the best seat for me, right? You should do your best to entertain me."

King Gazel who, after venting all of his anger before me, was now saying we should stop the boring talk. *You're only saying that because you're satisfied*—is what I thought, but I was not stupid enough to actually say that. I was informed that Hinata's side had also participated in the Founding Festival, so we determined to discuss this in detail after meeting each other in person.

Gazel similarly indicated a need to discuss things among his subordinates that followed along.

I sent Gazel off after promising him that I would arrange a meeting after the festival.



It was the morning three days after Diablo's return.

Youm's party arrived.

He happened to come at a good time, seeing as tonight was the eve of the celebration and starting tomorrow, after the long wait, would be the start of the Founding Festival.

We were in the usual conference room, in front of me were Youm and several of his subordinates lined up.

"Your Honor, it's been a while! As promised, I have become a king."

Although his outfit had changed to something fancy, his personality had not. With a brusque attitude and a grin, he looked straight at me.

I returned his gaze with a smile.

"Clothes truly do make the man, Youm-kun. I will be in your care from now on as well."

"Haha! That's my line. Making a person such as me a king, I will serve you well until the end. We are all prepared to join in on your ambitions. I'm not the type to half-ass things," Youm said with a smile.

As promised, Youm had become a great king. Thanks to Diablo putting in the hard work behind the scenes, the groundwork seemed to have been firmly established.

And so the Kingdom of Farmus's long history had come to an end. Now giving rise to a new nation with Hero Youm as the king. They decided to call the new kingdom "Farmenas"<sup>3</sup>, with the meaning being a country that was born while experiencing danger. At the same time, Youm, who was the founding king, decided to call himself Youm Famenas.

The two majins beside Youm—Myuran and Grucius—were also with him. As long as these two guardian escorts were with Youm, he would be safe.

Although Myuran wasn't a mere guardian escort.

"Your Majesty Rimuru, I apologize for the late greeting. I am Myu Famenas, the wife of the King of Famenas, Youm. I will be in your care."

Seeming to have noticed my attention switching to her, Myuran gave a curtsey and offered me a polite greeting. Her beauty could outshine any other noble lady.

"Myuran displays the striking presence of a queen."

"Right? That's because unlike me, Myuran has refinement."

As I was complimenting Myuran, Youm joined in with a proud expression.

"I may look like this, but I do have experience. Because Clayman was at least a man of manners—"

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<sup>3</sup>"-menas" derived from menace

Thanks to what you may call his interest in aristocracy, Clayman had developed a sophisticated taste for the finer things. He would decorate his castle with high-quality furniture and artworks, so he was probably just as meticulous with the education of his subordinates.

And like that, help came from a place we least expected it.

“So, it’s good to have experience in anything. I’m also having difficulty learning proper mannerisms. Not long ago I was having a hard time being set up as a decoration while greeting the different monsters of Jura Great Forest.”

“Ah, I can understand. The noble’s never-ending requests for an audience give me a headache, not to mention the idiots stirring up fights in an attempt to gain some power. Although those problems are often solved by that old man—Chief Sorcerer Razen.”

Speaking of which, it didn’t seem like he would be coming. They said he was busy since things within the country weren’t stable yet. I thought maybe he would betray us—but thinking about it, he was under the effect of Diablo’s ‘Tempter.’ So my worries were unfounded.

Even the retired king decided to hide his identity and become an advisor. While helping Youm, who lacked knowledge and finesse, he had been a lot of help on the political side of things.

Then there was the other majin, that being Grucius.

“And I heard you became the chief of knights?”

“That is right, Rimuru-sama. I declined, but this guy just won’t quit once he makes up his mind...”

It seemed that Youm forced the position onto Grucius. Looking at his skills alone, he didn’t lack the talent to fit in this position, so the others didn’t complain. They couldn’t let a talent like that go to waste by just letting him play around, so they requested him to be the chief of knights of the newly founded the Kingdom of Famenas.

However, Grucius had a bitter expression. I advised him that following his heart would be the right thing to do. Although Grucius thought that too, he couldn’t decline Myuran’s request.

After receiving her personal request he couldn’t refuse, Grucius was formally appointed as chief of knights.

*Are you okay with that, Grucius?* I thought, but he didn’t seem to hate it, so I wasn’t in the position to make it an issue.

“I still believe I’m a subject of Karion-sama, but I plan to look after this idiot for a while.”

“Shut up, you’re the stupid one!”

Nothing seemed to have changed between these two.

Myuran just looked at them dumbfounded.

Seeing this scene made me feel nostalgic. Until now it was a pattern that I had experienced over and over, but this time we had an unexpected intruder.

“Really! His Majesty Youm and Chief Grucius...this is an act that is of courtesy to Demon Lord Rimuru!” shouted a boy who looked like he was still in elementary school. He was a handsome, nerdy looking boy.

“Edgar! You’re so stiff.”

“Haha, what of it. If the people see how quick-witted I am, everyone will realize that I’m most qualified to be the next successor to the throne.”

“Chief Grucius! Things will get complicated if you make such jokes. Since I’m working hard as an attendant for his Majesty to be a great king!”

Edgar spoke with his face flushing red with anger. Surprisingly, I was told that he was the son of the former king, Edmalis. Although Edgar was only ten, he seemed very trustworthy. Seeing him already accustomed to pointing things out like that, he was probably going through a lot, despite being a wee lad. Dealing with a sloppy adult must be a strenuous job.

Youm and Grucius may complain a lot, but they seemed to actually adore Edgar all the while.

Although I would have liked to continue this heartwarming conversation, we had to move on. Youm’s party must’ve been exhausted from the long travels and other high-status people were coming here for the eve of the festival.

After agreeing to have a drink with Youm at our leisure later, I ended our conversation.

“Putting that aside, I have a gift for Youm-kun for keeping your promise. Diablo—”

“Yes, Rimuru-sama. Were you looking for this?”

Diablo apparently noticed even without me finishing. He brought up a certificate that he had prepared in advance. I handed it over to Youm.

“Your Honor, this is...?”

Youm wasn’t used to reading yet, so he handed it over to his attendant, Edgar.

The look in his eyes changed after examining it.

“I-I shall void the remaining balance for the reparations. Is that what you’re saying?!”

“That’s right, now with Youm as king, they serve no further need.”

Actually, we already got 1,500 stellars. 10,000 stellars was an excessive amount, and since I had already achieved my goal, I did not need it anymore.

“Haha, I don’t quite get it but that’s what he says, Edgar,” Youm beamed at the wide-eyed Edgar.

Although Youm didn’t seem to understand, it looks like Edgar grasped the ramifications.

I hoped Youm’s reputation would improve with this.

Thus, Youm was heralded as a successful man due to getting the reparations forgiven by me—a demon lord.

My greetings with Youm’s party wrapped up.

Taking the baffled Edgar, Youm left the scene.



As the afternoon rolled around, my busy schedule became a bit more relaxed.

The stream of visitors kept pouring in, but in order to prepare for the evening's Founding Festival, we didn't have time for talks. There were a lot of people requesting an audience, but I decided to schedule them for a meeting after the festival.

And so, after barely getting any time off, I went to the Kingdom of Ingracia to meet Yuuki as promised. On the way there I was going to visit the academy and bring the kids too. Since it was a festival, I thought that it would be nice for them to have some fun as well.

The nostalgic scenery of Ingracia's streets.

It had only been a few months, but a smile crept across my face as I remembered my time living here.

I headed for the headquarters of the Freedom Association without running into any trouble. Through modern-looking automatic glass doors, I stepped into a temperature-controlled room. At that moment, several sharp looks focused on me.

This was a place that only people who were rank B or above could enter, so naturally, only skilled people were around. Satisfied with the place not looking any different from before, I slowly strolled around.

I noticed that some people were trying to size me up. Seeing that they were gathered at the headquarters this early in the morning, there might've been a big job they were preparing for.

“—Who is that?”

“It's not a face I know. A newcomer? Do you know?”

“No, I don't know anyone that beautiful.”

Hearing whispers like that made me feel a little uncomfortable.

To forget me in less than a year—at first, I was a little peeved, but then it hit me. I had forgotten that I wasn't wearing a mask. Now being able to completely control my aura, I confidently went in with a bare face thinking that I didn't need to wear it anymore.

I had considered disguising myself, but it was already too late. Luckily, my clothes were those that I often wore as an adventurer, so if I acted confidently, no one would realize that I was a demon lord.

After all, the demon lord attire for the audience was masterfully handcrafted by Shuna. It was impossibly luxurious. The decorations were fancy, and it was a beautiful product of the highest quality. The headdress was also exquisitely decorated, making me look like a completely different person.

In this world, the ability to take pictures has yet to become commonplace, so my face shouldn't be widely known yet... It'll probably be okay not to worry about it. I decided to just roll with this look.

Someone blocked my way as I was confidently striding towards the reception desk.

I felt like something like this had happened before.

“Wait, I don't know from which countryside you earned that B rank, but walking by without greeting your seniors is something unacceptable—hey, you. Don't you know it's the etiquette

for a junior to reveal his name first?"

Déjà vu—that was it, I remembered now.

This guy was an acquaintance of Kabal. Seeing as how they complained about greeting seniors last time as well, he looked like the type who put great emphasis on and valued the relationship between juniors and seniors in a sportsman kind of way.

"You, if I remember correctly, your name is Grasse? You seem to always be in the headquarters, do you have a lot of free time?"

"Huh? You know my name? That means—"

"I'm Rimuru. I was with Kabal's party, remember?" I cut Grasse off and introduced myself.

Putting that aside, what was up with Grasse? I *did* take off my mask, but my voice stayed the same, didn't it? *Why don't you recognize me...*

"What?! Ri-Rimuru-san?"

"Yes. You, although it's my first time showing you my face, you should be able to recognize me from my voice."

"Uh, um, I mean...huh? I think I remember you being a bit shorter back then?"

As I revealed that my name was Rimuru, Grasse quickly became confused. My rank was way higher than Grasse's, so if we were to base it on his standard, I was *his* superior.

Fundamentally, adventurers are all about strength, making the relationships between seniors and juniors not nearly as important to most. When I first started out, I did occasionally show my respect to those I owed a favor, but I didn't even owe any favors to this guy, so no reason to act as such. It would be another story if we took a job together, but among adventurers your rank was everything.

"I grew."

Actually, I evolved, not grew, but I didn't really have to be honest about that. I laced my tone with a hint of irritation, thankfully Grasse took the hint.

"S-so that's it. Putting that aside, Rimuru-san, you're gorgeous! Now that you've grown you must be invincible! I'm touched to actually see a face this gorgeous in person!"

Grasse straightened his posture like Kabal's party did and started dumping vapid flattery on me. Although he was weaselly, he was someone you just couldn't hate.

"All right, all right. More importantly, you seem to always be here, is it okay for you to slack off?"

"Hehe, please don't say that. Actually, this is one of the jobs I took; I train newcomers here. As you might know, there are different levels of strength within the B rank, so it's my job to teach those newcomers that act up. Those guys are in the same position, but since we don't have anything to do right now, we were just resting while on standby at the headquarters," Grasse said while pointing at the men who were looking at me, to which they promptly stood up and greeted me.

"I can't believe it was actually Rimuru, someone of B-plus rank, I apologize for not recognizing you," the man, who seems to be the representative, said with everyone nodding in agreement.

“I don’t believe I changed much...”

“No, No, No, No, please don’t say that, the only thing that we could recognize are your clothes.”

“Yes, he’s right. That face is almost like a cheat. It goes well beyond merely catching someone’s eye...”

*Hmm, is that so?*

“All right, will wearing the mask suffice?”

It was a hassle to go over this every time, so even if it was a bit of a bother, I didn’t think I had a choice. After I secretly made a mask within my ‘Stomach,’ I put it on my face. The adventurers’ moods deflated, their eyes filled with disappointment.

I don’t know if that’s really something to make a fuss about, but it was over.

“Then I’ll excuse myself. Don’t be too hard on the newcomers.”

After leaving those words, I headed for the reception desk.

I gave my name at the reception desk and requested to meet Yuuki. Word apparently got through and the man at the reception desk directed me to Yuuki immediately.

“Oh, Rimuru-san. Long time no see! You seem to have gone through a lot of difficult experiences since the last time?”

“It’s not something you can just sum up as being difficult. Getting a surprise attack from Hinata, Farmus’s army marching down on us, I even got summoned by the demon lords... It’s been a never-ending barrage of torment for me. Just saying ‘that it was difficult’ doesn’t even begin to describe the misery, wouldn’t you agree?”

“Haha, even after all that, coming out unscathed feels just like you, Rimuru-san,” Yuuki responded playfully, but it was true that those things were actually awfully grueling to deal with. Yuuki probably understood this too. Although he was smiling cheerfully his voice did contain a touch of compassion.

“In short, since I have made up with Hinata, I can say that it all turned out well in the end.”

“That seems to be the case. Occasionally meeting with Hinata to exchange information gave me the chance to speak well about you from time to time. Regrettably, Hinata does seem like the type who is loyal to a fault.”

“Ah, I know what you mean. She doesn’t listen at all to what others say.”

“You’re right. She’s the type that only believes what she has seen and heard with her own eyes and ears. That personality of hers has put me through quite a lot over the years...”

That we could agree on, launching into a delightful conversation.

Yeah. There were moments when I had no clue what Hinata was thinking. I could only imagine the hard times Yuuki must’ve had.

“Well, but you’re the only one I can talk about this with, Rimuru-san.”

Hinata’s circle of believers was vast, allowing even the slightest, casual slander to trickle back into her ears, or so they say. In the first place, disparaging people wasn’t something you should often do. Therefore, I thought that I should be careful as well.

“Well that’s that, so what do you think? You don’t have to push it if you’re busy, but if two or three days is okay, wouldn’t you like to participate in the festival?”

“Heh, I should go, of course. I’ve been desperately finishing my work just to attend, you know? And, not to worry, I have a trustworthy subordinate to take care of my work while I’m absent. Wait a moment.”

After I brought up the real purpose of my visit today, asking if he’s attending the Founding Festival, Yuuki left those words and stood up, then seemingly calling someone, he left the room.

I took a sip of the tea he had left me, and not much time had passed before Yuuki returned with a woman in tow.

“I’ll introduce her to you. Her name is Kagali and she has taken the job of the Freedom Association’s deputy grandmaster,” he said, introducing me to that woman—Kagali-san. Her appearance was one of beauty and elegance, clothed in what resembled a suit with ornate designs unique to this world. It suited her perfectly. She had navy-blue eyes and blonde hair tied in a bun, but most remarkable were her long, pointed ears. Her species was undoubtedly elven in nature.

“Nice to meet you, Rimuru Tempest. No, Demon Lord Rimuru-sama. My name is Kagali. It’s an honor to meet you.”

“Happy to meet you. This is my second time here, but it seems we weren’t able to meet the last time?”

I had seen the woman who served the tea, but it was my first time seeing someone called Kagali. *If it’s someone great enough to be the deputy, I wish he would have introduced me to her earlier*—but there was a reason for that.



“Haha, there wasn’t much I could do about that; I just recently returned. My lifelong passion has been the exploration of ruins, and a few days ago we discovered the world’s largest ancient ruins, ‘Soma.’”

Kagali-san was at the top of her field in the exploration sector. Before Yuuki established the Freedom Association, she was said to have been captivated by ruins, exploring them day and night. Yet because she didn’t participate in an adventurer’s group, which was the core feature of the Freedom Association, her name was not well known. Regardless, her skills were undoubtedly exceptional, catching Yuuki’s attention, who then recruited her.

Fighting wasn’t the only purpose of the Freedom Association—a sentiment Yuuki believed in as well, hence the appointment of Kagali-san, an expert archeologist, to the honorable position of deputy. And with Yuuki’s support, it was said that Kagali-san had made a breakthrough achievement this time. That was the surprising discovery of the ancient ruins called “Soma.”

With this outstanding feat under her belt, Kagali-san’s reputation was revised in the public eye. Even those who were convinced that she had been afforded a high position solely through her personal connections with Yuuki now acknowledged and revered her as the deputy grandmaster.

“We discovered the ruins, but we still have a lot left to explore. We were only able to make a full map of the top floor; many of its riddles remain yet to be solved.”

“But that’s the job of the exploration adventurers. If they have Kagali’s map, even they could explore without problems.”

Instead of leaving it all to one accomplished exploration adventurer, it seemed like they were mobilizing people to start excavating. Since it would also help nurture young rookies, I think it would be killing two birds with one stone.

And so Kagali-san took up the job of training exploration adventurers of at least rank B at the Ingracia Freedom Association headquarters.

The pay was quite high, and apparently, some of the income earned from selling the things found in the ancient ruins went straight into her pockets. Considering that the transactions were all made through the guild, the profits they reaped couldn’t be underestimated.

“I see. Ruins seem to be quite profitable.”

“That’s right. Although in my case I’m not in it for the money, it’s more of a hobby. Although, occasionally, I put the things I found up for auction to top off the activity funds.”

As expected, exploring ruins was expensive, she seemed to have had a hard time.

*Yes, yes, talking about ruins...*

“I have something I want to ask, who owns the ruins? Does the country they are in manage it?”

“Uh-um, that’s a bit complicated. Take, for instance, the topic of our conversation, the ancient ruins of ‘Soma’; they are under the administration of the Freedom Association. That’s because its location is a bit of a gray area, found in the region far west of the Western Nations

in the desert known as ‘Barren Lands.’”

“Strictly speaking, the ‘Barren Lands’ is close to Demon Lord Dagruel’s territory, causing everyone to fear it and dissuading any attempts to rule it. So, no one currently claims ownership of the ruins found there.”

“Is that so... Then, as expected, it is necessary to carefully consider how to manage such a place...”

“Huh? Is there something that’s bothering you, Rimuru-san?” Yuuki asked, seemingly bothered by my reaction.

The thing on my mind was, of course, the ruins under Clayman’s castle. Likely magical items and other things were sleeping in that place, so exploring it would, by my estimation, earn us some hefty profits.

But there was something that bothered me. It was the question of rightful ownership surrounding the findings from the ruins. Another thing that bothered me was the potential of attracting unsavory adventurers in it only for the money or even distasteful outlaws.

Although the proposal of digging up treasure in ancient ruins was enticing, we ought to consider their historical value as well. Investigating them can tell us a lot about how the ancient people lived back then. The world of ancient civilizations captures a certain sense of fascination. If we act too hastily, we will run the risk of destroying valuable information. That was my biggest concern.

The ruins weren’t something I intended to hide from them, so I decided to discuss the matter with Yuuki and Kagali-san. It seems like I came at just the right time to meet an exploration specialist.

“The truth is, I found ruins in Clayman’s base.”

“What? Is that true?!”

The moment I said that, Kagali-san shot a sharp stare at me, radiating an incredibly intense force that made my skin crawl. I was somewhat taken aback but decided to continue my explanation.

“Clayman had accumulated an immense fortune, and he also handed weapons and shields with magic effects to his subordinates. So I was wondering if he was making use of the things he found in those ruins, but—”

“—But?”

After hesitating a bit, I let out my thoughts.

“It may be rude to say this to people who make a living with ruin exploration, but I refuse to tear apart the ruins merely for a chance of treasure. What kind of life and culture did the residents have and what ultimately lead to their downfall—these are the things I want to find out. Even if it’s just to make meaningful use of the past, I think we should show our respect to the ancient people.”

Well, those were probably just my overly emotional thoughts. It’s not that I didn’t have

an interest in treasures, but I believed there to be something more important. And that's why I ordered for the ruins to be sealed for now.

"Hmm, surprisingly, you're quite the romanticist,<sup>4</sup> Rimuru-san..."

"Surprisingly,' what do you mean? I'm a romanticist through and through."

"Haha. Hearing that, I guess you're right. If it weren't for your romantic spirit, you wouldn't have thought of making a country of monsters," Yuuki said with a smile of agreement.

As for Kagali, she was nodding while deep in thought. The murderous look in her eyes had long subsided, now shining with the light of reason.

"I wonder... It's something I haven't thought of, but I can understand. I would also like to prevent wanton destruction of the ruins. Therefore, I'm planning to properly educate the research group before dispatching them to Soma."

My sentiment—romanticism for the ancient times—didn't get across, but I think she at least understood that the ruins needed to be protected.

*She's a well-qualified person, so maybe I should ask her to explore the ruins.*

*Then that still leaves me with the question...*

"In regard to Clayman's territory, it is currently under my sole authority. Later on, it will be merged with Milim's territory, but right now we're the ones who are managing it, after all, we're the ones who defeated Clayman. I think even that guy took good care of the ruins, we wouldn't want to be the ones to ruin it, right? That's why I thought we should get Milim on board with this and have her take good care of the ruins."

"Huh-hmm, so Rimuru-san won't be the one to continue managing it?"

"I think that would be difficult. It's adjacent to the Eastern Empire, making considerations for the perimeter defense a hassle—something needlessly tedious. We can't spare the military forces to fortify that area in the first place."

Clayman's territory was the buffer zone with the Eastern Empire. There you could find a road known as the Valley of Death that wound its way through jagged mountains. It was a rough, unfastened road that, if you managed to pass, would allow you to travel between Clayman's territory and the Empire. Despite this treacherous road being laden with monsters, traces of Clayman's subordinates using the road had been found. Therefore, the Empire was possibly in collaboration with Clayman and might mobilize their forces. We would have to remain vigilant.

Even if we wanted to dispatch an army there, we were too short on numbers. Managing the Jura Great Forest on its own was already an arduous task, and so if I could leave Clayman's territory in Milim's hands, it would be up to her alone, if or when the Empire decided to make a move.

"Then, does it mean that we need Demon Lord Milim's permission to explore the ruins?"

"That would be the case."

"Is that so... You've intrigued me with those ruins, can't we somehow take a look?"

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<sup>4</sup>In this context it means fanciful, unrealistic, and passionate.

“I doubt she would turn us down if we asked, but she would, in all likelihood, ask to come along.”

“That would be...”

She seemed hesitant to go exploring together with Milim, which came as no surprise, considering that that demon lord was infamous for causing disasters. Kagali already looked dejected—*but it's too early to give up. Milim is gonna tag along, that's for sure, but if I were to accompany them, it might be okay.*

“I intended to investigate them sooner or later anyway, and I'd feel reassured if a pro like Kagali were to come along. This too might be fate, so I would like to formally request an investigation from the Freedom Association, with remuneration, what do you think?”

“In other words, the rights to the things found in the ruins will belong to Rimuru-san?”

“No, that needs to be discussed. I have my own museum, leading me to be more interested in displaying things there than digging. First, it's part of Milim's territory, we have to discuss it with her. I think it would be difficult to decide now.”

“I see. Regardless, you'll still be doing your own investigations, correct?”

“That's it!”

“So, I'd be happy to accept your offer if I didn't have to worry about the funding. If you could handle negotiations with Demon Lord Milim on our behalf, I'd be more than willing to accept the offer.”

Kagali-san struck me as the type that is interested in scientific research, rather than someone who's just in it for the money. If that was so, then there was no problem. I would take on the job of convincing Milim and leave the organization of the investigation team to Kagali-san.

“Can I entrust this to you?”

“Yes! Please leave that request to our Freedom Association!”

“I'm looking forward to it. Then along with taking care of things while Yuuki-sama is out, I will finish up the preparation for the exploration.”

That was the situation. The conversation had completely derailed at this point. The whole point of me being there in the first place was to invite Yuuki.

“Then I'll let you handle everything, Kagali. I'm sorry that you can't enjoy the festival with us.”

“Hahaha, it's all right. Then, Yuuki-sama, please have a great time.”

“Yup, I'll leave the rest to you!”

After our little greeting, Yuuki and I left the Association headquarters.

Things were on the up-and-up for the exploration of the ruins, as we received a helping hand from a place we never expected it. Previously, I was having a hard time deciding who to take along, but I felt reassured now that a pro was taking part. I was eagerly looking forward to checking out the ruins after we wrapped up the Founding Festival and took a short break. *Who knows, maybe it could be reference material for the dungeon. There'll be a lot for me to study.*

I thought about these things while taking Yuuki to our next destination.



I removed my mask as I was leaving the Association's headquarters. Since its ability to hide my youki had become meaningless now, I didn't have to wear it unless I was in a place where someone was likely to bother me.

Yuuki came over to speak to me, with a giant bag in tow. He must have prepared in advance, like I told him to in the letter I had sent. The ridiculous size of that bag suggested that he intended to stay for a couple of days.

“You’re bringing those kids to the festival too, right?”

“Yep. Since I reconciled with Hinata, there’s no one openly hostile to us. There might be some small incidents here and there, but when it comes to security, I’m well prepared.”

Since we’re inviting prominent figures from each country, we’re especially focused on that part. Therefore, inviting those five kids to our country’s festival won’t be an issue.

“Okay, then I will allow it,” Yuuki nodded, then continued with a smile, “they’ve been studying and behaving well lately, so I think it’s okay to give them a breather.”

We didn’t send a letter to let the kids know in advance, meaning this would be a total surprise to them. I kept quiet about it until I could be sure that it was okay. I hoped they would understand that part. Normally with things like this, you would need to get the person’s consent first, but, depending on the situation, inviting the kids could be postponed. I believed that it would be better than getting them all excited only to let them down.

A short walk later, the familiar school building came into view. The imposing structure was the pride of Ingracia, a training institution for association members—the Freedom Academy.

After a brief exchange with the guard, he immediately conveyed the message inside. Yuuki’s presence expedited the process immensely, he was the chairman after all, and the person to guide us soon arrived.

After greeting the principal, we headed for the classroom.

“Hey. Have you kids been well—“ Before I could finish, Alice came charging like a bullet, ramming me squarely in the stomach.

“You’re late, sensei!”

*How could it be? It didn’t really feel like it had been that long, so maybe it’s because I’m an adult? Kids have a different sense of time; they must’ve felt lonely.*

“Yeah! You promised to come to play often!”

“Yes, Gail is right. I was worried that you had forgotten all about us.”

“But now you’re here, we’re so happy, sensei!”

Gail, Kenya, Ryota, these three gathered around me had big smiles on their faces, in spite

of their complaints.

And lastly, Chloe as well, “Welcome, sensei!”

She came running and hugged me with a smile.

“You’re still as popular as ever, I’m envious,” Yuuki observed while looking at the children.

“Ah, big bro Yuuki is here too!”

“Big bro Yuuki, you’re going to battle me today too, right?”

“Me too!”

“That’s a good idea. I’ve been able to get a good grip of the spirit’s power recently.”

As the kids recognized Yuuki, their happiness shot through the roof. Kenya challenged him, while Gail and Ryota seemed to have the same in mind. Now that they could properly control their powers, they seemed to really want to try out their skills.

However, that’s not what today was going to be about.

“Ah-haha, it’ll take another hundred years before you get a shot at beating me!” Yuuki teased. “I can be your opponent, but not today.”

“Awwww, why?” Kenya grumbled, at which point I decided to jump into the conversation, “It’s a shame, but we don’t have time today.”

“What are you saying?” Chloe asked as her eyes widened in excitement.

I looked her straight in the eyes and answered, “I’m inviting the five of you to my country. There is a festival tomorrow. But if you don’t really want to go—”

“Hurry up, let’s get ready!”

“All right, Ken-chan!”

“Wooow! Tell us important stuff like that sooner!!”

“That’s right, Rimuru-sensei! You’re telling us too suddenly!!”

“Ah, but I’m still excited!!”

The kids darted off without letting me finish. They had all agreed to go in a heartbeat.

“Just pack up a change of clothes!” I shouted after them, but there was no response.

They disappeared in a gust of excitement.

The teacher left standing in the classroom had observed our interaction with a surprised expression. And once the kids disappeared, he let out a sigh of defeat.

“Ah, how amazing. They never treated me with such affection...”

“Ahaha, you’re doing well. It’s gotten a little bit better now, but there are no other teachers who can handle those kids.”

“No, it’s nothing. If you don’t show your skill, they won’t take your lead. It’s, admittedly, a pretty reasonable demand. Embarrassingly enough to say, even I could lose if I were careless. The strength of those kids is the real deal. Anyway—“ told me a teacher I was unfamiliar with, someone they likely hired as my replacement back then.

“Ah, I’ve yet to introduce myself. I am the kids’ former advisor, Rimuru. I apologize for interrupting the class.”

“Ah, you really are Rimuru-sensei. I heard a lot about you from the kids, so I guessed it was you. My name is Clouse. I was employed at this academy as your replacement. Don’t worry

about the class; I was informed in advance by the chairman that the class could be on break for a while,” Clouse-sensei said with a defeated smile.

According to Yuuki, Clouse-san was an A-minus rank adventurer of the subjugation division. At his ripe old age of 50 he was slowly preparing for retirement.

“Wait a minute? If they’ve gotten so far as rivaling you, then just how much stronger have those little rascals gotten?”

“What are you saying? They are going around, proudly proclaiming that they were taught by none other than you.”

“Yeah, that’s right. Honestly, if I were ever to get foolishly careless, even I would lose to them,” came the admission from Yuuki.

*If he said so too, it’s gotta be true.*

*No, no, it’s really amazing that they were able to grow this much in such a short amount of time,* I marveled, deeply impressed, when Clouse set his gaze on Yuuki and me with a determined look.

“Yuuki-sama, I have a request.”

“Yes? What is it?”

“I would like to ask Rimuru-sama to listen as well, as this is about the kids—before long, they will surpass me in strength if this carries on. We’ve seen this happen time and again; If the kids become complacent, it’ll be to their detriment. We need an adult that can be a mountain for them to climb.”

“What do you mean?”

“Elementary, Yuuki-sama. Those kids have much room to improve. We need someone who would teach them how to fight, so that they won’t be satisfied with merely beating me.”

*I wonder.*

Clouse-san was worrying for them like they were his own kids. Each of them housed a greater spirit of their own, allowing them to borrow that power to neutralize the energy they were imbued with on their travel through worlds as an otherworlder. As they grow older, they would eventually gain the ability to control it on their own, opening the path for them to use the excess energy in fights, allowing even things like ‘Spirit Magic’ to be wielded with ease. That way, they could become powerful spirit-wielder<sup>5</sup> like Shizu-san.

Moreover, a Spirit of Light deemed Kenya to be in possession of the qualifications to become a ‘True Hero,’ so under the guidance of a great teacher, acquiring tremendous strength could be within his grasp.

Like Clouse-san said, we needed to find a great teacher. But that raised the question—

“That’s it. We need to find someone to be a good teacher for those kids, right? But if it’s someone stronger than Clouse, he would need to be an active A rank. Having a first-class adventurer like that take on the role of a teacher is a bit of a stretch...”

*That’s the problem.*

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<sup>5</sup>Fuse’s note defines this role as “Elementalist,” but the kanji writes “Spirit-wielder.” Somehow I feel the latter makes more sense.

Once you retire from the adventurer lifestyle, then accepting a stable job in education makes sense. But if you're an active adventurer, it would be in your best financial interests to prioritize doing more high ranked jobs, rather than looking after kids. And even from the Freedom Association's perspective, it would only be right for them to have the great and talented people prioritize protecting the public.

"Precisely. Assuming at least Rank A, I can't think of anyone who would accept the job of a teacher. If it's academic studies or various adventuring skills I could teach them, but alas..." Clouse let out a sigh.

In spite of him being the one who suggested it, he fully understood that it was a difficult task. That must be the case. Asking adventurers to be teachers would be difficult. Then... Thinking along those lines I gave a suggestion, "Then how about we do this? I am planning to build a school in our country. We have plenty of B ranks and our 'Sword Master' Hakurou is the instructor. Based purely on swordsmanship, he still outpaces me comfortably, he could teach them—"

If we were to focus solely on swordsmanship, it'd be okay to leave it to Hakurou. But I wanted to teach lots of other stuff besides that.

"That's amazing! Then can we entrust the kids to Rimuru-san's country?"

"That's one option. But if we were to do that, it would be hard for the kids to learn about human society."

Living among humans teaches one the common sense required to get along in their society. If we were to deprive them of this opportunity, I was afraid that they might grow up with a lack of communication skills.

Over the course of time, the number of adventurers would increase, and their kids would probably go to schools. But that was still a future awaiting us several years from now. Until then, they would be learning in an environment without any other human children, and I thought that that could pose a bit of a problem.

"Ahh, because there are only monsters and no human children."

"I see. That could be a problem..."

Yuuki and Clouse-san ostensibly shared my apprehension and nodded in agreement.

I was glad to be on the same page with them.

But it was too early to relax. There was one last thing weighing on me.

"Well, there is the option of leaving only the skill training to us. We can utilize teleportation magic after all, conveniently making it possible to take care of them a few times a week. But more importantly, I think the kids need to deepen their understanding of the spirits."

At this point it wasn't an issue yet, but this also wasn't a matter we could just accept and forget. To protect the lives of the children, each of them had a spirit in their bodies. To use that power properly, I thought it necessary to know more about the spirits.

And that was something I could not teach. Saying this might be too obvious, but my knowledge is something I learned through experiencing it myself. Like trying to explain how to breathe, my disposition would make it prohibitively difficult to explain. You could easily

expound the nature of spirits, yet doing so will never capture the essence.

That's when Hinata and the Holy Knight's combat tactics came to mind—one of them the technique of fusing spiritual magic with a sword. Reaching those depths requires a similarly deep understanding of spirits.

*If we could teach that to the children...*

"If we're talking about spirits, then the Holy Knights are unmatched. Should I ask Hinata?"

"Uh-um, I thought about that as well, but isn't Hinata too scary?"

"Ah, yes. That is true..."

"The kids probably won't underestimate her, though I worry that she might be too strict with them..."

"I cannot deny what you said," Yuuki admitted, as both of us looked at each other and sighed. We decided to put this on hold for now.

I could see the kids running towards us with their luggage.

Shifting gears, attending a festival was a rare occasion. Moving forward, we would have a fun time, it'd be a shame to spoil it with these tiresome matters. For now we'd leave it to Hakurou and think about what would follow later on.

*We're really just sweeping our problems under the rug, but I'm sure it'll probably work itself out somehow.*

As usual, I decided to take it lightly and stopped worrying about it then and there.



After we headed out through the kingdom of Ingracia's gates, I opened a 'Teleportation Gate' in a secluded place, away from prying eyes. Since this wasn't magic, it could be cast without the use of a magic circle. Yuuki looked at me surprised, but the kids were already used to it.

"That's so easy for you, sensei, you should come visit us more often!" was the complaint I ended up hearing from Kenya. He had a point, so I ended up apologizing. I struggled to find the time among the many things vying for my attention, I couldn't guarantee their safety either, but that didn't need to be mentioned. There's no reason to bring up trivialities that just make the kids feel uncomfortable. So I just brushed it off and promised to visit more often.

After that, I guided Yuuki and the children to the inn that I was very proud of.

Separate from the section housing the kings and nobles of each country, this was a private sector for the executives to stay in.

After seeing Yuuki off to his room, I turned to look at the kids.

"I'm sorry but I have things left to do. I think I can only meet you at night."

" " "Huuuh—?!" " " the kids cried out in dissatisfaction.

“Hush!” I took out a pendant and showed it to the sulking kids to quiet them down.

“I considered using this to play a game—?”

Before the words could leave my lips, the kids’ eyes lit up, gone was their bellyaching as they were captivated with what I was about to say.

Once I confirmed that I had captured their attention, I continued to explain.

“Check it out, this is a free pass to all of the street stalls that will be installed for the festival starting tomorrow. With this, you can eat and drink at any store, all you want, and you can freely enter any event venues as well. However, the budget has an upper limit, it’s 100 silver coins—use them all up, and it’s game over. If that happens, you must go back to your room, where homework will be waiting for you as punishment. If you have kept up with your studies until now, you’ll be able to have a blast for all three days. So, do you want to play my game?”

I knew from the start that I would be saddled with taking care of the kids, so I concocted a way to compensate in advance. To get the most out of a festival, having money to spend on snacks and trinkets is indispensable. Allowing them to roam freely was the main idea. I felt sorry that I couldn’t be with them, but I thought that the kids would be able to enjoy going around by themselves.

Souei and his subordinates were on duty for surveillance inside the city. Even if they were to go their separate ways, I already had it set up for them to be monitored in secret.

And so I had prepared for the kids to be able to enjoy themselves without worry. The amount of allowance was an unconventional 100 silver coins. Most of the things they’d sell at the street stalls wouldn’t even be worth 1 silver coin, so it would be hard for them to spend it all in three days. It was a game in name only, a simple excuse.

“I wanna play!”

“There seem to be a lot of weird things, you’re excited, right, Ken?”

“Yup. It seems like fun!”

“Thank you, sensei.”

“Oh, we’ll also buy you a present, sensei!”

The kids fell for my scheme, hook, line, and sinker. They were overcome with excitement in anticipation of the festival that started tomorrow.

I gave out a pendant to each of the kids, then looked them up-and-down before nodding. I thought to myself, *it’s only natural for there to be a lot of excitement on the eve of a festival.*

I had considered telling them that Ramiris was in town, but I decided against it. I had planned for them to meet at the end of the festival anyway, there was no need to rush. Additionally, the kids, with Kenya and Alice in the lead, seemed like they were busy making plans for the next three days starting tomorrow.

For the remaining time, the hotel’s waitresses would be taking care of the kids.

“Then, you guys, if something happens, tell it to the waitresses in the inns. I don’t imagine this would become necessary, but if you really want to contact me, hold the pendant and pray in your mind. It will activate magic that sends messages.”

“ “ “Okay!” ” ”

It sparked joy in me, seeing the kids answer so energetically. I didn't think the kids would be raising a ruckus anymore, so I slipped out of the room.

And with this, I could mark the end of today's checklist.

There was still a little time before the eve of the festival and I thought of resting for a bit in preparation for tonight, but... It didn't seem like it would go the way I wanted it to.

“—Rimuru sama, it seems that ‘hero’ Masayuki’s party has arrived outside the city,” Souei quietly appeared to report and whispered into my ear.

*A hero, huh.*

*Let's see what kind of guy he is.*

With that mindset, I went to meet him right away.

A wagon with several elves who I suspected had been caught as slaves came into view. The story of them being saved from a criminal organization called ‘Orthrus(Slave Trade Union)’ was, apparently, true. The wagon looked fairly high-class and they seemed to have been treated well.

A blond boy was riding on a small sized carriage, separate from that wagon. He was in the driver’s seat, but there was another man who was holding the reins.

*Is that boy the ‘hero’ Masayuki?*

He appeared to be Japanese, but his face also looked kinda like a foreigner.

*Should I say he looks like an idol?*

Smooth blond hair and deep double eyelids in his long narrow eyes—he had a bit of a baby face, but on the whole he looked cool. He was a considerably handsome young lad.

Frankly, he didn’t look strong at all. But I must not be fooled by his appearance.

Masayuki was definitely an otherworlder. Because, although it was weak, he was exuding ‘Heroic Act.’ It was a coercive force, but it didn’t work on me. I didn’t dare to get careless and tense up. While acting composed, I turned my gaze towards Masayuki. And his party seemed to have recognized me too, as I came to meet them. They slowly proceeded and came to a stop in front of me, then approached on foot.

“Hey, are you that demon lord called Rimuru? To think that you would come to meet us.”

“Masayuki-sama is a great hero. Obviously, he cannot be ignored, even by a demon lord.”

“Hehehe. Masayuki-kun, what should we do? Should we declare a winner right now?”

*They seem to be babbling whatever nonsense they pleased, these humans. I'm thankful for them saving the elves, but I don't see a reason to listen to this.*

But I held back, it would’ve been foolish to get angry here.

I was promoting myself as a benevolent, not harmful demon lord, who made up with even Hinata. It was out of the question to make all those efforts go to waste.

“Wow, you’re pushing it a little too far, hero and company. As thanks for saving the elves, who became my subjects, I will permit you to stay in this town. If you really need it, I will prepare a place for your stay as well, so feel free to stick around as long as you want. However, I do not plan to fight here, keep that in mind.”

There were many merchants around, and I decided to lower myself by showing a friendly attitude for now. However, the response wasn't favorable.

"Haha, as expected, the demon lord fears Masayuki," bellowed the guy who acted as a coachman, a man with a big body dressed in armor that still left him half-naked, and leered down at me with a fierce sneer.

"You wanna get along with us humans, but I wonder how much of that we can believe. Rumor has it that the one who plotted the downfall of Farmus was you, demon lord. You might have deceived Hinata the Saint, but if you think you can do the same with Masayuki-kun, it'll get ugly."

*Is this what they describe as being "slow to catch on"?* It felt like he was trying to paint me as the villain. But what puzzled me was how the hero himself remained silent until the end. Every time he seemed to be about to say something, his party members cut him off.

The lengths to which they were going suggested they were Masayuki's attendants, rather than his teammates.

"Hmph! We need to punish the evil beings. Masayuki-sama, let's defeat this demon lord right now and bring peace to this land—"

*No, you see, this land is already peaceful.*

*The merchants nearby were left out of the loop and I saw them making bewildered expressions,* this was one pot I couldn't let them keep stirring. That said, I couldn't just fight them then and there, either...

I was brewing over this conundrum when someone stepped in with a helping hand.

"What are you guys doing here?"

Yuuki had changed his clothes when he heard the commotion and made his way over.

"Ah, Yuuki-san!" Masayuki called out, speaking for the first time.

Just like me, he sounded like he had found a light in the darkness.

But his attendant's reaction was cold.

"Huh, well, if it isn't Yuuki-san. Did the head of the association purposely come to inspect the demon lord?"

"No, Jinrai. You guys, Rimuru-san really wants to establish a friendly relationship with us. As evidence, you are still alive."

*It seems like the big guy's name is Jinrai.*

Yuuki told him that I was strong enough to end in a draw with Hinata. Additionally, he explained to Masayuki's party that I was not a bad demon lord. Yet despite that there was someone who couldn't accept it.

"What do you mean? Listening to your explanation, it sounds like you're saying that Masayuki-sama is weaker than Hinata the Saint?"

"I would be grateful if you didn't look down on us. Something like a demon lord is no match for Masayuki-sama. Even if you are the head of the freedom association, we cannot forgive you for insulting Masayuki-sama!!"

Masayuki had yet to say anything, but his attendants were raving zealots.

“That’s right, Yuuki-san. Like Bernie and Jiwu said, you know we cannot forgive you belittling Masayuki-san? I have no clue how strong Hinata is, but you’re saying that at best she’s tied with that demon lord there. Then don’t you think it’s time to lay down the trump card? Masayuki-sama will make light of that demon lord and flatten him to the ground!”

But Masayuki seemed to be at a loss, hearing the reaction of his entourage.

*Maybe Masayuki himself doesn’t want to fight with me?*

Perhaps Yuuki noticed that as well, he started to calm down Jinrai and his other colleagues.

“I told you to calm down. I’ve said this multiple times already, but Rimuru-san isn’t hostile against us. There is no point in fighting.”

“But that guy is a demon lord. We don’t know when he’ll do bad things. Right now, when even the Western Holy Church moved out, don’t you think it’s an important time for Masayuki-san to show his strength as a hero?”

“No, you see—”

*Uh—um, that seems to be the case.*

It’s not like I didn’t understand this guy, Jinrai’s claims. In short, he was saying that I, as a demon lord, had no credibility. For sure he’s right. Considering the fact that many didn’t know I was formerly human, it was a given that there would be people who thought like Jinrai. I didn’t know what the man known as the hero, Masayuki, thought, but if we kept this going, this conversation would’ve gone nowhere, which is why I decided to accept the challenge. But—

“All right. Then under one condition. In the festival that will start tomorrow, we plan to hold a tournament. If you go out there and win handsomely, then I will accept your challenge! You can prove your strength there, so I assume you have no problems with that?”

I would accept the challenge. But before that, I offered it in exchange for Masayuki’s party to participate in the tournament. Doing that, I would be able to learn their skills and possibly not have to fight them at all.

*Huhu, I think this is an awesome idea.*

Although deciding who to put in the tournament would prove to be difficult. And there was one more issue.

I had planned for people below A rank to participate, so the structural integrity of the arena had me a bit worried. It could endure magic of high ranked spiritual level—in other words, A rank magic, but... Oh well, if it breaks, we can just fix it. As long as there were no injuries among the spectators, it probably wouldn’t be a big problem.

“Oh ho? Do you want to be embarrassed in front of countless people?”

“Masayuki-kun, how should we do this?”

“You have to accept this proposal. For us to spread Masayuki-sama’s name in one fell swoop, let’s demonstrate justice in front of the people we should protect!”

“Ah, yes. That’s right...”

Attendants with burning desires. In contrast, Masayuki’s eyes kept darting left and right like a lamb at sea.



*Is that guy all right? Is he perhaps a novice who likes to brag a lot... No, that can't be.*

According to Souei's reports, 'Orthrus' was a considerably dangerous organization. Masayuki and his comrades crushed an illegal organization like that, that's not something a novice who just likes to brag could do.

If what I was thinking was right, then he would decline my offer.

"—I guess I have no choice. I will accept your offer."

Sure enough, I was overthinking things. Masayuki had thought for a moment and then accepted my offer.

"Wait, Masayuki-kun. Will it be all right?" Yuuki asked in a worried voice, Masayuki replied with a bitter smile, "Well, even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise. Things will definitely turn out all right, like they usually do," Masayuki declared.

*He's got a lot of guts for saying that with me standing in front of him.* As far as my observation went, it didn't seem like I needed to worry about it too much.

"Well, I wonder if the tournament will stay free of casualties? I hope you'll be careful."

"Hmph, who do you think you're talking to? Let's go, Masayuki-san. Let's rest a lot in preparation for tomorrow."

"Since there are a lot of eyes on us, the demon lord won't do anything cowardly, Masayuki-kun."

"Don't worry. I'm always on guard against poisoning or assassination."

"Th-then we shall go. Let's check the time for tomorrow's match."

With that, Masayuki's party went on their way.

"Rimuru-san, will you actually fight in earnest with Masayuki-kun?"

"Uh-um, I guess? First of all, that guy, do you think he'll win?"

"Ah, I want to know that as well. In the tournaments held in the Kingdom of Ingracia, Masayuki-kun remains undefeated. I never actually heard of him losing in a fight with monsters, and his skills are still unknown..." Yuuki answered with a sigh.

His face looked pained, as if saying that an annoying problem had reared its head.

"Well, let it go for now. Instead, it's pretty fortunate that a hero joined the tournament lineup, raising the bar; I'll think of it as a good thing."

Having the right mindset can change everything.

Things definitely became tiresome, but compared to the Walpurgis banquet and the fight with Hinata, this wasn't something to worry about too much. I probably had to think of a solution later, but I decided to put it on the back burner for now.



Later that night, in the lobby of the extravagantly decorated parlor house, the important figures

of each country were gathered in once place. There was a large number of nobles attending, each garbed in luxurious and flashy clothing.

Looking at the ratio between men and women, I felt like there were a couple more men. It seemed like we were afforded a considerable amount of trust, considering how many brought their wife and kids as well. Among them I saw a cute blonde-haired girl, who looked like a doll. There were attendees of all different ages, it seemed.

This time people could participate freely, leading me to put a lot of effort into this being a fun party. It was arranged so that the people can enjoy meals while standing, with various dishes placed on buffet tables for guests to enjoy as they strolled around.

Additionally, we had set up curiosities that were unheard of in any other country. Among them was a “tatami room,” which covered half of the wide space, and where it was prohibited to wear your shoes. In many countries it wasn’t customary to take off your shoes, therefore I only saw people enter from time to time. But it wasn’t like it remained deserted, I could occasionally witness people sitting down and getting flustered by the unfamiliar sitting cushions—King Gazel was one of them. It wasn’t his first time experiencing this, so he seemed quite at home, and we chatted for a brief moment.

I was told that he inspected the city’s developmental situation this morning, and things like the sewage system, as well as the work-in-progress rails, caught his eye. Not only that, but I heard he was also staring at the facilities and recreational equipment that I came up with on a whim, like he would gobble them all up.

“That thing called a ‘rail,’ with what purpose did you make it?”

“I have something to consult you about, regarding it. I plan to develop a thing called a ‘train.’ I hope that I can count on your assistance.”

“Oh-ho? Since it’s a request from my adorable junior, gladly—how could I ever refuse?” King Gazel announced his decision on the spot.

He probably weighed the benefits after laying eyes on the rails and saw the potential. If he were this enthusiastic about it, he would likely have disregarded a “no” and vehemently insisted on joining the project, leaving me little choice, other than bringing him on board straight away.

During my discussion about it with Gazel, a man came up, saying, “Excuse me,” and sat down at the seat facing me. A familiar face—it was Youm. He confidently plopped down in front of King Gazel, who received him with a grin and liberally poured Youm a glass of wine.

A king of a developing nation confidently speaking with Gazel, king of a mighty nation. Those who saw this, would, no doubt, reevaluate their stance on Youm.

After Youm cut in, we started shooting the breeze and eventually ended our conversation. Gazel’s goal was to show that we had a friendly relationship, and as a result, profiteers would have no choice but to gauge me and Youm as high value. Those who carefully observe the Dwarf King Gazel—that assessment will raise my worth in future dealings with them. This was, in a sense, King Gazel’s way of supporting us.

In all likelihood, it came down to him running the numbers on what I had told him before,

and ultimately concluding that Dwargon stood to gain a great deal, but I was eminently thankful regardless.

*Gazel sure is trustworthy. I saw a new side of him.*

There were those who went ahead and experienced the large bathhouse before the eve of the festival. Most deemed it favorable and had asked many questions to the one in charge of the bathhouse. I heard there were large bathhouses in other big countries, though many found the hot spring itself to be breathtaking. The ingredients providing the medicinal effects were a tightly guarded secret, severely hampering attempts to reproduce it.

I had received copious requests, asking us to introduce them to their countries as well, but I decided to gather and file those guests' requests for later review.

That said, all I could tell them was to please visit us often.

Among the people who were satisfied after soaking in the bath, several were now sitting in the tatami room with a yukata we provided them. It painted a dignified image, with them throwing glances at each other in admiration of the outfits.

In the midst of this, there were people who wanted to speak to me one-on-one, though talking with everyone would've stretched me too thinly, so I only met those I encountered at a fortunate time, and proceeded to make my way across to sit in the seat of honor.

Many people were seeing me for the first time, so, understandably, I could feel a lot of curious looks being thrown at me. From those who turned pale, knowing I was a demon lord, and on the other hand, those who observed me attentively, it was a mixed bag. Their prickling gazes were unnerving, so I greeted them lightly and immediately announced the start of the banquet.

"Ah, it is a pleasure for me to welcome you here today. I am Demon Lord Rimuru. I would prefer for this night to be free of serious topics, and instead would like to direct you towards our nation's dishes that I hope you will enjoy. Long speeches are not my strength, so please excuse me for cutting it short. I wish you all a grand time; let the party begin!"

The preparation was perfect. The way we served the dishes was the cherry on top. I hoped our sincerity could be conveyed fully.

Each table had a waitress assigned and Vesta strictly educated them to bring dishes with every request. Everything was laid out to serve the guests—the results of intense education and training were now on full display.

I called for a toast after I finished my greeting.

The eve of the festival had been set in motion.

Gasps swept through the crowds as they all drank a glass of cold beer. Tempest's beer must have been surprising to those who had only tried poorly carbonated drinks before. After all, they were kept freezing cold.

The method of preparing a cold glass cup, was something taught by the meticulous style of Japanese service. Even for my own sake, it wasn't something I could compromise on.

Not only that, but elven ladies were pouring alcohol. It wasn't forced, you know? I only accepted those who voluntarily offered to help.

This was another huge success. Beautiful elven ladies were roaming around the banquet hall carrying various kinds of alcoholic beverages. Those who were accustomed to wearing formal dress seemed to be enraptured by the yukata adorned elves' voluptuous figures. In addition, the way the elves greeted the guests by putting three fingers on the floor, shook the hearts of men equally among all nations. I could see their faces turn red even when they weren't drunk. The view of the elves' chests, laid bare behind the yukata, must've been an alluring sight.

*Hehehe. Like I intended.*

I would say that this was the pinnacle of merging western and Japanese traditional culture. The heterogenous mixture of those clad in yukatas among the nobles wearing formal attire made for quite the scene—it was something you could only see here.

That was what we planned, but, nonetheless, it ended up being a wildly chaotic party. From a commonsense standpoint, this really looked like a mess. But if this bothered you, then you had already lost.

I acted as if this was the norm and observed the condition of the guests.

The extravagant dishes on the tables were made by Shuna and Yoshida, who went through a lot of effort to create delectable meals, and I could confidently say that the guests would all be satisfied with them. Smoked chicken-duck meat and sandwiches filled with vegetables, cow-deer steak, fried vegetables marinated in sauce, karaage fried chicken, roast beef salad.

We also prepared a sherbet made with an assortment of fruits as refreshments, and going so far as to recreate dishes like the black tiger meat stew and grilled fairy-leather bird from the Walpurgis banquet. Although we had quite a hard time looking for the monsters we could use as ingredients, we were somehow able to track them down within three days, using the information we had gathered before.

We were able to satisfy the aristocrats, who were accustomed to luxury, with the dishes made from precious ingredients that were the pride of our country.

That wasn't all. In the banquet hall, at the dividing line between the Japanese traditional space and the western space, a large fish was being carted in. It was a fish with an extremely hard exoskeleton and a sharp, spear-like horn. This abominable ocean monster was called a "spear tuna," and, excluding the horn, had grown to four meters in length of heinous-looking fish.

Now, the reason why we brought this fish. It had, in fact, a delicious, savory taste to all of that blubber, which was unthinkable, based solely on its appearance. Under the armor-like exoskeleton, red meat that looked similar to tuna was hidden.

I actually caught the fish by coincidence during the course of a competitive fishing match, which Gobta and I had placed bets on, and, fortunately, I thought to use 'Analyze and Assess' before tossing it away. It was found to have non-toxic and highly nutritious meat. I dipped it in our commercially available soy sauce before giving it a try, and...it was exceptionally delicious.

I remembered this savory treat and decided to unveil it before everyone at the banquet, so

I went out by myself and caught one. I was used to traveling under water, so it was a great experience. But we'd have someone else catch it next time.

So anyway, the fish was a recent catch and still fresh.

Hakurou was responsible for cutting the fish, and using the long kitchen knife Kurobee had forged, he made us sashimi previously. But this time, as a performance to entertain the guests, the process of preparing the dish was slowly shown in front of everyone.

Hakurou's kitchen knife was flying to and fro, avoiding the hard exoskeleton armor. The spear tuna was dismembered in a beautiful display of artistic skill. It was something even Shuna would be astonished with. Holding that kitchen knife, he made the impression of a dignified master.

Behind me, Shion was holding the kitchen knife I had gifted her, looking like she wanted to help out, but I calmed her down, telling her to bear it this time.

We had invited numerous prominent figures from foreign countries, so naturally, we absolutely could not present a dish prepared by unskilled hands. This wasn't something we could play off as a joke. I just hoped Shion could properly fulfill her role as my secretary and guard.

As for the reactions coming from the guests, at first, they were frightened and scared by the grotesque sight, but, as Hakurou's excellent performance of carving up the fish progressed, their faces started to shine with admiration.

The head was discarded, and the body was divided into four pieces, then sliced up as the plates were loaded with sashimi. In the middle laid the marbled belly meat, enveloped by red meat. The mouthwatering sight alone had me drooling, but the majority of people present hadn't tried it before and remained hesitant, waiting for someone to make the first move.

Hakurou looked at those crowds and made sushi as well.



It was a specialty that I had not expected him to have.

White rice, alcohol, vinegar, cooking wine, and soy sauce—these alone opened the door to a vast assortment of sophisticated dishes. That said, I had never seriously expected that I would be able to eat authentic sushi in this world. As it turned out, back when Hakurou was young, he often heard his grandfather mention...he had fond memories of sushi, its taste forever eluding him since his arrival in this world. He must've been deeply embittered by that.

Thinking of it this way, I sure was a lucky guy. Hinata said this as well, claiming that reproducing Japanese dishes in this world would normally be a highly ambitious endeavor.

Well, that's that, but getting back to Hakurou's grandfather.

I clearly heard that he was an otherworlder named “Byakuya Araki”; *perhaps he could've been someone from the Edo era? I don't think he was a chef; I wonder just what era he was from.*

*Well, all right. It doesn't really matter. For now, let's just enjoy the night.*

There were a lot of people gathered around the buffet tables of the standing party section. The dishes were well received, and people were singing their praises. After all, Shuna and Yoshida pulled out all of the stops, so I just nodded, thinking that kind of reception was to be expected. In stark contrast, no one seemed to want to even touch the fish sashimi and sushi Hakurou had prepared. They might have been intimidated after laying eyes upon the horrid sight of the spear tuna. But It seems like anywhere you go, there will always be those who want to appear knowledgeable, despite not knowing anything. You could hear people saying “Ah, could that fish be the Rank A...”

*There's no way that raw fish being served right after getting sliced would taste any good—I would like it if they stopped saying things they didn't know and tried a bite instead.*

It was possible to check for poison in this world, so it surely didn't come down to a fear of getting poisoned. They had jumped to the conclusion that it would be a lousy dish, due to the appearance.

No one was willing to take the first step, leading me to seize the initiative.

“I shall try it.”

“Ohh, then please try this.”

Hakurou made the effort to make me a new piece of sushi with the belly meat. I dipped it in soy sauce and took a bite. The strong scent of the wasabi and the buttery belly meat that melts in your mouth complemented each other spectacularly, exploding in a heavenly taste.

Delicious...!!

*It's so delicious. I doubt the places in Ginza<sup>6</sup> could even keep up with this?!*

“It's the best, Hakurou!!”

“Of course. The fish that came in was so delightful, it had me worried that we wouldn't have any left, however, it's a pity that it hasn't been well received. But I'm looking forward to the post-dinner drinks.”

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<sup>6</sup>One of Tokyo's top shopping districts, Ginza is packed with upmarket boutiques and ritzy cocktail and sushi bars.

Hakurou's colleagues would have their meal after the guests left, so it seemed like they planned on saving some sashimi to go along with sake. It was unfortunate that the guests didn't take too well to it, but if they were going to be picky about their food, that would be fine as well. Rather, it might've actually been what Hakurou and co. wanted and couldn't be thankful enough for.

However, Hakurou's plan went up in smoke.

"Could you make sushi with that belly meat and without the wasabi?"

Someone turned up, making a comment that left me dumbfounded. *Not only did she ask for the belly meat from the start, but she even asked to remove the wasabi?*

"What are you, a kid?"

"Shut up, I don't like the burning sensation in my nose," Was the arrogant retort coming from none other than Hinata.

Hinata, wearing a simple evening dress meant to be worn outside, ordered the sushi like it was natural.

"I would also like it if there was a wider variety of fish."

As if that wasn't enough, she stepped it up with such a cocky request. Not only did she want the wasabi to be removed, but also more kinds of fish? Surely, the wasabi part could be a difference in preference, granted, it could be hard to handle for people trying it for the first time. I, too, asked to remove the wasabi when ordering, that is, until I was in middle school. But now as an adult, I believed that you could only say that you were eating it properly, if you knew how to relish the taste of wasabi.

"What nonsense. That's neither here nor there, all that matters, is that it's delicious," she smirked at me.

*...But she did have a point. That damn Hinata, she fired back a logical response without a flinch.*

Although Hinata was like that, she received the plate Hakurou was handing her with a broad smile on her face. She closed her eyes as she slowly placed the sushi in her mouth.

"It's really great. The sashimi, and the sushi as well... I'm a tad angry, but I respect you, Rimuru."

She seemed satisfied, savoring the belly meat to her heart's content.

"Then I would like one as well. Ah, I'm not a child, so you can include the wasabi."

Yuuki came by, following Hinata. Seeing how he was dropping light, sarcastic remarks, he had likely been watching us from the start. Despite already having loaded up in the buffet area, his appetite remained unwavering. As he was receiving the plate from Hakurou, he immediately shoved the sushi into his mouth and started chewing, as if he had been waiting for it.

"Wow, it melts on your tongue! To think that I would be able to have sushi this delicious in this world, I'm slightly moved," he said as he moved his hand towards the sashimi as well, beaming with glee.

Seeing Yuuki like that, Hinata also shot a sarcastic remark, "It sure tastes differently from freshwater fish. I had made a request to the Freedom Association, but they denied it and even

said that it cannot be sent through magic, so I had given up, but it seems like my joy in life will increase a bit from now on.”

Hinata had said that she wanted to eat seafood dishes and had previously requested Yuuki to transport it. But it proved to be too difficult, and facing far too many problems, so in the end, the request went unfulfilled.

To get him back for the wasabi incident, Hinata brought up that topic.

“There was nothing I could do? The sea to the north is inhabited by large beasts, so it’s too dangerous, and the south is unviable because of the distance. And transporting the fish from the inland sea is prohibitively expensive,” Yuuki bitterly replied, with a troubled face and a wry smile.

Yes. The market of this world was still fragile. Sure enough, as I expected, people who lived inland usually didn’t get the chance to eat freshly caught fish. It was because of the innate hurdles that made the transportation of seafood a laborious task. You could only transport small amounts with carriages and keeping them frozen was tricky. The only options were hiring a mage exclusively for this task or preparing large quantities of ice in each city. Even with all of that, it remained uncertain whether or not the freshness of the fish could be preserved throughout the journey from the coast to the inland cities.

If you weren’t among the fairly rich, the luxury of eating fresh fish would remain beyond your grasp. It was something entirely unthinkable to most.

Taking into account that dishes with steamed fish could be had, you could say that the problem came down to distribution. That issue was being improved upon like I had hoped. Seizing this opportunity, we could make the existence of luxury dishes exclusive to our country’s public knowledge. When the time would come, we planned to organize a logistics network, but until then, our country would monopolize it.

Perhaps it was the appearance of the spear tuna that made the guests reluctant, or maybe they were hesitating because of the disparity in food culture, but either way, there was still no one daring to touch the sushi and fish sashimi.

However, Yuuki and Hinata were doing their part in flipping the public sentiment by showering the sushi with praise.

“Rimuru-sama, may we try that as well?” asked the man sitting to the side of Gazel, as he stood up and came towards me. This person was the head of the Pegasus Knights Dolph.

“Yes, all right. I shall bring it to you.”

In reaction to my words, Hakurou’s hands sprang into rapid action. Freshly made sushi, sashimi, and soups were lined up and served by the elven ladies. The dishes were placed one by one in front of Gazel and Youm’s party, who were sitting in the tatami room.

*Now, let’s see how they react?*

“—Hmm, this definitely is outstanding.”

“Kua, this is delicious!!”

Gazel ate sashimi while enjoying the cold, Japanese alcohol. And the feelings they expressed were those of amazement.

Youm did as Youm does, dropping all semblance of royalty as he was enraptured by his first time eating sushi. And the reaction of everyone at the table was the same.

“To think that that infernal fish could be this delicious!”

“Speaking of fish, I thought that frying it was the way to go...”

“Well, what does it matter as long as it’s scrumptious.”

“Every dish Rimuru-sama provides is spectacular, without fail!”

*That's a relief.* I was elated to find that everyone seemed satisfied.

And then—a lot of heads had turned to watch Gazel’s company and saw their reactions.

“I, I too want to try that!” one person shouted, followed by a stampede of others, scrambling to order from Hakuro in a frenzy.

It became all the rage. Hakuro made a very slight happy expression, at the same time it was tainted with wistfulness.

I got where he was coming from. In this situation, he wouldn’t have any left to eat with sake later. *Actually, I have another spear tuna that I caught, so I should hand it to him later in secret.*

After Hinata and Yuuki had a light quarrel, they voiced their opinions on things and argued while having a drink.

*I'm not sure whether they get along or not.*

But at the end of the day, you could thank their quarrel for acting as a successful promotion. I didn’t want to bother them now and decided it would be better to thank them later.

The banquet proceeded with minor incidents here and there. So far, it was a great success. Western and Japanese dishes, both were very popular.

Attendance of tonight’s party was voluntary, but, despite this, many people had participated.

I didn’t forget to imply that the food’s ingredients were in store for those willing to trade with us in the future.

In short, that was also part of the plan. My job was to subtly promote things this way. The purpose wasn’t merely to wallow in luxury. I wasn’t burning money to satiate my greed; it was just a thorough preparation for times like this!

—That was my excuse at least.

Anyway, that’s that. Even if I were to think of it that way, the banquet was proceeding as smoothly as planned, except...

“Bi-big trouble!!” a soldier rushed into the parlor house, shouting.

It seemed like a problem was afoot.



Naturally, we had soldiers stationed around the parlor house. There were even the escorts of the prominent figures that came, all together it was very crowded outside the building.

Under those circumstances, the likelihood of the problem being a massive headache to solve was high.

“Why, what’s wrong?” I slowly asked to calm the soldier down.

I wanted to run out and check the situation, but I couldn’t show myself panicking as well—I spoke with that thought in mind. But before the soldier could even reply, the escorts from each of the countries came running in a panic.

*What is happening here?!* The security should have been airtight; if something were to happen, it would be very disgraceful.

I didn’t feel a big aura approaching us, and it wasn’t like a monster had appeared either. If something like that had happened, we would’ve noticed it sooner. Milim and Karion’s group seemed to be a bit late, but even if they did arrive, the soldiers wouldn’t have panicked. Then what exactly…

“A large flying object came flying outside the city!!” the soldier looking at me reported, soon to be drowned out by the escorts from other countries informing each of their masters.

“Reporting! The Sorcerer’s Dynasty’s Guardian Dragon King has appeared!!”

“B-big problem here! E-Elmesia El-Ru Sarion, the Emperor herself is coming down here right now!!”

“Her Imperial Majesty Elmesia and her entourage are approaching this location right now!!”

They all shouted in disarray, so I was stunned for a bit, but without having to put together all of the pieces I heard, it seemed like Sarion’s empress was just arriving late.

“Ah, don’t scare me like that. I was wondering what happened.”

I mumbled absentmindedly, which prompted Gazel to rise from his seat and move beside me, with a dumbfounded expression.

“You’re the same as ever, carefree and without a clue how the world works. If the Divine Emperor Elmesia came out of her country, then it’s natural for this commotion to happen. The humans from each country and even I have to be careful and watch her complexion, if that divine empress is the opponent, then it would be hard to handle. Even the people who aren’t here right now must be panicking and sending messengers to their countries.”

“What do you mean?”

As I asked for a more detailed explanation, Gazel dove into it as if he had been waiting for the opportunity. *This guy, even if he talks a lot, I get the impression that he just wants to show off*

*to me by expounding his proud knowledge. Either way, it was honestly a big help nonetheless, so I don't really have any complaints, I thought while listening to the breakdown.*

According to Gazel, the Sorcerer's Dynasty Sarion was a superpower. It was one that held national power on the order of magnitude comparable to the Armed Nation of Dwargon, without even participating in the Western States Council. And just like the name "Dynasty" implied, it was a federation formed by 13 royal families.

If you were to compare the levels of influence, the Western States Council was undoubtedly the most powerful. However, as long as they upheld the council system they adopted, they lacked the efficacy to take immediate action. Leveraging that flaw, Dwargon was, in contrast, an absolute monarchy under the rule of Gazel, allowing it to exert more influence than the Western States Council, despite falling behind in total strength. Likewise, the same was true for Sarion.

"The empress of the Sorcerer's Dynasty Sarion, Elmesia, holds absolute power. She calls herself a descendant of god and declared herself the divine empress. I don't know the truth, but it is an undisputed fact that the high elf with the name Elmesia revived the country. So, that girl lived longer than Sarion's history."

They were on fundamentally different levels. The Armed Nation of Dwargon spanned 1000 years of history. Compared to that, the history of Sorcerer's Dynasty Sarion was known to go back at least 2000 years.

"And so, Rimuru, before Elmesia, even I can't raise my head. Much more, to humans with their short lifespans, it's impossible to even think of meeting her."

Seeing how Gazel made a bitter expression, the person called Empress Elmesia must've been a very troublesome person to deal with.

*Uh-um, I was planning to invite only Duke Elalude... I ended up calling the absurd bigwig as well.*

"Ah, I see. I should have written proper names in the invitation."

"...I don't think that's the problem here."

Gazel stared at me through narrow eyes; she had already arrived, it would be a fool's errand to make her leave. I had no choice but to do my best to receive her.

During our conversation, a commotion had been brewing at the entrance.

"Looks like they arrived."

"Do not get careless, Rimuru. Just think of her as a beast who's been through all sorts of hardships."

I took Gazel's insistent words to heart and prepared myself for an abnormal encounter. I looked at Gazel and nodded firmly to show that I understood.

A great commotion broke loose inside the parlor house. Someone who you normally could never meet, no, not only that, the empress of a superpower, who had not shown herself for tens of years, appeared. I should say it was natural for others to be causing a ruckus.

Empress Elmesia El-Ru Sarion. Someone who called herself a divine empress, was con-

fidently walking into the venue. An incarnation of beauty, was the thought passing through everyone's head as they gawked, bereft of words, at Empress Elmesia.

I thought that as well. Because that appearance, no matter from which angle you looked, she was a beautiful girl. She had skin as white as freshly fallen snow, and soft, silver hair. Sharp, pointy ears and jade green eyes that seemed to see through everything.

Gazel said she was a girl, so she definitely had to be female.

If she was a high elf, then did that mean she was a pure-blooded fairy? Or she might've had blood that was infinitely close to pure. Calling her a fairy addresses too broad of a category, but they were said to be a race that evolved from great spirits, so this Elmesia standing before me seemed to be one of those ancient beasts from a time long gone. She was a big enough deal to warrant a warning from Gazel.

I also needed to remain vigilant of the guardians protecting the Empress. From each and every one, I felt extreme power, despite them wearing formal garments. It must've been magic armor, and this was just my guess, but they were legendary-grade. The power I felt emanating from those formal clothes was equivalent to the feeling I got from the Moonlight rapier Hinata wielded. Their skills would, naturally, be on equal footing with Arnaud and the Holy Knights. No, thinking about the quality of their weapons and armor, the Empress's guards might've been superior.

*The world sure is big*—that thought passed through my mind.

Holding back one of her guardians from stepping forward, the Empress herself approached.

“I am thankful for the invitation. I am happy about it.”

A mellow voice—I almost mistook it for charm magic, but it wasn't magic at all. It was simply her voice being that charming.

“I, too, am honored to meet you,” I answered in front of her, at which point I could see my own reflection in Elmesia's jade green eyes.

«Notice. ‘Mind Interference’ detected—Interrupted. This doesn't seem like an attack, just an effect of ‘Heroic Spirit’ that seeped out.»

This was dangerous. This person seemed to have a higher level of ‘Heroic Spirit’ than even Gazel. In other words, her strength was not only equal to Gazel, but there was a chance that she was able to top it.

*Maybe she's a demon lord class?* It would be good not to be hostile towards this person. This was a peaceful invitation; I would try my best to appease her in the hopes of friendly relations in the future.

“Then, though it may not be up to standard, we have prepared meals as well. I hope you will enjoy yourself tonight.”

“Hmm, I am happy to receive such consideration from Rimuru-sama. I expect a lot from the festival that will take place tomorrow, so please make me happy. And—“ she said with a leisurely smile, then brought her face near mine, and whispered in a hushed voice only I could hear, “It doesn't have to be today, but I hope you can make time for me. There's something I'd like to discuss with an open heart, in a less formal setting.”

That informal way of speaking must've been Elmesia's true self. As someone who was still not used to being a stern and dangerous demon lord, but had to play the part nonetheless, this made me feel a bit more intimate with her. And so, I answered: "All right. I'll contact you when the date is decided."

Elmesia nodded with a look of satisfaction, then retreated to her guards' protective circle.

And just like that, Elmesia gave a cute, entertaining smile to the people who were preparing to meet her for the first time, while walking towards the table laden with food.

On a side note, I was wondering why Duke Elalude, the person I initially invited, was nowhere to be seen, when I landed eye-contact with one of the Empress's escorts. *No, wait a minute. That person is Duke Elalude?!* He had such a gallant expression that I almost went past him, but anyway, he apparently had come along. We only caught a passing greeting by sight, but I thought that I should say hello to him later.



It was a short conversation, yet a very tiring one. I was so exhausted that, while all eyes were on Elmesia, I snagged the opportunity to go and sit down in the tatami room. I thought tonight would be easy-going, because participation was optional, but a bigwig just had to show up.

"Yeah, I'm really tired."

"I felt like I was gonna fall over the moment I met her. If I don't keep my mind straight, that grand—"

Gazel swallowed his words and shut his mouth. Then he mumbled a bit and ended up just drinking the cold alcohol.

Seeing as how I could feel a terrible chill coming from Elmesia, that was probably the reason. *I wonder what Gazel was about to say? If it's something that starts with "grand"—then it must be that. They say even ears are sharp, so I'm glad I didn't say it out loud. Loose lips sink ships; I should be careful as well.*

*Ah, whatever, I'll just drink for now.*

I talked with Gazel and Youm about how the world goes around, and this and that, over some drinks.

But our leisure time didn't last long. Noticing how the entrance was starting to get noisy again, I could sense that another bigshot had showed up.

"Our guests have finally arrived."

"Yes, it seems like they're here. I was worried because they were running late," I answered Shion with a nod, then tried to stand up after excusing myself from Gazel. Maybe it was because Youm was familiar with all of this, that he figured out who it was.

“Ah, it’s Milim-san. Seems like she’ll spruce up the evening.”

After having experienced it once before, Youm seemed to be a little in over his head when it came to Milim. On the other hand, since it was only by a bit, then maybe that meant Youm really was that much stronger now? To use “san” with a demon lord was something normal people would never imagine doing, even in their wildest dreams. I thought to myself that Youm really was an awesome guy.

“—I see, the demon lords have arrived.”

Gazel was also observing Milim and her group with a sharp eye, but Youm’s words seemed to have tipped him off. Well, many others had also recognized them.

No wonder, since Benimaru, Diablo, Geld, and even Gabil, four of our country’s executives were there as guides.

Even Gazel was tense when seeing the group, because the ones who stepped into the parlor house, with the executives guiding them, were ten powerful people, including Milim.

She was in the lead, flanked by two subordinates.

A bald man wearing a priest’s gown—a warrior called Midley who was strong enough to be acknowledged by Benimaru. There was another man wearing a priest’s gown, but with a less serious demeanor—this was the guy known as Hermes, who fought with Gabil.

The ones following the three of them were two former demon lords. ‘Beast Master’ Karion and ‘Sky Queen’ Frey. Karion had a solemn appearance as always, and Frey-san wore a lascivious dress and radiated extreme sexiness. I could feel great dignity from both of them.

My, my, I saw Phobio-kun, who I hadn’t seen for a long time. He seemed a bit thinner, but I am glad he looked healthy.

Looking at the people following Frey, there were two beautiful twin girls. One had silver hair while the other had gold hair, which fit well together. I heard that they were attendants of Frey, called the Twin Wings. I didn’t know they were twins, but they seemed like strong ladies as well. These were rulers of extreme power who accepted Milim as their new queen.

It was hard for people to hide their nervousness, and I honestly couldn’t blame them.

“Sorry. I’ll have to excuse myself for a minute,” I said before leaving to meet Milim’s group.

Milim’s face lit up with a big smile as soon as she saw me.

“Huhuhu, this day finally came! I’ll expect dishes good enough to make Midley shout from the rooftops today!” she announced for everyone to hear.



“Ah, leave that to me,” I answered, then in a subdued voice: “But first of all, didn’t you get scolded?”

Milim often snuck into the dungeon whenever she managed to slip out of Frey’s sight. She was here until yesterday, so her arrival today was also later than planned. I was a little worried about whether she’d been found out and was being scolded by Frey.

“It, it’s okay. I became self-aware that I am a ruler, so I made Frey believe me by emphasizing that I was protecting my borders,” Milim replied in a small voice, claiming she had made Frey accept it.

Seeing how she was sweating bullets and her eyes kept darting back and forth, it didn’t seem like she fully convinced her... Frey had a keen intuition.

What Milim was protecting wasn’t her territory, but the floors of the labyrinth I assigned to her. If that was found out, I, who was wholly unrelated, might get scolded as well. I had no choice but to believe in Milim for now. But—

Even if Milim ended up folding, I could just cling to saying that I had nothing to do with it.

“Thank you for inviting us today. I sincerely apologize for being later than the scheduled time,” Frey came towards me with a greeting, after waiting for my conversation with Milim to end. Then she looked me in the eyes and asked as if it were an interrogation: “Our Lord, Milim, had gone missing until this morning. So it took time to get her changed into formal dress—”

“Ah, hahaha, so that’s it. Ah, I don’t mind, so please enjoy the next few days free of hassle.”

I got the feeling that she could see right through me, so I looked away and politely brushed it aside. Had I been in my slime form, there would be no signs of agitation. But right now I was in my human form, causing me concern over my line of sight betraying my real intentions.

I must not meet eyes with an opponent that had such sharp senses.

“—I will do so. To be invited, despite being indebted to Rimuru-sama for building our new city. I am very grateful,” she answered with a smile, which melted my anxiety away. Then, naturally, I ended up saying something potentially inflammatory.

“No, No. I would hope that the dishes are to your liking. Right, are there any ingredients that you don’t eat? There is a dish made with a bird, if that is a problem—“ Those words slipped past my tongue, before their meaning had caught up to me.

“A, bird...”

A freezing tension suddenly paralyzed me.

*I’m in big trouble*—but it was already too late.

“Ah—”

“Did Rimuru-sama want to say that I am on the same level as a bird?”

“That, wasn’t my intention—”

Frey was still smiling, and the Twin Wings were seething with bloodlust.

I screwed up big time. The saying, “The mouth is the source of trouble,” fits me perfectly right now.

This was unbearable. That moment of suspense filled with worry.

“Pfft. Hahahaha! Amazing, truly amazing, Rimuru. You really are an amazing guy. To

actually treat Frey like a bird, this is a masterpiece,” Karion had burst out in laughter, looking like he couldn’t read the atmosphere.

“Hmm, it’s something even I can’t copy,” Milim said in admiration.

*Don’t do that, please don’t look at me with those sparkling eyes.*

“What’s so funny, Karion? And Milim,” Frey huffed angrily.

No matter how you look at it, this was my fault.

“No, it was just my bad manners. What I just said was a slip of the tongue. I brought up a pointless concern, worrying that you might dislike bird dishes.”

It’s best to apologize truthfully in these situations. Stubbornly insisting on some irrelevant point could lead to a bigger argument. Based on this notion, I bowed my head and apologized in order to appease Frey, despite being in front of everyone. And I was met with surprise from Frey.

“Huhu, how befitting for Rimuru-sama. You’re just as I expected. I knew that you didn’t mean to insult me, though I wanted to test, for a moment, how you would react. But this was very telling. That Milim will grow by your example,” Frey finished, this time showing a gentle smile from the heart.

Milim being a tyrant was a thing of the past. In spite of her current appearance, her tendency to listen to others had markedly increased. Thinking that the reason for that was me, she used my slip of the tongue to test me. And probably intended to let Milim learn from my attitude. Bowing immediately was the correct answer. As long as Milim followed my example, then from Frey’s perspective, of course she’d want to test me. If I had been a bad influence on Milim, then she would no doubt be limiting playtime with me.

This really made me see Frey in a new light. I thought she was just a scary lady, but she seemed to be looking after Milim well.

Then, if we were to talk about bad examples…

“Well, what about you, Ka-ri-on? What’s so funny? Could you explain it clearly for me to understand?”

An incredible pressure seized Karion’s head, strong enough to make cracking sounds. Frey turned to Karion in a flash and grabbed his head with her soft hands. In brute force alone, Karion was far stronger, but looking at grip strength on its own, Frey had the upper hand.

“Wa-wait! Ow, ow-ow-ow, that hurts, really!!”

Frey hardened her arm from the fingertips to her elbows. Her fingernails started to transform into knife blades that were stronger than steel, then continued to grow bigger and embedded themselves in Karion’s head. It looked awfully painful.

“Dangerous, if this gets any worse, it will really be dangerous! I was wrong, I’m sorry, so please forgive me, Frey!!”

Their master was screaming, but the three Beastketeers did not try to move. Only Phobio was worried and didn’t know what to do, and the other two just stared at them looking baffled. Well, Karion still had the strength left to scream. And unlike me, he didn’t seem to be reflecting, so it was a natural consequence of his actions.

“Did you see, Milim? You need to apologize when you make a mistake. That is the right choice, all right?”

“Hmm, okay. Before that, I will try to avoid doing things that will make Frey angry.”

Milim seemed to understand what I was saying. Playing in the dungeon was fun, but you must do it in moderation. First you finish the things you need to do, after that, leisurely playing around could be more fun. If you did that, you won’t have any trouble, so if you didn’t want to get punished like Karion, you needed to be careful.

“Wait, hey! Wait! Stop the idle talk and help me!”

Seeing Karion desperately struggling to break free from the claws as an example to learn from, Milim and I looked at each other and nodded.

“Hey, don’t ignore me. Ouch, ow-ow-ow-ow—“ Karion’s voice was slowly fading away.

Pledging not to forget his sacrifice, Milim and I waited for Frey’s anger to subside.



Next, making use of the extra time afforded by the commotion, Shuna was still finishing her work at hand.

“There, the extra orders are complete!” She said with a smile, and brought various dishes, all the while met with cheers from the guests.

Ignoring Karion’s sacrifice, we moved places.

“That was too mean, Milim and Rimuru. Even though I pleaded for dear life,” came the immediate complaints from Karion, who was just released by Frey.

“You’re fine, so stop complaining!”

“Yeah, Frey wasn’t super serious about it. That much was nothing, right?”

Because Karion was still so lively, I didn’t worry too much and told him that. But it was more dangerous than I thought.

“That’s not true? From the moment my head was caught in Frey’s claws, I lost access to my Skills. It’s probably her special Skill. To think that she would use that on me, this is no doubt an expression of her love.”

*You’ve got it all wrong—but I kept that to myself.*

That aside, right now Shuna’s cooking was more important. Countless dishes were stacked on top of a round table. The people who were waiting to serve, handed out the dishes according to the number of people in Milim’s group.

“I’m counting on you today. Midley is really stubborn, he expects dishes straight out of heaven.”

“Fufufu, I understand, Milim-sama. Please enjoy the meal,” Shuna assuaged Milim with a smile. Maybe it was because Milim was good with Shuna, but she seemed more relieved than

when I told her. But—

“—That’s highly disagreeable, Demon Lord Rimuru-sama. To teach our Milim-sama such blasphemy...”

The thing that came out of Midley’s mouth, who followed as Milim’s attendant, as soon as the dishes were placed in front of him, was criticism. According to this Midley, he was the representative of “the people who want to follow Milim,” in the letter Milim sent.

Hermes, who was sitting off to the side, was making either apologetic or prayer gestures directed at me. Maybe he was doing it because he was worried that I might get angry at what Midley said. He seemed like the type that didn’t neglect to worry about the small things, a pleasant guy.

The nobles were watching us from afar, they had already filled their bellies and were enthusiastically talking about the ways of the world. Even if they were talking about the current affairs, their sphere was the world of aristocrats, and the goal was information collection. Right now, they seemed to be more interested in our conversation, than their own stories. In other words, Demon Lord Milim and her associate’s reactions, and the dishes they felt were good, that was what they were curious about. Especially since there were people like Midley, who didn’t understand the luxurious life of humans in the first place...

There was nothing to talk about when traditional values were vastly different, but if we gave up that easily, then getting humans and monsters closer together would be hard—there were likely people coming to that conclusion. There was nothing we could do about that, but it would probably be okay this time.

Hermes, another one of Milim’s attendants, said that he wanted to spread the concept of cooking to the Worshippers of Dragon, therefore, I responded to Midley with confidence.

“Blasphemy, you say?”

First, I countered with another question to figure out what Midley was thinking.

“Hmph! To be thankful and enjoy the taste of nature at its purest, that is the proper way, the rule we had set in stone long ago. To do this to them...”

There was dressing on the salad. The potato salad was mashed and devoid of round shapes.

“And what exactly are you doing? Cooking the meat, that’s fine. But to then tarnish the meat by pouring an unknown liquid on it? Pathetic. This deed is truly pathetic!!” he bellowed while glaring at me with throbbing veins on his forehead, he must’ve been furious.

Seemingly irritated after hearing that, Shuna, who had prepared the meal, stared at Midley with an eerie smile. Hermes, noticing the intimidating atmosphere, went pale as a sheet and bowed to Shuna in apology without end. But Midley paid him no mind and kept ranting.

“To show such insolence to the gifts of nature! It doesn’t matter if you do as you like in your territory, but it is nonsense to rope our Milim-sama into this as well!”

While jabbing a finger at the soup filled with ingredients and the bite size cream croquette, among others, Midley was persisting on his views of it being an insult to the natural ingredients. This was ridiculous, it’s no wonder Milim asked me for help.

These kinds of people were always tiresome to deal with, talking sense into him would

be hard. He seemed like the type of guy that thought himself to be infallible and disregarded anything other people said. However, that would come to an end today.

It would be a problem if their tongue structure were different, but this was solely a conflict with Midley's values. And he simply believed it to be true, there was no legitimacy behind his ideas. In the first place, Milim herself, who Midley served, wanted to eat delicious dishes. Even now, she looked like a dog that had been told "wait," while there was food in front of her, so let's settle this quickly.

This time it would be an easy victory. If the word "delicious" came out of Midley, then it would be our victory. If he even has a bite of Shuna's food, then our victory will be assured—I had that kind of an optimistic outlook. But I was being too simplistic.

"I can never accept something like this!"

Midley was furious and didn't want to touch the meal. Victory's prerequisite was making him eat at least one bite, but if Midley didn't even want to lay his hand on it, then we lost the battle before the fight even began.

Milim was eyeing me anxiously.

Hermes looked to the skies with a crestfallen expression.

The dispute had gotten slightly out of hand and seemed to have drawn a lot of eyes. Even the low-ranked people who were too lowly to deal with Elmesia, started to watch how things were turning out. Were I to falter before Midley's opinion, in front of so many people, then this wouldn't just end with me losing face.

"Rimuru, I didn't know Midley would be this stubborn. Do you think it would be better to tell him to stand by in a separate room?" Milim proposed, worrying about me.

"My apologies. Our High Priest has been rude. He does have a bit of a temper on the regular, but he isn't a bad person... I didn't expect him to get this bent out of shape over food."

"Uh-um. I naively thought that he would understand once he tried the food. It's not good to force it either, so there's nothing we can do..."

Well, it wasn't like today was our only shot at this. The festival started in full swing tomorrow, so there was no need to rush.

*Let's rethink and finalize our plan of attack against Midley by using today's failure as an example; right now we have to prioritize taking care of the current situation—I decided to put this problem off for later.*

But there was someone who could not accept that in this situation.

**BAAANG!!**

A loud noise echoed throughout the parlor house. Shuna had suddenly slammed the table hard in front of Midley, with a smile quite unlike the one from a while ago.

Midley's eyes went wide. The expression he made was not because it hurt, but because he could not understand what was going on.

That's how it happened. Shuna was surprisingly fast, so much so, that, even though he was caught off-guard, not many could've reacted to it.

"What, what are you doing?"

“Shut your mouth!!” Shuna shouted loudly, without losing her smile as she glared at Midley. Then she grabbed the bowl with the soup and handed it to him.

“Look at this soup. There are a lot of ingredients in it, right? This is Rimuru-sama’s ideal.”

*Huh? What does that mean?*

*Disregarding* my confusion, Shuna continued, “Under Milim-sama, beastmen, harpies, the monsters who served Clayman, and your dragonites are gathered. You could say that any one of them possesses tremendous power. But if you combine your strength—you’ll be able to act with far greater strength in unity. Please try this.”

Showing unexpected power, Shuna handed Midley the spoon, and likely cowed by her demeanor, he tried the soup as he was told. I had almost given up, but Shuna pulled it off this easily...

Since we got this far, it would follow as planned.

“...!!”

Midley’s face was overcome with astonishment.

“Thi-this is—?!”

“How is it? It’s delicious, right? This is what we call ‘harmony.’ Just like each and every one of the ingredients in the soup limiting their self-assertiveness can bring an overall complete taste, this soup contains that desire.”

*Aha, so that’s it. Heck, I only thought of it as a tasty soup...*

“It...it’s delicious. More than any vegetable I have eaten... This one spoon of soup has a deeper taste...”

*No, that’s obvious.* Compared to totally raw vegetables, Shuna’s cooking being far better was obvious. But to Midley it seemed to be a groundbreaking discovery.

“Hey, if you could stop looking at us with those pitiful eyes, that would be great...” Hermes said with a bright red face. His attitude clearly portrayed that he was asking not to be treated at the same level.

Certainly, I understood why he wanted to say that. After all, there are superiors who refuse to listen to their subordinates, even when they make a good point. Nevertheless, when something happens, then they have joint responsibility, making things tricky.

He looked rather pitiful, so I gave him a nod to show that I understood. That was that, during my time with Hermes, Midley had eaten all of the soup, down to the final drop.

Shuna told Midley after finishing the soup: “As long as you understood, that’s all I ask of you. But please remember the following at the very least. Cooking goes beyond just one dish.”

With a calmer expression, Shuna was teaching Midley. With the wonderful taste of the soup in mind, Midley now seemed to be willing to take in those words.

“What do you mean?” he asked Shuna in an earnest fashion.

“If this soup is the new country that Milim-sama rules,” she replied, “then this bread here is the Kingdom of Blumund, and this steak is the rising nation Famenas. If this Terrine made with Foie gras<sup>7</sup> is the Dwarf Kingdom, you could say this seafood dish is Sorcerer’s Dynasty Sarion.

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<sup>7</sup>A terrine is a dish of ground meat, organs, seafood, vegetables, boiled eggs, herbs and/or other seasonings packed

The variety of combinations is diverse. Cooking isn't something that could be complete with just one style. It's the same with nations. Forming wide and deep relations and being entangled can give you a more plentiful satisfaction. That is the world Rimuru-sama wishes for."

Shuna smiled from the heart. Midley seemed to be moved by those words, lowering his eyes to take in the spread-out dishes, he silently descended into deep thought. It wasn't just him, but the people stealing glances from afar reacted similarly.

"Is, is that so..."

"The relationship between countries, that's definitely important."

"That's correct. However, to think that his Majesty Demon Lord Rimuru had thought that far ahead..."

"It's really an amazing idea! Even if we were to talk about just one dish, it's true. If you don't get the right amount of salt, it won't taste good. On this basis, you're saying you made various dishes that harmonize with each other and complete a full course. Truly, I could truly say that this is a fascinating idea!!"

We reached a situation where people started to talk about it with excitement.

Uh-um, you see, I hadn't thought of it to that extent. Shuna's powerful persuasion seemed to have beautifully touched the hearts of others. They were apparently spinning glorious narratives about the haphazard selection of dishes that were available during the party as well.

I admired Shuna, with an honest heart, I thought that she was amazing. Transcending the strength of words alone, the spectacular taste of her dishes made it all the more convincing—

The difference in values—even the people who were afraid of that, after listening to the word "harmony" derived from the cooking metaphor, probably saw a future where humans and monsters could join hands.

"Also, not everything that mixes is good, so please keep that point in mind," Shuna mentioned that caveat, and for a split second, she shot a glance at Shion standing behind me, but I'd just ignore that.

"Well then, I think you understood. Shall we move on then, food is best eaten warm. Milim-sama, Karion-sama, Frey-sama, and accompanying people, please eat before it gets cold."

On Shuna's mark, Milim dug into her food like a starving dog.

"It's so delicious!!"

A face full of smiles.

A reply like that was obvious. You didn't need fancy words, her face said it all.

"I see... I had the wrong idea... Does that mean Milim-sama had waited for me to realize my mistake all this time..."

Midley became aware of it as well. After a long period of time, he was finally able to realize his mistake.

"Now, now, Midley-sama, being disheartened will only make the people around you uncomfortable. Let's eat before it gets cold!"

---

into a loaf shape, then boiled; Foie gras is the liver of a duck or goose fattened by force-feeding corn through a tube.

He was not able to read the mood—no, because Hermes said that, purposely acting oblivious, veins started to show again on Midley’s forehead.

“You, you fool...”

“Wha-what’s wrong? Making your head stripy like a melon—”

“Wahahahaha! You don’t have to get angry like that, Midley. Let’s eat like Hermes said, or I might end up eating it all.”

“Tch, you escaped death, Hermes. I will forgive your disrespect today in consideration of Milim-sama and this excellent dish!”

And the place was filled with laughter. Regardless of human or monster, it was like all became one in heart.

“Your little sister is really amazing.”

“Right? She’s my proud little sis.”

As I complimented Shuna while meeting eyes with Benimaru, he nodded saying that it’s only natural. Maybe because she heard our conversation, Shuna dashed to the corner of the parlor house with a bright red face.

After that, the eve that was planned to go from six to nine in the evening, was extended for two more hours. One of the reasons being that key figures who were hesitating to participate, attended with the news of Elmesia turning up. Midley’s and Karion’s group were quite the heavy eaters, so satiating their hunger took a while, that being another reason.

Well, whatever the reason was, it didn’t matter. Judging by the unprecedented results, it was a huge success.

And with this, the eve together with multiple promotional efforts aimed at prominent figures from other countries, despite some diversion that brought us off course a few times, but, nonetheless, had exceeded expectations, finally came to an end.

**Interlude**

## **Late-Night Meeting**

***That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime***

## Interlude 1

### Late-Night Meeting

After the pre-party ended, the time was twelve at midnight. We held an emergency meeting.

“Sorry to have to summon you all this late. Surely you are all very tired by now, but I hope you all can hold up for just a while,” saying so, I glanced around the people gathered. First, I wished to commemorate the biggest hero of today’s event, Shuna.

“Shuna, it’s all thanks to you today. The food was truly delicious, and you also helped convince that Midley who has been troubling Milim as well. You have my sincere thanks.”

After expressing my gratitude towards her, Shuna gave off a sweet smile.

“That was too kind of you, it’s all thanks to Yoshida-san’s help that the meals turned out to be such a success. Moreover, Rimuru-sama couldn’t stop complimenting Hakuro’s fresh sashimi. I was quite troubled and felt that my culinary skills weren’t as good.”

Whether it be fillet, fancy-looking sashimi, and even hand-made sushi, Hakuro’s culinary skill far surpassed Shuna’s. It’s not that Shuna wasn’t trying hard enough, it was just his unique craftsmanship… Though Shuna still seemed rather troubled by it. With that being said, she candidly accepted my thanks, nonetheless.

Next, I turned to Myourmiles, who was quietly working behind the scenes.

“Myourmiles-kun, what’s the situation with the merchants? Were there any issues?”

In order to sell things during the event, we imported a variety of goods from different countries. It was being managed by Rigurd and Lilina-san. We entrusted Myourmiles with receiving visiting merchants to our kingdom.

“The merchants gave very positive feedback. They were all astounded by the majesty of our nation. The food provided by our residents tonight also made a great impression on them. Many farmers from neighboring countries also visited us. It was an unprecedented sight to behold. The goods provided by the merchants were mostly of high quality, so hopefully we can stay on good terms with them in the future—”

At this time, Myourmiles turned his eyes slightly to Rigurd. He nodded in response and continued the explanation.

“Indeed, as Myourmiles-san mentioned, there have been many goods, such as fresh vegetables, fruit, dried meat, dried fish as well as precious artifacts gathered here. Not to mention, some have even brought livestock, so the preparation for the celebration is water-proof at this point.”

Rigurd guaranteed that there was no need to worry about the adequacy of the products.

“We’re planning to start using these imported goods as food ingredients for the nightly gala from tomorrow onwards,” Lilina-san added, after nodding to Rigurd’s words.

“Right, so there doesn’t seem to be any problem.”

“Yes, there shouldn’t be any problem. It’s just that—no, there shouldn’t be a problem.”

*Hmm? Myourmiles wanted to say something. This actually just made me more curious, hopefully he will explain clearly.*

“Oi oi oi, don’t hold back and say it already! It’s really bugging me that you stopped mid-sentence.”

I tried to get Myourmiles to come clean. Benimaru and Souei seemed to approve of my view as well and nodded in agreement. Unable to withstand this pressure, Myourmiles scratched his head and opened up once more.

“Perhaps I’m just worrying too much, but the vendors that came with the well-known merchants were all unfamiliar faces. Despite the impression I may give to others, memorizing people’s faces is my specialty. So that really caught my attention. That’s why I had it look into—”

Even though he was concerned, there shouldn’t be an issue. That’s how Myourmiles put it. From shop-owners he was acquainted with, he learnt that they were indeed only trading with these people recently. But they hadn’t heard anything negative about them. These people were offering quality goods at low prices, and the shop-owners all jokingly commented that Myourmiles was worrying too much. Myourmiles tried talking to these people to probe their intentions and they also responded rather kindly.

“I’ve been too excited having taken this important responsibility that even I am a bit on the edge,” he finished with a wry smile.

Recently, Myourmiles’s workload had reached jaw-dropping levels. I was a bit worried and asked whether he could hold up.

“Oi oi oi, are you sure you’re gonna be able to hold yourself together? You’re not going to force yourself too much and fall into illness...?”

Yet this time Myourmiles did indeed dismiss my worries with a smile.

“Hahaha, please don’t worry. As opposed to this, there’s more important things to attend to! The Chosen Hero, Masayuki-sama himself, is going to partake in the martial tournament tomorrow! The news has hit the town like wildfire, I heard a betting pool was immediately set up in the bar.”

He was full of passion towards this job, so this was no time for him to quit. Myourmiles declared himself. He also pointed out the more important business, which was Masayuki’s decision to join the tournament tonight.

“Right, that’s why I’ve gathered everyone here.”

The people who went to receive Milim and the others weren’t aware of this ordeal yet. Benimaru even eyed Souei, asking “What is going on here?” hoping to hear an explanation from him. Yet Shion was a step ahead of Souei and took the chance to explain.

“That guy was a pain in the ass! All talks and no cider, he went on about dealing with Rimuru-sama. I wish I could teach him a lesson myself...”

“It was me who intervened. Since there was an audience, we couldn’t have Shion be that reckless. It may affect the ceremony tomorrow.”

I see, no wonder Shion was behaving that well. And I thought she had become more restrained lately, it seems it was too early for me to be relieved of that. Thankfully Souei was there.

“It was fortunate that you stopped her. My friend Yuuki was there at the time, if the news that she’s been looking to brawl with the chosen hero at the town gate started spreading, people would definitely be needlessly wary of us,” I said with a sigh, and saw Benimaru nodding.

“Well said. Shion, you need to keep your head cool.”

“Hmph, there’s no need for you to lecture me so. I was just a bit triggered, not that I actually wanted to crash the scene. That being said—”

“Kufufufufu, I can understand Shion-san. You meant that you couldn’t sit still as your master was being looked down on, didn’t you? Had Benimaru-san been there to witness the scene, surely you would have had a similar response?”

“—No way. I’m always very calm,” Benimaru responded with a slight pause, while shifting his eyes.

*Uhh—that doesn’t sound all that convincing.*

“By the way, Rimuru-sama. You mentioned that you have something to discuss, could it be that you intend to eliminate that hero? If you leave it to me, I’ll make sure to take care of him tonight without a single trace.”

Diablo gave this horrifying proposal without a flinch of an eye. This guy was one-hundred percent serious. He would really do it without hesitation, how terrifying.

“Not at all; don’t you act reckless now,” I repeatedly warned him.

Then I proceeded to discuss what I was actually planning.

“The thing I wanted to discuss is the martial tournament tomorrow. Which ones of my lieutenants would like to participate in it?”

My words riled up the crowd—

“Ho?” Benimaru’s eyes lit up.

“I see how it is.”

Shion was smiling maniacally. I thought she secretly prepared something behind my back. *Is she just going to abandon it now? Perhaps she has forgotten about it now that her mind was focused on the combat.*

“Kufufufufu, intriguing, that’s truly intriguing.”

Even Diablo was giving off an unusually bright smile.

“Then please allow me to demonstrate my martial prowess for the people to see,” Geld was very motivated as well.

“Heh,” Souei followed and gave off a thin laugh. He looked ready to participate. There was also Hakuro. He didn’t say anything, yet he started to look distressed. Gabil said that he had some activities to attend to, and now regrets were written all over his face.

—And so on, these reactions were as I expected.

The only one who did not respond was Ranga, who had been slumbering in my shadow. I won’t allow him to participate anyway, so there shouldn’t be an issue.

Seeing that my lieutenants were about to start arguing about who were to attend the tournament, I brought them to my attention with a dry cough.

“Hold up, there will be many foreign spies at the scene, surely you guys wouldn’t need to show your true strength?”

“Kufufufufu, even if I don’t fight seriously, I will absolutely crush—”

“STOP! Let me make one thing clear. Benimaru, Shion, Diablo and Souei, you guys are banned from participating.”

“WHAT!”

“What do you mean—”

I held up my hand to quiet the shocked crowd as I explained to them the rationale.

“First of all, Souei, aren’t you the “Covert Spy”? How can you attend a tournament in front of an audience?”

Souei was brought back to his senses with my words. He seemed to agree and said no more. He no longer insisted on participating. Thankfully, he wasn’t stubborn and asked to participate in disguise. But just to be safe, I had another bit of leverage.

“As a result, I want to give you a new role title.”

“A role title?”

“Indeed. Since you have been in charge of the espionage activities of the nation, I now officially appoint you as the leader of the royal spies. I also give your troops the title “Shadow Squad.” People such as Souka under your command are eligible to join, but not those who still can’t handle themselves!”

“Understood! Thank you for the title, Rimuru-sama!”

Souei’s gratitude exceeded my expectations a bit. That was really just an excuse for him to not participate, although it was good that he also felt so happy about it. Nowadays his troops had reached around a hundred members. He only needed to pick out the elites to form the “Shadow Squad.” Souei was able to accept that kind of arrangement. The problem now lay with the other three.

Among my subordinates, these three were the strongest. If I allowed these folks to participate, there would no doubt be problems everywhere. I was aware of the consequences, so I’d already come up with a solution.

“Hear me now. In order to match the political needs of the Western Nations, I will be adding

the roles of the ‘Four Heavenly Kings.’”

“The Four Heavenly Kings...”

“So that’s—”

“I see how it is now.”

The expressions of the three changed drastically. Obviously they all fell for it.

“You three are especially strong among my subordinates. Benimaru will be appointed as the leader of the ‘Four Heavenly Kings.’ Another two seats will be taken by Shion and Diablo.”

Among the three, Benimaru was most suited to lead. Since he was my representative after all, the man to fill in the role of commanding general. That was why Benimaru was the most suitable for the secretive role of the “Four Heavenly Kings.” I made it sound all mysterious to mask the fact that it was just the title of a made-up role. It was mainly an excuse to prevent them from participating in the tournament.

“Appointing me as the leader... I shall obey your divine command!”

All right, Benimaru had accepted it.

“Although I can’t agree to the point that Benimaru took charge as the leader, I hope you may reconsider it after seeing my performance in the future. I am most glad to be among the ‘Four Heavenly Kings,’ Rimuru-sama!”

Shion also accepted it. Not sure where she got her confidence though, but since she had accepted it, this’ll do.

“‘The Four Heavenly Kings,’ I see? Although I would like to be Rimuru-sama’s choice of top subordinate, I’m still just a green-horn for now. I can’t be too greedy. Right now my goal is to try my best to draw my strength closer to Rimuru-sama’s!”

Hmm—does that mean he accepted it too? Diablo’s personality was really troublesome, seriously.

Anyhow, from now on these three would be the “Four Heavenly Kings.”

“Thank you for your frank approval. Next, as for why I’ve barred you from participating, it has to do with this ‘Four Heavenly Kings.’”

“What do you mean?”

“Yes, it is because the last Heavenly King is difficult to choose. I meant to appoint Souei, but since he is a “Secret Spy” and cannot show up in public easily, he wasn’t suited for the role.”

I quietly observed everyone’s reaction as I finished. They seemed to nod in agreement.

“That’s why I will have the remaining folks join the tournament. I think whoever wins will deserve the title of the ‘Four Heavenly Kings,’ what do you guys think?”

I fired my words in quick succession. In the conference room, folks began to look at each other to see their reactions. A most unexpected voice was suddenly raised.

“Uh, hmm... I would like to attend, but from tomorrow onwards, I’ll be having dates with Momiji—I mean, I promised her to show her around the town... But, since Rimuru-sama has given the order—”

Hakuro, who I’d put most expectations in, wanted to decline the request. Someone as skillful as Hakuro was most suitable for such an important role, but the timing seemed off. Al-

though I could indeed order him to attend, it just didn't seem appropriate. Hakurou was the best man to test out Masayuki's true strength, or so I thought—but since he had the rare opportunity to have some memory with his daughter, he'd hold a grudge against me if I intervened.

"That's quite a big deal, Hakurou. If you back out, Momiji may not talk to you again, EVER."

"T-that's..."

My senior from my last life didn't go through with his promise to his daughter. He later came to work and lamented about having been ignored over a week or so. These two just got reunited, if he were to break his promise so soon...

"Besides, as opposed to appointing Hakurou as "The Four Heavenly Kings," he is more suitable as Benimaru's military consultant. You seem to be quite satisfied being an adjutant already, so you don't have to join."

Hakurou nodded gratefully in response. For his sake, I decided not to have Hakurou participate. In that case, the available participants would be—

"I still have my technology conference to attend... Geld-san is stronger than me, so I'll give him the opportunity!"

It seemed that Geld was the only one left. Due to his own scheduled activity, Gabil would not be able to participate. He had placed his hope in someone else and decided to cheer for Geld instead.

"I see. I'll do my best to defeat that brat called Masayuki!"

Geld nodded his head firmly in response to Gabil's expectations. Geld was an incredible talent in terms of strength, but to be frank, "The Four Heavenly Kings" were set just for show; it'd be somewhat inappropriate to have Geld join...

I only appointed Benimaru so he would restrain the other two troubled kiddos, so it doesn't really seem fair to Geld. Never mind, I'll think about this later. First I'll have Geld test out the strength of Masayuki.

And just as I was about to make up my mind—

"I would like to recommend a man that is suitable as a Heavenly King!" Rigur suddenly stood up and said to me. There may be some complications due to issues with the grouping during the tournament. In order to prevent such a thing, it was best not to send just one participant. Since the person in question was someone worthy of Rigur's, who is Rank A, recommendation, I was pretty reassured.

"O-okay. Although I figure it'd be fine with Geld alone participating, who would that be?" as I thought to myself, I hurried Rigur to explain.

"Unfortunately, I am unable to participate due to security duty, but there's a man whose strength is only next to me, that is—"

*Someone strong enough to stand next to Rigur—could it be!*

"Gobta!"

Oh... Saw it coming. As I expected, Rigur had given his highest approval.

"Gobta would be most suited to join in representing us," he said.

“Hehe, that guy is among the best of my disciples. He’s got a quick mind as well as good techniques. Although he hasn’t evolved in terms of raw power, it’d be interesting to have him grow with this tournament.”

Even Hakuro was saying so. None of the lieutenants seemed to object. I would like to confirm his willingness in person, however...

“Zzz—Zzz—”

Uhh. It seemed that the participant was eager to fight as well. No problemo. *So it shall be*, I decided to send Gobta into the tournament.

And just as I was about to end the meeting, someone had a word to say.

“Master, I would like to join in the martial tournament!”

Ranga woke up at some point without my notice and stretched his neck out of my shadow. He had commented while wagging his tail.

“No no no, Ranga, surely you’re not suitable. The theme this time is martial combat, after all...”

“Y-you have a point, the Summoner is joining the battle, so there should also be summoned beasts... But it would be pretty odd to have Ranga-san join the tournament...”

The tournament was a battle of strength and technique. Ranga was indeed strong, but he didn’t fit in accordance with the rules of the tournament. Based on these views, I rejected his proposal. Myourmiles also expressed approval.

Ranga looked at Gobta hatefully. He seemed upset, but that was a point I couldn’t compromise on. I steeled my heart and refused Ranga from participating.

“Then we should arrange Geld-san and Gobta-san as the seeded participants. The number of participants has exceeded two hundred, we will have them group in six teams to partake in elimination matches. Then we will decide on the official participant.”

*Over two hundred!* There were quite a lot of people participating. The preliminary rounds tomorrow were originally supposed to select eight final official participants of the tournament. But we couldn’t spend too much time in the preliminary matches, so we planned to split them into eight teams to fight in elimination rounds. Now that we considered the two joining the tournament, it became a match of six.

“I’ll be receiving guests from other nations tomorrow, so I’ll leave the commanding post to Myourmiles-kun, sorry for the trouble!”

“Just count on me!”

Hearing Myourmiles’s reliable voice, I nodded reassured. And next in line is—

“Diablo, are you acquainted with all the foreign journalists?”

“Yes, I’ve invited them to participate in the Founding Festival. I have made preparations for them to promote us positively.”

Diablo sure was comprehensive in preparing things. Now that we had been covered by the media, there was no need to hide our strength. In other words, perhaps having a fearsome demon as referee—such contrast may more or less change people’s impression of him.

“Sorry about it, I didn’t want to trouble you with the referee role. But since the Chosen Hero Masayuki, Geld and Gobta are joining, it doesn’t feel safe to have a hobgoblin as referee.”

“Kufufufufu, please leave it to me!”

And so it was done. If anything happened, Diablo would definitely help.

“That’s it for now, sorry for taking up your time. It’s a bit late, but everyone can relax for the day!”

“ “ “Yes sir!” ” ”

Now the meeting was finally over. And so, we went to bed before the official start of the actual ceremony tomorrow.

**Chapter  
2**

**Founding Festival**

*That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime*

## Chapter 2

### Founding Festival

After meeting the representatives of the monsters living in the Great Jura Forest, the talk with the representing group from the Western Nations went smoothly as well. There were many more details to discuss in the future, but the ideas brought up in our discussion were a good start.

Last night we held a rare founding eve celebration. The event concluded peacefully with the various attendances from guests all over the continent.

I was very satisfied. I seemed to only have to talk to people I'd been acquainted with in the past yesterday. In terms of actual agreements and demands, I ordered Rigurd and Myourmiles to document all of them. They even stopped guests in secret to prevent them from chatting with me.

*Very impressive. They're truly men I can count on.*

To be honest, had someone directly negotiated with me, there was a good chance that I'd screw up and end up getting myself lumped into something I shouldn't have. If that were the case, we could have been held accountable for something in the future. Their buffer-zone really helped me out.

*That being said, if I am able to establish good relationships with other nations in the future, I wouldn't really mind helping 'em out a bit... But for now, it's best we act with caution until we can ascertain their true nature.*

I couldn't just roll over and simply acquiesce to their requests.

Regardless, right now we were still lacking in manpower. We still had tons of work left to do even after we concluded the festivities. There were a lot of pending issues to attend to.

Practicality aside, even if we were to moderate and establish relevant departments, we still wouldn't have had enough people to fit in administrative roles. And I couldn't just pile on more work for the existing people either, or else they truly would be busy forever.

Rigurd and Myourmiles far exceeded my expectations. Their due diligence on all the work I assigned them had at times caused me to be a bit over-reliant on them. I also invited them over last night, despite things being hectic as they were, causing them to lose some sleep. I need to avoid becoming dependent on them—this was my conclusion I reached following the

emergency meeting we had last night.

As such, I had decided to take on some responsibility as the ruler of this nation and do my best to receive the guests.

The Founding Festival of Tempest would be held today, under a sky as clear as crystal.

*Even if it rains, I'll just blow the clouds away,* I thought to myself.

This was the capital of the Monster Kingdom, Rimuru, a city crowned with my own name. The location was the meeting hall in the center of the northern district, where most political institutions resided.

I glanced down upon the people gathered below. The streets leading to the meeting hall were packed to the brim. They were once unruly monsters, but they were now my citizens and regarded as demi-humans.

The majins from all over the Jura Great Forest had congregated here before me. With them were also merchants from neighboring nations as well as adventurers bodyguarding them.

Moreover, there were also peasants that came for the festival. From what I saw below, the total population here numbered over one hundred thousand, and we had become a huge melting pot of races. A sense of fulfillment gradually filled my heart as I realized that we had finally achieved a kingdom where humans and monsters could peacefully coexist—feels good man.

Next, it was about time. I stood up and held the microphone in my hand.

“Everyone, I... I mean, I (*royal sounding*)...am the Demon Lord Rimuru...”

*Umm, whatever goes. This is too troublesome.*

To me, delivering a serious speech was not only just a difficult task, but also a burdensome responsibility. That's why I decided to just put forth my honest emotions.

“I am Demon Lord Rimuru, and it's nice to meet you all. Well—thank you all for coming to my kingdom upon invitation. I am very pleased. Although for some of you guys it might be your first time visiting, please rest at ease. While it is indeed a fact that I have become the new demon lord, I have no intention of antagonizing humans. I simply wish to build a kingdom where everyone can live in harmony. As opposed to fighting each other, I believe humans and monsters should cooperate. I believe only in this way can we build a better future.”

I observed everyone's reaction as I continued my speech. It seemed that everyone was intently hanging onto my every word. This not only applied to citizens of our kingdom, but also to the peasants that came for the celebration. I continued:

“Some may be wary of the fact that I am a demon lord. While this sense of caution is understandable, I hope everyone would put trust into your genuine feelings. I won't force you to accept my views. It would certainly be pleasant if you were to find me trust-worthy, but even if you are not willing to trust me, it is something that cannot be helped. Trust is not built overnight, but rather through persistent communication in the future, which is a conclusion that I shall not rush towards—”

As the saying goes, “Rome wasn't built in a day.” Things like trust need to be nurtured

over time. However, how the people interpreted my message was entirely up to them. Next, I addressed the royal ruling classes:

“Fellow nobles gathered today, I hope that you will relay what you see and hear here today honestly when you return to your respective nations. Some kingdoms have already established diplomatic ties with us. Even if you can’t put your faith in us, will you not find those nations trust-worthy? I hope that you will not be prejudiced simply for the fact that I am a monster and a demon lord.”

With that being said, this wasn’t something they could determine by themselves. It had to be a decision made by the nation as a whole. What everyone thought here wasn’t that big of a deal, but... I still wanted to believe that there was some use to say these things.

*But I’ll need to give them a fair warning, so we don’t end up with a Farmus 2.0.*

“I won’t wage war against you simply for the fact that you did not cooperate with us, but if you treat us unfairly due to our monster status, or attack us with the intention of invading: that is something we absolutely will not tolerate. I figure that everyone here has an idea about what I’m talking about after seeing what happened to the Kingdom of Farmus.”

These were my genuine thoughts as well. Perhaps some would consider me as a threat for doing so, but those were just my honest opinions. I disliked war, but if anyone dared to invade our kingdom, I would retaliate without hesitation. An indecisive ruler will only bring about harm, especially for innocent civilians.

After all, ensuring the lives and properties of our citizens was the responsibility of the state. It was my primary objective to protect, and that included friendly monsters as well as future immigrants. A world without military conflict was nothing but an idealistic dream. A citizen had every freedom and right to dream about peace and prosperity, but that wasn’t a luxury rulers could afford. They needed to always be on their feet, ready to handle any situation that may arise. This was the bare minimum for a nation to function. That was my justification for the speech I just delivered to the higher-class guests.

And to wrap it all up—

“Whether you’re a merchant, adventurer, or peasant, I swear not to lay my hands on common civilians. But that does not apply to criminals. Our country is lacking in manpower. As such, there are plenty of jobs available, so anyone who wishes to fill an empty role can consider immigrating. Naturally, with more people come more opportunities. Here, you will have freedom of speech and the ability to choose the occupation that you desire. But even so, please speak and act responsibly. If you are still interested in our nation after my speech, please consider my proposition. There are all sorts of events planned for our nation in the future as well. Today’s Tempest Founding Festival is but the first debut project. With that being said, I hope everyone will have fun!”

After that promotional message to the commoners, my speech concluded.

*Was that a bit too on the nose?*

Oh well, I didn’t really mind. I was just a clerk working nine-to-five in my previous life,

which is why my speech was nowhere near as eloquent as those delivered by kings and nobles despite my quick rise to fame.

But, even with that being the case—

The crowd exploded into deafening cheers. My citizens aside, even the visitors were in an uproar. Although there must also be people who still had their suspicions, most people were willing to trust me and put their faith in this nation. That would do for now. It would be odd to have complete trust from the get-go. Our heartfelt thoughts had been delivered to everyone. All that's left was to see their reactions.

And so, with my speech, the Tempest Founding Festival was officially commenced.



After the speech, I made my way to the main hall on the ground floor. The children had finished dressing up and gathered there.

“Sensei turns out to be the king of this country?”

*Hmm? Did I not mention it?*

“So, you didn’t know, Kenya? Since you are now aware of my greatness, it’s never too late to show me a tad bit more respect.”

“What did I—”

“Yeeeess! I respect sensei a great deal!”

As I was teasing Kenya, Alice interrupted and hugged me. Chloe followed up with a “Me toooo!” and similarly sprung on me.

I smiled, patting both their heads before gently pushing them away. The two seemed rather displeased since, after all, I only had one body. They’d just have to suck it up for now before they started arguing amongst themselves.

“Speaking of which, this is quite a surprising turn of events. Just yesterday I was guessing whether sensei was a king or not...” Gail said as Ryota nodded in agreement.

“Ahh, this whole king thing was after I parted ways with you all. By the way, I have been really busy lately.”

“R-right... Of course, you’d be really busy after becoming a king...”

Kenya still looked very pissed, but at least it seemed he was willing to forgive me a little.

“Then, sensei, will we not have any more chances to see you again in the future?”

“Hmm—I’ll check on you guys when I have the time. Don’t be fooled by my appearance! My king status is only in name.”

“Tsk, what’s that supposed to mean? Are you great or not?? Make up your mind!! Seriously...”

I attempted to comfort the complaining Kenya before giving all of them a couple words of

caution.

“Listen well now, you guys will undoubtedly be very excited to join in on the festivities, and as a result you may easily go out of control. Don’t get over your heads and stay out of trouble!”

“ “ “All right!” ” ”

*They’re quite the lively bunch today.*

“Did you bring your handkerchief, napkin, and that necklace?”

“ “ “Of course we did!” ” ”

*These brats sure answer fast.* It’s probably better to find someone to accompany them, but all my subordinates had their hands full. Diablo was busy refereeing at the Colosseum. Hakurou had a date with Momiji, and Benimaru was my bodyguard.

“Are you sure you want to give the chance to date Momiji to Hakurou?”

“Please give me a break, it’s all too soon for me...”

Benimaru seemed to be dodging the question. *Fine then. I guess only time can tell.*

*Shuna should be running the cafe, Shion also seemed to be occupied with something as well and has been missing all morning. While this fact alone brings me great unease, I want to cling to the faint hope that everything will be fine. Souei will be covertly keeping watch over the town. He’ll inform me if something happens. Souei’s men will be keeping an eye on the kids, so I guess there’s no need to worry too much—*

“What’s the matter? Something troubling you?”

As I was in the midst of contemplating how it was never good to overthink things, someone suddenly interrupted my train of thought.

It was Hinata. Hinata was standing there in casual attire with a saber sheathed on her belt. She was wearing a navy-blue sleeveless dress which occasionally allowed for glimpses of her armpits and chest, giving off an indescribably erotic allure. Moreover, the saber strapped on her belt accentuated her slim waist.

*Ahhh, what a pleasant sight.*

While I wanted to appreciate her body a little bit more, Hinata’s icy gold glare shut down my hopes. I gave a dry cough to get through with it.

“Eh, sensei!”

“Who is this?”

Alice and Chloe warily asked after seeing my expression.

“Her name is Hinata. She’s the powerhouse that fought me to a draw.”

“Huh—? This old hag managed to—”

Kenya was only halfway through his sentence before Hinata cut him off by pressing her saber to his throat. It was only one centimeter away from his neck. Any move and his throat would have been slit open.

“Now, what were you saying?”

“I-I was going to say... T-the beautiful big sister...”

Kenya’s eyes were filled with tears as he squeaked out his words.

“K-Ken-chan...”

Ryota had tried to save Kenya but was now frozen in place. It seemed that Hinata’s glare had made him stiff with fear. Gail, who had been mesmerized by Hinata, was also standing stock still. So shocked was he by Hinata’s sudden appearance, that his body was straight and rigid as a board.

*I can’t really blame them. Even I find Hinata a little bit frightening, so I guess it’s only natural for Ryota and Gail to have that type of reaction.*

“Kenya, watch your manners! This person was also the disciple of Shizu-san just like Yuuki. In other words, she’s basically your senior.”

Kenya looked at me with sad puppy eyes that seemed to say: Geez, couldn’t you have said that earlier! While I could definitely sympathize, it didn’t change the fact that it was Kenya’s own fault this time. I warned them not to get in over their heads just moments ago. Kenya ignored my warnings and had his just desserts served to him.

“Shizu-sensei’s disciple... Could it be?!”

“Could it be the person that allegedly surpassed Shizu-sensei in a month...”

“The Holy Knight commander of Lubelius, Hinata Sakaguchi-sama?”

“That’s rad! But, is it really her...?”

“Hey... Shouldn’t you mention something as important as that *first*...”

Hinata smacked her lips and then sheathed her sword at incredible speed. Kenya slumped to the ground, exhausted. He probably lost all strength in his legs. *I’d wager he won’t be getting back up anytime soon.*

“I almost pissed my pants—“ Kenya said, his face pale. Alice sneered at him, calling him “Disgusting.”

“You can’t blame me! That was really horrifying.”

“But it was Kenya’s fault as well.”

Kenya was silenced under the pressure of Chloe’s facts and logic.

“By the way, Rimuru-sensei, did you really fight to a tie with Hinata-nee?”

Since Gail asked, I at the very least had to give him an honest answer.

“I guess. There was no decisive winner or loser since the losing one ran off before the end of the fight.”

“And the ‘losing one who ran off’ is referring to you, right sensei?”

*And after all that trouble of avoiding specifying who... That roast was on point.*

“Whatever you say.”

But that was just me trying to play cool. I wasn’t lying; I just wasn’t revealing the whole truth. Something which, by the way, shall just be kept as a lil’ secret between you and me.

The children wanted to ask more but Hinata interrupted them.

“So, what was it that was troubling you just now?”

Having been asked, I recalled worrying about who to entrust to accompany the children.

“It’s nothing really. It’s just that these kids are gonna be going to town soon. Even though there are safety patrols and such on duty, it’s still gonna be really crowded, and I’m a bit worried

for their safety. Preferably I'd want someone to accompany them..."

"Oh—in that case, I can take care of them."

"So, I was thinking about whether there are any suitable candidates... Eh?"

*What did she just say? Hinata's gonna take care of the children? Wait wait wait, that joke's not funny at all!*

"What, do you think I'm not qualified?"

"No way, what are you talking about—"

She glared at me again. What a terrifying woman. Kenya managed to not pee his pants.

*Good work on his part; I'll need to praise him a little.*

"You guys won't turn me down now, will you?"

"No, of course not!"

"Ken-chan..."

"Please help us!"

"Even Gail has... Fine then, so be it."

The two boys—Gail and Kenya—had fallen. Seeing their reactions, Ryota caved in as well.

"I can't believe I get to see Hinata-nee that I've always looked up to! I'm so happy!"

Alice was practically an idol-chasing stan. I used to think she looked up to Masayuki, but it seems that she looked up to Hinata like some idol. Unlike the two boys who were complaining, she was more than happy to be close to her. And there was also Chloe.

"Big sis is such a nice person! I feel like you are so similar to Shizu-sensei!"

She went on to hug Hinata with a smile. I guess Hinata really was a good person if even Chloe was tagging alongside here. Even though her eyes were scary as hell, Chloe didn't seem to mind.

Speaking of Hinata, if I wasn't mistaken, she had a small smile on her lips. Hinata seemed to have grabbed the children's hearts in an instant.



“Let’s go then!” Hinata announced. “They seem to be selling chow mein and corn on the cob there, so let’s go eat at the vendor stand.”

“ “ “Okay!” ” ”

What amazing leadership. Impressive was the only thing I could say about her. Now I could rest assured with the children entrusted to Hinata.

Having been relieved of a heavy burden, Hinata suddenly snuck next to me and whispered.

“Now that I am helping to take care of the children, I’ll leave Luminas-sama to you!”

*Huh? I didn’t see her last night, but could it be that Luminas is here as well?*

“Is Luminas willing to join the ceremony?”

“Weren’t you the one that invited her? She was overjoyed and even prepared her maid outfit!”

I didn’t expect Luminas to disguise herself as a servant of the Holy Knights Arnaud and Bacchus when coming to attend the event. She seemed to be operating alongside the nobles on the first day under the guise of her maid outfit. Holy Knights were, after all, of noble status. That being the case, it would be fine for her to accompany the people that I’d be receiving today.

*Should I call her astute or...*

Apparently, she spent the night over at our newly constructed church. I didn’t realize it at all, meaning that she had hidden her real identity perfectly.

“I’ll leave the rest to you.”

And with that, Hinata left with the children. *By the looks of it, I’ll be the one putting in the work now, won’t I...* Hinata seemed to be pretty smug about it. I felt like she had checkmated me yet again.

Just as Hinata left, someone came up to pat me on the shoulder.

“Ah, how surprising, Rimuru-san. That’s the first time I’ve seen Hinata smiling.”

It was Yuuki. He wasn’t wearing his usual suit this time, but rather a formal outfit that was modeled after his old school uniform. He was standing there with a welcoming smile on his face. It seemed that he’d been looking for me to go to the gathering location. *Since that’s the case, guess I’ll have to lead the way.*

“Right, I didn’t expect Hinata to offer to take care of the children. I was thinking that she would say something along the lines of ‘How annoying’ while looking disgusted.”

“She’s not like that at all. Hinata is actually a great caretaker. That being said, I’m still surprised. By the way, her casual clothes suit her super well, don’t they? It gave me quite a shock indeed! That piece seems to have been purchased in this town, and now she’s like a charming, fashionable university student. Ain’t that right?”

I see, so they were indeed our domestically produced clothes. And I had thought that I was mistaken, but I guess not.

“That girl turns out to be pretty wealthy. Perhaps it’s rather impolite for me to say, but that dress is pretty expensive.”

That dress was made from hell-moth silk, which not only provided comfort, but also had the

effect of ‘Thermal Fluctuation Nullification.’ It even had defensive capabilities that exceeded your run-of-the-mill leather armor.

With all those features, it was no wonder why the dress would be pricey. Even with the production of silk stabilized, the supply was still scarce. And of that scarce supply, even fewer were finished products. Given that to be the case, we could only sell them at an incredibly high price. It was a product tailored for nobles and not meant for the commoners.

I heard that Hinata bought it without hesitation upon seeing it yesterday. She even had someone custom tailor it. I figured that she must have spent a good load of money on it. Well, if that were the case, I couldn’t complain about such a good customer.

“I guess it’s possible that her spending mood is related to the festivity? She was also quite eager to explore things around here yesterday as well.”

*Are you serious?! And I thought that I was just seeing things...* It seemed that peoples’ expectations towards the Tempest Founding Festival had gone beyond my imagination.

*Ah, I guess that’s why she said those things.* Based on these considerations, Hinata decided to take a break herself and pushed the duty to receive Luminas to me.

“What was she investigating yesterday by the way?”

“The food stands. Wasn’t she just animatedly talking about chow mein and corn on the cob?”

“Oh, so she did...”

*That means Hinata has indeed done her thorough research.*

She seemed to take enjoying the festival very seriously. Any wariness she may have had was gone with the wind, fully immersing herself in the festivities.

Indeed, we had lots of fast food stands on display outside the Colosseum, and among them was one that I had personally planned. Everything went very smoothly with the help of Myourmiles’s arrangements.

We offered hamburgers, hot dogs, french fries, and a panoply of juices. There were many other shops as well. We had stands that offered chow mein, corn on the cob, cow-deer BBQ, and snacks. Even though it might have been off season, we even had shaved ice for sale. It would definitely become a best seller during the summer. Shaved ice was thin, delicate, and it melted in your mouth. Now just add some sweet syrup on top of that... I had tried it before, and I could definitely vouch for its fantastic taste. The aromatic smell of soy sauce combined with the sweetness of fruit sugar was mouthwatering.

This was all possible thanks to everyone’s careful preparations for this day. I communicated my memories of the dishes through ‘Telepathy Net,’ and as a result, Shuna and the others were able to successfully recreate them. With Myourmiles doing the planning, my projects were able to come to fruition. Even more surprising was the fact that we made it so that Veldora could open a takoyaki shop.

Hinata seemed to have checked out stores beforehand and had made her plan to tour around the town.

“By the way, she seems pretty different compared to how she normally interacts with people. Does she really like eating junk food that much?”

“I mean, who doesn’t? It tastes good. I’m a fan of junk food too, so you can’t really just judge her like that...” Yuuki agreed as I was mumbling to myself.

I had stumbled upon a rather surprising side of Hinata, and I wasn’t sure whether I could call that a blessing or a curse. At least she wasn’t stingy with her money, so she should be a good client.

*Although I feel like she may be a negative influence on the children...*



Accompanied by Benimaru and Yuuki, I arrived at the guest hotel. Rigurd was already explaining the planned schedule to the large group of nobles gathered there.

“Oh, Rimuru-sama! Your speech just now was truly wonderful!”

*Eh, really?*

Rigurd’s joyful expression was contagious. He provided me reassurance that my speech just now was perfectly fine. I exchanged smiles with Rigurd all the while thinking to myself, *nice, nice!*

“Then, we will be leading everyone to attend the first event of the day!”

Rigurd began walking as he finished. He moved towards a building near the hotel. It was the opera house. We managed to redecorate the interior on a crunch, and the end result was more majestic than what we had hoped for. We only arranged these high-quality chairs in this particular manner after considering the acoustic effect in the theatre.

The guests were seated properly.

The standard of culture in this world was a bit lower when compared to Japan. This was...umm, a genuine observation even from other people’s point of view. While there was a relatively high artistic and musical achievement, that was limited to royalty and nobility. They were entertainment for the upper echelon that had both an abundance of money and time. The angels would assault any city that developed past a certain threshold. As a result, most aspects of advanced culture were tucked away in the realms of the privileged. To the nobles, these forms of culture were merely considered as minor entertainment. But to me, culture was something that required a collective effort to build together.

Geniuses had been buried in this world. It was not only difficult to discover the genius in these fields in a world with such a narrow view, but they may also even be buried and eventually not be developed for their entire lives. Art is the product of entertainment spawned from extra vitality of life, and the same goes for any innovation.

In this world, the search for such things is a luxury, but I'm not giving up because of it. I will, however, search the world to discover the geniuses that were overshadowed by the average people. In order to achieve this, first I need to foster a culture appreciation trend within my nation.

And the first step is—today's appreciation concert. There were plenty of musical instruments in this world that were similar to my original world. To my surprise, there was even something like a piano.

And these were all discovered at Clayman's base. He seemed to have been living life no worse than court royals. In one of the countless luxuriously decorated rooms of his, he had stored a large number of instruments. Some monsters already understood music. They seemed to play beats to the performance of flute and taigo<sup>8</sup>. They also had a culture of holding festivals every year. I loaned instruments to these people and, with time, their talents here and there blossomed.

We prepared instruments for those conscious of learning, and gave them basic instructions such as teaching them how to read music notes.

My knowledge alone was hardly enough, and it was a time like this that Wisdom King Raphael would shine. With the music schoolbook from Japan combined with the knowledge related to instruments within the library of this world, we produced a paper book. How amazing(-ly terrifying) it was for Raphael to recreate such long-forgotten knowledge of mine.

The personal effort of the monsters came next. As the saying goes, "Interest is the best teacher," soon enough, the monsters started to master their favorite instruments.

By the way, I also had someone faithfully recreate the music notes. I wasn't someone qualified with traits such as "pitch perfect hearing," but it was no problem for Raphael-san. Not only did it recreate the sheet music, it even re-composed the songs. Although I was worried about copyright issues, there was no JASRAC<sup>9</sup> in this world. Moreover, the rights holders were not here either. *So please give me some leeway for wanting to further foster the culture.*

Our powerhouse was comprised of violinists, but there were also instruments such as the trumpet and kettledrum. While it was surprising to see that there were pianos, how easily the monsters played them moved me quite a bit.

The opinion on whether to add a piano into the orchestra was split. But this alone was not enough to concern me too much. If we wanted to further dramatize the performance with the addition of a piano, we should just add it in. I wasn't musically talented, so the decision was handed to the monsters. The result of the performance was guaranteed by Myourmiles.

Today was also the first day I would be hearing their performance. With mounted expectations, I nervously awaited the moment.

After confirming that the guests had been seated, the lights were gradually turned down. The curtain on the stage was pulled up. Members of the orchestra in uniforms emerged. The ensemble was made up of people from different races as they held their preferred instruments.

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<sup>8</sup>Japanese drum instrument

<sup>9</sup>Japanese Society for Rights of Authors

Some looked like humans, others looked like beasts. There was a lot of variety. Everyone's face was filled with confidence and pride in their instruments.

A halfling came to the front, likely the conductor, and bowed deeply to the audience—I recalled this young man sighing that he couldn't do anything. I told him as comfort that "There's no such thing." Even though he wasn't good at accounting, his weak physique made him unsuited for construction work and he wasn't cut out for farming either. When out of options, he went to be enlisted, but he couldn't win in a fight either.

While this was the case, he was good at raising morale. His singing voice was most beautiful and united the people. That's when I recommended him to the army band. I had even given him the name "Taktstock"—

Taktstock then raised his face. Unlike his expression from before, his face was now filled with enthusiasm. As he graciously subjected himself to the judging eyes of the high nobles, he turned his little back to everyone. A small and fragile body, but his back was full of strength.

Everything happened so quickly. These people were lucky that their talents were developed.

He raised his taktstock (conductor baton), and the next second—they began to perform. A steady tone started, and soon was followed by a change into a solemn reprise.

Under the conduction of Taktstock, the performers were acting in unison. They had also found things to be proud of. The music they were performing seemed to be announcing: "This is the best moment of my life." It was mesmerizing.

*Classical music, these are famous songs that can be recognized in any era no matter where. There are songs that heal, that inspire joy and determination. These are songs crafted by many geniuses.*

These people, who could barely read, studied these notes day and night—and today at this hall, their effort blossomed, and they performed music with their heart and soul. Nowadays, they would no longer be mocked and called useless trash. *If someone actually does that, I'll beat the shit out of them. That's how good their performance is. I had been to classical concerts a couple of times when I was in Japan, and you guys are not doing bad at all.*

I didn't expect to hear such high-quality music here.

Yuuki closed his eyes and listened while reminiscent about the past, he seemed mesmerized by it. *How about that, aren't they amazing*—I couldn't help but feel smug.

But just as I thought so, the music stopped abruptly. They then continued to play some very familiar anime songs.

*No way, hold up... That was an almost natural transition from classical music to an anime song! And then it somehow transitioned to pop music.*

Yuuki opened his eyes and stared at me with a deadpan look. *Quit it already, I'm not the one responsible here.*

And the culprit that used my memory to compose songs—

«Answer. These are songs I've selected from master's memory bank that evoked relatively high satisfaction.»

—This answer filled with confidence came from Wisdom King Raphael-san.

*Now I'm gonna carry this for the rest of my life.* The good atmosphere we just managed to create had been destroyed completely.

I did like these songs, but it was too drastic of a contrast when it was played right after some serious music.

Yuuki seemed to agree. A small, wry smile emerged on his face.

With that being said... It seemed only Yuuki and I felt that way. I guess this was to be expected. The audience were all hearing these songs for the first time. They had no clue where they were from. Moreover, with the clever tweak of Raphael-san, the songs were composed perfectly. Naturally, people wouldn't suspect a thing.

Whether it was people who were used to listening to famous songs or not, they all probably heard these songs for the first time, and some were really into them.

The orchestra's music surrounded and dominated the music theatre, the people in the audience didn't even risk making a sound by blinking; they were fully concentrated. Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, as well as music composed by unknown geniuses had mesmerized the nobles and royalty alike in this world.

The concert today was quite the success. The monsters were able to perform beautiful music—today, anyone who listened to the concert, would have to acknowledge that.

That included the anime songs. After hearing the version they performed, they were just as great as the famous historical pieces. Even the pop songs did too, they were truly mind-blowing, and the rock songs were morale boosting.

The enthusiasm in the theatre was still very high—and soon, the performance ended.



It was over now. The past hour sure was something else. It was almost like the moment had been immortalized.

As planned, the performance would come to an end. According to Myourmiles's explanation, there would be one hour of public performance each day in the morning and afternoon. Some people who were not familiar with music may find listening for too long to be insufferable. Based on these considerations, we shortened the duration.

There was no intermission. This was our first attempt at it, in order to proceed things quickly, we simplified some steps. And the concert just now was the result of it.

I only needed to listen to the reports. The people in front of me were the ones that figured out all of this. I felt honored as I stood up, hoping to give them my congratulations to their success.

As I was about to clap—

Taktstock bowed to us and swung his baton. All the lights suddenly went off. The theatre hall became dim, some people seemed to be panicking. But that was only for a second. Someone was standing on the stage, as a slim film of light shone down.

She was a petite young girl with light pink hair—Shuna. She had an unusual charm today as she was dressed in a white open shoulder dress. I had only seen her in her kimono, which even made me doubt “Is this really her?”

Surprisingly, under the thin light stood a purple-haired beauty as well.

*Is that Shion?* She wasn’t in her usual suit, but an off-shoulder dress. As if she were bathed under the moonlight, Shion’s silhouette was dream-like. The lighting change made her dress, looming in the dark, give off a rare sensation of sexiness. Without speaking up, she was a beauty with an incredible body. Such a presentation had made Shion especially seductive.

Under the light, the two stood at the front of the stage as they bowed deeply. This alone was like a painting, drawing the eyes of the audience—but, speaking of which, what were Shuna and Shion going to do?

*Could it be...*

The light started moving as Shuna walked along to the piano that no one had played until now. Shion, on the other hand, picked up a violin. There was no doubt that they were planning to perform. I could see Shuna playing the piano, but Shion playing violin? *Is it really okay for Shion to play in front of so many guests?*

I suddenly recalled the travesty that was Shion’s cooking. *What if Shion’s performance is so horrible that it makes things difficult for us later*—no, it shouldn’t come to that. If it were that bad, there was no way Shuna would bring her up. Moreover, Myourmiles was very confident about it. That man seemed to have bet his life on this project, there’s no way he would let Shion do whatever she wanted.

I needed this confidence. Upon thinking so, I closed my eyes. Although there were still worries within me, I awaited the performance to begin.

The sound of the piano was calm and smooth. It was accompanied by the passionate play of the violin like flame. The nature of the song suddenly changed. Rather than a duet, it was more like a duel.

—But, beautiful, nonetheless.

It’s as if the tone reflecting the bad temper of Shion was being surrounded gently by the piano notes that reflect Shuna’s temperament. Tender yet exciting, the two characters intertwine and support each other. Their incorporation was just right.

Ah ah, this was amazing. It’s as if my soul was being shaken as I was overwhelmed by the rich music. That was something else. There’s no way they could have reached that level of mastery by practicing on the spot. It must’ve been skills practiced since childhood.

Speaking of which, Shuna was a miko-hime (witch princess)—I heard that Shion was responsible for protecting her. During religious celebrations, music was a necessary component.

It must have been for this reason that the music Shion and Shuna performed was so strikingly impactful—

There was silence. As if a momentary stay in a fantasy land had just finished. I felt as though I'd been there for an eternity, yet it had barely been five minutes. Upon coming back to my senses, I wanted to clap amidst panic, but I was overtaken.

There was a sprinkle of soft applause that broke the silence. Someone did it before me. I was gonna clap first, but someone got ahead of me. I clapped alongside to confirm who it was—I didn't expect it to be Luminas. That gave me a spook. She had disguised herself as the maid of the two Holy Knights and was clapping with utmost satisfaction.

I followed up with some intense applause, joined by many others. There was applause like thunder. Emperor Elmesia of the Sorcerer's Dynasty Sarion, Dwarf King Gazel and the aristocrats of the Western Nations joined along. Even Frey and Hermes, as well as Midley, who seemed remotely unconcerned with any culture. Everyone stood up and gave them their applause.

For some reason, the habit of applauding seemed to be the same as my original world. *Is it that there are so many otherworlders from the start, or is it that this is just how this world is? I'm not really sure about it, but I'm sure there's no culture of "Encore" in this world.* After all, cultural activities were a rare occurrence in this world, and the reason was very obvious.

And so I thought that everything was over, but it didn't seem this way. The stage turned dark once more before the light shone again. The last song was performed by Shuna on the piano, Shion with her violin, as well as the rest of the orchestra. This concluded the public performance.

Music—and art—can break through any barrier.

After witnessing it all, I would like to believe that there were indeed good things in this world, their beauty being something anybody could appreciate.



The performance was a great success. At noon, we dined at the hall of the guest hotel. As the guests were eating snacks prepared by us, they were passionately discussing the performance from before.

“That was amazing.”

“Aye, you're right about that—”

“I was even mesmerized with my eyes closed—”

“Me too. There's still an echo of the music around. It didn't matter if it were humans or

monsters that performed, there's no difference between the two at all!"

"Indeed. Good things are intrinsically good, nothing else really matters."

And so on, as I eavesdropped nearby, hearing everyone's praise.

"E-excuse me...Lord Rimuru, I wanted to attend that music concert again, how could I have the chance to do that?" someone decided to just ask me directly.

"Throughout the three days of celebration, it will be held at fixed times every day."

*That's the answer I gave at least, but I may consider arranging regular concerts after the celebration.* There still weren't many songs that they could play, but we would add on to the list in the future.

"They did a wonderful performance. I had a lot more fun than I had imagined," when I crossed paths with Luminas, she said so in a volume that only I could hear. I felt that Luminas seldom gave praise, so her praising them directly this time could probably be interpreted as praise of the highest order.

Seeing the reactions of the crowd, Benimaru also looked very proud.

"Speaking of which, Shion was really surprising."

"That's right. But—despite her look—she has always been good with rhythms. That instrument called violin was a great fit for Shion. Even though Shuna gave me a surprise with that instrument as well, she already enjoys singing, so it's not that big a surprise after all."

In Benimaru's view, these seemed to be facts that could easily be accepted. He knew that the two had good singing voices. Having been reminded by him, I did recall hearing them singing joyfully. Although I seemed to have understood, I wasn't actually sure about what everyone was truly capable of.

The lunch gathering concluded, followed by the tech presentation in the afternoon. I followed Rigurd to guide the guests who had yet to calm themselves from the exciting experience in the morning.

Just passing by the opera house, we moved towards the museum this time. It felt as if we had gotten to the wrong place, but the historical records room was our destination this time.

Gabil and Vesta were welcoming us at the entrance of the building. Some of the guests seemed to be aware that Vesta used to be a subject of the Dwarven Kingdom. A wave of noise came through, sounded like a commotion of surprise. But Vesta didn't seem to mind as he laughed alongside the crowd. Under the two's guidance, we entered the building.

"What's in the box here are the healing potions first produced by Rimuru-sama. It was a liquid refined from hipokute grass. The refinement rate was up to 99 percent. It is not as good as a resurrection potion, though it is almost as authentic as one—"

Vesta explained as we walked further into the building. It was at this point that I discovered a misstep. While Vesta's explanation was in detail, it was probably pretty boring to the people without the relevant knowledge. It was possibly for this reason that some had begun to feel bored.

The arrangement of the event was not ideal either. Had the tech presentation been arranged in the morning, the crowd would probably still attend out of curiosity. And it would appear less tedious. But arranging it right after the amazing concert in the morning, the presentation in comparison would, therefore, be dull. Moreover, considering that most of the guests are aristocrats, they may have been interested in the outcomes, but the production process would appear less significant. This must've been on their minds. Vesta seemed to have noticed this as well, as a wry smile emerged on his face.

"My, my, it must be tedious for everyone to listen to these abstruse topics. Let us switch things up and take a look at our experiments."

He turned to signal Gabil.

Gabil nodded in response.

"This experiment is—to ask the rudimentary question of 'What exactly is the healing potion.' When we dilute the full healing potion to one-fifth of its concentration, we will have the higher healing potion for treating severe wounds. A little more dilution and we will be able to produce twenty bottles of lower healing potion. In other words, that's just how incredible the full healing potion is."

As Vesta was explaining, Gabil laid out all three types of healing potions in a line.

"If there's any wounded person, we can invite him to test the effect of the potion. But deliberate self-harm would be too barbaric. So we've come up with an interesting experiment as an alternative."

Accompanying Gabil's presentation, Vesta took something out—a broken sword.

"Next, will the healing potion be able to fix this sword, can anyone answer this question?"

As soon as Gabil asked, someone snickered at his question.

"Impossible! hipokute grass only works on creatures!"

The respondent seemed to be a sorcerer, likely a court mage of some kingdom. He seemed to be well acquainted with relevant knowledge to determine that a healing potion had no effect on a broken sword.

"Kukuku, indeed you are right. That is at least the case for the higher and lower healing potions—on the sword, they would have no effect," Gabil nodded in response.

That was only natural. You didn't need an experiment to know the answer. *I can see Gabil asking it, but why did Vesta continue with the question—?*

"Then, what is the range of its effective targets? What would be the answer to this question?"

To this question, the audience started arguing along the lines of "Do you think we are stupid?" and started making a fuss to Gabil and Vesta. While such a reaction was expected, they were really being noisy.

But I could understand their sentiments. However, regarding the application range of the healing potion... Of course it was not limited to humans, it was effective for animals, plants and monsters.

*Then, what really is the difference?* Upon thinking so, that did make me ponder. *Is it a difference between being organic and inorganic?* No, my guess was that it had to do with

having will or not.

«Answer. Plants have wills as well, it stems from its “Soul.” Speculation is that the difference has to do with the spiritron that makes up for magicule, i.e. the presence of “Soul” or not.»

Yeah, that. Plants have wills as well. Although they have no clear concept of self, they still desire to live. But a sword does not have “Soul,” in other words, possesses no will. A sword is purely just an object, and of course—*uh, hold up?*

Something strange just crossed my mind. I recalled that Kaijin mentioned that a sword had its own will—

*Could it be!*

“Kukuku, that’s the question I hope to explore as well. We’ve come to discover something new out of curiosity on the matter.”

“Indeed. I was laughing to myself at how stupid Gabil-san was and told him not to do such a silly experiment, trying to stop him. But I was the ignorant one. I was too accustomed to common sense that I forgot my purpose as a researcher.”

Vesta, with a smile, poured the full healing potion on the broken sword. And soon, while only just a bit, the sword was reacting.

“ “ “...!” ” ”

“This is the answer. While it is not complete regeneration, the broken sword does show signs of restoration.”

“H-how could this be...”

“Unbelievable. So, healing potion can be applied in this way—”

The guests couldn’t hide their shock, as was to be expected. Their common sense had just been devastated. It was hard not to feel surprised—I was shocked as well.

I didn’t expect them to conduct such an experiment. Neither of the two persons responsible reported it to me, leading to my unexpected and unnecessary shock right now.

“However, this only applies to gear that has grown to a certain extent. The basic requirement for the weapon is that it is made of ‘Magisteel.’ In addition, if the owner has not used the weapon for a long time, there will be no reaction.”

I see, in other words, it does not work if it does not possess will.

“—What prompted your interest in the matter?”

Gazel opened up quite seriously and asked Gabil.

“It’s not anything special, to be honest. I used to think that wild plants and grass had no will, but after experimentation, I discovered that healing potion works on them as well.”

Since full healing potions were already being mass-produced, there was a surplus in terms of production. That’s why they were able to spray plenty of it on different materials as an experiment.

Indeed, curiosity is the first step to new discoveries. I recalled a similar experiment done at a science lab when I was in primary school. I also wanted to challenge myself a bit due to boredom. Gabil was the same, anything would come after the action.

The potion was effective towards plants. It was said that it could revive an almost dead tree and grow new branches over the broken ones.

“This reminds me of the dryads in this world. Could the seemingly weak plants before us not grow to powerful monsters in the future? On second thought, I believe there must be some other conditions.”

As the explanation reached this point, at least half of the crowd became intrigued. Normally speaking, such research results should have been kept secret. That fact must’ve been in the back of everyone’s mind.

*Should I let Gabil and Vesta continue the presentation?* This thought quickly went through my mind before I dismissed it and continued to listen to the explanation with the rest.

“Any entity that reacts to healing potion possesses magicule. And items without magicule do not react at all... This means that will is something that exists in magicule—or the two are closely connected.”

“Yes. I’ve changed my mind since Gabil-san showed me the files. It was then that a question came to mind—‘What is magicule?’”

Magicule—one of the unique substances of this world that, like oxygen, existed in every corner of this world. It was the source of all amazing powers in this world, and to some extent it could control free will...

“Here’s a sample of a certain plant. Let’s switch to a different location and have a close-up image.”

After being hurried by Vesta, we moved on to a different venue.

This was a large room with lines of chairs set up. This seemed more like a multimedia room. An experimental projector was set up there in front of a wall with a white cloth as a screen.

Gazel was observing the projector excitedly, but he seemed to know that it wasn’t the focus at hand, so he kept his mouth shut. As expected of Gazel, a mature adult that read the room.

After confirming that all guests had been seated, Gabil began operating the projector. The device possessed light-magic engravings. It was a treasure that could project colored images. The room turned dim as images emerged on the white cloth.

Some people were very surprised to see this, but Vesta ignored them and continued the explanation.

“Then, please take a look at this image. This is the dissection of the aforementioned plant, and there is another dissection graph of a random grass—”

The two enlarged dissection graphs were displayed next to each other.

*He didn’t mention what type of plant it is on purpose, what is Vesta’s goal here?*

“—Aren’t these two the same thing? I couldn’t tell the difference...”

“Uh—same here, I can’t tell the difference.”

Many people agreed.

While some pointed out that “Here’s something different,” “No, over there,” but I guessed none of them were right.

“All right, so what’s the correct answer?”

“Then let us enhance the image further.”

“How about now, does it still look the same?”

Vesta and Gabil gave off a rather devious smile.

It was then that they began to reveal their ace in the hole.

“The first image is the plant known as hipokute herb. The second is a random grass we picked by the road. How about it then, do they look the same?”

As Vesta finished, people with pertinent knowledge began to disagree with him.

“They do look different. You can see the difference if you pay attention!”

“How devious of you Vesta-san. It’s so hard to see the difference between the images like this!”

The audience began to express their views.

The hipokute herb was rare. It was the grass that I ate inside the sealed cave of Veldora. It was also the famous ingredient that produced healing potion.

The dissection graph looked very similar to that of the grass. How could that be possible—that’s probably the average persons’ reaction. Including me, some had become shaken by the words of Vesta. Gazel was among them, his face looked quite shocked.

The dissection graphs of the hipokute herb and grass were the same—this suggested that both *were* the same thing. Then, what even was a rare herb? The common sense of this world had been completely subverted...

While the devious smile still hung on Vesta’s face, he spread his arms to have everyone’s attention.

“Please, everyone, calm down, calm down.”

Vesta and Gabil comforted the guests and quieted them down. As the room was back to silent, they continued to play the images.

“The liquid extracted from hipokute herb mixed with magicule will become healing potion. The nature of the refined liquid determines the rate of the fusion, that is a fact that everyone knows. Regarding the point, while I can’t give you the details, we’ve managed to extract liquid with purity up to 99 percent. The medicine made from it is the full healing potion.”

They were displaying a series of images while hiding the key technology. Vesta also explained the production process of healing potions.

“Then there’s the leaves of the hipokute herbs. When you grind them up and mix in magicule, you can produce ointment that can be applied on wounds. However, its effect is not as obvious. Because it is considered the remains of the refined extraction. You will obviously get such a conclusion from a certain point of view.”

A picture of the leaf was projected on the screen.

When you ground up these leaves and mixed them with the refined extract, you could make ointment. When he showed the steps of production, there wasn’t anything odd, I wasn’t sure what Vesta was up to now.

“Next, I’ll direct everyone to look at this image.”

The screen showed some ordinary grass that looked like the hipokute herb grown in the cave. Its appearance looked completely different, so how come the picture of its dissection was the same...

But after switching to a few different pictures, the image of hipokute herb began to change.

“Has anyone noticed yet? I found it purely by accident. While I was growing hipokute herbs under Rimuru-sama’s order, I came by some leftovers of the herb’s refinement waste. Even if we make them into herbs, as soon as our preservation method is not good enough, its effect would disappear. Moreover, compared to the juice of the healing potion, its effect is very low. Since these leftovers have always been prepared in one way, I’ve not paid any attention to it in the past. But back then, I thought carefully and realized that there’s really no need to specifically make it into ointment. I kept on pondering as I observed the leftovers—”

It was then that Gabil discovered something.

That was the shape of the leftovers’ leaves. They were different from the hipokute herb they grew. Gabil was shocked and decided to keep a detailed record of it, which were the images he showcased.

“—First, in terms of theory, technically speaking, there is no such plant as hipokute herb. It was the high concentration of ‘magicule’ near its surrounding that caused this particular plant to mutate—”

“Indeed! It was not that hipokute herb grows in areas with high magicule concentration, but that only in areas with high enough magicule concentration can its mutation take place. That is the true identity of the hipokute herb!”

As Gabil concluded his explanation, Vesta continued excitedly. No wonder he was so thrilled. The audience was riled up as well after hearing their speech.

“T-this is a major discovery!”

“Something like that, how can you publish that in a p-place like this, Vesta! Y-you need to find a more appropriate venue... You need to contact the universities and publish something like this by formal procedure!”

Noises abruptly at the scene and the situation was almost chaotic. Even those who were lacking in interest could not keep silent. As for the people who were intrigued from the start, the impact on them was even greater. The content of this showcase was beyond their imagination. From their exclamation that “You shouldn’t have published it in a place like this—“ alone could you deduce just how shocked they felt. Even Gazel’s eyes were popping out in awe. Emperor Elmesia was also whispering with Duke Elalude.

I was scared as well. I hadn’t paid much attention to it until now, and was immediately brought to speed by their presentation. Now that I thought about it, this made a lot of sense. I didn’t think that there was all that hipokute herb in Veldora’s sealed cave from the start. If it were mutation—the plant itself evolved—then it would have made sense.

These plants returned to their original state as ordinary grass when all of its magicule was extracted through the refinement process. When it is completely depleted of magicule, its dis-

section graph naturally looks just like your garden variety grass.

*I see, that's why Gabil thought of using a healing potion to fix the sword.* Just as any ordinary grass could be turned into hipokute herb, minerals could be turned into magisteel ore. These ores could then be refined into “magisteel” and could be used to craft weapons. Therefore, he would naturally question whether healing potions could be effective on swords or not.

The result of which was the demonstration at the start of the presentation.

“As for my question ‘What is magicule?’, there has not been any clear answer. Monsters and majins are also affected by magicule. That is a known fact. But what about demi-humans? Is it possible to make them human by extracting all the magicule from their body? Questions similar to these started pouring into our heads, but proving any of these would prove to be extremely difficult.”

“With that said, we will carry on with our research. There are many researchers gathered on this land, we promise to continue our search for the answer. And with that, our tech presentation today is concluded.”

“Thank you—”

“—for listening, everyone.” ”

Gabil and Vesta concluded the presentation together. It seemed that they had prepared the presentation very discreetly. They acted very natural as if they’d done this many times.



Moreover, the content of their presentation was fascinating.

Even though there was no clear conclusion, the content was worth pondering over. They managed to announce something so important without revealing any of the core information on the matter.

The most important point was that through a presentation, you couldn't really steal any of our technology.

Magicule could cause changes to plants—that was some wonderful information, but other nations may not have been easily able to research the matter. Perhaps they could run experiments, but even with the knowledge at hand, they couldn't produce hipokute herbs in mass. Our nation would still take the lead.

Moreover, experiments conducted in our nation would be continued. There would be many researchers and intellectuals gathered on this land—just as Gabil said, we will have many scholars gathered here to study. Because of our abundance of magicule, we could do however many experiments as we pleased.

This tech presentation had landed quite the impact on our audience. In the morning they were enjoying amusing sensations through music, and in the afternoon, the tech presentation excited their desire for exploration. As for which of the two was more memorable, that would be up to each person's own judgement. But with both events stirring up such attention, it meant that we were very successful in holding them both.

*And I was thinking that people may find it boring and the arrangement was all wrong... Looks like it was for nothing.*

This was the way to keep our guests' attention on our nation—this goal was successfully reached.

I really wanted to praise those two without reservation.



After the presentation, it was free-roaming time. Some went to the salon for a rest, some snuck out to the market district. Some went to enjoy the hot spring or visit one of our entertainment facilities. We did send receptionists alongside guests so they could move at will.

As for what the guests were discussing, it was all about the concert and the tech presentation. Their praise was spreading around the town.

I went around and checked on the nobles for fun. It was then that Arnaud and Bacchus caught up to me nervously. They whispered to me “We have something to discuss with you.” I suspected it was something urgent, so I returned to the guest hotel alongside Benimaru, Shion and them to one of the rooms.

The one waiting there was Luminas.

I had half guessed that it was her, having seen how nervous Arnaud and the others looked. *Looks like my guess was right.* She was crossing her leg while sitting on a chair in her maid suit. The black stockings on her pale legs looked very sexy. Arnaud and Bacchus stood up straight behind Luminas without a flinch. This scene of master and servants looked very strange, but I suppose it was acceptable. It probably had to do with how majestic Luminas looked.

“Well, though I did make a nonaggression pact with you...that was far from sufficient,” Luminas immediately said as she saw me.

I didn’t even get the chance to respond—or rather, I didn’t get the chance to even sit down. I knew that she was an acute person, I didn’t know just how acute she was. While somewhat dumbfounded, I sat down without asking. And I immediately questioned Luminas back.

“Far from sufficient of what exactly?”

“Do I really have to spell it out? Exchange! Don’t you see that we can’t have much exchange at all now with the nonaggression pact?”

“No, I don’t think that’s really a problem...?”

I tried to figure out what Luminas was *actually* trying to say while trying to clear the situation. Holy Empire of Lubelius and Tempest Federation had indeed signed a nonaggression pact just as Luminas pointed out. The Western Holy Church that served under Lubelius would also help with our status among the Western Nations. This had given us much convenience, but in terms of exchanges, we were indeed not in any alliance. Since the two nations were too distant from each other anyway, there was no trade between our nations. The flow of goods was left to the opportunities in the market, determined by the merchants and the strength of the nations. However, it’s not that we were not making any deals at all. I had actually requested Myourmiles to send traveling merchants to them.

Not to wait for their attempt, instead, we were going to strike first.

Basically, we had to do some investigation of the market there. Right now, I had gotten the investigation report for the specialties of the Holy Empire of Lubelius. I learnt that Lubelius was a huge agricultural nation. They mainly produced wheat-based crops. They seemed to also be exported to the Western Nations. I also ran investigations of the products themselves; the quality was good and the taste was delicious.

That was our current situation.

I hoped to have some deeper exchange with them, but if you asked me what to do now, I really couldn’t come up with anything.

“Are you seriously that stupid or are you trying to bait me?”

“No no no, that’s not what I meant.”

I immediately denied it. Luminas sighed rather anxiously.

“Speaking of exchange, how about we try culture first? Seriously, I have really underestimated you guys. The people under the protection in Lubelius lacked artistic talent, so I didn’t have much expectation at first, but the concert just now was truly wonderful. With the whole

day's tour, I've changed my view on you guys."

Haha, and she gave us a five-star review. She did also praise us when passing by me just now, it looked like she really liked the things we had. Moreover, I had gotten an idea of what Luminas was going for. She recognized our ability after hearing the concert today. There also seemed to be a band under Luminas's rule, perhaps she wanted the two bands to have some exchange to encourage each other.

"Some vampires also possess artistic values. They've inherited music from ancient times and have been working to innovate on new songs. Lately they've been stagnant in that regard, so I think it would give them some good stimuli in the form of an exchange with your people."

As expected, her proposal was actually hugely beneficial to us as well. Experience can fulfill one's mind. If we wanted to host even better cultural events, the best way for us to grow and learn was through exchange with others with the same profession.

"That sounds good! Exactly what we want in fact."

I had no reason to refuse and agreed without hesitation. Considering the future relations between our nations, there was more boon than bane.

"Um, let's discuss more in that direction."

Luminas nodded with satisfaction.

It so happened that an old butler came forth to serve Luminas and me some black tea. His name seemed to be Gunther. He was just as strong as Louis, but also an experienced butler. Although our Diablo certainly wasn't any inferior, I did have to say that the butlers in this world seriously couldn't be underestimated.

Servants also began to prepare drinks for Benimaru and Shion behind me. But they were moving too slowly, and Luminas anxiously opened on the topic before they could serve anything.

Luminas's eyes turned coldly at the servants; and just when I thought to myself "Talk about an absolute master-servant relationship"—

"How wonderful, now you guys can have some fun too," She told her servants arrogantly.

The servants responded with "All thanks to your grace," "I am looking forward to it!" They seemed genuinely joyful about the fact. I sensed that they were not afraid of Luminas, but holding great respect towards her.

Confused, I checked more carefully and discovered that these were all vampires. Every one of them suppressed their strength and youki to appear no different than humans. They were no doubt highly evolved vampires, almost at Luminas's level. Surely by the few people at the scene now alone, they could take down a nation with ease. And to think that these people were her servants, this was enough proof as to how unfair power came into play in this world.

"Then Gunther, help me with the procedure back at Night Garden."

"Yes ma'am."

Luminas nodded as she sipped on her black tea.

She elegantly did so without making any sound, her beauty and elegance could be a model for royalty.

"By the way, that tech presentation was very interesting as well. What an intriguing thought

to analyze the effects of magicule on things. I've got some weirdos who enjoy researching as well, is it okay to send them your way?"

As I was mesmerized by her elegance, Luminas suddenly said so pleasantly.

I further inquired about the matter.

According to Luminas, the civilizations dwelling on the surface had a relatively low level of technology, while their nation dwelling underground seemed to have some high tech.

"How surprising, I thought you guys would have a higher profile with those..."

"I want to stay away from trouble. We may be found by that annoying lizard if we were too eye-catching. Moreover, I didn't want the angels to interfere with us. Before we can exterminate those things, all important research would be conducted underground," she said proudly.

I didn't expect that the strongest nation ruled by a demon lord would be Luminas's.

Vampires were different from humans, and they possessed undead characteristics that allow them to live even longer than the elves. The more highly evolved individuals didn't even need to feed, instead, they could maintain their life force by taking small doses of human spiritual vitality... Vampires were no doubt at the top of the ecosystem. However, they also had weaknesses. The reason why vampires were called the rulers of the nights was not only due to their immense power wielded during nighttime. It also was due to the fact that they could be eliminated by sunlight.

This was the type of race that the vampires were, to have such a huge weakness while still maintaining high levels of lethality.

And among the highly evolved, individuals with great power, these vampires were subjects of Luminas and were considered noble within their nation. Some of these seemed to have overcome their weakness against sunlight. These people were called the "Surmounters." It seemed that they were able to operate wherever they went. Although they were few in number, vampires without weakness were still nightmares to humans. Even though these people were not as strong as Louis and Gunther, they were already at the gates of Calamity-class.

By the way, all these servants next to us were "Surmounters." Apparently, they only became Luminas's servants out of personal interest. But you could easily figure out that there was more to their intention than just ensuring Luminas's safety. "Surmounters" were a bunch of idlers without any weaknesses. And given how idle they were, they developed interests in designing all kinds of things. Some of them even started designing some out of fashion a.k.a. hipster objects in an attempt to earn Luminas's favor.

"Seriously, they are really annoying. I ordered them to develop something more presentable, but they may be too tightly bound by established ideas. These people have no clue what progress is. I hope that you will at least educate them a bit when they come here."

That was Luminas's request.

"Um—well, we can do that..."

But I was worried as to whether they would cause any trouble or not.

These so-called "Surmounters" were the ruling elites. To have them do research in our

nation, who knew what type of problem may emerge.

Noticing my hesitation, Luminas further suggested:

“But of course, I’ll give you a reward! I’ll grant you a Skill for your troubles.”

“A Skill?”

“Yes. I shall grant you the “Ultimate Secret of faith and grace.””

*What is that, it sounds super strong!* As opposed to a technique for getting drunk, this actually sounded very powerful. She seemed to be for real.

“What would that be then?”

“To put it simply, it’s a Skill that allows your believers to carry part of your strength,” Luminas said so to me with an evil smile.

Oi oi oi, are you seriously announcing a Skill so powerful in front of everyone’s faces—

«Answer. Individual “Luminas” has applied “Dimension Severance.”»

Raphael-sensei’s instruction reassured me. With it pointed out, I finally realized that except me, no one else seemed able to hear Luminas’s voice. As expected from one of the strongest demon lords, her execution of such a Skill was so natural.

“You’ll teach me that Skill, and we are supposed to take in researchers from your nation to return the favor. Is that so?”

“Yep. Even with only the musical exchange alone, I would already be satisfied. If I have to be honest, consider this my appreciation gift for you.”

Luminas seemed to be genuine.

“Fine, I’ll accept your proposal.”

“Heh heh, then we have a deal.”

And so, I accepted Luminas’s proposal, followed by her teaching me the “Ultimate Secret of faith and grace.”

This Skill, to put it simply, was the principle of “Holy Magic.” This secret technique allowed me to use my “name” as a medium to help people cast magic. Hinata and the Holy Knight therefore could cast “Holy Magic” in the name of Luminas. In other words, they were using part of Luminas’s power.

Now that she had taught me the principle of it, the people under me who would be able to use “Holy Magic” would, surely, increase. This was a reward greater than I had expected. I couldn’t help but feel shocked.

But then again, Luminas was not born yesterday either. She had planned things very carefully before negotiating with me.

“I’m grateful for this opportunity, but is it really okay?”

“No worries. You probably would figure out the truth of the Skill with your own strength in a couple years or so. One should always utilize information like that more when it still retains some value.”

«...»

...I see.

Based on the upset look of Raphael-sensei, I could probably learn the Skill myself within a few years' time. Indeed, with research to discover the true nature of magicule as well as the information I learned about "Spirit-particles" during my battle with Hinata, if I was to put this information together to dig to the root, the truth of the matter would have been revealed in no time. While I personally was unable to do it, Raphael-sensei was still capable of it.

Luminas merely realized this and gave me the information as a favor.

"I still need to thank you regardless, Luminas."

"Well, as long as you do what you promised."

I am still too naive to strike deals with Luminas. Although the content of our deal this time posed no big issue, I needed to be more cautious.

As I thought so to myself, I shook hands with Luminas.

And with that, our orchestra was invited to the Night Garden. On the other hand, the "Surmounters" under Luminas's rule—in other words, high-ranking noble—would be doing research in our nation.

As Luminas disabled "Spatial Severance," it was as if nothing had happened. Peace fell again at the scene.

I tasted the black tea casually while I listened to Luminas accounting for her experience during the concert. As opposed to the exchange of technology, the musical exchange amused Luminas more. She had mostly talked about when our nation's orchestra should set off.

Near the end of our conversation—

"By the way, Rimuru. Among the guests that were invited, someone was giving off an unpleasant aura, did you notice it?" Luminas asked casually, without the slightest change in tone. I wasn't able to respond for a second before I realized that this was a warning from her.

*This would mean that I wasn't just overthinking things...*

"Hmm, you mean 'those two'?"

"Indeed. I'm glad you didn't lower your guard. Be very cautious. Do not disgrace the reputation of the Octagram."

With these words spoken, the meeting concluded.

I nodded towards Luminas before leaving the place.



Something interesting took place later on—after my talk with Luminas, it was dinner time.

For some reason, circling around a round table, it was Yuuki and Hinata who dined with me. Those two were very friendly to each other as they were eating the set meal and chatting

about the interesting things they'd been through in the day.

I also listened to their thoughts during the meal.

The set meal was divided into two kinds, Japanese and western. You could eat either one. Yuuki and I were eating the western meal while Hinata chose the Japanese.

"Ahh, that concert was really amazing. If Hinata hadn't gone shopping, then we could have enjoyed it together."

"Shut up already, I'm always free-spirited, so what if I didn't go?"

*Moreover, that takoyaki place was surprisingly delicious*—Hinata muttered as she tried to find excuses. But when Hinata mentioned someone was using an alias—I couldn't help but turn my eyes away.

"With that being said, the music concert was really worth a shot. I knew the songs they played, but the composition was really top-notch."

*Nice job, Yuuki.* Thanks to him praising Taktstock and the band's performance, Hinata's attention was drawn elsewhere.

"Fine, since you've put it that way, I guess I'll bring the kids to watch it tomorrow," she replied half-heartedly.

Hinata seemed to have had plenty of fun during the festival, also spending a lot of money. I heard that she bought a ton of exclusive clothes, gear and magic items sold at the festival. She was also eating the whole time as she went to the shops. I was starting to suspect that her taking care of the children was just an excuse.

But they did seem to get along fine and had a lot of fun. I couldn't be happier about that outcome. She also seemed to be continuing her babysitting tomorrow as well, so I shouldn't complain.

"As opposed to that, I'm more interested in the research to discover the truth about magicule. Because healing potion doesn't work on me, my body would instantly dissolve any magicule substances. As a matter of fact, the effectiveness of 'healing magic' also depends on the user..." Hinata said, while lowering her volume.

I heard that she'd done much research to see whether there was a healing potion that could help heal her.

Magic Nullification sounded useful in name, but if you gave it any closer thought, it would reveal its many inconveniences.

"To my recollection, I've not really thought carefully about those things until now, after all, I do get affected by magicule as well—"

"When we traveled to this world, we absorbed a huge amount of magicule. This will be reflected in terms of Skill on some people immediately, but to someone like you, you may also not have any Skills. But you must have been affected to some extent. Like seriously, you didn't seem to have aged one day—"

"Uh, can you not make comments about me like that? My body did stop growing, but I've done plenty of work by myself nonetheless!"

"I know, I know. You're still the same, so easy to get pissed. I was just joking around."

Ehh, perhaps Hinata thought she was joking...but her look wasn't joking around at all. It was all because of how serious Hinata looked when she spoke. There was no trace of a smile on her face. And her tone didn't sound like a joke either.

"Never mind, I won't quarrel further with you. By the way, I heard that Rimuru-san has had someone to research the matter, what an interesting focus."

Even though Yuuki praised me like this, he had overestimated my ability.

"There's no such thing! They did that research by themselves. Even I only heard about the matter today."

"Eh?"

"Weren't you who ordered them to conduct the research? So you just let them publish information like that in front of all the nations' figureheads without even knowing the content of their presentation?"

Yuuki and Hinata looked at me, dumbfounded.

*AH, this soup tastes so nice*—apart from escaping from reality, I could only try to find an excuse.

"You can't blame me for that! I always encourage independence!"

Since I couldn't find anything more suitable, I decided to just make up an argument.

But neither were fooled by me, and both were giving me the eyes.

"—I have reflected a bit now. Even though I was busy, I should have learnt what the content was..."

But these were afterthoughts.

"Rimuru-san, why are you so good at your job?"

"Truly, you really have the impressive attitude of a great man at times."

They were definitely not praising me, yet I couldn't do anything about it. I did, in fact, also feel that I was acting too casually.

The content of the presentation was indeed nice, but halfway through it did kind of make me worry. Gazel also had things to say about it, so it was best that I be careful about it. I didn't expect to get nitpicked by Yuuki and Hinata...

The night gathering proceeded with us finally changing the topic and beginning some random chatter.

As such, the first day of the Founding Festival concluded with much praise. It was so good that I had garnered a lot of confidence that this festival would turn out to be very successful.

However—

I would quickly be proven to be too naive to have such a thought.

# **Problems Emerging**

**Interlude**

*That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime*

## Interlude 2

### Problems Emerging

In order to do our routine report, everyone gathered at the conference room.

*Was Myourmiles the only one yet to arrive?*

It was nine in the evening and the night feast had just ended...

You could still hear the sound of flutes and taiko from the on-going celebration. I permitted people to party until ten in the evening, so it was totally legitimate to continue their celebration now.

The building provided for the guests to stay overnight could be completely sound proofed with the windows shut. There had been preparations done so that, no matter how noisy the townsfolk were to get, no one would complain.

Although I wanted to visit the night market as well, I recalled keeping everyone until late last night. So instead, I decided to hear the reports early today.

“Shuna, Shion, thank you both for the effort. The performance was fantastic, it really surprised me.”

“Heh heh, that’s because we have been practicing in secret. I’m already good at singing, and the instrument called piano also suited me. But in reality, I only knew how to play those two songs,” Shuna said happily.

I figured that if she could play that well having just learnt it, surely, she must have some talent in music. But she was busy all the time and could only practice during break times during work. So, it wasn’t surprising that there were limits to the songs she could perform. And given that to be the case, Shion was probably the same.

“I have also been practicing in secret with Shuna-sama to give Rimuru-sama a surprise. Looks like it worked!”

Shion’s face was full of joy. She looked really beautiful while playing the violin, giving off the aura of a cold beauty. She deserved genuine praise.

“You were super cool. Will you be performing in the future as well?”

“Of course! I will practice more diligently and recreate all the songs memorized by Rimuru-sama!” exclaimed Shion.

“Um, um. I have a lot of songs that I want to hear, I’ll be looking forward to your performance!”

I had never realized just how competent Shion could be until today. She always had some faults that made people second guess her achievements, but today, Shion looked particularly dazzling.

Next, I spoke with Gabil.

“Gabil, your presentation was really well received—even Yuuki was amazed by it. King Gazel was also very impressed by you. Although he mentioned that we’ve given too much information, I felt it was just fine.”

“Yes sir! Thank you for the compliment! Even though Vesta-san helped out a lot, I worked really hard too. When I was experimenting, I fulfilled my desire to learn, so I wanted to relay the sentiment to everyone in the audience… But I may have overdone it a little.”

“No no no, I wasn’t blaming you. I was very surprised that you were doing that kind of experiment. The content was very intriguing, and also sparked the interest of the guests. It was a very successful event.”

Hearing my words, Gabil sighed with relief, erasing his previous nervousness.

“Send my regards to Vesta as well.”

“Yes sir!”

Vesta was out drinking with Gazel at this moment. Perhaps he could even be getting scolded, but that was probably a form of praise for Vesta. Since to Vesta, Gazel had always been his idol.

After all, this was a celebration, it was fine to have fun no matter your status.

I also asked Diablo about the martial tournament.

“There have been six formal participants elected. If I were to participate, none of them would be qualified enough. I’ve seen that chosen hero as well, kukuku, an interesting talent indeed, should I take care of him first?”

“Didn’t I strictly forbid that?!?”

“Your wish is my command. I’ll probably ruin Rimuru-sama’s mood if I am to continue the report.”

From Diablo’s point of view, none of them would raise a problem. With the inclusion of Gobta and Geld, there were eight contestants in total.

Since there was no problem, I didn’t want to hear the rest of it.

With the right pairing, I should be able to see some interesting battles. So, I did as Diablo said, to keep the fun for tomorrow.

Souei also reported something to me. I heard that the children were having fun at the ceremony. They’d gone to the selection match of the martial tournament as well to cheer for Masayuki. They also seemed to have eaten a lot of food.

*Hinata-san… What kind of a guardian were you?*

I was worried that the children would get a bad stomach. Would the same problem occur

tomorrow? I couldn't help but worry. And so, I chatted with everyone as we waited for Myourmiles. If there were no problems, we would be done in thirty minutes.

As if jinxed, I saw Myourmiles entering the room shaking, his face looking blue. I couldn't help but think "We have a problem."

"S-sorry to have kept you waiting."

*By the looks of him, we may have run into some serious trouble.* Normally he always looked thick-skinned and fearless, yet today he couldn't help himself from shaking.

"Did something happen?"

Shuna served some cool tea to Myourmiles. After Myourmiles had the time to catch a breath, I asked him.

"I'm truly sorry, there has been a huge problem. Here's the deal—"

Myourmiles said that we didn't have enough money. The retailers had all come to ask for payment for their goods and he'd been desperately trying to solve the issue.

*No no no, how can that be?* There were a lot of decorative pieces of art at Clayman's base. We had also recovered his treasury. Moreover, Diablo also claimed 1,500 stellars as part of the reparations paid by the Kingdom of Farmus. Even if we held this type of celebration one hundred times, there would still be surplus.

Upon thinking so, I turned to ask Myourmiles with doubts over my face.

"Regarding that, it is not a matter of budget, but that Demon Lord Clayman's legacy cannot be used as currency. That's because they are not universal currencies used by the world. The gold coins of the ancient kingdom may be highly valuable from an artistic view and some even used as currency in the Eastern Empire, however..."

Even though some countries may still have used them directly as currency, they were not approved by the rest of the world, and thus not a universal currency. It should have been resolved through exchanging the coins, but the merchants seemed unable to accept them. They were demanding us to pay them with the official currency—the gold coins issued by the Dwarven Kingdom.

"At first, I even made a promise to pay them with gold coins, but halfway through I realized that something was odd. But it was already too late."

When the coins in the treasury had been exhausted, Myourmiles had started paying the merchants from his own pocket. Yet there was a limit to his ability to pay; that was why he had to explain the situation to the merchant that he had been acquainted with. Myourmiles then discovered a shocking fact. He didn't know that these shop owners had actually been doing business with these new retailers and the retailers only took universal currencies.

If it were trade between nations, they could always use goods to afford the debts. Or when cash was not used in a transaction, merchants instead utilized certificate documents. Eventually the debt would be paid, but it would not be done for the time being. There was no concept of interest in this world, so under these circumstances, neither side would endure any losses. This was a common way of trading in this world.

However, our nation had no credibility at our disposal.

Right now, we had no choice but to agree to others' demands of payment in cash. Myourmiles was well aware of this too, which was why he'd managed the budget discreetly and selected trading partners carefully. According to his calculations, there should have been many large-scale transactions. In that way, there would be change when using the stellar. The gold coins returned could then be used to pay off everyone.

Even if that was not the case, he and the owners of the major shops had developed deep ties over the years. And it wasn't a stretch for Myourmiles to think that they would give him a pass one way or another. He thought that they might acknowledge a certificate of proof, or even accept payment through the gold coins of the ancient kingdom. Yet those retailers refused to accept, and even the merchants with a good relationship with Myourmiles were troubled by it.

"I see. No matter how you look at it, it seems that someone has been pulling the strings behind this."

Diablo, standing behind me, concluded without hesitation upon hearing Myourmiles's words. Myourmiles nodded in agreement.

"I thought so as well, I just didn't expect them to draw us back in this way..."

So Myourmiles also believed that someone was trying to drag us down?

*But, who could it be...?*

"I'm really sorry, Myourmiles-san. This is all because I didn't notice your concern earlier—" Rigurd sighed.

He was too busy receiving guests before, yet he still wanted to hold himself responsible, believing that it was not just Myourmiles's problem. Indeed, Myourmiles shouldn't be the only one to be held accountable.

"In other words, someone trying to cause us to lose credits?"

"That's more or less the case. According to the international charter settled by the Western Nation Council, we must use gold coins produced by the Dwarven Kingdom to pay for the goods. Even though each kingdom has their own regulations, the retailers' demands stand in accordance with just the Western Nations..."

If it were merchants from the Freedom Association, they'd probably take our circumstances into consideration and reach an agreement with us due to the discounts we'd given them in terms of tariffs among other things. We'd already built a level of trust. But the people that were causing problems were formal merchants under the Council State Allies. They were all citizens of these nations and therefore could argue that they were acting according to international laws.

Even if we told them that it was the special regulation of our nation, surely, they would not yield so easily. That aside—

These people possibly just all conspired to create problems on purpose. If so, applying an uncompromising attitude could lead to adverse consequences. In that sense, we had reasonable suspicion that this was exactly the outcome that our adversary wanted.

"If we insist on them obeying the regulations of our nation, perhaps the council will also oppose us."

“It would have been different if we were already part of the council, but since we intend to join in the future, this may cause the situation to be tense.”

Normally there wouldn’t be any issue, paying with the ancient kingdom’s gold coins. But if their intention were to destroy our nation’s integrity... Perhaps they wanted to see if our kingdom would be willing to obey international regulations or not.

“Could the council members be behind this?”

“The merchants came from all over the world. They must have done it by arranging retailers into the mass of merchants in secret. Although I don’t know who our enemy is, this is not as simple as we thought. By plotting this way, it shows that they were not afraid to take on some losses and have put their own cost and benefits out of the picture. I believe that they only have one goal, that is to destroy our nation’s reputation.”

Despite Myourmiles’s appearance and the size of his past country of residence, he was a respected individual in the underworld. If even Myourmiles believed that our opponent was problematic, not to mention that we were unable to find any details about them, this enemy must indeed be hard to deal with.

“Can’t we just force them to comply with our kingdom’s rules?”

I approved of Shion’s words.

“Indeed, we can; you’ve become smart, Shion. But if we force people to obey our country’s regulation, the Western Nations may no longer wish to welcome us. We want to be on friendly terms with humans, so we have to avoid such a thing at all cost.”

“But, according to Rimuru-sama’s plan, there are already Sarion, Blumund, Dwargon, Farmus—I meant Farmenas—as well as Demon Lord Milim-sama’s territory. Shouldn’t these nations already coexist in prosperity? If we are to focus on developing Tempest, shouldn’t our loss at hand be greater?”

*Was this girl really Shion? Honestly, she surprised me.*

She very accurately interpreted my thoughts. I almost suspected that she was an imposter. The point she made was on the spot with our problem.



“Kufufufu, as expected from the first secretary, Shion-san. You are right.”

“Right? Then why are they bothering us? If they can’t ignore us, shouldn’t they just cooperate and work with us to promote our image anyway??” Shion continued.

How surprising, Shion’s words were not just any lucky guess, but she seemed to have genuinely understood to give the response. And the point she gave was also the point of my doubt, to which Diablo then gave the answer.

“Creatures such as human beings are truly incredible. They cannot survive without cooperation, yet they caste among themselves to determine each person’s status. Moreover, when two or more groups encounter each other, they also start arguing again to see which one is more powerful. The weak and pathetic are always afraid that their own rights and properties are damaged, and as for this time—”

“Hmm, perhaps our opponents are worried that Rimuru-sama will threaten the circle of co-existence within the council?”

“Indeed.”

Diablo’s explanation was very straightforward. I also felt the same after hearing Benimaru’s comment. The lieutenants all began to realize the issue, some even began to feel anger. Diablo, on the other hand, was smirking joyfully while making some radical speech:

“How laughable. These ignorant rulers have no clue of restraints and do not wish to accept the compassionate love of Rimuru-sama. It is best to kill them all.”

And of course, Shion was the one to agree. The two seemed to be on the same page on this.

“Hehe, I see that the second secretary shares the same view.”

There went all my praise for her. *Looks like Shion’s nature was not altered that much after all.*

“I’m not permitting any of this.”

The two seemed very regretful. *You guys sure were tacit at the wrong time.*

“Anyhow, we cannot leave this unattended. Shall I run an investigation on the previous employers of these merchants in detail?” Souei asked for my order.

Perhaps we could get some dirt on them. This appeared necessary. But that would have to wait until after the Founding Festival finished. As of yet, we were unable to make a move without caution, just to deal with any emergency. After resolving the problem at hand, we would expose the enemies in time.

“That’s also important, but we should sit on it for now. By the way, Myourmiles, what’s the deadline of the payment? Have you come up with any good ideas?”

First, we needed to show everyone that we are willing to follow the regulations of the Council. If we were still unable to break the stalemate, we would have to see about it then. After all, I refused to let it come to war or affect people’s lives. I doubted the situation was that dire.

“Indeed. They seemed to also enjoy the celebration and said that they were willing to wait until the next day after the end of the Founding Festival. My friends also tried to help persuade them, but they said that it is as much time as they can spare—”

The next day after the end of the celebration—it was the first day today, so there were two

more days at our disposal. We would have to pay up after three days.

“Right now, my friends are gathering money for us. Although we will take more or less some loss, they are taking the ancient kingdom’s gold coins in exchange for dwarven gold coins. But whether we can mobilize the cash in time is unknown...”

That was rough... But that was to be expected. Essentially, transportation alone would be difficult.

The lieutenants could use “Dimension Transportation” to reduce time, but to run around looking for gold coins that may not even be settled would be far too inefficient. While unlikely, it was possible that the enemies might try to distract and transfer my lieutenants out of town. It was best not to make a hasty move.

*I got it!* I recalled that the Beast Kingdom had given us some gold bars—so why not just create some counterfeit coins with that? Through the replication ability of my ‘Analyze and Assess,’ I would be able to make counterfeit coins. It was impossible for dwarven technologies to see the difference, right?

«Answer. The viability of said solution is zero. Each dwarven gold coin is enchanted with Engraving Magic. They are rigorously regulated with serial numbers, and the merchants would be able to instantly detect real coins from counterfeits.»

*Ah, so that’s how it is...*

I took out a coin from my ‘Stomach’ to observe. There really were numbers engraved on them. It definitely wasn’t hard to create coins that looked like the real deal. But if there were two gold coins that looked exactly the same, it would be proof that one of them was fake.

Surely there was no need for them to use such precise technology. To me, it felt like in the past, no matter which country it was, counterfeiting currencies would always result in punishment with the equivalent to death. In this world, people had even combined magic and technology to apply absolute regulation. Since if they wanted to unify the currency used, they naturally would not want people to be able to make counterfeits easily.

“If we can’t counterfeit, there’s probably no way we can buy back...”

The crowd agreed.

“Then, even though we will be taking some losses, can’t we use the massive amount of gold bars we have already to start off with?”

Surely the merchants would accept these as payment?

“Any smart merchant will likely agree to the proposal, but I’m totally against it!”

While I thought it was a good idea, Myourmiles protested it fiercely. He then gave me the reason.

“It will become our weakness. In future trading with other nations, they will use this as an example. They will think that ‘Even if we intentionally make things difficult for this country, they are still willing to take losses just to keep a clean record.’ By that point, they will just continuously trade unfairly and will never treat us as equal trade partners. Although they will probably cover it up on paper...”

Myourmiles gave a wry smile and explained it in a way that we could understand. If the

merchants were able to find any weakness in our nation, we would be devoured clean. Myourmiles, being the same kind of merchant, would totally do that himself, and so his conclusion was very likely to happen.

At this point, I had no choice but to accept.

“There are still two days left. We will use this time to gather the coins. The people who joined the celebration are not the type to be conservative with spending, let’s all work hard to get their cash!”

“Thanks for the effort.”

In conclusion, we couldn’t find a solution.

But I had decided to go all out: If we couldn’t reach a compromise, we might as well just force them into obeying our nation’s regulation. We didn’t always have to obey others’ rules. *This is the Tempest Federation. We have our own rules.*

But of course, while it was best to stay in their lane, we insisted on making equal and just demands for both sides. Regardless of the outcome, they wouldn’t be the only ones to suffer losses. Even if they were not happy with the ancient kingdom’s gold coins, nor accept proof certificates or complain about using goods to trade goods, they didn’t have enough to badmouth us.

“Anyway, let’s not worry about them too much. This is our kingdom, if we really are at a loss of way, we will just tell them to obey our kingdom’s rule. Let’s not worry too much and just do our best!”

“Understood.”

Myourmiles seemed to have gotten a huge burden off his back, as his expression became much more joyful.

The Council may have an impression on us, but we would be able to know who the foes were at least. I had to look at things optimistically. Perhaps they weren’t even foes to begin with, just people trying to test us. It was too early to make that assumption.

“That’ll be all, let the meeting end today! Good work everyone!”

After my exclamation, the routine report session of the night concluded. The issue had been put aside, though I expected that, “Things may turn out to be challenging...”

But worrying too much was not good for your health. Myourmiles-kun seemed to have put down a lot of work for it, so now I decided to share it with him.

“Let’s go then, Myourmiles-kun. You are coming with us too.”

The male members did not object. Benimaru had already changed into his yukata, ready to party all night.

“Eh, I thought I’m supposed to be gathering money now—”

“There’s no use worrying about that now! You can’t come up with things that don’t exist. If you fall ill from worrying too much, that will be a bigger problem.”

Myourmiles gave a wry smile hearing my words.

“I’m totally defeated, young master. Then allow your humble servant Myourmiles to accompany you!”

And so, I successfully invited (forced) Myourmiles to join the night celebration. This way he could turn his mood around. I vaguely heard something along the lines of “Rimuru-sama, don’t play too hard now, that goes for you too, big brother—”

We threw these words behind us and marched towards the vibrant city.

—Something off-topic:

Earlier today, when I mentioned to Hinata about the problematic Takoyaki stand, I saw a silver-haired girl arguing with the owner.

“An intelligent man won’t stand beside a collapsing wall”—It was not the first time I’ve said this, but by following such a principle, you wouldn’t ever run into any fatal crisis. You instead get to avoid problems entirely.

And as you can imagine, I fled from the meeting elegantly and had a fun night out with the boys.

*That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime*

**Chapter  
3**

**Martial  
Tournament**

# Chapter 3

## Martial Tournament

I had a hangover.

I couldn't get drunk before, but by tuning down my 'Poison Nullification,' I was able to overcome the issue and finally get sloshed. It was the technique Luminas taught me, and I had treasured it ever since. Yesterday I used it behind Raphael-san's back and drank some fine wine whilst already slightly drunk. As a result, my headache worsened dramatically.

*Could you do something about this situation?*

«...How unfortunate, the effect of 'Pain Nullification' has also been suppressed. You will feel the pain for a while»

Oi oi oi, aren't you just targeting me on purpose...? It was angry last time as well, and it's even more—

«Answer. That fact could not be found.»

*No no no, that is a fact. Because drinking has nothing to do with 'Pain Nullification' not working—that would just be bizarre!*

But my comeback was no use against Raphael-san. I was very blatantly ignored, leaving me to battle the headache on my own.

"I need to reflect and pay attention next time," is what I would tell myself every single time, but I'd probably end up doing the same thing when the opportunity popped up again.

«...»

*I will reflect! I am reflecting right now in fact, please help ease my headache now!*

«.....»

Raphael-san seemed to be ignoring me.

The headache lasted a while before easing down a bit. I would really need to be careful in the future.

Seriously, eating is like doing drugs. You need food to keep going, but if you have too much, it would ruin your body. And by that analogy, it's the same thing for drinking—wait...that didn't really make that much sense.

Ultimately, I could just enjoy the sensation of being drunk. I didn't really have to force

myself to drink until I was completely wasted... I just happened to have too much fun with the boys. After visiting the night market with Myourmiles and the rest, I went to visit the VIP Only Elven Cabaret at level 95 of the labyrinth for an inspection.

It was the top cabaret of our nation, designed and intended for VIP guests exclusively. However, for the sake of promoting our nation, we also opened it up for the other guests.

And there it went. In the morning, people were still excited, unable to forget their concert experience. Some lost themselves in enthusiastic discussions regarding the capabilities of the healing potion.

Gazel and Vesta were there too. We, of course, couldn't hide away from them and were forced to stay with them for quite a while. In the end, we had a great conversation and chatted until late over bottles of alcohol.

It felt great to be hearing compliments about my companions and having been overjoyed, I couldn't help but want to get drunk. I was indeed reflecting at this point; I hope you guys can understand how I felt at the time. Besides, I wasn't the only person who got wasted, so were the guests.

All in all, they spent a lot of money at the cabaret. All the better for us. More good news: I had been discussing the matter of insufficient coins with a drunk Gazel when Duke Elalude joined in, to which they agreed to consider aiding us. I supposed that was the power of alcohol.

«.....»

—Something like that.

Already worn down a bit, we braced for the morning of the second day of the festival.



The recently finished Colosseum was a huge building. It was large enough for 50,000 people and had a roof that stuck out over the audience seats, which was used for sun-screening. It had a semi-circular shape, much like a pterosaur's wing membrane over the wing bone.

To be honest, this design was mainly due to my personal preference. I wanted to make the atmosphere a bit creepier and deliberately designed it this way. The intended purpose of it was to block out the sun, but no one really believed that.

People cried out, were scared, and raised their heads to see it. But there were nonetheless some weirdos who seemed very excited. The audience was crowding all over the place and all of the seats were occupied. The sheer turnout was all thanks to Myourmiles's invitations. He was truly amazing. While there was much disappointment and stress last night, the man was still very reliable.

The audience seats surrounded an empty area, which we had prepared as the stage for battle. After processing a selection of giant rocks, we embedded them in this empty lot. We first

compressed the hard rock into a cube, two meters in length. We then arranged them carefully as a base. The slits between the blocks were filled with a sticky buffer material, making them, as a whole, look like one giant, flat rock plate.

Since there wasn't enough time, I also constructed a part of it. Normal, hard rocks were already three hundred times harder than cement, and with magicules infused into the rock base of the colosseum, it became ten thousand times that. It was two meters thick alone, and its hardness put nuclear blast shelters to shame.

I hadn't done any real testing, but I was certain it should survive a direct nuclear magic strike without a crack. Not to mention that the physical layer was also reinforced by a magical enchantment.

Beyond that, we'd set up a double-layer defense barrier. The first layer covered the entire ground. It went all the way to the spectator seats in a large-scale magic circle. In order for it to withstand Hinata's future battle training, I made sure it was impenetrable from the get-go.

The second barrier stretched around the inner circumference of the seating, right in front of the first row of benches where the audience sat, extending in a diameter of around fifty meters. The battleground was above the two magic circles.

The double barrier was meant to protect the venue and prevent the audience from being impacted by the event. The first barrier would halt magicules from flowing through, but posed no restrictions on Skill usage. Therefore, if someone were to launch a powerful magic attack, it could still impact the surroundings. So just in case, we set up the second barrier. And, worst-case scenario, I could just launch 'Absolute Defense' of 'Covenant King Uriel.'

While I didn't want anyone to see me using the Skill, it was better than having my guests get hurt. I would activate it the instant there was an issue, so no one would find out. There definitely wasn't gonna be a problem since we did it so discreetly.

Honestly, I was pretty sure the double-layer barrier alone would do the trick. It was one thing if my lieutenants were to join in the battle, but the abilities of the contestants alone were hardly enough to wreck the place. At least that's what I thought, but I didn't expect the "Chosen Hero" Masayuki to have joined in...

The venue was packed with excited onlookers. Go figure.

In this world, there weren't a lot of entertainment events, so something like this would obviously cause a ruckus.

The martial tournament held in the Kingdom of Ingracia was already super popular. Every year, they would have adventurers of different ranks attending the tournament to fight for the championship.

However, our tournament differed slightly, as spectating it was open to average citizens as well. In Ingracia, only the wealthy got to partake as the audience, while the commoner had to wait for the results to be unveiled. Some people would climb atop roofs or poles, trying to catch a glimpse from above the ground. But they probably couldn't see much given the long distance.

By contrast, the Colosseum in our nation had rings of benches installed in incremental heights along a slope, which allowed for a larger number of spectators. As a bonus, we had

installed giant screens to live stream the battle for people in the audience to view from all four directions.

With the light magic engravings, it was extremely easy to enlarge a projection of the match. Some guests seemed to recognize the same device that was used during yesterday's tech presentation. They did seem pretty interested in the device, so I predicted that it would have a pretty decent promotional effect.

In this way, we could slowly move towards success by attracting clients and building a strong foundation. This was the same technique I used when I was doing a nine-to-five job.

That was why the guests were able to see the stage clearly. They could also view the enlarged image on the screens. The audience would surely be satisfied.

The participants began to enter the center of the stage. All eight men stood in a line facing the VIP booth. All screens were showing the contestants' faces, and even their expressions were clearly visible. These individuals all looked very distinct. By the way, some of these eight seemed quite familiar. Obviously, I had seen Gobta and Geld, but...

Despite my being shocked by this, the introductions began without delay. As planned, we introduced the contestants one by one. I also instructed people to switch up the screen view and show the contestant's face, respectively.

Souei's subordinate, the dragonewt Souka, was the announcer of the event. Starting with the six people who managed to emerge from the elimination rounds, the first was the "Chosen Hero" Masayuki.

"FIRST OF ALL," Souka began, "ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE THE MOST POPULAR MAN IN THE HOUSE! THE DOMINATOR OF THE ELIMINATION ROUND, HE IS THE CHOSEN HERO, **MA-SA-YU-KI!!!**"

Oi, this girl sure was enjoying herself. Was it really okay for her to show up in front of the contestants so free-spiritedly? Wouldn't it cause problems for her "covert agent" work?

I asked Souei next to me.

"No problem. Souka is good with the 'Invisibility Spell,' and she will disguise herself during missions anyway. Moreover, we need someone on stage whose face has never been seen by the public before," he said.

Since Souei said it was fine, I had nothing to worry about. Souka continued the broadcast effortlessly.

"NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN HIS EXCELLENT SWORDSMANSHIP! THAT'S BECAUSE THE INSTANT HE DECIDES TO UNSHEATHE HIS SWORD, THE OPPONENT WILL ALREADY BE DEFEATED!"

So how had he been able to win all this time? It made sense for unofficial tournaments, but hadn't Masayuki also participated in large-scale tournaments in the past?

Even if he did take his opponents down in one swift slash, there was no way he could hide his moves in front of the entire audience.

"How did the match go yesterday?"

“About that, we really have no way of knowing—”

According to Souei, Masayuki didn’t seem to have unsheathed his sword even once. It turned out that Masayuki’s companions were also part of the competition yesterday. They beat around fifty contestants and purposefully lost to give their results to Masayuki. In the end, Masayuki didn’t get to show his skills at all...

The admiration he received alone showed that he was powerful—but I also suspected that he was just bluffing. Whatever. Whether he was truly capable or not—we would see about that in today’s tournament.

“HIS IMMENSE POWER IS KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE SEVEN SEAS, MASAYUKI, THE YOUNG PRODIGY, THE ‘CHOSEN HERO’! MORE AND MORE PEOPLE ARE FALLING FOR HIS HANDSOME APPEARANCE; RUMOR SAYS THAT WOMEN WILL FALL IN LOVE WITH HIM AFTER MERE EYE CONTACT. MA-SA-YU-KI! HOW MOST FORTUNATE FOR US TO BE ABLE TO WITNESS HIM ON THE FINAL STAAAAGE!”

As Souka finished, people shouted out in awe, cheering loud enough to overwhelm any other sound.

He sure was popular. Thinking of it, really? How could he be so popular? Did Souka improvise the whole announcement? If she did, she had some unexpected but not unwelcome talent. I figured that most of her speech was probably exaggerated and intended to praise Masayuki extra hard. Also, what was that “MA-SA-YU-KI” thing all about? After listening carefully to her promotion, I supposed that something might be wrong with Souka’s head.

Masayuki sure had his share of bad luck. If he lost after being promoted this way... It would just be embarrassing. In some sense, this could be her setting up trouble for him. Souka must have been sarcastic, how clever. As expected from Souei’s right-hand woman, she sure was devious.

The next contestant, titled “Crazed Wolf,” was a man called Jinrai. He seemed like an experienced warrior, and while his gear appeared subpar, he gave off the aura of someone powerful. He also seemed to be one of Masayuki’s companions. This man, at first glance, didn’t seem to be even close to Rank A, but for some reason, I felt that he should not be underestimated. There seemed to be something hidden about him.

Upon thinking so, I decided to watch the match closely.

The third contestant was Gai, the “Splendacious Sword Fighter.” This Gai guy’s selling point seemed to be fancy swordplay.

“BEAUTIFUL LIKE DANCING, ANYONE WOULD BE CHARMED BY HIM! IN TODAY’S CONTEST, WILL HE PERFORM HIS AMAZING DANCE AMIDST THE BLOODSHED—?”

How horrifying! Dancing in a bloodbath, wouldn’t that be scary as hell. He didn’t look as strong as Jinrai physically, but considering his swordsmanship, perhaps he was ranked A? Although he wouldn’t pose much of a threat, he seemed pretty strong for an adventurer. The fourth and fifth contestants were people I had met before.

They were the leaders of the Gozu and Mezu. I asked Souei, “Why are they participating?”

“About that, it seems that the news has spread...”

“The news?”

“Right, that. You said that the champion could be part of the ‘Four Heavenly Kings’—”

“—Huh?”

It was probably Gobta running his mouth with the rumor. And now, somehow, the champion of the tournament would get to become one of the “Four Heavenly Kings” under my reign. Because of this, a bunch of monsters had joined up the day before for the elimination rounds. In the end there were over three hundred signups and the place was crowded.

The heads of Gozu and Mezu hadn’t hesitated to join either. They were probably just lucky to have gotten into the final. But I supposed it wasn’t just luck. Despite their looks, they were ferocious fighters with strength equivalent to Rank A. No wonder some random adventurers couldn’t stand against them. That being said—I didn’t expect both to enter the final.

In their group of the elimination round, there seemed to be several monsters ranked A, yet just as I mentioned, they had managed to defeat all of them. I even heard that their fight against the monsters around them had been a complete massacre. They were unstoppable. As expected from a higher evolved species, but to be fair, the truth was—

“—HE IS THE WINNER OF ROUND FOUR YESTERDAY, GOZER—!”

—Yep, I had given the ‘Name’ “Gozer” to the leader of the Gozu. I felt that I shouldn’t play favorites and then also named the Mezu leader “Mezer.”

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The reason went without saying: I wanted them to be bosses in the labyrinth. I decided to send one of them to be the boss of floor 50, and I told them that they could alternate the role by taking shifts.

Since they’d sworn loyalty to me, I therefore, very ungenerously, gave them a bunch of work, the reward of which was their names. Nowadays, I’d become quite good at this, I was able to limit the magicule consumption during naming to be as low as possible. But even with that being the case, they had undergone some amazing evolutions.

Gozer evolved to an ox demon (Gyuki) while Mezer became a horse demon (Baki). They were already ranked A as a higher species, but with this they became far stronger than my initial expectations.

Moreover—

«Question. Apply ‘Grant Ability’ on the individual “Gozer”? YES/NO»

Wisdom King Raphael-sama—no, sensei asked me excitedly. It seemed that besides ‘Fusion’ and ‘Ability Change,’ it could also reverse ‘King of Gluttony’ and ‘Food Chain’ to grant individual abilities. However, the conditions were apparently very strict, as it took adaptability into account, among many other things. That being said, Raphael-sensei still wanted to do an experiment.

Sure, I nodded and answered “YES” in my heart, and then...

«Report. Granting of Extra Skill ‘Ultra-fast Regeneration’ to individual “Gozer”—Successful.»

Another fine job by Raphael-sensei with the experiment. The original Extra Skill ‘Automatic Regeneration’ obtained by Gozer after his evolution had been changed by Raphael-sensei through ‘Ability Modification.’

I was quite impressed. It also granted Mezer the Extra Skill ‘Magic Interference.’ Now both of them had their own unique features.

Gozer had evolved to become specialized in physical attack while Mezer became specialized in magical attack.

But there was more. They were even granted Unique Skills—specifically, the Skill called ‘Limiter.’ It was a skill that could create a space used to limit your opponents. In simple terms, it was like an inferior combination between ‘Infinite Prison’ and ‘Space Domination’ from my Ultimate Skill ‘Covenant King Uriel.’ If people were to try to resist and suppress the Skill, said special space would no longer be effective. Its ability to control wasn’t particularly great, so it was not a very useful power.

But if the two confronting parties had a certain difference in strength, they could forcefully drag the opponents into a new space to gain an edge against them. But that really depended on how the users applied their skills. On the other hand, it also depended on their opponents’ ability. It wouldn’t work if they were on par with themselves, but they could try to trick their opponents, nonetheless.

If they were to create a special space with rules such as restraining magic use—hmm, that would make an interesting idea of applying it. In that way, it could be used as a ‘Defensive Barrier’ to lower the attack power of the enemies as well.

Since they would be working inside the labyrinth, they could also negotiate with the adventurers by adding conditions such as giving additional treasure, etc. Now that they had even mastered skills like this, the two were becoming more and more like dungeon bosses. Yet I didn’t expect both of them to participate, just to receive the superficial role of the “Four Heavenly Kings,” of all reasons...

I heard that the two even made a bet between themselves that the winner would be the “Heavenly King” while the loser would be the boss at level 50.

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While this rumor continued to give me a headache, the speech to hype up this match was as expected.

“THE NEXT OPPONENT IS THE ARCHRIVAL OF GOZER, MEZER!! THERE HAS YET TO BE A CONCLUSION TO THEIR HUNDRED YEAR DUEL! WILL THEY FINALLY BE ABLE TO DETERMINE THE STRONGEST BETWEEN THE TWO IN THIS MATCH? A WHIRLWIND OF STRENGTH IS STIRRING IN THE COOOLOSSEEEUM!”

Souka sure was into it. She was really suited for the job. She was also cute, so the audience would probably adore her as well. Even with a tail, wings, and horns, she was still considerably “cute.”

“MOREOVER, BOTH MEZER AND GOZER WILL ALSO BE AMONG THE BOSSSES IN THE DUNGEON OPENING TOMORROW! DO WITNESS THEIR STRENGTH! FOR THOSE WHO HAVE THE CONFIDENCE AND COURAGE TO DEFEAT THEM, SEEK FORTUNE AND GLORY IN THE DUNGEON!”

Super into it. She even shilled for the labyrinth on top.

We planned to open the labyrinth tomorrow, and since many people were still unaware of its existence, we would make sure to reveal it now. Additionally, after witnessing Gozer and Mezer’s strength, some may just come to challenge the labyrinth…

There were many people in this world who tended to be determined yet overconfident. This included many, if not most, of the adventurers. I could only hope that they would actually use their brain and think for a moment before running inside, blinded by the prize they could receive for challenging the labyrinth. Myourmiles also spent plenty of time planning, so there probably wouldn’t be any issues.

Right, let’s see who would win now. Based on the results of the draw, the two would be confronting each other soon enough. Now that they’d been praised so highly, it would be embarrassing to have any of them lose too fast. Their reputation would be based on their performance in the first round. They might even get looked down upon if they underperformed. We would see when the time came. Perhaps being looked down upon may actually work in our favor; we would figure out a plan then.

There was no need to rig the game for that. We could just wait for the results. With that being said, Mezer was the fifth one.

There were three more contestants, meaning there was one more winner from yesterday’s elimination rounds.

“NEXT ON THE LINE, GIVE IT UP FOR THE MYSTERIOUS MASKED MAN WHO PUT ON A SHOW YESTERDAY! IS THE MYSTERIOUS LION-MASKED CONTESTANT A SEEKER OF JUSTICE OR THE DEVIL’S HENCHMAN? AND WHAT SORT OF BATTLE WILL HE GIVE US TODAY?”

I turned to the Lion-masked man (TL Note: Lion-Mask for short, reason<sup>10</sup>) and—PEWWW! My juice went everywhere.

“S-Souei! That’s—”

“Indeed. Your guess is as good as mine. That’s definitely him…”

While neither of us said his name, Souei seemed to be convinced about the identity of this Lion-Mask. Oi oi oi, wasn’t it Diablo who said: “These guys aren’t enough for a show”?

What’s wrong with that guy’s judgement?—wait, that’s not the issue. That idiot has no concept of humility to begin with… Ahh, let’s put this deal aside for now.

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<sup>10</sup>This is how Fuse called him, “ライオンマスク” Lion Mask. The kanji read something similar. Initially, I thought it meant “Masked Lion,” so this change was added afterwards.

I saw a familiar-looking trio in the crowd cheering for the Lion-Mask. All three seemed to be cheering reluctantly, with tears in their eyes. One of them, a slim, gentle-looking man with an earring. One of them, a muscular, fit man with a nose ring. One of them, an obese, short man with a mouth ring. All three had bizarre and colorful hair above their heads—these folks were, no doubt, Dagruel's sons. The clothes they wore had “Shion Fan Club,” “Shion 4 Life” and stuff like that written on them. They were definitely the three brothers, all right.

They had been very close to Shion after the incident where she beat them up. Perhaps the event had awakened the masochists within them... But, ultimately, that was none of my business.

I didn't wanna get into that stuff.

While I wanted to ask if they were okay, I also knew that Shion was usually seen as very attractive and sensible beauty. But that was a misjudgment, a mistake I had also made at the beginning. But since I'm no fan of trouble, I decided to let them keep thinking that way. Sooner or later, they would discover the reality and in turn disillusion them from that notion. But that was their choice.

“By the way, Souei, why are those three cheering for Lion-Mask?”

“—Because during yesterday's match, he defeated the three of them.”

You don't say...

Despite how the trio presented themselves, their magicule content still almost rivaled some of the older demon lords. Shion had easily taken them down because of their poor fighting techniques, but they definitely weren't weaklings. They were probably stronger than the evolved Gozer and Mezer. To fight the trio and triumph, it seemed that the true identity of Lion-Mask was sealed at this point.

“How useless. Those idiots really need more exercise.”

Shion was pissed though. I felt a bit sorry for them.

It was a bad matchup. Those three had always been pretty outrageous, but to fight an ex-Demon Lord who worshipped martial prowess, it was like pitching a fight between an adult and a child. There was no easy victory in that.

Moreover... All three of them happened to be grouped in the same division with such a monster alongside them. They were really down on luck. Had they been assigned to a different division to compete in, they might've had a chance to win.

But anyway, since Shion was so pissed, to the point of wanting to retrain them, I looked forward to their future performance.

“—NEXT, SOMEONE LEFT AN ANONYMOUS MESSAGE. ‘PLEASE DO YOUR BEST IN MY STEAD! YOU SHOULD KNOW THE DRILL, ABSOLUTELY DO NOT REVEAL YOUR TRUE IDENTITY. BEST OF LUCK IN YOUR CONQUEST!’ THAT'S THE MESSAGE! WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? I'VE GOT NO CLUE, BUT IT'S PROBABLY TO ENCOURAGE OUR CONTESTANT, LION-MASK!”

No, she knew well enough. Souka was making fun of him. In other words, she must have been in contact with Milim at some point.

Milim had been working hard to make some final adjustments to the labyrinth—or so she

said. But it was better than her coming to meddle with things, so I took her by her word. I didn't expect her to interfere in the match in this way.

For that matter, I didn't invite Veldora either. At that moment, he was probably happily building the labyrinth with Milim and Ramiris, with all his mind focused on it. We would be in trouble if he came and destroyed the tournament out of excitement, this being just one of the reasons why I didn't invite him.

While I didn't expect Milim to send someone in her place, Veldora didn't have any subordinates, so I wouldn't have to worry about him sending someone to join. But the question now is, who was going to come out on top...

The difference in strength was a bit too overwhelming. I figured there was no way the powerful Lion-Mask would be backed into a corner by others, so I supposed the only person capable of rivaling him would be Geld?

I hoped Geld would win, but I may be pushing my luck. But ultimately, even if Lion-Mask won, it was fine. I was actually more afraid of them beating each other too badly. Moreover, I was curious about what would happen if Masayuki encountered him. If he wanted to win, then surely, he would fight seriously. Anyhow, best of luck to him.

The six contestants had been introduced. And now for the special contestants:

“OUR NEXT CONTESTANTS ARE THE REAL, AUTHENTIC POWERHOUSES! THE PROUD LIEUTENANTS OF THE TEMPEST FEDERATION—THEY HAVE COME TO JOIN IN THE TOURNAMENT. THEIR POWER IS THAT OF A THOUSAND MEN, AND IF YOU WIN AGAINST THEM, YOU CAN BECOME ONE OF RIMURU-SAMA’S FOUR HEAVENLY KIIINGS!”

The rumors had already spread far and wide. There was no use trying to amend the matter. But still, hearing someone shouting out the title “Four Heavenly Kings” made me cringe. Or at least I thought so, Shion seemed to be very proud of it. The monsters watching the match also gave Gobta and Geld a look of admiration.

It seemed that people thought that the role of the “Four Heavenly Kings” was much more valuable than it really was, much more than I had expected.

“OUR FIRST CONTESTANT, **GOBTA!** MANY LOOK UP TO THIS ELITE SOLDIER WITH A CRUEL APPEARANCE! THIS IS THE YOUNG PRODIGY THAT HAS ACHIEVED THE POSITION OF CENTURION. WHAT SORT OF FIGHT WILL HE GIVE US?”

*Cruel, how? Are you sure you understand what that word means?* I could almost feel Gobta shouting internally, “Stop that!”

His eyes looked lifeless. But that was no wonder. No matter how it was framed, Lion-Mask next to Gobta looked way stronger than him.

If they ended up matched against each other, even if Lion-Mask were to cut Gobta some slack, he may still end up worse than just beaten up... Sorry, Gobta. I didn't expect things to end up this way. If you had to blame someone, blame Milim who sent out her subordinate just for fun.

But perhaps—Gobta might actually show some of his true strength if pushed hard enough. He may even awaken some extraordinary, unforeseen power.

«.....»

I looked forward to it. Gobta's battle was only just starting now.

Moving on, the last contestant was Geld.

“WITH THE APPETIZER OUT OF THE WAY, WE STILL HAVE TO INTRODUCE THE ACE IN THIS TOURNAMENT! HE IS THE SAVIOUR OF THE HIGH ORCS, GELDSAMA!! WITH HIS INDESTRUCTIBLE BODY, HE IS ALSO THE GUARDIAN DEITY OF THE TEMPEST FEDERATION!”

Woah, Souka. She seriously just called the other contestants “Appetizer.” She even changed her tone to give a serious introduction.

Geld was indeed one of the veteran lieutenants... But that being said, Gobta was also a veteran. Though I suppose that was a clear difference in “levels.” If Gobta actually won, Souka may change her view on him.

“AL-RIGHT, NOW THEN, ALL EIGHT CONTESTANTS HAVE GATHERED! WHO AMONG THEM WILL EMERGE VICTORIOUS? THE MOMENT OF TRUTH IS COMING!”

Oh yeah, after the contestants' introductions, I needed to give a speech in front of the eight of them. I almost forgot about it entirely. But it'd be awkward if I panicked right beforehand.

Rigurd had left to go attend to the guests and I had Benimaru act as his bodyguard. I ordered Souei to oversee the situation and stood up.

I walked towards the stage. While pretending to be carefree, I used ‘Spatial Domination’ to open a ‘Portal’ between the VIP booth and the tournament stage. With Shion by my side, I entered the arena with the audience cheering loudly.

“WHOOOOO!”

Citizens of our nation and tourists from neighboring kingdoms alike seemed to be very excited to see me. I acknowledged them back.

I couldn't help but feel a bit shy, but I was trying my best to maintain the arrogant attitude that a demon lord was supposed to hold. I gazed towards the contestants as I took the microphone from Souka's hand.

“Well then, everyone. If you emerge victorious from today's tournament and in tomorrow's final, I shall grant the victor the special honor of citizenship to our nation.”

Was that okay? Anyhow, I spoke slowly while acting like a superior. Then I proceeded to address the contestants individually.

“‘Chosen Hero’ Masayuki. If you win, I shall permit you to challenge me.”

That was a promise. Although, hearing so, Masayuki didn't look happy at all. Instead, it looked like the discerned face of “What good is that?”

My guess was right, he didn't want to fight me personally. I was really struggling to find a reason to dislike the guy.

Next, I turned my eyes to the next contestant.

I recalled that he was “Crazed Wolf” Jinrai, Masayuki’s companion.

“You must be ‘Crazed Wolf’ Jinrai. What is your wish?”

As I asked, Souka handed the microphone to Jinrai.

“Ho, I didn’t expect you to speak to me. I have only one wish: to aid Masayuki-san. Sorry, I ain’t gonna be champion, but Masayuki-san will beat you for me!”

Ah, I see. It seemed that if Jinrai got matched up with Masayuki, he would just give up without a fight. Then there was no way for him to become the champion.

“I see. In light of your noble cause, regardless of the result, I shall order my people to prepare new gear for you. Consider this my respect towards a brave warrior. Do take it generously.”

It’s a rare occasion, so I might as well give him something. Thanks to Masayuki’s team’s participation, we’d managed to gather a much larger audience. On one hand, I was thanking him, but more importantly—I wanted to give everyone a good impression by showing my kind and compassionate nature.

That was the only reason.

“Hmm, since you are giving it for free, I’ll take it. But don’t think you can bribe me with that.”

Jinrai said rather contemptuously before handing the microphone back to Souka.

This guy’s got some backbone, but he also seemed okay to accept my hospitality. Otherwise he wouldn’t have accepted the gift. He probably considered it a participation prize.

All right, next one. As I finished talking with Jinrai, I turned towards Gai, the “Splendacious Sword Fighter.” The next moment—

“Oi, Demon Lord. I’m even stronger than that ‘Chosen Hero’! Won’t you fight me as well when I win?”

Eh? How was I supposed to respond to that kind of question...

I wasn’t great at improvising... I had no idea what to say in response. Instead, someone else spoke for me. It was Diablo.

“How dare you offend Rimuru-sama? Since you have the nerve to ask, I shall be the one to waltz with you if you win. If you are able to win against me, I shall relay your request to Rimuru-sama for you.”

As the referee, Diablo stood by the side of the stage with a smirk as he responded in my place.

I’ve been saved. Since I preferred to stay out of trouble, having Diablo fight him for me was much more convenient. I took the mic:

“The Chosen Hero and I made an arrangement prior to this, but, if anyone wishes to fight me, then they must first defeat the ‘Four Heavenly Kings’ to prove this ability. Only then shall I permit you to challenge me!”

“Four Heavenly Kings” sure was convenient—I could use this.

I’ve learnt a new trick.

Souka finally passed the mic back to Gai.

“Hmph, nice dodge just now. Fine then, I don’t care if it’s the ‘Chosen Hero,’ or that

‘Demon’ or some ‘Demon Lord’—none of them can rival me!”

What the heck, what’s this guy’s deal with his self-righteous, arrogant attitude? Please, try again after you win.

It was best to finish the conversation before Diablo lost his temper.

“...Gai, the ‘Splendacious Sword Fighter,’ if you are victorious then I shall be gracious enough to grant you permission to challenge me. Will that work?”

How troublesome, next one already, next. This kind of people wouldn’t win anyway, so I might as well just accept the challenge casually.

*Heh, don’t you forget about that*—while ignoring Gai who just said this to play cool, I turned my eyes to Gozer and Mezer. Upon receiving my attention, Gozer and Mezer knelt.

“I’m looking forward to your performance. Even if you can’t win the contest, you should have the awareness, as a labyrinth boss, to not lose too badly.”

That was enough, right? While the message was mixed with a hint of a threat, I didn’t want my labyrinth bosses to flee for their lives in front of so many people. It wouldn’t matter if they lost, though I hoped they would be able to show their martial prowess before exiting.

“Understood! I shall gamble my name of ‘Gozer’ to fight with all my heart and soul for the sake of Rimuru-sama.”

“To not taint your glory, I, ‘Mezer,’ promise to fight with passion as a member of this nation!”

Nice, nice. Although they both seemed a bit too serious, they appeared to have made their resolve to battle.

Even if both of them lost in the end, we would still carry out, as previously promised, to have them take turns in guarding the 50<sup>th</sup> floor of the labyrinth. I personally felt that neither would make it to the final, but all I needed was for them to fight hard and not embarrass our nation.

Next, moving on to the troublemaker.

“Eh—Lion-Mask. If anything, *please* restrain yourself.”

“Oi oi oi, is that all ya gotta say to me?”

“That’s not the issue. Just be sure to keep that promise!”

I had nothing more to say to this guy. Anything else, like telling him to quit or encouraging him, would just sound weird.

I might cheer him on, depending on the opponent he was matched against, but if someone like Gobta was matched up with him...well it would be tragic. It would be best if he got to fight Masayuki—but there was no way things would go that smoothly.

While I wanted to cheat and assign an opponent to him, I gave up that thought eventually. If we got exposed somehow, we would lose credibility for the foreseeable future. That would be an even bigger loss, so, for now, we would play fair and leave the results up to the draw.

And that was that, moving on.

“Gobta-kun! Good job fighting your way up here!”

“Huh, but I’m the special contestant—?”

“I believe you’ll win in the end!”

Ignoring Gobta’s words, I encouraged him. Now Gobta couldn’t back down anymore. Surely, he’d try his best to win.

All right, next was Geld.

“Geld, you are strong. Show off your strength in the tournament as much as you want!”

“Yes sir!”

I had high expectations for Geld, and I wanted him to be at his best.

*How come we are treated so differently*—I ignored Gobta’s complaint again and concluded my words to Geld. The usually quiet Geld wouldn’t say much more anyway. His actions would speak louder instead.

Having introduced all of the contestants, it was time to decide the matchups. Since these were the promotion rounds, we would have six matches straight in one day. Tomorrow we’d go straight to the final, so we aimed to get to the semi-finals before the end of the day. Since there was no award for third place, there would only be one match tomorrow.

It was time for the draw.

The numbers were as follows: Masayuki number three, Jinrai number four, Gai number five, Gozer number one, Mezer number two, Lion-Mask number eight, Gobta number six and Geld number seven.

As their numbers were announced, their names began to fill up the list of promotion matches.

As a result:

- Round 1 - Gozer VS Mezer
- Round 2 - “Chosen Hero” Masayuki VS “Crazed Wolf” Jinrai
- Round 3 - “Splendacious Sword Fighter” Gai VS Gobta
- Round 4 - Geld VS Lion-Mask

Those were all of the duel groups. Even though the draw results were definitely fair and square, so I couldn’t really complain... Masayuki really was a natural D20. He had already won his first match. In comparison, Geld’s luck was the opposite. In the first match, Geld was immediately pitted against *that guy*—Lion-Mask.

*Would he be able to win?*

I was very curious. I supposed these matches would be interesting, but I just couldn’t make myself feel excited about it. If I really wanted someone to test out Masayuki’s ability, this was possibly the worst combination.

Since Masayuki’s second opponent would be the winner of the first round, even though Mezer and Gozer’s match may be entertaining, they would probably end up fighting each other so fiercely, they would end up exhausted before the match with Masayuki.

There was another reason. The winner of the third and fourth matches would also enter the final...

Gobta would face Geld, which meant that they wouldn’t be able to test out Masayuki’s

strength.

There was also Lion-Mask in their division. If Gozer and Mezer's fight was going to be entertaining, so would Geld and Lion-Mask's. In my opinion, the two matches would be extraordinary.

Kari—I mean, if Lion-Mask really were to get serious, I had no clue either, how strong he would be. But Geld was, no doubt, an extremely powerful fighter as well. It was quite bizarre how the two got matched up in the first fight. It was almost as if fate were playing tricks on us; the combination of their matches all worked in Masayuki's favor.

But anyhow, there was no use complaining. Putting my predictions aside, there was no way of knowing the result, as of yet.

And at that moment, the first round was about to start—



Before the first round, the other contestants left the arena to go to the resting lounge. Only Gozer and Mezer remained at the center of the stage. Other than a couple of scathing taunts, they merely stared intently at each other.

"Oi, Mezer. We are supposed to duel each other to determine the stronger one already. Let our long-standing rivalry end today—prepare to lose."

"Cut the bullshit, Gozer. The one who's going to be one of His Majesty Rimuru's glorious 'Four Heavenly Kings' will be me, Mezer-sama! You can go and enjoy your retirement in the labyrinth."

"Ridiculous! You don't deserve the majestic title of the 'Four Heavenly Kings'!"

With that, the duel between the two suddenly erupted.

Both of them being melee type, they clashed with shield and axe, shield and lance. As opposed to magic or sorcery, a purely physical brawl was much more suitable for them. Gozer slammed his great axe into Mezer's shield before Mezer sent the force back in a heavy block.

As Gozer was about to lose his balance, Mezer raised his lance to attack. But Gozer backed away and easily dodged the shot. It had been twenty minutes since the match began and the two were still going at each other hard. Their strength seemed to be on par with each other. As expected from a hundred-year long struggle; they still had yet to determine a winner.

The blood-boiling battle of the two monsters also kept the audience enraptured and enthusiastic. After all, there hadn't been a lot of opportunities for them to witness monsters of such great strength battling each other. It was understandable—they probably wouldn't have the opportunity to witness another Rank A against Rank A battle for the rest of their entire life. Because the two's power levels were about the same, a victor had yet to be decided.

What a fine duel.

However, the moment of victory suddenly came without much warning.

“THIS IS IT!”

Gozer decided to gamble on one move.

He threw out his great axe with all his strength in a strike that would surely be able to crush even a boulder; the opponent would certainly crumble if he took on the weapon. Mezer’s left hand exploded and flew through the air. By sacrificing his left hand, he’d stopped Gozer’s great axe!

In the wake of this, Mezer grinned victoriously. This opportunity was exactly what Mezer was looking for. In a blink of an eye, Mezer closed in on Gozer. Thinking that Mezer would dodge, Gozer had no time to react. Mezer had already approached him.

“The match is settled! Die, Ma Chao Ultra Lance Strike<sup>11</sup>!”

Mezer appeared right in front of Gozer and suddenly began stabbing his lance into Gozer’s chest once, twice—there was no way for him to dodge—

A couple of large holes were violently drilled into his torso. Mezer would even sacrifice his own left hand to achieve victory. Mezer had won—

“You are too naive! Thunder Horn!” someone roared.

Gozer thrust his horns towards Mezer. His horns were wrapped in lightning, and their length had increased several times over. Their wickedly sharp points were focused on Mezer and tore away at his right eye and arm.

That sealed the match. Mezer could no longer hold his lance with his right arm mangled. Moreover, Gozer’s attack had burnt Mezer badly through the lightning strike, making even his blood boil.

Mezer previously gained the Extra Skill ‘Automatic Regeneration’ during his evolution, but even so, the lightning strikes kept spreading faster than his regeneration could mend.

In comparison, with the aid of his Extra Skill ‘Ultra-speed Regeneration,’ Gozer had the giant hole in his chest and stomach fully healed in an instant—he was the winner.

Under normal circumstances, those would have been instantly lethal wounds, but they posed no threat in the face of the Extra Skill ‘Ultra-speed Regeneration.’ Mezer also had a Skill with similar effect, and so his arms and right eyes had begun to heal. By the time Gozer and Mezer had left the stage, both had recovered to their original state.

*I’ll definitely win next time!* Mezer shouted with determination.

How very motivated. However, the match had already ended.

Our first winner was Gozer.

Having witnessed their incredible fight, the audience gave them their applause and cheers. It was a beautiful duel, a most appropriate appetizer for the early matches.

—Speaking of which, it just made me realize how broken of a Skill ‘Ultra-speed Regeneration’ was, once again.

If following the rules of his previous matches, Mezer probably would have won. Normally

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<sup>11</sup>Ma Chao is the lance wielding general from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Not sure where Mezer learnt this Chinese lost art.

speaking, his ultra lance strike would have settled the match. But it was Mezer's miscalculation to have not suspected any trickery. I hoped he would be more cautious in deducing his opponents' ace in the hole in the future.



The second round began.

The fight was between the "Chosen Hero" Masayuki and "Crazed Wolf" Jinrai. But as I expected, Masayuki won without a fight. The two simply shook hands in the center of the stage.

Upon seeing this, people not only applauded, but even cheered out loud.

I couldn't understand it. It was just a handshake, how come the crowd got all riled up like that?

"As expected from Masayuki-sama!"

Some were even shouting excitedly. His popularity was truly baffling.

...Never mind. Thinking about it too much was troublesome. Moving on.

Round three.

Gai the "Splendacious Sword Fighter" versus Gobta. Well, what would the result of this match be?

I was actually looking forward to this duel. This man called Gai, he barely looked like a Rank A. He was wearing a full set of rare equipment, meaning that he was a top-tier adventurer.

On the other hand, all of Gobta's own equipment was special-ranked and tailored for him. While in hindsight, the former seemed to far outmatch the latter, but in terms of strength alone, this would be an interesting duel.

"Get ready, set, battle!"

As Souka shouted, the match began.

As Gai whispered: "Make haste!"<sup>12</sup> he unsheathed his blade and moved out.

What a sharp hit. His reputation as a "Splendacious Sword Fighter" definitely wasn't just for show. He was quite skilled. However, the sword was stopped by Gobta's armor.

"Huh? You're nothing but some goon, how dare you wear such unbefitting armor...!"

"Eyy, eyyyyy! That was way too fast...!"

Since Gai's attack landed practically the instant after Souka started the match, Gobta didn't even have time to unsheathe his kodachi.

*You were too careless, idiot!* I cursed internally. This attack was blocked by armor hand-crafted by Garm, but next time he would not be as lucky.

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<sup>12</sup>Supposedly this is a skill shout, like "Accelerate"

He only managed to survive because Gai was overconfident with his abilities, but it was obvious that he would be targeting joints next time.

“Hmph, how about this then?”

Gai sent a series of slashes descending upon Gobta, who was barely dodging them, and his face looked rather desperate and exhausted.

Judging from his expression, he seemed to be planning to run out of the arena to forfeit himself. He had already given up, only wanting to save his own life. While that was indeed the right choice now, I was hoping for him to hold on a bit longer. I had been expecting great things from them, foremost an engaging battle, but Gobta’s performance left a lot to be desired, disappointingly enough.

This match was probably about to end—or so I thought...yet the victor still hadn’t been settled after so long. Could it be that Gobta wanted to sneak out of bounds, but Gai was chasing him all over the place, not wanting him to escape...?

“Does that guy actually want to murder Gobta?”

“It seems that this man has a pretty disgusting character. Even though Gobta isn’t really upright either, this man’s actions are far more unpleasant to watch.”

Shion seemed to agree with me.

Umm... With things turning out like this, at this point, I wished Gobta would win no matter what.

“Ahahaha! Keep running like a rat, you piece of trash!”

In his right hand, Gai held a longsword fit for both single and double-handed combat. On the left, he wore brass knuckles that he used to beat up his opponent. It was a strange fighting style.

As soon as he saw an opportunity to strike, he would use both hands to hold his sword and slash, so it was difficult to predict his moves.

Gobta had only studied formal swordsmanship under Hakuro, and his opponent was definitely giving him a hard time. But even with that being the case, Gobta had yet to sustain any fatal wound. He had only been cut once at the start of the match.

“Gobta sure has sharp eyes. If he couldn’t see the path of his attack, he wouldn’t be able to flee for long,” Shion praised Gobta.

That was my thought exactly. Even though he got punched a few times, Gobta managed to block all of Gai’s sword strikes with his kodachi.

“All right! Gobta, nice job! That’s the spirit! Let everyone see what you can do and beat that guy! I’ll give you more pocket money! And—if you win—I’ll give you the new prototype fishing pole that you always wanted!”

“Seriously?! Then I’ll use my ultimate move!”

*If you had an ultimate move, you should have used it earlier...*

Hearing my verbal support, Gobta seemed to become more motivated. Using items as bait seemed inappropriate, but when facing someone as lazy as Gobta, there was no other way. But honestly, it was because I wasn’t putting much expectation on Gobta since we had Geld to hold

our ground. But if things went as I expected, I would have to make Gobta work harder.

“GAHAHAHA, quit bluffing, you trash! I am the strongest, you stand no chance!” Gai laughed maniacally as he chased after Gobta. He had no guard against Gobta whatsoever, believing that he had already won.

*No matter what Gobta could do, he wasn't capable of turning the tide*—such underestimation of his opponent would become Gai's downfall.

“Summon! Come, come to me!”

Right, Gobta *was* the captain of the goblin rider troops. Of course he could summon Star Wolves.

Moreover, he had the ultimate move: ‘Unification’ with the star wolf.

His magicule content would rise to around A-minus, and with Hakurou’s swordsmanship training to boot—logically speaking, it would be more than sufficient to handle Gai.

*Then you should have done it from the start*, I thought to myself. This guy Gobta, when he first participated, he only wanted to lose.

But now Gobta surely would become serious—eh? How strange.

“Eh?”

“Tsk, summon spell I see. But those direwolves are no match for me—”

Gai was interrupted violently as the dark wolf summoned by Gobta bolted towards him at ultra-high speed. He had drastically underestimated the threat. The monster summoned by Gobta was no Rank C or D monster like a direwolf. The dark wolf wagging its tail on the stage—no matter how you looked at it, it was Ranga.

“Ranga... What are you doing?”

“Tsk, I didn’t expect that. As expected from Ranga, he’s got his own game as well...”

No, there was no way. That’s not the point, right?

Gobta was surprised too, I figured that he didn’t expect this to happen. In other words, it was all Ranga’s doing...he purposefully intervened in Gobta’s summoning. And I thought he was sleeping silently in my shadow. I didn’t expect him to be planning anything like this...

I said that I wouldn’t allow him to participate and I thought that Ranga would accept such an arrangement as well. I didn’t expect this from him. Souka rushed to Gai and turned to Diablo.

“HE HAS KNOCKED OUT CONTESTANT KAI. WHAT A GREAT SHOT. IT SEEMS THAT THE VICTOR HAS BEEN DETERMINED.”

Diablo, the acting referee, obviously took the result for granted, judging the attack just now to be effective. Even though Ranga had disguised himself to look like a smaller wolf, Diablo would be able to see that it was actually Ranga.

I mean, I guess it was because Diablo and Ranga were on good terms with each other.

“AND THE WINNER IS, GOOOB-TAAA!”

Souka’s announcement echoed loudly in the arena. The audience proceeded to give Gobta a round of applause and cheers. It appeared that everyone agreed with the adjudication. The summoning this time was not considered foul play.

“No way...”

Gobta's mumbling was overwhelmed by the loud cheering of the crowd. No one was gonna hold him accountable.

"Is this really okay?"

"In my humble opinion, summon spells are within the rules, so I believe it's fine."

If even Rigur said so, I'd let it pass. Then again, Ranga entered the tournament.

*Uh—should that be a foul regardless...?*

Prior to that, Gobta would've had no chance in surviving the fourth round of the tournament. But with Ranga fighting alongside him, it had become far more difficult to predict the outcome. But upon recalling my original intention of testing out Masayuki's ability, things could actually be heading in a direction that I originally wanted.

All right! Let's not think too much about it. I had decided to adopt a more open-minded spirit and let things flow.



Round four.

Geld versus Lion-Mask, the fight I was personally looking forward to.

"Kukuku, looks like I finally get to have a fun all-out brawl!"

Lion-Mask looked ecstatic.

"I never expected to have the chance to duel such a great warrior, I am indeed lucky. Do indulge me to battle against you, and please allow me to fight with all I have," Geld finished, as he took off the armor on his upper body and raised his fists.

"Ho, ya wanna fight me barehanded? All right, I'm good at unarmed combat anyway."

Agreeing to Geld's invitation, Lion-Mask prepared himself as well. A duel that would probably go down in history as one of the most exciting to date, unfolded.

There was a clash of fists.

That alone caused a huge shockwave that stirred up a whirl of wind on the stage. Geld was not even using his legs, but instead relied on grappling and throwing punches to fight his opponent. He was maintaining balance by sliding his feet along the ground to take steps, unshaken by whatever blows he received.

That was the thing. I had seen it in boxing manga, the crouching stance where you raise both fists in front of your face to protect your head. Such a defensive style can be compared to an iron wall.

Moreover, you can strike when the opponent is least prepared. Not only is it a method to stall the enemy, but you also keep the potential to strike with explosive force. If you consider the lower half of the body to be the turret, the momentum of the entire body is accumulated at the fist before a strike is unleashed. The fists were not the only threat, Geld could also use his

shoulder to bash the enemy, and combining certain attacks could lead to a suplex. He was like a heavy tank.

On the other hand, Lion-Mask was the all-rounder with attacks that varied in style. His physique was every bit as strong as Geld's, delivering equal amounts of brute force. But in this world, the amount of magicule one possessed was much more important than physical appearance. That was why Lion-Mask outmatched Geld.

But even still, he was unable to take down Geld. That went to show just how outstanding Geld's defense was. A crescent kick, that could shatter a boulder into pieces, connected with Geld's arm. His opponent was apparently trying to knock him down, but Geld didn't seem to budge. It was almost as if he was saying "Go ahead, bring on a new attack." Lion-Mask then launched a barrage of hand chops and punches from almost every angle, these were also accompanied by a flurry of roundhouse kicks and axe kicks, among other things. Strike after strike, he was so fast that it almost appeared like he had doubles.

Those consecutive attacks landed fast, yet none seemed to be hitting home while Geld was on guard.

"Huh! You're pretty good! My attacks landed on ya like a gentle breeze!"

"Hehehe, I should be the one to complain. You leave me absolutely no chance to counterattack. All of your attacks seem to be thrown out in disarray, yet every one of them is so skillfully executed—" Geld replied to him with a sense of regret in his tone. Right now, he was still able to hold up, but he would eventually get beaten down if this were to continue.

As expected from Lion-Mask, his strength was as authentic as it gets. Moreover, I had yet to see the depths of his power... It was as if he were relentlessly firing attacks from outside of Geld's range, aiming to penetrate his defense—like an attack helicopter. It was obvious which side had the advantage, but victory was not solely determined by strength, sometimes it came down to luck. So, who would Lady Luck favor this time—

This duel had boosted the atmosphere within the arena to maximum hype.

"S-so strong...!"

"Holy shit, this is insane, yo!" someone hollered while grasping a handful of fries. Others were screaming excitedly, their faces beet-red from all of the beer. The audience had also realized how strong the two truly were. Roaring cheers thundered throughout every corner of the colosseum.

Geld had the style of a handsome prodigy, while Lion-Mask gave off a dominating aura that, alone, was enough to attract the audience's attention. It seemed that the two had now become the most popular contestants of the tournament. Their duel raged on for several rounds more, yet a victor had yet to be determined.

As one attacked and the other defended—the match proceeded with both sides holding up on equal ground. The stalemate persisted for another thirty minutes. Souka was also brimming with excitement, broadcasting the battle between the two vigorously. The referee, Diablo, on the other hand, monitored their battle with an intently serious eye.

Another twenty minutes passed—

“I didn’t expect you to last so long against me. You have my approval.”

“Ahe, hehe, t-this is, is my honor. To be praised by a great man such as you—”

“Let’s skip the formality. By the way, I’ve got a question for ya.”

“—Ask away.”

“Why didn’t you use any Skills?”

“There was no need. Since your Highness won’t show your true form either.”

“Hehe, hahahahahaha! Although you just called me a great man, are you seriously intending to win this match? How interesting. It’s true that I can’t reveal my true identity to the outside world, so I guess I’ll just have you witness what I’m good at instead!”



They conversed while keeping up their unwavering attacks and defense. The general audience couldn't hear a thing, but I had heard their entire conversation as clear as day through Diablo's ears.

I had indeed been wondering why Geld wasn't using Skills this entire time—so this was the reason. While battling Lion-Mask, Geld wanted to make a point of winning while restrained under the same conditions.

Lion-Mask—actually Karion—could've shown off his true skill through 'Beastilization.' But because he was in disguise, he probably wouldn't fight with all of his heart.

Geld was aware of this, that's why he had refrained from using his Unique Skills 'Guardian' and 'Gourmet,' instead, relying purely on his body. However, perhaps another reason for that, was that he didn't want to reveal his abilities in front of the crowd. After all, a certain anonymous message also mentioned the same thing. Karion had seemingly agreed to keep his true ability concealed, so as not to reveal his real identity. With that being said, Karion was still very strong. An ordinary monster or majin couldn't hope to match him. His power had already exceeded even the likes of greater spirits.

Karion, who already possessed such strength, apparently decided to show a glimpse of his actual skills.

"Get ready, here it comes!"

"Aye!"

A flood of golden youki emerged, concentrating around Karion's right fist. There was an afterimage of it piercing through both of Geld's arms. Its power was incredible.

Geld's hands were instantly flung apart in opposite directions, leaving his body wide open. Karion's right fist went straight to Geld's chest—one of his vitals. The shock ran up and down through Geld's entire body, forming a destructive torrent of physical damage.

"Impressive—looks like this is as far as I can go," Geld wheezed, before stumbling.

But he didn't fall, managing to totter toward the edge of the arena. Diablo went forth to support Geld while signaling Souka with his eyes.

"The match is over! Contestant Lion-Mask—has won!"

The Colosseum erupted in thunderous cheers and, moreover, they were joined by deafening applause. People weren't holding back their admiration for their duel.

"That move was called the Roaring Lion Punch. You should feel proud, Geld. Not only did you survive being hit by one of my ultimate moves, you even managed to stay on your feet and kept moving."

"He, hehehe... I do hope that one day I'll be able to fight you seriously."

"Just what I was thinking. I haven't had a good fight like this in ages."

Geld and Karion exchanged their feelings with their eyes. It seemed that the two of them not only now acknowledged each other, but they also cherished the experience. To both of them, that was no real duel.

Indeed, had the two both been serious and used their full set of skills, the match may have resulted differently. However, this time, it was Karion's victory and Geld's defeat.

I still wished to praise Geld for a job well done. The resounding cheers were proof of that, it was a truly magnificent match, after all.

I applauded alongside the rest and saw Geld off the stage.



All four matches had ended, and it was time for the intermission. When the midday break was over, we would proceed to round two.

The winners of round one would be fighting each other, but the fatigue they accumulated from before would likely affect the outcome of the match. We did give the contestants healing potions, and their physical wounds would be healed, but the amount of magicule they had left couldn't be judged purely by their appearance.

People were still entranced by the excitement of the morning matches as the fifth battle of the day was about to start on the center stage.

There, gambling over the right to participate in the final, "Chosen Hero" Masayuki would battle Gozer. *Now then, we shall see whether Masayuki really has what it takes, in this match.*

I got the impression that Masayuki's feet were shaking. *Could this be the battle excitement they talk about?* When looking carefully, you could see that his neck was drenched in sweat as well. *Is Masayuki really as strong as Hinata? I don't feel like that's the case, no matter how I see it.*

Halfway through my observation, Gozer, with a microphone in his hand, began to speak.

"So, you are the 'Chosen Hero' who wants to go against His Majesty Rimuru? Your ignorance and arrogance are truly pathetic."

This was his attempt to taunt him. But Masayuki only responded with a cold smile—but, to put it bluntly, his mouth was twitching—he ignored Gozer's words and reached his hand out towards Souka.

As requested, Souka passed the mic to Masayuki.

"Heh, you fought pretty well—"

"S-so?"

Not only did he remain unprovoked by the taunt, Masayuki decided to praise his opponent. It seemed he was more mature than I imagined.

"—That being said, this is very regretful."

"Regretful? What's regretful?"

Masayuki had made the announcement to Gozer with a tone that held no intention of fighting.

*Hmm—what is he trying to say?*

"Had you been in your optimal state, I would have wanted to fight you seriously. But after

the fight just now, you must have used up most of your strength, didn't you? That is truly a shame."

So, it turned out that before the fight even began, he had announced that he wouldn't fight seriously. Although his tone sounded genuine, could those just have been excuses...?

"What are you trying to say—"

"Nothing really. I simply feel that I wouldn't be content, even if I won against you right now."

"..."

"Is it true, what I heard, that you've been appointed as the labyrinth boss by Demon Lord Rimuru? You seemed to dislike that and wanted to be among the 'Four Heavenly Kings'—"

"That's not true at all! His Majesty wanted Mezer and I to be the bosses of level 50 of the labyrinth. That was, of course, an honorable role! We simply wished to pursue a higher goal, that is all..."

"Really? Unfortunately, in my opinion, that man called Geld just now was supposed to be the one strong enough to receive the title of the 'Four Heavenly Kings'—"

"That's, uhhh..."

He first praised his opponent before looking down on him.

*What's Masayuki's game?*

"If you fight me now, I'll be the one who wins. But if I fight you at your peak strength, whoever emerges victoriously, may be up in the air. You may even have the upper hand in an environment such as the labyrinth. I simply feel that obtaining a hollow victory from fighting you here would be a downright pity."

"Ehhh?"

*Oi oi oi, could it be that Masayuki isn't planning to fight him at all...*

"I want to challenge the dungeon here as well. However, these are two separate matters, compared to fighting the Demon Lord. So how about it? Shall we wait until then, to decide who's the better, where you could face me when you are at your best and more prepared?"

There was no other way. Masayuki was acting as if he had vast power to spare, but in my opinion, he was afraid of fighting Gozer. Was he really trying to convince Gozer not to fight by talking his way out of it...

I ordered Gobta and Geld to test Masayuki's strength, yet Gozer was not aware of this. That's why he might just—

"Ku, kuu-hahaha! I've gotten a taste of your generosity already. You read that correctly, right now I've got no more strength to spare. My battle with Mezer was a narrow victory. Fine then, I'll take your word for it and await you in the labyrinth!"

*WOW—It seriously turned out like this!*

This Gozer, he seriously just accepted Masayuki's proposal and even went on to shake hands with him while sporting a placid smile. Upon seeing this, the audience reacted with excitement as well.

Generally speaking, when people leave the stage without fighting, the audience would usu-

ally start cursing and complaining. But, for some reason, this time they were met with applause and cheers. Some were praising Masayuki for being generous, others were lauding Gozer for recognizing Masayuki's honorable character. An incredible outpouring of solidarity flooded the entire Colosseum.

*I don't get it. I honestly don't get it.*

No matter how I looked at it, Masayuki was just bluffing. Yet in the eyes of the audience, it somehow became a noble act. Masayuki seemed to have that kind of charm—no, hold on? If I thought of it that way, maybe even I would've been fooled. Could all of this have been an act? He must have been afraid that I would see his true ability, and made sure to keep it hidden. This would explain why he tried to avoid fighting Gozer. Now I couldn't be careless at all.

Since Masayuki had made it through this match, he would be the one to enter the final. The next match was between Gobta and Karion—Lion-Mask. No one would be surprised by that match's outcome.

Against this ex-demon lord, how far would this young kid, that called himself the “Chosen Hero,” be able to take it?

*Hmm, now that I think about it, the way this has developed may not even a bad thing.*

I reassured myself with those words and sent Masayuki off alongside bursts of applause.



And now, the last match of the day—Gobta versus Lion-Mask. You could tell the result without even watching the match. And for that reason, I wanted to root for Gobta.

Even though I just said that I would reward him with that fishing pole, that was actually one of my finest works. I made this new pole with improved string winding efficiency, all to best Gobta in fishing.

No way I was just giving him that for free.

Despite it being rather trivial to make the rod, this was a matter to decide future victories! The idea of getting the fishing pole as a reward was eminently alluring to Gobta, he seemed to be highly motivated. I was glad to see that, so I'd at least cheer for him...since we all knew how this would go down.

Lion-Mask, a.k.a. Karion, had this in the bag. He had already gotten this far, surely Karion wanted to win as well. Or else he would have forfeited long ago, after his satisfying duel with Geld. And so, my worries subsided, and the only lingering concern was regarding Masayuki.

Having Karion there to gauge the strength of Masayuki was exactly what I wanted. Even though it was not within my right to have Milim's subordinate doing it. Karion was a laid-back kind of guy, so he might've forfeited at some point—these kinds of things concerned me a great bit.

By now all of that worry was for naught, and since Karion and Geld didn't end up severely wounding each other, my anxiety had dissipated as well. I could leave the rest for Karion to handle—or so I planned.

However, it was as if Gobta had become aware of my little plot, as he seemed to have gone super saiyan.

*He really likes to go against the grain. Why don't you work that hard when people actually rely on you...*

Actually, no. I should root for Gobta properly. Karion was gonna win anyway, I shouldn't mock Gobta's personal efforts. I decided to turn my eyes towards him and saw that he had summoned Ranga from the start, even riding on him.

*Oi, you're looking to Ranga for help again!*

What seemed to be fueling Gobta's confidence, was his intention to have Ranga fight this battle. As long as it didn't violate any regulations, it was fair game. And if Gobta intended to win, it was the right thing to do.

In my opinion, Ranga was stronger than Geld. Unless Karion actually got serious, if he continued to fight like he just had, Ranga's chances of winning were actually very high.

Eh, how odd? What would become of this situation if things really turned out that way? Wait, how else could it even be?

If...if Gobta actually won, we...we should just have Gobta lure out Masayuki's true self.

I suppose that fits in line with the original plan. Let's just say that no matter which side wins, it would be fine. Although tasking Gobta with the job unnerves me quite a bit, let's just go with the flow for now.

Upon making up my mind, I started to cheer for Gobta—

The match began.

“I'm not like my usual self today!”

*Then what was that embarrassment during the last match*—I wanted to ask him.

“Quit joking around, kiddo. I'm telling you this for your own sake, you should forfeit quickly—”

“Ranga-san, I'll be counting on you!”

“Emm, I understand!”

Ignoring Karion's suggestion, Gobta and Ranga lashed out first. These two had probably used the intermission to do some planning, as there was no hesitation in their movement.

Gobta was serious, he really wanted to win.

That being said, it was nothing more than his intention...

“Eagle talon and Tiger foot!”

Sharp claws extended from the tips of Karion's feet, then unleashing a lightning-fast round-house kick, swiping at both Gobta and Ranga. His claws were strong, and their reach was challenging for others to gauge. Successfully dodging them wasn't even enough, as the tip of the claws would cast something akin to a vacuum wave, tearing up any opponents in that direction.

To Karion, such a move was probably mere child's play. But for Gobta, it had almost spelt the end for him.

"AHH!" Gobta cried out, before tumbling off of Ranga.

Of course, he was barely holding on to life. Gobta was reduced to clumsily crawling away, trying to sneak out of Karion's line of sight. No one here was entitled to laugh at him, despite the audience apparently finding it amusing, but that was because they didn't have the faintest idea of just how terrifying Karion was. For the mere act of confronting him face to face, Gobta's courage was commendable. And Karion also chose not to pay attention to the fleeing Gobta. Actually, he couldn't exactly spare any of his attention.

Ranga, without Gobta riding him, was now relieved of the weight on his back and went on to take a big bite out of Karion. At the time, Ranga had transformed to the size of a large canine, yet his teeth and claws were, nonetheless, still razor-sharp.

"Tsk."

Karion sacrificed his left arm to Ranga's fangs and used the leverage to slam him firmly on the ground. However, Ranga wasn't about to give up either. He turned around and slipped away after the impact.

"Oh, oh oh... That wolf sure was something."

"Right, to my memory, isn't the most evolved version of the direwolf only around Rank C?"

"That must be the monster mentioned by Gai-san. Though, is it really a direwolf?"

Ranga's movements had people in awe, and the crowds began to rile up. Among them were some folks with more pertinent knowledge, which had led to people speculating about Ranga's actual species.

*Indeed, he is actually a Tempest Star Wolf; a rare, Special Rank A monster, far from your average wolf—I answered internally.*

"Stampede of Chaos!<sup>13</sup>"

Karion had struck, he concentrated his fighting spirit before raining down volleys of attacks from mid-air.

You would normally be able to flee with sufficient free space, but this was a stage, and escaping would mean stepping out of bounds. So you could only sit and take it—or so Karion thought. However, it turned out that Ranga decided to bolt out of the ring without a moment of hesitation.

"What?" Karion exclaimed.

He must not have expected Ranga to forfeit and turn tail right then and there. Perhaps he was simply too shocked to react, but for a second, there was an opening on him.

"Now!"

Ah! It was Gobta. At the same time, a dark shadow emerged. It was Ranga, the same Ranga who had just dashed outside of the ring, suddenly emerged from Gobta's shadow as if nothing

<sup>13</sup>Much appreciation to Voxel for these cool names. All of the skills shouted by Karion here are related to animals, here the stampede refers to elephants as opposed to horses.

had happened.

“Weren’t you just out of bounds—“ Karion shouted, but—

“Kufufufufu, summoning him again does not violate any rule,” Diablo cut him short.

Ah, this was a total misstep on Karion’s part. It’s true that Ranga was much stronger than Gobta, so naturally, Karion would have paid more attention to Ranga.

But the contestant was Gobta, and as long as he didn’t step out of bounds, the match was not forfeited.

And cunning as Gobta was, he fled near the boundary line from the start of the match, which was just what he had planned. Pretending to be a lame-duck was also a part of his plan. All of this out of his greedy fixation on winning the match, by any means necessary.

The tide of battle had now been turned, as Ranga’s fangs scraped past Karion’s head. He attacked when Karion was least prepared, yet that guy managed to dodge the impact by a millimeter.

—Actually, that wasn’t true.

Karion, despite narrowly avoiding the strike unscathed, was pressing his hand on his mask. Ranga’s ploy had met its mark—he had successfully damaged Karion’s mask.

Karion must have seen this angle of attack coming from the very start, which was to be expected, considering Karion was on guard the entire time. However, he must have also been confident in his ability to take on whatever was thrown at him, if he avoided a direct hit. He didn’t go for messy dodges, but instead maintained balance in his body and chose to use a crouch stance, in order to convert defensive action into attacks. To a ruler such as Karion, such a choice wouldn’t cause much harm regardless.

He always had a carefree attitude and fought with the prowess of a king. That’s just the way Karion thought, for which he also had the strength to back it up, so there was no reason why he shouldn’t do the same during this sneak attack.

However, Ranga’s attack was not meant for Karion in the first place, it was aimed at the mask on his face. Karion chose to dodge in close quarters due to his unusually good instincts and prevented himself from getting harmed. Actually, his reflexes kicked in and he did it accidentally, which was why Ranga managed to cut open the mask with his claw.

Gobta cracked a cunning smile.

“All right, all right, all right, all according to plan!”

He shouted excitedly and raised his kodachi to launch his giant icicle lance.

“Here I come!”

“Tsk, smartass!”

Gobta’s goal seemingly wasn’t to defeat Karion physically, but instead to take off his mask.

Upon realizing this, Karion continued to fight with both hands covering his face. That afforded Ranga the opening to attack at will. It was as if both of Karion’s hands were tied, making it extremely difficult to handle Ranga.

“S-such a dirty tactic...”

“This is such a despicable way to fight...”

“Fight seriously now!”

The audience began to complain. But Gobta didn’t mind at all.

“Shut up already! In this world, the winner is always right. Rimuru-sama used to say so too!” he responded righteously to the audience.

*Please don’t drag me into this...*

“Tsk, it should be expected from someone wanting to be among the “Four Heavenly Kings” under the demon lord. He doesn’t even feel shame when making use of such tactics.”

“That’s right, and not only that, he even seems to feel himself being pretty justified in doing it.”

“Despite having a fool’s face, he’s good at dirty tricks. Seriously, he must have planned all of this from the start.”

“Apparently it was the demon lord’s idea. Look at his stupid face, there’s no way he’s that smart.”

“How terrifying, a demon lord that manipulates “Four Heavenly Kings” like pawns—”

*Why am I being judged?! I don’t want any “Four Heavenly Kings” that can’t think for themselves, yet the audience can’t read my mind, how sad.*

The situation had flipped in Gobta and Ranga’s favor.

In the end, Karion stepped out of bounds voluntarily, and concluded the match.

“Damn it, I only lost because of your scheme.”

On the surface, Karion seemed to maintain calm judgement, despite how pissed he must’ve been. Rather than continuing to embarrass himself with that match, he might as well just forfeit. It would be trouble if people knew that an ex-demon lord lost in this type of match. That was the right call. And the reason for his loss came down to a certain unnecessary message left by someone who shall not be named.

Had that person not done said thing, Gobta would probably never have come up with a plan like that.

“What a surprising ending, truly surprising—”

Souka’s announcement riled up the crowd as well. Some were shouting angrily, some were cheering, both mixed with laughter. But despite all of the complaints, the audience seemed to have had fun watching, nonetheless.

“That dude with the mask was being way too dramatic about keeping his face hidden, big deal...”

Many such comments were tossed around openly. But at the end of the day, Gobta seemed to have been labeled as the bad guy. That being said, with his likeable mug as well as funny antics combined, you just couldn’t paint him as a hated fiend. All in all, the people in the audience were all very satisfied.

The duel between Geld and Karion was commendable enough. Gobta, on the other hand, would probably be lauded for his interesting behavior.

This was a world heavily lacking in entertainment. As opposed to the heavily regulated tournaments in Ingracia, plenty of bizarre things were happening in our kingdom’s tournament,

which seemed to be more attuned to capturing the hearts of the audience. This was in spite of our matches being in a state of complete disarray by comparison, but the result was plenty interesting.

Afterwards—

“You participated in the fights without my permission, therefore I’m disallowing you to stay in my shadow as punishment for now!”

Ranga came back wagging his tail as I was announcing my judgement to him. He had apparently anticipated that I would praise him, but instead was shaken by my verdict...

*I’m the one who should be asking why you thought that I would praise you.* However, looking into Ranga’s sad puppy eyes, my heart inevitably started melting.

“Ranga, although I just said that I would punish you, this will be moderated depending on the result of tomorrow’s final.”

“...!”

“You have to work hard from now on, after all, you were considered a summoned beast. You must listen nicely to Gobta’s commands and not overdo things.”

“I understand!”

Ranga was good friends with Shion and would sometimes take things too far when heated. If I didn’t warn him now, I feared that he would cause some major trouble the next day. As long as he remembered that he was still Gobta’s summoned beast, then there should be no issue. He at least wouldn’t do anything too excessive to Masayuki.

“Gobta, you and Ranga need to work hard together during tomorrow’s final!”

“Yes sir!”

Now I could rest assured. Gobta would do his job tomorrow and help me evaluate Masayuki’s true strength. Since the worst-case scenario would be Ranga showing off his actual abilities in front of the crowd, and still losing to Masayuki. That would end in me getting forced on stage, by which time it would be difficult to resolve things through negotiations. Staying in the dark about Masayuki’s abilities was worrisome, but if possible, I would like to avoid conflict. If Gobta and Ranga achieved a clear victory, the issue would be resolved.

In any case, everything would be determined by tomorrow’s final showdown.



And so, although another unplanned episode interrupted the second day as well, the celebration ended smoothly and according to plan. Six of the matches had been fought out, with the remaining final taking place tomorrow.

Masayuki versus Gobta—a surprising match-up. Thankfully, the excited audience flooded

the night market, skyrocketing sales.

Masayuki's groupies were singing his praises, and some self-appointed experts were commending Geld and Karion. On the other hand, some fanatics gave Gobta their approval too. Folks joyfully chatted about their expectations for tomorrow's match.

Dinner time was no different.

The guests were divided into several tables where they would enjoy their meals. The topics of discussion were naturally all related to today's matches. That man named Gai seemed to be quite famous, and Gobta having defeated him became quite the hot topic. In addition, people were also looking forward to tomorrow's final showdown.

It was the same at our table.

"It was awesome! Sure enough, Masayuki-sama looks handsome even while just standing!"

"Is that so? I like sensei more though!"

"Geld-san really got some moves; he was so rad."

"Um, um, he didn't even flinch when defending against the ferocious attacks of Lion-Mask!"

"That's true! He was able to take on that Lion-Mask's attacks!"

"They were so strong. Lion-Mask got so many cool looking moves; I want to learn them too."

"Gail wants to learn it as well? Me too!"

"Yes, yes, me too!"

Alice only loved Masayuki; Chloe had no interest in him; the teenage boy legion led by Kenya seemed to think Geld was quite cool, but Karion seemed to be more popular.

I supposed it was only natural, after all, Lion-Mask was like a superhero.

While I was learning much from the children's behavior, I placed down the dishes for the meal today. We weren't eating any set meals this time, instead we were having a fried shrimp special. The main dishes were hamburger meat, croquettes, and fried shrimp. These were dishes specifically served for children.

In truth, I really enjoyed it as well.

A nobleman would naturally have servants, but there was no need to worry about such a thing here. That was because we set up screens that provided fairly good soundproofing around each table. It was very tiring to follow the stringent table etiquette, so I had ordered people to apply such measures from the second day onward.

That's why we were just going to have fun, eat, and chat.

The kids were all riled up after watching the day's matches, whereby their cheerful mood stood to prove how well our entertainment had worked.

Although I was uneasy about the match tomorrow, worrying too much wouldn't help things either.

Karion, sitting at the next table, was grinning, likely after overhearing the children's conversation.

There was also a severely unhappy Milim.

A sound-proof screen was probably little more than a paper cloth to these people. Whatever we said here, they heard clear as day. Although, I could hear their voices as well.

“Hehehe, looks like they were charmed by me. These kiddos have good taste.”

“What are you talking about?! You couldn’t even win a match like that.”

“Ahh, don’t put it that way, Milim. I was performing quite well already, even with much of my strength held back.”

“How disappointing. Did you lose your pride as an ex-demon lord?”

“HAHAHA, there’s no such thing. I already had some good fun with someone I wanted to fight, so I had no interest in winning afterwards.”

“That makes me jealous.”

“Yeah, I probably should have participated with a disguise as well—”

These voices belonged to Karion, Midley, and Milim, respectively. If Milim were to participate, I would have pulled all of the stops to intervene.

“Hold on, that ain’t it, chief.”

“That’s true, Milim-sama. I can’t believe someone as noble as Milim-sama would want to participate in such a tournament with a disguise.”

Karion and Midley felt the same as they began to calm Milim down.

*What noble quality does she have anyway? Never mind, I won’t hold a grudge against them for that.*

“Let’s put that aside, we should go watch the final tomorrow!”

“Oh? Are you already done with the labyrinth?”

“Everything’s foolproof, I’ll join Rimuru tomorrow!”

“Should I accompany you?”

“I won’t be going. I got invited by my subordinates to go out. It’s quite regretful that I won’t be able to attend the final, but I’ve decided to take a stroll around town tomorrow.”

Milim was going to watch the match tomorrow as well. Karion intended to travel with the Beastketeers, leaving Frey alone to watch over Milim.

*Thank god the only thing left was the final.*

Milim seemed to be looking forward to more of the labyrinth demonstration later, so I shouldn’t worry about her.

“Speaking of it, had I known how interesting the tournament was, I should have participated myself.”

“Haha, by the way, what were you doing all day?”

“Hehe, Midley-san spent the day at the opera house,” Frey remarked, it looked like she had been there as well. She knew that Midley stuck around at the opera house, so that must’ve been what she was up to.

Knowing that someone enjoyed it that much, our nation’s band members would probably be delighted.

“Huh? You mean the stuff that bored me to sleep yesterday?”

“Karion... A savage man like you probably doesn’t understand art—”

“Frey, for crying out loud, do you have to put it that harshly?”

“Which one was that supposed to be?”

“The concert, Milim. It was the type of band that Clayman would’ve been proud of, they played beautiful music. This country is training a band as well.”

“I figure that, as opposed to Clayman’s band, the one here was better.”

“Ho—I didn’t know you had that level of understanding.”

“That didn’t sound like a compliment, oi!”

“That’s no surprise, since it wasn’t one anyway.”

“Ya still gotta be just as mean to me as before...”

“In any case, even Luminas felt that way. For the entire afternoon, the best seat of the opera house had been taken by her. I don’t think you can really comprehend those music pieces with your level of artistic taste.”

“Seriously, *that* Luminas?! Did she actually come as well?”

“Heh, I like music too, you know!”

Their enthusiastic chatter carried on like that without end. It was so nice that they were having such a fun chat. And so, I listened to everyone chatting on and on—

“By the way, what would you do if you were to fight that boy called Masayuki?” Hinata asked me out of the blue.

She cut to the chase without a warning.

“If that were the case, I guess I’d just have to fight him then?”

“Eh—Rimuru-sensei is going to fight with Masayuki-sama? Sensei is really strong, but I think Masayuki-sama is stronger.”

“How? I think sensei is stronger!”

Hearing my conversation with Hinata, the children began to argue over which of us was stronger. Alice and Kenya were defenders of Masayuki, the rest were supporting me. Since I had one more person on board, I felt that I had won at that moment.

“Right, but honestly speaking, even I couldn’t tell how strong that Masayuki guy is. You must treat him cautiously, there’s no mistake about it,” was the advice Hinata gave me.

It had to do with Hinata’s Skill, and although she couldn’t give me too much information right now, she seemed to have investigated Masayuki for me. It turned out that Masayuki seemed to be an opponent that even Hinata had trouble reading...

“Although, most likely he would get defeated by me—“ Hinata uttered in provocation, with a smile at the end. What followed was a lot more worrying.

“That’s true, I think big sis Hinata won’t lose to anyone.”

“Um, though I don’t want to admit, big sis Hinata is super strong.”

“I don’t think anyone can win against big sis Hinata.”

“Um, I think so too...”

“That’s right, even that Lion-Mask would definitely be no match for Hinata-san.”

I didn’t expect the children to come to the unanimous conclusion that Hinata was stronger

than Masayuki. They had a disagreement when discussing me and Masayuki, yet they had a consensus on Hinata...

A flash of annoyance overcame me in that instant.

“B-But Masayuki, unlike a certain person, would probably want to talk to me first, so I don’t have to worry too much about it.”

Feeling a bit sour, I carelessly let that out in front of Hinata—

“—What’s that supposed to mean?”

That one sentence changed the atmosphere immediately. I had stepped on a major minefield. And it’s an obvious mine that I stepped on.

“Ah, nothing really, don’t mind me.”

“I’m right here if you want to fight.”

*Hinata-san, why are you so impulsive!*

By handing over my pudding, I managed to quench her anger after this slip-up. That was a huge cost for an unnecessary line of words.

“But, just as you said, Masayuki can indeed be easily reached. Yuuki also said that he’s Masayuki’s guardian. At most I can come out and ask for a favor, though that is very unlikely.”

“Eh?”

“Masayuki will probably lose during tomorrow’s match.”

“Um—I can’t deny the possibility. However, his opponent will be Gobta… That guy always fails during crucial moments—”

More often than not, he could wield his strength, if he just followed his usual combat routine, yet this is the type of scenario where he would come up with boneheaded ideas and mess things up. That’s the type of person Gobta was. He would probably do the same during the final—

«...»

Huh? How strange, did Raphael-sensei want to say something—or was I thinking too much?

Never mind, it probably wasn’t anything important. Moreover, by contrast, the more important thing was the battle between Gobta and Masayuki.

Gobta could summon Ranga, by any logic, he had the upper hand. If we assumed that Masayuki were to win against Ranga, he would definitely be a threat to us.

Although, personally, I didn’t feel even the slightest bit threatened by him.

“In my opinion, that child called Gobta had some outstanding qualities as well.”

“Yeah, I’ll admit, Gobta does have some fighting talent, but this *is* Gobta we are talking about here...”

As long as he fought normally, he could win the match. But Gobta often did unnecessary things that messed with his fights.

“All right, I’m looking forward to tomorrow’s match.”

Hinata stopped discussing the topic at that point and instead went on to happily bring the children to the night market.

*Please don’t spoil the kids*—I asked Hinata internally.

While Hinata had her flaws, she probably really cared for me. I appreciated her intentions

greatly.

If Gobta were to lose, we would have to figure something out. I had already made up my mind regarding that outcome, so nothing worse would probably happen.

Compared to that, I should enjoy the festival at hand. There were still tons of problems and much work to attend to. Still, I felt very fulfilled every day.

With this happy feeling, I readjusted my mood and departed to meet with Gazel and the others for our nightly gathering.

# Midnight Conference

Interlude

*That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime*

## Interlude 3

### Midnight Conference

Alongside Benimaru, Shion and Diablo, I entered the conference room. Myourmiles was already waiting nervously. Shuna was in charge of receiving the guests. Upon realizing our arrival, she began to prepare drinks for everyone.

“Gazel-sama said he’s on his way.”

As soon as Shuna said that, the door swung open as Gazel entered the room.

“Have I kept you all waiting?”

“No, we only just arrived as well.”

Now that we’d had our greeting, everyone was seated.

“Let’s start with the conclusion. I contacted HQ this morning to have them gather the remaining gold coins. So far, we were able to gather one thousand five hundred coins. It’s not much, but we can’t have the people pay for it. Moreover, we have to prepare it by tomorrow morning, this is our limit.”

If we were talking about gold coins in circulation, it wouldn’t be so difficult to get enough. But if Gazel was to withdraw gold coins without causing negative effects to the Dwarven Kingdom, this was as much as he could get. It went without saying that Gazel was only willing to help because I requested him to exchange gold coins with our stellars.

“I’m really sorry, the amount seemed to be greater than I imagined. Thanks a lot.”

“Hmm, I’ll have someone carry it over by pegasus, it should arrive by next evening.”

*One thousand five hundred gold coins are quite heavy, I feel bad having them transport it here, I should use “Dimension Domination” to get the money. It’s probably safer and more ensured.*

“It’s me who requested you guys, I’ll be the one to get it.”

“...I see, you seem to know ‘Dimension Transportation,’ that’s indeed more secure. I understand, I’ll inform them about this. That aside, let’s talk business, will this be enough to pay the merchants?”

“Hmm—about that...”

Unfortunately, we were still short by a bit. This Founding Festival was the first of its kind, so the budget we planned was huge. Therefore, the amount of gold coins required was pretty incredible—with three thousand coins and more. This would be three hundred million yen in the economy of my past life. Considering the economic scale of this world, that's an almost horrifyingly wasteful sum of money.

This was simply how rich our treasury was. We had 1,500 stellaris, which could be exchanged to roughly 150,000 gold coins. That's why we didn't spare their usage, after all, it was just two to three thousand coins. It wasn't that our nation had no money, we could manage to pay if exchange were possible. But since the people at the receiving end were all retailers and small businesses, this did not work. And so we had to find gold coins from our treasury...

Our nation just managed to get into currency economy, the flow of gold coins at this point was still limited. Even though we'd gathered all sorts of silver coins, there were less than a hundred gold coins of the Dwarven Kingdom.

This, plus my own money, made three hundred gold coins. Myourmiles managed to gather around one thousand coins. This added up to approximately one thousand four hundred coins. Even with the addition of Gazel's part, we still didn't have three thousand coins.

"Not enough, still?"

"I've calculated a bit; we are still a couple of hundred coins short."

"Even if your budget shortage was calculated so casually, how on earth did you manage to hold this type of celebration..."

"I just came up with the idea. The duration is short anyway, so I can't really help myself not to."

"...I don't even know where to start my grievances with you."

Gazel sighed greatly, looking at me dumbfounded. *But, that's because... Everyone was for it. No one objected...* I wanted to argue back loudly, but doing that may have caused Gazel to lose his temper completely. A sober Gazel was pretty scary, and I was a smart guy, so I decided not to say anything regretful.

"If that's the case, shall I pay the remaining portion?"

Halfway through our conversation, someone suddenly cut in. Curious who it was, I turned towards the direction. It turned out to be the emperor of Sorcerer's Dynasty Sarion—Elmesia.

Gazel sitting next to me showed an expression of disgust upon seeing Elmesia. It was for a brief second, but enough for people to notice the change. I had my guard up too, but at the same time, questioned Elalude:

"How strange, Elalude-san... Why has the emperor come as well?"

"Umm, about that—Rimuru-sama, I went to discuss it with the emperor, and she agreed to provide aid without hesitation—"

Elmesia had a big smile on her as Elalude explained. Elalude, on the other hand, looked depressed. *I see what's happening here, the emperor must have forced him to do it. Best not to poke around for trouble now.*

“I see, actually, we should handle this problem our—”

“Hmm—aren’t you lamenting about not enough money? I only proposed to help with the hope of creating a foundation for the mutual friendship of our nations.”

Her face was filled with a smile, but it didn’t reach her eyes. My instinct told me—*things are getting messy*.

“No, I mean...”

I trusted my instinct and decided to reject her somehow. It was true that we wished to exchange some gold coins, but I was more afraid of owing Elmesia a favor.

We were only short by a few hundred coins, we would at most intimidate those merchants a little. We simply had to avoid them looking down on us, as long as our rival did not suffer losses, they wouldn’t go as far as to hate us to the bone. Based on this consideration, I had made the judgement, however—

“Give it a rest now. Once this woman has spoken, she will persist until the end. It’s far worse dealing with her, than a whole group of merchants. You’d be better off accepting her help nicely now,” Gazel commented unimpressively while switching to the same depressed expression as Elalude.

*How surprising, it seems that even the great Hero King Gazel finds it difficult to deal with Emperor Elmesia.*

“Ara, Gazel-chan, are you speaking for me? I am so happy!”

Elmesia smiled as she couldn’t hide her joy. She called Gazel “-chan,” the relationship between the two could be reflected in that sense.

“Please don’t call me that. Doesn’t matter, what do you really want?”

“You are still so serious, not a free-spirited man like your grandpa was.”

“It’s because of the type of person my grandfather was, that my father worked so hard. Let’s put that aside and get to the point now.”

Gazel’s personality was pretty free-spirited in reality, but he often played the role of a rigorous ruler. This was largely due to him observing the hard work of his father as he grew. While the former king still ruled the nation, Gazel was having the time of his life during the last free period of his life. Apparently, it was then that he met Elalude and Elmesia. It was also around the time when he became an apprentice of Hakurou.

Elmesia would still bring up old tales about Gazel. She was like a close relative to him that kept on mentioning his past stories. No wonder Gazel got a headache just seeing her alone.

“How impatient, were you always so impetuous before?”

Gazel hid it well enough that people couldn’t tell, but he was in fact extremely irritated. I couldn’t see it, but that was not the case for Elmesia. Picking up on people’s actual feelings was a piece of cake for the royal court. That’s why they were constantly wearing masks and deceiving each other cautiously... Looks like I needed to call Gazel my mentor in that regard, yet Elmesia was still treating him like an infant. No wonder why Gazel’s face was filled with disgust.

Elmesia then exclaimed, “Let me have a drink as well,” as she took a glass of fruit wine

from Shuna. She nonchalantly sat down, seemingly in no hurry to leave.

Gazel and Elalude exchanged looks as both released a sigh. The two looked quite tacit, but they were both no different than children in Elmesia's eyes, perhaps that's why they were similar.

But of course, also myself, who's inexperienced had no chance of winning in a negotiation with Elmesia. That's why Gazel told me to forget about it.

"Ara, this tastes good as well."

"You are too kind."

The fruit wine poured by Shuna seemed to have fit her appetite, filling her face with an even brighter smile. That was Shuna's personal collection that tasted different with every sip. If she were to dislike it, it would be difficult to prepare anything better. I was a little relieved as Gazel spoke up once more with emphasis.

"All right, that's enough. Time is precious, I'm afraid there's none to waste on your little hobbies."

After his hurrying again, Elmesia was finally willing to talk business.

"All right. If you want my help, I have something in mind for you to do as well. If you are to organize this type of celebration again, please invite me. If you are willing to invite me to any future events, I'm happy to exchange the money for you."

*You dare to organize such an interesting event behind my back? Unforgivable*—that was Elmesia's actual message.

Elalude began to hold his head as he looked towards the sky. Gazel looked troubled as well.

"I am happy to do that," I answered without hesitation.

Elmesia smiled joyfully hearing my response. The contrast of her behavior seemed to be too drastic, perhaps I had misjudged her. But since she liked the lively time of celebration and talking about participating in said projects, it was right down my alley.

"Royalties are not slaves to the people. If royalties live carefreely, so will the people be joyful. I am happy too; everyone will be happy!"

"It makes sense, and it's my thoughts exactly. I am glad that someone is on my side, I'll be looking forward to encountering you in the future."

I shook hands with Elmesia with a smile. Now Elmesia was my comrade. Aside from me and Myourmiles, with the addition of Elmesia, the "Bad Idea Trio" was suddenly formed. Even though Gazel and Elalude were shivering, seemingly sighting omens, we simply did not care.

And then Elmesia took out her magic wallet.

"I only have some pocket changes with me, at most one thousand gold coins. But if you want more, I can request more to be brought here."

"No, that should do for now. Allow me to exchange it with ten stellars," I answered rather casually as well, but what on earth was this person thinking?

*She's been wandering about with a thousand gold coins. I can only say that her concept of money is a bit weird. Looks like she's an authentic billionaire, it was the right choice to listen to Gazel's words and not make her an enemy.*

“All right, just remember to fulfill your promise.”

“Of course!”

I nodded with a smile at Elmesia’s response. She then immediately began to exchange money with me on the scene.

Now we just had to wait for the one thousand five hundred gold coins exchanged at the Dwarven Kingdom and we would have enough money. The problem had finally been resolved. I was relieved of a huge burden.

Diablo commented, “This is great, Rimuru-sama,” as he poured me some tea. I happily drank it as he then poured some for Gazel and Elmesia as well.

“Although someone wanted to make Rimuru-sama a laughing-stock to see to your inability to follow rules, their plan now has completely failed.”

Benimaru also gave a fearless smile. Someone tried to outsmart me, to prevent me from gaining renown, now their plan had been exposed and defeated. We didn’t need to apologize to the vendors and had saved face. It was as though I’d relieved a boulder from my heart, my mood gradually became better. At that moment, Elmesia suddenly commented something worth pondering on.

“But I figured, even if you didn’t have time to prepare the gold coins, someone would be willing to assist you.”

“Hmm, what do you mean by that?”

I didn’t understand and asked straight away.

“In order to make a subject obedient, rather than using sticks to coerce or intimidate, it is better to just do them a favor. It is simpler and has a higher chance of success.”

Elmesia gave a smile as she finished her sentence. There was no doubt about it, that was the smile of a ruler. Diablo was suddenly inspired by her words.

“I see, you are saying that someone will enter uninvited to try to amend things?”

“Yes, it is very likely. However, even if such a person shows up, my guess is that he will be someone else’s puppet.”

“Kufufufufu, what an interesting thought. They first caused the problem and they tried to do us favors by helping us. That’s certainly a plausible plan, but—”

“Even if they have no coins with them, they can just take out some proof certificate. To let the high-ranked officers of the nations see how untrustworthy you all are while also demonstrating their own credibility. In that way, they would be selling you a favor.”

“How greedy, that’s truly the thought pattern of humans. I’ve learnt a new lesson.”

*Eh, could that mean? In order to sell us a favor, will the person trying to get close to us appear and convince the retailers? And that this person is only a pawn that is following orders and can be discarded at any moment?*

*I see—if we trust the person, they will be getting close to us, and if we raise our suspicion, will they abandon the plan? But of course, perhaps they only want us to lose face, yet... I had a feeling that Elmesia’s prediction would come true. Diablo seemed to think such a possibility*

was high as well. He had been pondering with a chilling smile.

“I don’t really understand something that complicated, but do you know who is behind all this? Could it be—a member of the Western Nation Council is trying to test us?” Benimaru asked.

His rude tone did not upset Elmesia as a smile emerged on her face.

“I’m not sure about it either. After all, our dynasty was never part of the council. But—if it’s that mister over there, surely, he has learnt something, hasn’t he?”

Elmesia turned her eyes to a certain direction, in her line of sight was Myourmiles who had been pondering by himself.

“Eh, were you talking about me?”

He seemed rather nervous upon being appointed. Soon enough though, he regained composure and spoke up in a rather troubled tone:

“I did hear some rumors. Apparently in private, there is a sub-committee that runs the entire western nations. They seem to be some high-ranked ruler among the council... But that’s just a rumor. After all, each council member is representative of their nation, all of them are nobles and all of their identities are verified.”

According to Myourmiles, there seemed to be some rumor among the merchants. They claimed there to be a group of dominators at the center of power. Myourmiles said that such rumors were no different from conspiracy theories, and that he personally did not believe them...

“—If any suspicious personnel come up to mediate... I shall investigate his activities and expose his background,” Souei kneeling next to me said.

I didn’t even realize he was there...

I suppressed my shock and nodded rather pretentiously.

“You scared me. You didn’t even make a sound.”

“I’ve told you before, your Majesty. The residents here are far too inhuman, visiting here yourself is far too dangerous.”

“Kukuku, but that was quite the intriguing experience. By the way, Rimuru-san, could I ask you a question?”

*Hmm? What does she want to know at this point?*

“Right, ask away?”

“I would like to form an alliance with you, but before that, I would like to hear your thoughts—”

The aura emitted by Elmesia suddenly changed. She was looking straight at me without any intention of hiding her prowess as a ruler. An immense pressure ensued that was almost suffocating for everyone at the scene, even Gazel was no match for her. This was—‘Hero’s Haki.’

“Do tell—”

Given this to be the case, I began to use my ‘Demon Lord’s Haki’ against her as well. We stared at each other to battle it out with our sights. I wished to confront her directly, so I did not

flinch as I looked right at Elmesia.

“What do you plan to do with that demon? That most dangerous primordial—”

*Primordial? Although I'm not sure what Elmesia is on about, was the demon referring to Diablo? He's indeed strong, but he's definitely not “most dangerous,” right...*

“Nothing, I'm not planning to do anything. Diablo has been very satisfying working under me, is there a problem?”

“...Allow me to ask differently then. If that demon loses control, how do you plan to take responsibility?”

*Lose control?* He did concern me with that. Even this had been seen through by Elmesia, you could tell just how concerned I had been. Indeed, it wouldn't be strange for Diablo to lose control at any time. But that wasn't just a problem unique to Diablo. Despite my unwillingness to admit, I also have the troubled child that is Shion. She seemed to be concerned about me, but that was probably no problem for Elmesia-san to take care of.

“Well, about that, I will stop him before he loses control. That's all I can do to prevent casualties, isn't it?”

*If there's any other way, please enlighten me.* I could only try to intervene before he lost control. Diablo seemed rather happy that I said so.

*No, you are just one of my problematic children. What should I do now that you are so happy...* I wasn't the only one confused.

“Huh? Eh—hold on? Ignore my accidental transformation back to my own self, but did you just say you are going to stop that demon? And take responsibility?”

“Right. He's indeed quite prone to losing control, but lately he's been listening to my words and has been better behaving lately,” I answered with confidence.

Diablo and Shion, if they kept where they were right now, there shouldn't be anything to worry about. Although Shion said so seemingly excluding herself, it made me uneasy... But all in all, there shouldn't be any concern. Hearing my answer, a girlish smile emerged on Elmesia's face.

“Eh, Elalude-chan, did you hear? Demon Lord Rimuru's got some bearing, he's got a lot more grandeur than you!”

Elalude's wrinkles increased several-fold. *Surely you had your share of hard time as well, serving a master so free-spirited*—I comforted him internally.

“Isn't this enough, Elmesia-dono. Rimuru has spoken, he has my support as well. If anything happens, I, Gazel Dwargon promise to lend Rimuru my aid.”

Showing a sense of reliance I had not seen for a long time, Gazel verbally supported me.

Elmesia peeked at us pleasantly. And next—

“I've understood your view on the matter. But if you are to stand against humanity, I shall stop you with all I have. I hope that we will be able to maintain a good relationship and deepen the bond between our nations. Elalude—”

“Yes ma'am!”

“I've approved the alliance between Sorcerer's Dynasty Sarion and Jura Tempest Federa-

tion. Go handle the rest of the procedure.”

“Yes ma’am—!”

As expected from an emperor. The way she ordered Elalude was filled with majesty. *I need to pick up a thing or two from her.*

“Then, if anything goes wrong, just come find me or Gazel-chan. Don’t you lose control now,” Elmesia said to me.

*I don’t get it. Weren’t we just talking about Diablo and Shion losing control? And somehow the topic landed on me. Telling me not to lose control... How rude.*

“I mean, despite how I look, I’m very considerate when doing planning! Don’t put it that way as if I’m gonna lose control that easily—”

“Rimuru, who was it that started this festival?”

Gazel was staring at me. If you asked me, I could only answer, “Me of course.”

“I think it’s Myourmiles-kun?”

“Huh, that’s not true at all!”

He didn’t want to comply...

“Okay, fine. I get it, I’ll negotiate with people properly next time.”

“That’s the spirit, I’ll be counting on you.”

“Normally this is not something we’d say to a king of another nation, but you are an exception. So don’t blame us.”

If they talked too much, it would interfere with our politics, Gazel claimed. But I really didn’t seem to agree with many ideas in this world, I hoped I’d be able to discuss these with them. This was not a matter of good or bad timing, but dependent on whether Gazel and the rest felt necessary. It was nothing bad for me. I was lucky to get the two nations’ support against the cultural destruction of the angels.

After solving the money issue, the conference somehow became a gathering to scold me. But I’d let it pass. The hard topic was over. Now that I’d had my agreement with Elmesia, we would be building a good relationship between our nations in the future. I had no intention of discussing it with her, yet this unexpected encounter yielded great progress.

I was going to dismiss the conference just before Elmesia wanted to continue. She looked at me very seriously, seemingly in a hurry. Unsure as to what she wanted, I asked nervously as well.

“Eh, is there any other problem?”

“No no no, no problem at all! It’s a personal request... Please introduce me to Master Yoshida!”

“Hold on, your Majesty, what are you on about now! That’s just shameless to ask right now!”

And I thought she had some terribly challenging favor. *I see how it is.* Seeing how panicked Elalude looked, I imagined it was nothing severe. Yoshida-san came to our nation at the request of Shuna. Right now, he was contributing his culinary abilities for us, and I had not asked him

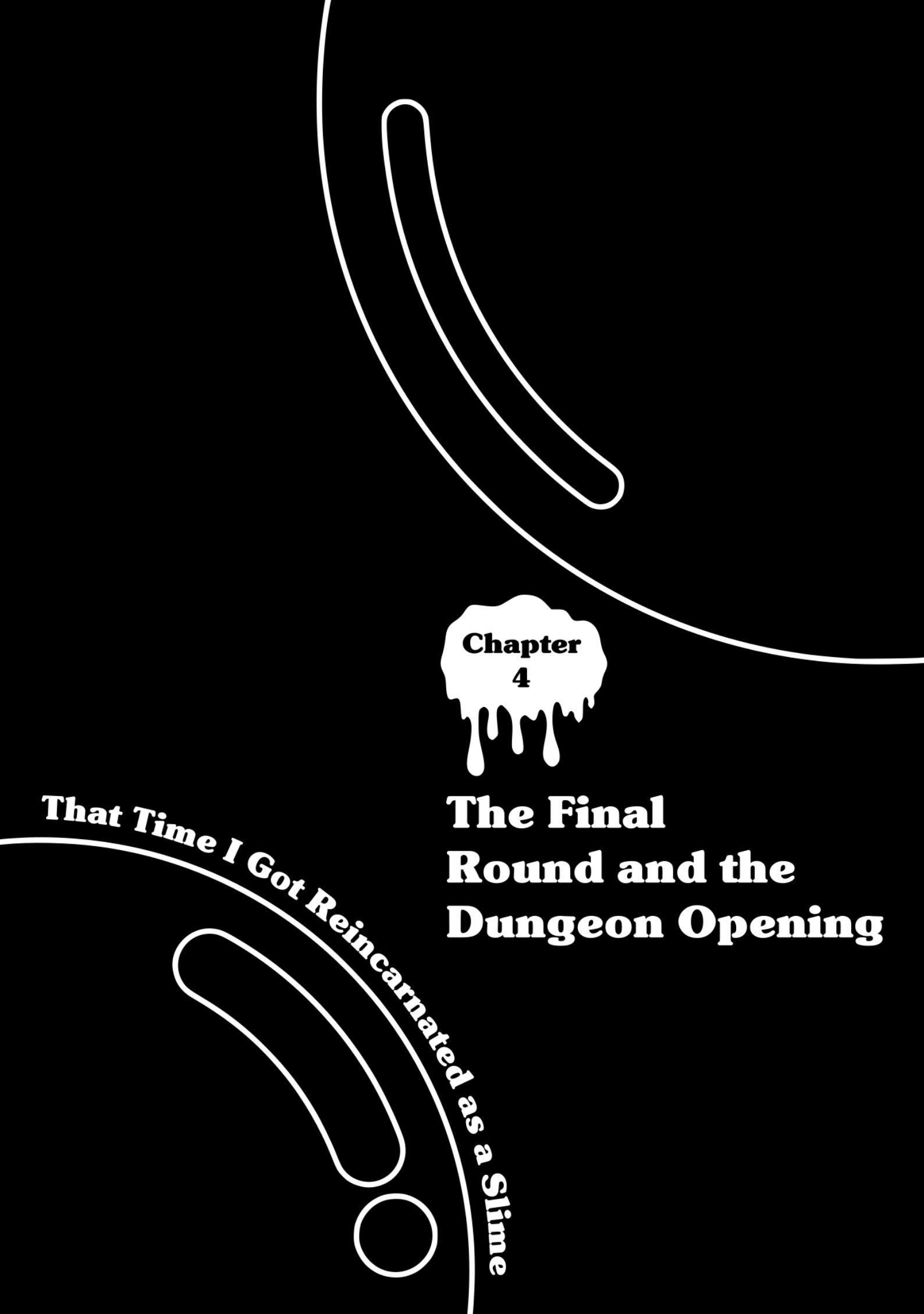
what he planned to do after the festival, either. I personally hoped that he would remain in our nation, but that ultimately depended on Yoshida-san. If it was just introducing him to Elmesia, that shouldn't be a problem.

"Easy peasy. But, please don't force Yoshida-san to do anything," I answered Elmesia without hesitation.

"That is most certain!"

Elmesia was happy to accept as well, we would introduce them after the celebration.

And so, the "Meeting of the Big Three" quietly concluded.



**Chapter  
4**

# **The Final Round and the Dungeon Opening**

***That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime***

## Chapter 4

### The Final Round and the Dungeon Opening

On the third morning of the Founding Festival, I set off to the Dwarven Kingdom in order to exchange our stellaras for gold coins.

Now that our problem had been resolved, we would have to see how the conspirators would react. With this done, I had nothing else to worry about, so I could just enjoy the celebration.

We would be starting the day with the final battle between Masayuki and Gobta. The stands were packed with anticipation and people were all enthusiastic about making their predictions about who would be the winner and some even opened up a betting pool.

Myourmiles was hoping to make the most of this by making the only winning play—be the guy running the business. No matter your prediction, you'd still make money. This is the secret to any gambling operation.

I put my money on Gobta, mainly to make some more pocket change, not because I expected to win, however. Yeah, nah. I only put money in due to the enormous return in the event that he was actually successful.

*Cough!*, that was irrelevant. The important thing was to give Gobta my support.

“NEXT—WE ARE FINALLY ENTERING THE FINAL! WHICH CONTESTANT WILL BE CROWNED THE CHAMPION? WILL IT BE ‘SHINING’ MASAYUKI, OR THE CHIBI WARRIOR GOFTA, WHO’S FIGHTING FOR HIS PLACE AMONG THE ‘FOUR HEAVENLY KINGS’?”

Souka’s broadcast was on point as well.

She was praising Gobta relentlessly, making it impossible for him to escape. I wasn’t sure if Souka was aware of this herself, but pushing people like this was truly cruel. It was then, that Diablo raised his hand and the arena fell into complete silence.

*What the?* Even some female audience members looked mesmerized... It was best to just not think about it and pretend I saw nothing. If Gobta beat Masayuki, all the problems would be resolved.

But if Masayuki turned out to be just as strong as Hinata, Gobta would have no chance of

winning. Ultimately, no matter the outcome, I would be able to obtain some information about that swordsman. If Masayuki fell into a hard battle against Gobta, I could at least confirm that he was not going to pose any threat.

Moreover, Gobta's natural good luck was combined with the presence of Ranga. This was actually quite the ideal circumstance for testing out Masayuki's strength.

Onstage, Souka finished introducing the two contestants smoothly. With that, the match began. All right, time to see what percentage of Masayuki's strength Gobta was going to force him to reveal.

With that thought in mind, I watched intently—



Masayuki's head was burning with anxiety.

After watching the battle between Gozer and Mezer yesterday, and knowing that he had to fight against the winning contestant of that match—

*I'm done for. Fighting against a monster like that. I'm gonna get slaughtered!*

The very thought of the upcoming match made the blood drain from his face.

When he managed to trick Gozer with his speech and got him to give up the match, Masayuki really wanted to praise himself. But upon seeing the match afterward, Masayuki was plunged into despair yet again.

*How am I supposed to win?! What the hell, are all the participants in this martial tournament actual monsters?*

He felt the urge to curse impulsively again. The people he would be fighting against during the final were all monsters even stronger than Gozer. He'd lost his appetite last night, and instead spent the night like a death row inmate awaiting his execution.

*Now that I think about it, everything went all too smoothly.*

The constant praise as a hero—a ‘Chosen Hero’ no less—and his overconfidence in his companions’ abilities, had led him into a complacent mindset. And as a result, Masayuki thought he could have an easy life, with minimal effort, and easily eliminate any hurdles in his way.

To this day, he'd been able to get through all tough situations like that, giving him no reason to question his strength.

—No, he just never bothered to put much thought into it.

Without much proof, he just went around arrogantly believing his squad was invincible and that they could defeat whatever enemies they encountered. It was this thought that kept Masayuki composed internally.

*But...how the hell can I hold on to such an ignorant delusion now? ...I want to run. I want to run away from this place!*

The thought of making a run for it had actually crossed his mind multiple times...

“Yo, Masayuki-san. After winning tomorrow’s tournament, are you going to duel the demon lord right after?” Jinrai asked casually, which made Masayuki want to argue back, “What kind of joke was that?”

It was all Demon Lord Rimuru’s fault. It was all because of the demon lord’s gentle and fragile appearance, that Masayuki let his guard down. Or else he would have acted more cautiously for the sake of self-preservation.

“It’s only a matter of time. Masayuki-sama will defeat the demon lord and save this kingdom.”

“Before fighting the demon lord, should we perhaps discuss this with Yuuki-san? We should, nonetheless, remain vigilant, despite the easy win today. We don’t want to lose tomorrow’s match out of carelessness.”

“Bernie, my man, how is that even possible?”

“Lion-Mask might have been dangerous, but that hobgoblin named Gobta should be a piece of cake. The match will be over before he can summon that troublesome beast.”

*Easy my ass.* Masayuki had absolutely no clue how to fight these enemies. All he could think about was how he was going to get crushed. But after seeing the faith his companions had in him, he couldn’t bear to tell them his genuine thoughts. With that being the case, he forced out a simple: “I’ll just try my best.”

The beginning of the final approached relentlessly. Masayuki went to the toilet several times to avoid pissing himself during the match. He had to make sure his bladder was empty before going on stage.

*UHHHHHHH, what do I do? How can I make it back alive??*

The fighter in front of him was daunting. The announcer had called him Gobta earlier. Even Kyu said that the Hobgoblin was nothing, but Masayuki begged to differ.

*Hobgoblin? That’s a total lie! Aren’t goblins supposed to be the weakest kind of monster? How did he evolve to become so strong?!*

“And now! We will witness the very first Tempest Martial Tournament finale! On one side, we have the fierce warrior, lieutenant of Demon Lord Rimuru and young captain of the goblin riders, Gobta! His opponent, the hero of the western nations, the ‘Shining Chosen Hero,’ Masayuki! What sort of match will they show us—? Turn your sight to the center of the stage—what an intense staredown! The match will begin in—”

Masayuki knew that as soon as she finished her announcement, the match would kick off.

*Damnit, I don’t have much time left.*

Even though Masayuki had just relieved himself, he was still on the brink of pissing his pants out of anxiety. If he had had any nerves to spare, he would have kept listening—mainly because he wanted to see what the announcer lady’s tail looked like. But right now, Masayuki had neither the time nor spirit.

He instead contemplated his own powers. He considered his Unique Skill ‘Chosen One’—this bizarre ability. He recalled hearing a stone-cold voice ringing in his mind, telling him of his

Skill. He'd only figured it out recently, but his Skill did seem to have a variety of effects on the people around him.

He found that people would speak in favor of him or praise him without any of his own input, to the point that he was even worshipped as a hero. His entire reputation and title were due to his it. But at the same time, this Skill was completely passive and unalterable, leading him to where he was now—standing before his inevitable doom.

*—Right. Yesterday, when I talked to that monster Gozer, my power worked on him too. Best case scenario, I just gotta make it through this match in one piece and this one might just give up...*

From Masayuki's understanding of it, his Skill made people automatically admire him—he was so confident in this ability, that he would wager his life yet again.

Now having finalized his plan calmed him down a bit. Masayuki then turned towards his opponent. One should call it a coincidence perhaps, but the two happened to cross eyes. Upon close inspection, Masayuki found that his opponent was also sitting anxiously.

*Eh? By the looks of it, maybe I still have a chance...?*

His opponents during the martial tournament held in Ingracia were also like this. They believed that Masayuki was stronger than them, and ultimately let that lead to their own demise. Masayuki had dueled tons of people like that.

Thinking of it that way, perhaps Masayuki had a chance to win this time as well. Upon thinking so, his legs stopped shaking.

*If things go smoothly, perhaps I can win without fighting once again.*

After reclaiming some of his energy, Masayuki hatched a plan. But he would soon realize that this thought was way too naive—



“Now then, let the match begin!”

On Souka’s command, Gobta was the first one to rush forward.

“Woah—here I come!”

Earlier, I was worrying that Gobta would attempt to forfeit before getting wounded or something, but it seemed such worries were for nothing.

The fishing pole as a reward was a great motivator to Gobta. His face-to-face confrontation with Masayuki was more serious than ever, as he smoothly moved towards the outskirts of the arena, almost sliding. From what I could see, he was planning to use the same tactic from his fight with Karion yesterday, by positioning himself near the edge of the arena.

In contrast to Gobta’s extreme caution, Masayuki didn’t make a single move. He merely slowly turned towards Gobta and made a “Heh,” sound, with a cold smile on his face.

“Ho—so it’s true that being more attractive also means that you’re stronger! In the face of Gobta’s funny antics, Masayuki proves this with his ineffable serenity—”

*What hurtful words.* Hearing this broadcast, not just Gobta, any self-conscious folk would start crying. Masayuki was indeed quite handsome, but she was definitely exaggerating.

“Heh, hehe, just as I thought... From your reaction, I can tell that, no matter what I do, it would be futile. Although I really would like to try and fight you with my strength alone, to see how far I can go... I can see that it probably won’t hurt you. So let me try this, my newly acquired ultimate power!”

*Ah, this brat... He was about to be reckless again.*

*That guy was definitely going to mess things up.*

At this point I’d grown tired of stopping him from doing dumb things. But seriously, I really hoped he wouldn’t mess around during such formal circumstances.

«Report. Last night the individual “Gobta” acquired Unique Skill ‘Magic Wolf Summon (Give Strength).’ Deduced reason being that the individual “Ranga” intervened forcefully. Extra Skill ‘Unification’ therefore was combined, and it now seems to be capable of summoning a Magic Wolf to perform Skill ‘Unification’—»

*What? So Gobta learned the Skill ‘Magic Wolf Summoning’ and is now capable of merging with Ranga? How in the world...? Eh, now that I think about it, Wisdom King Raphael-sensei seemed to be hesitant in saying something, could it have been this?*

«Regarding the matter—»

*Regarding what matter?* Raphael-sensei was stuttering, meaning things weren’t as simple as they seemed. It was already very strange that Gobta had suddenly gained some powerful ability. It probably came to Gobta’s aid and granted him a new Skill.

Confronted with my doubts, Raphael-sensei remained silent. It wouldn’t lie to me, but this time it was also unwilling to tell the truth. I could try to force it to answer, but there was no need to go that far.

All in all, things were going in our favor, so I decided to just quietly observe.

“Allow me to demonstrate! Magic Wolf Unification<sup>14</sup>!”

As the space around him distorted, Ranga was summoned behind Gobta. Then, Ranga fused with Gobta’s body and “Merged” with him. The resulting creature looked nothing like Gobta. To put it simply, they became a bipedal Ranga. Honestly...it looked super cool.

*Damnit, Gobta, of all people, actually got to transform!* I protested internally.

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<sup>14</sup>The note Fuse added states this skill is essentially へんしん/変身 (transformation)



“WOAH, WOOOW! So cool, what is that, that’s super-duper cool!” Milim shouted next to me.

She was very excited to see Gobta’s transformation. *Uh, I mean, I totally understood*—I never expected someone like Gobta could look so intimidating...

“T-this-! Contestant Gobta’s appearance has changed dramatically...?”

“Yes, this is a rare ability that allows one to borrow the power of a summoned beast.”

“In other words, Gobta has taken the power of the summoned beast we saw yesterday as his own? That’s one impressive skill! This is truly incredible!”

Even Souka’s broadcast was full of excitement and joy. Diablo, on the other hand, seemed extremely calm as he answered Souka’s questions.

“Does that mean that Gobta can freely utilize Ranga’s power?”

“If he can, I’d be impressed. Ranga seems to have handed his autonomy to Gobta, so the two might become an incredibly strong duo.”

“Ehhh, but that’s Gobta we are talking about.”

“Kukuku, Gobta is my disciple after all. While his physique may not be as strong as others, he has fought against majin stronger than himself in the past. Now that he has full reign over Ranga-san’s power, he may unlock more of his potential—”

As I muttered, many lieutenants watching the match next to me made their own comments. In addition, the audience were watching nervously.

“Hehe, my turn now!”

*Weren’t you the one who struck first?* I thought to myself spitefully. Masayuki didn’t even get to do anything.

Before my eyes, Gobta suddenly vanished.

—Correction, I obviously saw him move, but to the eyes of the ordinary person in the crowd, it really looked like he disappeared.

“C-contestant Gobta vanished! Where did he go—?” Souka exclaimed for the audience.

*She could see it as clearly as I could; what a drama queen.* It was right in front of her—

BOOOOM!

The battle stage exploded. The impact struck the wall right beneath the audience’s seats, the side where our VIP booth happened to be situated, which was also why I got to see things very clearly.

—Gobta spared his opponent a few words before—looking mighty fine in his new form—charging towards him. He was unstoppable—so much so that he managed to sail past Masayuki and run straight into the wall. All of this, I saw with my very own eyes—

It was because of *this* that I opposed Gobta being so reckless. Even if he hadn’t done anything yet, I knew that there was a good chance that things would go badly.

“Ara, contestant Gobta isn’t getting up, is he all right?”

Gobta was defeated by the wall and passed out instantly. Not to mention, dashing off the

stage like that was equivalent to forfeiting anyway, and so he had lost the match.

Gobta didn't know how to control the extent of his strength. He did gain amazing power after merging with Ranga, but he failed to manipulate it competently. Simply speaking, Gobta's "run and stop" fighting style was based on his old physique and didn't account for Ranga's power-up. One second to Gobta was completely different from one second to Ranga. In other words, Gobta didn't manage to "stop" himself before being slammed into the wall—

And just as Souka said, Gobta hadn't gotten up. It wasn't because he was incapacitated by the physical impact, but instead he had passed out due to shock. Not sure what I should say about him...

The handsome look he just gave off, followed by the utter embarrassment on display now. From a certain perspective, the situation could only be described as "A Gobta Thing."

"..."

I seriously was at a loss for words.

"That idiot..." Benimaru yawned.

"That's the Gobta I know," Shion was barely hiding her laughter.

"..." and there was Hakuro, sitting there without a word, as the veins on his forehead were throbbing.

"Hmm—so this is what father dear's disciple is like," Momiji's words only made Hakuro even angrier.

The situation turned super awkward.

All of this was the doing of Gobta himself. The audience in the arena seemed to have only just realized it as well. Among them, some had no idea what had happened and attempted to rationalize Gobta's actions. There was muttering along the lines of:

"Was that a shadowless body slam?"

These words were extra loud in the stunned silence of the arena.

"Y-you have a point. That's the only possibility."

"He sure got some moves, as expected from Masayuki-sama!"

"WOAH, WOOOOAH, so strong, sooo strong!"

"We didn't even see a thing, that was just way too powerful!"

Everyone had praise for Masayuki, and soon the phenomenon spread across the Colosseum. And in the end, people just seemed to take that as the truth, as the arena was filled with thunderous cheers. Even without Souka and Diablo's judgement, the whole place was already celebrating Masayuki's victory—

Next to me, a certain someone was furious to the point of shaking.

"T-that guy... Was he mocking me? How did this happen after he managed to turn into something so cool?!"

For Gobta to have such a cool transformation, yet still turn out to be a major disappointment—it turned all of Milim's previous excitement into murderous rage, all to be unleashed on Gobta.

"C-calm down, will you. Despite how he looks, he has already worked very hard," I offered

as defense.

“Rimuru, it does him no good to keep spoiling him like this!”

“Indeed, Rimuru-sama. I have been too loose with Gobta. I shall train him more strictly in the future,” Hakuro agreed with Milim.

Maybe it was just me, but the news that Hakuro had “spoiled” Gobta was a first.

“All right! I shall train him personally. Rimuru, give Gobta to me and I will make him an incredible warrior!” Milim’s eyes shone beseechingly. It honestly sounded more like she was asking me for some rare Pokémons.

If I nodded and gave my approval, Gobta would suffer in his own brand of hell... On that thought, I recalled something.

“I have something else to entrust you with, actually. If you are willing to accept, I might consider your first offer.”

“Okay, shoot.”

“The thing is, there are ruins located beneath Clayman’s base. I don’t think it should be explored in a careless manner. However, they may hold some valuable information about the ancient times. That’s why I ordered people to maintain them in their original state.”

“Umm.”

“I want to investigate that ruin; I hope you can give us the green light.”

“Why ask me for it?”

*Because it’s your territory now*—I thought to myself.

“Milim, who exactly is running that land right now?” Frey calmly asked Milim, before I could tease her about it.

Prompted by Frey, Milim suddenly straightened her spine and nervously said, “O-oh yeah, that land belongs to me now. Umm, of course I remember something like that!”

At least she remembered that the land was hers.

“Then—”

“Of course it’s okay!” she agreed promptly.

Perhaps Milim just wanted to change the topic, but to me, verbal confirmation was good enough; nothing else mattered that much.

Although I did feel a little sorry for Gobta, a good deal is a good deal, I was very satisfied. He was completely useless. He went on to eliminate himself before testing even a single thing on Masayuki, so at least he was useful in this regard. Moreover, Gobta got to be trained by someone, that’s one idiot goblin for the price of two.

“By the way, Rimuru. When you go for the investigation, will you bring me along?”

“Umm—that depends. I’ve actually invited an expert from the Freedom Association. If you think it’s fine, you can come along.”

“Yeah, I’ll look forward to it!”

“Is that so? It may be quite tedious if there turns out to be nothing of interest.”

While waiting for the referee’s judgement to be pronounced, I discussed the issue with Milim.

A few minutes passed. Souka and Diablo finally finished their discussion.

“The results are in! While it is worrisome that contestant Gobta has yet to recover, the winner of the match is—”

It was pretty obvious. I was ready for Souka to announce the outcome and for this to be over—



“I’ll give you a taste of it! Magic Wolf Unification!” Gobta shouted to Masayuki during the standoff.

In that instant, Masayuki realized he had been hopelessly idealistic.

*Hold up! What the hell is that? I’ve never heard about that skill before!*

With Masayuki unable to stop the summon, Gobta had already turned into a different form.

Masayuki could not have predicted that. His opponent exuded a powerful aura. Even an amateur such as Masayuki could tell that his opponent was the real thing. Even though he heard that there were healing potions prepared for the contestants, he still had no chance.

*Oi! If I get scratched by giant claws like that, my garbage armor will turn straight to scrap. If I’d known this would happen, I wouldn’t have turned down wearing that full set of heavy armor...*

That being said, Masayuki was still pretty sure that wearing magisteel over his entire body wouldn’t save him anyway, even if it was appealing.

It was then that Gobta shouted, “Heh hehe, my turn now!”

Not waiting for any response from Masayuki, he began to draw energy.

*Hold up, I want to forfeit—!* Masayuki tried to shout. Given how things had developed, Masayuki realized that he needed to put his dignity aside and save his ass first and foremost. Against someone like the transformed Gobta, victory was unimportant for Masayuki. Yet the situation just kept going downhill for him.

Masayuki didn’t even get the chance to utter: “I want to forfeit”—

There was already a loud “BOOOOM!” echoing in the arena.

Gobta knocked himself out.

Masayuki didn’t even have time to react. He stood there dumbfounded. There was a massive gust of wind and the shockwave sent shrapnel from the stone walls flying everywhere, stinging Masayuki’s cheeks. The sense of pain dispelled any illusions that this may have been a dream.

*N-no way... I couldn’t have dodged that hit. People seem to be explaining this in my favor, no matter what I do, no one would believe my account of what actually took place. What should I do...*

If this were to continue, Gobta would be disqualified and Masayuki would be the winner.

He thought to himself: *What's good about that though?*

What good was winning in a tournament like this?

*Earning the right to challenge a demon lord? Are you kidding?? That would be suicidal!*

Masayuki wasn't dumb. He understood that if he won, he would have to fight Demon Lord Rimuru. Masayuki was no match for the dark wolf that just shot past him, or Lion-Mask among the other contestants. Yet Demon Lord Rimuru was the head of all these majins. To pick a fight with that kind of character would only result in him getting beaten to a pulp.

*Or I will most definitely get killed!*

It was not a matter of whether his Skill worked or not; the two of them were on completely different levels. How could Masayuki beat a demon lord?

*Perhaps I should just admit defeat*—Masayuki made up his mind, concluding that this would be the most appropriate.

*What shadowless body slam?* The chatter from the crowd was really annoying.

If he did nothing, Gobta would be disqualified and lose the match.

Masayuki thought hard—it was the first time in his life that he'd used his brain this much.

*What can I do to lose the match—*

“The results are in! While it is worrisome that contestant Gobta has yet to recover, the winner of the match is—”

*Shit.* Masayuki immediately took action.

“—Hold on,” he interrupted.

He was dying of panic inside, yet from the outside, he looked as calm and focused as always.

“What's the matter...?”

Masayuki reached out quietly, to which Souka acquiesced and passed him the microphone.

“For this match, wasn't I the one who lost?” Masayuki posed the question while trying his hardest to suppress his stuttering voice.

“Eh—but, Masayuki-sama,” Souka implored rather confused, “no matter how you judged that, it was contestant Gobta who knocked himself out.”

“That may be the case. However, I failed to see through his attack. I feel that I still have room for improvement. It is a bit too early for me to challenge the demon lord now—”

Masayuki spoke slowly to avoid fumbling his words while also holding back the nervous sweat. His tone was casual in a way that made his forceful excuse sound natural, in order to be more convincing. Then, Masayuki handed the microphone back and left the stage without a word. He wouldn't reply to any questions. He simply left in silence.

*My power will be at play now. No matter what I say, the audience will make sense of it all by themselves and come up with some explanation. My priority now is to escape the scene...*

This was the first time in Masayuki's life that he focused this much on simply moving his feet. And so, Masayuki elegantly escaped from his life's greatest crisis yet.



Masayuki suddenly announced his own defeat after Gobta's clearly self-induced KO.

“What’s this guy thinking?”

“Uh—no idea.”

“There’s no way he would actually be afraid of Gobta. Could there be some other motive?”

Benimaru and Shion were entrenched in confusion as they watched Masayuki leave the stage.

*Was this kid bluffing? Or did he have some other plan?*

Alas, I wouldn’t get any answers even if I used up all of my brain juice. But since Masayuki gave up the chance to fight me, everything worked out fine in the end.

The spectators were also perplexed. People started speaking up in confusion:

“...Does he plan to hide his real strength in front of the demon lord?”

“No no no, he did just use the incredible shadowless body slam skill.”

“Although he said that he didn’t manage to see through the attack, he didn’t even get a scratch!”

“No, he actually got a scratch on his face...”

“What did you say? Did Masayuki-sama’s face get cut—?!”

The crowd erupted into discussion.

“I see, I finally got it!”

It was then that a certain man shouted and turned the situation around.

“Was Masayuki-sama giving the demon lord some time to decide?”

“What does that mean?”

“Demon Lord said that he wanted to live with us in peace, doesn’t everyone know about this?”

“That goes without saying.”

“Of course!”

“With that being the case, surely Masayuki was doing it to warn Demon Lord Rimuru,” that man said smugly. His surprisingly convincing speech kinda pissed me off. Yet probably because of that, more and more people started to support the idea.

And in the end—

“I see, I finally understand, now that you’ve put it this way. Masayuki-sama did not draw his sword this time either.”

“You’ve got sharp eyes, that’s right. Masayuki-sama must have wanted to relay the message that he could have won this kind of tournament at any moment!”

“I see! Surely, he also made the implication to the demon lord that he wouldn’t sit idly by

in the face of any wrongdoing, right?"

"That's it. However, even if he were really fighting the demon lord, he would probably spare his life, even after defeating him."

"He doesn't even mind the impact on his reputation... H-he is truly a magnificent man!"

"That's rad! As expected from Masayuki-sama."

"Right, he's so handsome!"

Much like this, people began to justify his actions with all these bizarre explanations.

At some point, for some reason, everyone began to praise Masayuki.

"MA-SA-YU-KI, MA-SA-YU-KIII!"

Why were they chanting? What was this? Some sort of religion?

This kind of creeped me out.

In response to their support, Masayuki raised an arm as he left. His movement was very rigid, which caught my attention.

But honestly, this Masayuki guy was really something else. Why was he praised by everyone like that?

«Answer. It is possible that the individual "Masayuki Honjou" possesses the effect of a Unique Skill.»

Just as I was convinced of the fact that some unexplainable phenomenons just happen in this world, Wisdom King Raphael-sensei proceeded to set me straight. It was experienced enough at this point that it analyzed Masayuki for me.

Masayuki's Skill seemed to be the kind that had special effects on people. People under its influence would be manipulated both in terms of thought process and emotion.

The reason as to why Masayuki had given up the championship must have been because he had witnessed Gobta's power. This was just my guess, but since he was able to trick and convince Gozer to give up, based on that alone, it was likely that Masayuki didn't think he was able to win against Gozer.

Based on this, now that I recalled Masayuki's fighting style, would it even be possible for him to react to his enemy's move at all? No wonder he never drew his weapon. In conclusion, Masayuki's own combat ability must not have been that great to begin with, or at least something along those lines. Even Hinata wasn't able to tell how strong Masayuki was, which was natural, considering how weak he was anyway.

With that being said, he still should not be underestimated. After all, he had a huge amount of influence, and antagonizing him would just bring trouble. These kinds of people simply couldn't be overlooked, and thus I felt the need to establish a good relationship with him.

In order to achieve this goal, I planned to say something along the lines of, "Kukuku, I know your little secret," to threaten Masayuki—just kidding. Masayuki was likely wracking his brain on how to deal with Gozer during their match, especially since he couldn't run away in front of his companions. I'd talk to him later, and comfort him about his hard work. After which I would propose future cooperation.

I could cleverly advertise Masayuki as a chosen hero and use him to promote the labyrinth.

“Souei! Please send a message to Masayuki. Tell him that I wish to meet him.”

“Understood!”

“Please be very cautious about this, invite him to have lunch with me afterward.”

I did want to speak with him, mainly because we were both Japanese. I also planned to ask Hakuro to make us some sushi. Hopefully, things would go well.

While I was thinking about Masayuki, Gobta seemed to have regained consciousness. Souka and Diablo renewed their judgement and decided to accept Masayuki’s proposal.

“Although there were a series of unexpected incidents throughout, due to the forfeit of contestant Masayuki, the winner of the tournament is Gobta!”

The arena was awash with dissatisfaction. No wonder. The final that everyone had been so hyped for, ended up with Gobta’s self-elimination. In addition, Masayuki quit after the match. It was only natural that these paying customers would want their money back.

But they were the minority after all. Since Masayuki himself accepted the result, the crowd didn’t really have many complaints against me.

Gobta’s abilities were already recognized by most people. I supposed that this was also one of the reasons why there weren’t waves of complaints at the scene. That being said, the bad rap Gobta had for a conniving personality didn’t fade. Everyone seemed to think that he was a despicable man.

“Come, contestant Gobta! How do you feel right now?”

“Eh, eh? Is this real? Am I really the champion?”

“Indeed. Gobta’s active involvement in the match has truly been phenomenal!” Souka praised, inflating his ego.

*... You were seriously able to say that with a straight face. All Gobta did was charge into a wall and get himself knocked out.*

All in all, the final match ended.

I personally came onstage and commemorated each contestant. I spoke with all eight of them and commended their excellent performance.

As for Masayuki’s companion Jinrai, as promised, I rewarded him with the newly made armor. Gai, upon seeing this, grumbled that he wanted one too. But since I never made such a deal with him, I proceeded to ignore him.

Masayuki’s answer to Souei, on the other hand, was “I’ll come.” He looked quite determined (to face his demise)—did he misunderstand something?

Anyhow, I’d resolve the misunderstanding when we sat down and talked.

The last Contestant was Gobta.

“Nice job, Gobta. From now on, I officially appoint you as one of the ‘Four Heavenly Kings’!”

While I was surprised by the way the matches had developed, a win was still a win. And as promised, Gobta would become one of the “Four Heavenly Kings.”

He was probably the best candidate for a pin-up. Even if he lost a fight, all we had to say was: “Kukuku, this guy is the weakest of the Four Heavenly Kings, the disgrace of the Four Heavenly Kings!”

He was so fit for that role. The thought of it gave me shivers.

“Thank you! I’ll work hard in the future as well!”

And so, the first Tempest Martial Tournament concluded smoothly.

—I wish.

Gobta’s personal hell had only just begun.

“Are you done yet? Hand him over! We need to train!” Milim crowed at me with a sharp smile after returning to the VIP booth.

“Um, just remember to hold back a little.”

“Relax, we’ll be in the labyrinth. He’ll be resurrected after death!”

Milim’s face was a parody of a smile.

*Oh yeah, that was a thing...* I wasn’t sure if that was of any comfort to Gobta though. But there’s one thing I could say for certain, that is, he was gonna die very horribly—he couldn’t even get away after death; that thought alone was chilling.

“Gobta, how about we have a little chat over there?”

Milim walked straight up to Gobta and lifted him with a single hand.

“AHH!”

That vice grip of hers was pretty intense, enough to bring out a squeal.

Milim’s continued smiling, though it didn’t reach her eyes.

“I congratulate you for your victory, but it looked so lame, so I don’t approve of it. That’s why I’m training you personally!”

Gobta’s transformation must have really blown her away, but his awkward display later made her furious.

YOU ABUSED MY EXPECTATIONS AND EXCITEMENT—I could almost hear her anger.

“Don’t worry. I’ll personally fight against you; you’ll get stronger right away!”

“Huh, Milim-sama? I never asked you for the favor!” Gobta panicked.

But I doubted that Milim cared about his opinion.

“Gobta, this is a fine opportunity, so you should train hard with Milim-sama.”

Hakurou gave Gobta the ultimatum with an extremely charming smile.

“M-mentor, you seriously sold me—”

“Shut up already!”

Gobta was about to complain before he was silenced by Milim’s iron fists.

*How brutal.*

“Hehehe, let’s not say something like that. It could be misunderstood. Gobta, this is all for your own good,” Hakurou told him. I doubt Gobta was listening though.

No matter how you see it, this was probably all because Gobta embarrassed Hakurou in

front of Momiji, driving Hakuro to retaliate. It definitely was *not* for Gobta's own good.

And so, Gobta was taken away by Milim.

Oh and there was the other one.

"My master, I've aided Gobta-san in achieving victory with style!"

Ranga rushed to me, having abandoned Gobta almost immediately. This reaction was all too normal, after all, Ranga didn't want any part in what was in store for Gobta.

But unfortunately, he wasn't able to escape Milim's grasp either.

"Hold on, are you the one called Ranga? Without you, Gobta's training won't be complete!"

"!" *Sad puppy eyes.*

*Sorry, when Milim makes a decision, she refuses to listen to anyone else's advice.* In addition, Ranga entered the match behind my back; I suppose he did this to himself. That's why there was no need for me to intervene.

"WAHAHAHA! I'm not gonna hurt you, just relax!"

With this, Milim dragged both Ranga and Gobta away.

Seriously, Gobta relied on luck too much sometimes. And Ranga as well, he was too used to fighting with his instincts. If they both trained hard to synergize with each other, that "Transformation" would prove to be quite an amazing power.

Milim must have realized, sparking her desire to train them both. I hoped they would abide by their training and learn some actual skills. I looked forward to Gobta having a decent performance by the end of it.

I would have Milim train them in the future.

So long, Gobta.

So long, Ranga.

I'll forever remember your martial prowess!

Rest in peace in the other world.



Next up was lunch time, and my chance to dine with Masayuki did come to fruition.

That would be an exaggeration: I just wanted to talk with him and so I ordered the others to wait in the other room. Although Masayuki's companions were reluctant, Masayuki was able to convince them personally.

"N-nice to meet you, is that the right greeting to use? I am Masayuki Honjou, and I get called 'Shining' or 'Chosen Hero'..."

Masayuki called himself a 'Chosen Hero' while blushing.

Hmm, based on the vice of my original world, there was nothing more shameful than calling

yourself a ‘Chosen Hero’ (Yuusha). It was almost as embarrassing as calling himself an empty-headed single-cell creature to be mocked and laughed at.

Moreover, Masayuki seemed to be really concerned about my reaction when we first met. Even though it was mostly his companions who were adding to the tension at the time, he did arrogantly claim to be able to defeat me. For this reason, he seemed quite embarrassed now.

I was the demon lord, after all. Masayuki must have been filled with fear at the thought of facing off against an opponent he knew he was no match for.

Considering this, the current mood was rather complicated. But worrying about this would be unnecessary. I personally decided to let the past go.

As long as he was willing to eat the food I ordered for this occasion, we would be able to settle this grudge.

“About that, I’m not meeting you for the first time anyway. You don’t really have to say ‘nice to meet you.’ I’m Demon Lord Rimuru, my original name was Satoru Mikami. I used to be a salary-man,” I confessed openly. It was mainly to help Masayuki relax a bit since he was still unable to touch his food. It has been a long time since I’d last used this discarded name. I felt surprisingly calm about it. I had no intention of hiding this, however, it was just that I hadn’t had much chance to use that name since.

“—Eh? Could it be...that you were Japanese?” Masayuki looked unconvinced.

*That’s pretty normal, I suppose. I look like a cute girl, so he had little reason to believe me.*

“I guess. We should talk about it while we eat.”

Following my prompt, Masayuki finally picked up his chopsticks.

“Eh, this...can I really eat it?”

“Of course. I specifically asked the chefs to prepare some Japanese cuisine for you.”

Today’s dishes were sushi and tempura—the dishes that even Hinata was moved about eating, and I hoped that Masayuki would be pleased by it as well. He didn’t attend the night gala, so I guessed that he hadn’t seen any sushi for a long time.

“Could this be my last supper—”

“Not at all. You seem to be quite easy-going. I want to be friends with you.”

Masayuki seemed confused about the delicacies in front of him, fearing that this may be his last meal. Even after I told him that I was Japanese, he still seemed to have his doubts.

“T-then, thanks for the meal—”

“Please eat, thanks for the meal.”

Masayuki finally began to dine with me. With one scoop of rice in his mouth, Masayuki suddenly fell silent. His expression changed and he began shoveling food out of his bowl with the chopsticks as if he’d been starving for days.

Since Masayuki was busy eating, it wasn’t the best time for me to interject. I had to wait for him to finish lunch.

As soon as he finished, however, Masayuki exclaimed: “I get it now. Please let me be Mikami—no, Rimuru-san’s subordinate!”

*What did Masayuki get?* I had no clue. But, from what I could tell, he just wanted to eat Japanese cuisine. I didn't even say anything, but Masayuki probably had thought about it himself.

“My subordinate? I mean...”

“No, it's okay. I don't miss the title of Chosen Hero at all. I used to hear people calling me ‘Chosen Hero Masayuki’ and things like that all the time; it was so embarrassing. Like, seriously, I was worried about how to get myself out of this bad spot anyway.”

And so he revealed the big scoop to me. Masayuki proceeded to share his story, and I listened intently, quietly drinking tea.

Masayuki, in the original world, was a top student in a famous school known for its high graduation rate. He also had some lesser known hobbies, such as reading manga and light novels. Masayuki thought that all of this (*isekai*) happened because he was too much of an otaku.

“My power seems to be some Unique Skill called ‘Chosen One’? Seriously, what kind of joke is that...”

It seemed that he desired being a hero too strongly and ended up in this world.

Masayuki's Unique Skill ‘Chosen One’ had a pretty obvious effect. It had the ability to induce suggestive ideas on the surrounding crowd, akin to brainwashing. The ultimate goal of the Skill was to make Masayuki the hero character. It also ignored Masayuki's own wishes, so even if he begged it to stop, the effect still remained.

*Should I call it useful or useless...*

“But your power is truly strong. If you hadn't forfeited, you would have been the champion.”

The effect it had during the tournament was the real deal. The winner was supposed to be Masayuki.

“That's right, but that is also what's been bugging me. I didn't do anything to begin with, yet everyone started to misunderstand... That's how I won in Ingracia too,” Masayuki explained himself—that was why he got in over his head.

During the defeat of the crime syndicate, ‘Slave Trade Union,’ he was also only there to receive the credit and didn't do anything himself. Masayuki had no choice in the matter, even if he tried. I suppose living this way seemed easy enough, yet this time Masayuki recognized that one misstep could get him killed. Which was why he decided to change strategy temporarily.

In my opinion, it was the right choice, mainly because the effect of ‘Chosen One’ would probably be—

«Answer. When confronted with an Ultimate Skill, most lower Skills will be rendered ineffective.»

*Indeed. It would be rendered useless against me.*

I had planned on giving him a chance from the start, but I didn't expect him to be such an amateur. I could have easily sent Masayuki to kingdom come with just one punch.

“You made the right choice. I think you should be proud of that!”

“Really? I didn't even expect that guy, Gobta, to be able to transform—especially into

something that vicious. I could tell just by common sense that I didn't stand a chance."

I didn't believe that was fully accurate. After all, many people with undisputed strength sought to challenge Masayuki in the past. But with that being said, Masayuki did make the right choice this time.

We continued to chat about various topics, learning about each other's circumstances. Even though I only mentioned a bit about my own life, I learnt a lot about Masayuki's story from then on.

Masayuki's companions treated him like a god, so he couldn't talk to them frankly or genuinely. If he wanted to complain about anything, he would have to find Yuuki. But the latter was a busy person after all, and the two couldn't find time to make an appointment. So the pressure and displeasure grew with time.

Even though I didn't ask, he still retold his story from start to finish in detail.

"Right, I wanted to talk with you a bit more, but the lunch break is about to end. Allow me to ask, what do you plan to do next?"

"Plan for what?"

"Nothing much, but didn't you promise Gozer to battle him again? How about you go and challenge the dungeon?"

"AH!"

By the looks of it, Masayuki had forgotten all about that promise. He was planning to just pretend the whole ordeal had not transpired...

"W-what should I do?"

"Relax. Gozer is in charge of guarding underground level 50. The dungeon is massive, just walking there would take a couple of days alone."

"I-I see your point, so I should just pretend to challenge the labyrinth and just get a pass for today, right?"

"That's right. Since the invited guests are expected to return to their home country tomorrow."

The celebration was estimated to last three days. We predicted that the streets would be filled with people tomorrow, and that, by that time, our main job would be to direct the traffic. We'd be wrapping things up the day after tomorrow. We would start cleaning up by the time we guessed all the guests would have left.

We were only planning to show the public section of the dungeon for the sake of our guests, a.k.a. a preview opening. It wasn't available for the public until it was officially opened. That meant that it would only be open for a mere few hours until nightfall. That should only be enough to take care of the upper levels.

In addition, I did have some ideas for the duel between Gozer and Masayuki. While it may suck for Gozer, it would be troublesome if Masayuki were defeated. This was a rare opportunity after all; I wanted to exploit Masayuki as a tourist attraction. In leading the expedition team to the labyrinth, Masayuki would be able to rile up challengers, provoking their fighting spirits.

“At least, that’s how I think. I would like you to help us advertise. What do you think?”

“I see, that does sound very reassuring. Is that why you gave Jinrai that god-tier armor? As long as I won’t die if I fail, that sounds interesting!” Masayuki agreed without hesitation to help me out.

In all honesty, I didn’t actually have this in mind when I gifted Jinrai the armor, but it was more convenient like this anyway, since going into the labyrinth without chest armor would no doubt be suicidal.

“I’ll sneak some walkthrough guides to you, so you can get through quickly and easily. Moreover, if you find anything that needs changing or anything like that, please tell me.”

I had gone through the fifty lower levels’ design meticulously, which was why I was not going to give any information about the lower levels. I reminded Masayuki of this and that he should be mindful of it. That being said, if they had their items in hand, they wouldn’t die. So there shouldn’t be an issue.

“I get it! I’m like a beta tester.”

“Uh... Now that you’ve mentioned it, yes you are. Anyhow, you don’t have to force yourself too much, let’s go for five levels today.”

*Video games. That’s an interesting point of view.*

“Okay. It was so nice to finally talk to you, Rimuru-sama. I don’t feel as nervous anymore, and I don’t feel that the world is that bad now after all,” Masayuki said with a relieved smile.

He seemed to be quite reliant on his Skill, but still held his doubts. My promising aid would help alleviate those worries.

After all, our kingdom was at the forefront in terms of culture. We had established high-quality bathhouses and toilets, and the comfort level of our hotels was also far superior to other nations. Even Masayuki seemed shocked by the variety and deliciousness of the food.

“We have a music band and painting classes for whoever’s interested. I’ve also planned to introduce drama shows later on. I look forward to these myself as well, so I’m not limiting the budget on it.”

“Rimuru-san, I’m really impressed by you! Do you happen to have manga as well—?”

“Kukuku, of course, Masayuki. Although you still have a long way till reaching that part, so if you give up midway, it’s game over for you!”

“UWOWOWO! I will follow Rimuru-san to the end of the earth!”

In the end, Masayuki decided to stay longer. I planned to stay in contact with him in private and share information. I noted that I should go chat with him more in the future. I wanted to hear more stories about the other world that I missed.

I also promised him to dig memories of manga from his head as well. Masayuki was also very interested in my collection; I was certain we could be good friends in the future.

And with that, I got a new companion.



We were finally demonstrating the dungeon to the public.

As a precaution, I went to confirm some things before it went public. After reaching the lobby at the bottom of the labyrinth, Ramiris, currently full of energy, flew and rested on my shoulder.

“We are going live in a moment, how’re the preparations?”

“Hmph! Who do you take me for?” Ramiris scoffed.

From the next room, a smug-looking Veldora entered as well.

“GA-HAHHAHA! Don’t worry, Rimuru. I’m as reliable as it can get!”

*Oh shit, that made me nervous.*

“Oi oi oi, are you guys really all right? We can’t make any mistakes during today’s public tour!”

“Hehehe, chill out! You can count on me! We are switching on all sorts of safety measures.”

“Kukuku, but! Today is the day that the demonic labyrinth awakes!”

Ramiris and Veldora grinned evilly at each other.

Were there really no issues? For some reason I felt uneasy...

“I’ll say this one more time, very seriously. The labyrinth will be shut down again soon.”

“W-what?!”



*Seriously, what kind of reaction was that?*

I'd explained this several times, but Veldora still hadn't caught up.

I planned to oversee the situation and adjust the difficulty accordingly. That was why the labyrinth would be shut down for two to three days before reopening again.

We also hadn't settled on certain issues for the labyrinth. This included pricing of entry tickets, as well as items such as the 'Labyrinth Card' to permit entry into the labyrinth. We also had yet to employ trained staff to run the facility.

Given how busy we were lately, we had no time to train such workers. I only planned to discuss such problems with Myourmiles in the aftermath of the festival.

Now that I really thought about it, handing control of the labyrinth to those two wasn't such a good idea. I was originally going to do it myself, but Ramiris and Veldora were having fun running it and I was too busy. They weren't listening carefully during the meeting either.

I could feel and relate to their anxiety towards the festival, which is why I wasn't mad at them.

"It's all right, just stay calm, you guys. I'll do what I can to get it running officially soon. You can enjoy yourselves when that happens."

"Okay!"

"I have faith in you, Rimuru!"

*This should do it.*

It looked like we could make it through today just fine.

*Oh yeah, I almost forgot.*

"By the way, did Milim drop by?"

"She did."

"Hmm, she came back and forcefully took two unlimited 'Revival Bracelets.'"

"Is that so? I heard that she was preparing levels 96 to 99. Those were the magic dragon cabins with geographic effects."

"Yeah, she really put a lot of thought into it."

"Um um, there were also those dragons Milim caught—she gave me all their commanding rights! She told me that if I take care of them well enough, they will eventually evolve into dragon lords, which means they will have enough intelligence to understand my orders!"

Ramiris seemed to be quite happy, to the point of claiming: "Turns out Milim does have some merit after all—"

Some time ago, Milim came back with dragons and scared the living daylights out of everyone. The first two times, people complained, but from the third time onward, they got used to it. The residents no longer panicked over it, but instead accepted it as part of their daily routine.

Milim caught four dragons in total—a fire dragon, ice dragon, wind dragon and earth dragon. They were supposedly elemental archdragons, but they had the intelligence of livestock. Apparently, they could be raised like pets and even communicate with people.

“Oh—do those four also wear neck braces?”

“For now, they are my adorable servants; I’ll solidify the master-servant relationship with them in the future too!”

I see, Ramiris had already planned it all out.

Then it was settled. Back to the main issue.

“Milim is staying at the Dragon’s Den<sup>15</sup>, right?”

“Um, she’s afraid that my servants won’t get enough exercise, so she got them some playmates!”

“She brought that lad we went fishing with, I think. Not sure why he’s playing with dragons though.”

*You’re better off not knowing.*

I only wanted to learn Milim’s location. As long as she stayed at the bottom of the labyrinth, she’d pose no threat to the demonstration.

“Got it. Then she won’t come meddling with things, so that’s all right. We are opening the labyrinth soon, you coming to the VIP room?”

“Um! I want to go.”

“I’m gonna pass. It is the duty of the king of the Labyrinth to await his challenger!”

*...I mean, of course it’d be great if someone got here in one day! You won’t get any guests for a couple of days even.*

—Okay, it’s not as nice to say it out loud.

“Is that so? I understand. Good luck with that then!”

I encouraged Veldora and ‘Teleported’ with Ramiris to the VIP room.



With the lunch break over, a huge crowd returned to the audience seats.

Ramiris and I hurried to the VIP booth as well.

“Welcome back, Rimuru-sama,” Diablo welcomed me with a smile.

His duties as a referee had concluded, and it seemed that he had been searching for me for a while. I nodded lightly in response, already ready to confirm whether all matters were in place.

Soon we would be opening the dungeon to the public, and there were many last-minute plans to work out after this. This was one of our biggest projects, that would eventually become one of the pillars of our nation. We hoped it would be able to attract even more guests in the future.

<sup>15</sup> ドラゴン部屋, this essentially means “Dragon Cabin” but editor suggested it “sounded lame.”

Luckily, no one had gone back to their home country after the noon break. The VIP booth had also almost filled up, so we had sufficient publicity.

Looking at the guest hotel, Souka and Myourmiles were standing there. Myourmiles and Diablo were taking shifts as receptionist and broadcaster.

It was time. I signaled the two discreetly.

At the center of the stage, Myourmiles stood with a microphone. He looked a bit more rigid as opposed to Souka, but still put up quite the show. The content of his broadcast was—

“All right, the time is now! There is one last activity that we wish to introduce to you all during our three-day Founding Festival.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, sorry to have kept you waiting. The facility that we are about to demonstrate is the pride of the Tempest Federation, the extremely challenging dungeon. It will be the most difficult undertaking opened by his Majesty, Demon Lord Rimuru to fellow adventurers. Will anyone be able to successfully break through this labyrinth—?”

While it was okay to hold a demonstration meeting, the dungeon by itself was too dangerous for a bunch of humans to enter.

There were several hundred noblemen alone. In addition to the residents from the neighboring town, there were more than one thousand people in total. With all these people coming in, we didn’t have enough personnel to guide them properly.

Therefore, I came up with the idea to use a giant screen to broadcast the walkthrough progress of multiple teams.

However, there were problems on the technical level—

The live feed of the martial tournament was viewed clearly by the audience with the help of the giant viewing screen. The screen was set up with a projector that played the footage on the screen. It was a device developed by Vesta and Gabil and could be used on many different occasions. The recent battles had also been projected on the screen. It used a crystal ball within the projector that had photographic properties. The crystal ball also had engravings for magic communication. This way, when it took videos from far away, it could project it live at the scene.

In this way, the spectators were able to watch the challengers’ every move from a safe distance as entertainment. Things would devolve quickly if any prominent figures here were to get hurt. In light of this, we made sure that only representatives capable of safely exploring the labyrinth were able to experience it.

“Now then, we shall be recruiting challengers here! Which warriors wish to challenge our nation’s pride, the Dungeon?” Souka announced, ecstatic. As she called for challengers, we began to move as well.

Ramiris followed suit, flying off my shoulder and summoning the illusion gate leading to the labyrinth at the center of the stage. All you actually needed to do was just walk down the stairs, but our demonstration was all about dramatizing things.

“ “ “OHOOOOGH!” ” ”

See, just as we predicted, the audience was enthused as well.

At the same time, while many spectators were very excited, the adventurer visitors were all observing each other's next move.

This time we were only open to volunteers, but still we hoped to use the opportunity to accumulate intrigue. Even if no one wanted to volunteer, we still had Masayuki's squad to back us up. That was the main reason why I invited Masayuki to lunch: in order to convince him to be one of the challenging parties. Masayuki had since convinced his companions and were waiting to come up on stage.

In order to prevent any accidents, I gave him the map of floors one to five. Hopefully, he was a competent propagandist.

The question was if there would be any other challengers—

“Hehe, this demon lord’s labyrinth probably ain’t real, we’ll show you! And that over-exaggerated martial tournament as well, all those matches must have been pre-planned. You think you can trick us into bowing down to ya—I won’t stand for that!”

“That’s right! Basson-aniki has a point!”

“If the street wasn’t as crowded then, Basson-aniki would have definitely won the tournament!”

“Hehehe, did you forget about me?”

“Don’t say that, Gomez. These people know you’re strong as well. With us working together, our team ‘Heavy Thunder’ is invincible!”

*Huh? I was wondering who came forth. They were challengers?*

It seemed that this man called Basson missed the tournament because he arrived late. But in reality, he could probably tell the contestants’ abilities just by watching the matches... Although the quality of each match greatly differed, given that some contestants forfeited.

There were probably more people like Basson who thought they were the strongest. But honestly, that was fine. There were always people who just couldn’t accept reality. These people would be our future customers (as fat sheep to be slaughtered).

“‘Chosen Hero’ Masayuki wasn’t that big a deal after all. I recognize his strength, but he wasn’t man enough to finish his opponent and gave the demon lord of this nation some time to think over, how incredibly naive. He makes me sick!”

*Ah, um, technically, he did recognize Masayuki’s “strength”...*

“This whole labyrinth is just a joke; Basson and I will show you what really lies beneath!”  
Basson and his party guffawed arrogantly.

“How dare you offend Rimuru-sama like that; unforgivable.”

“Allow me to go silence them—”

“Stop it!”

How very careless of me.

Shion was already pissed off, Diablo, on the other hand, was on the brink of losing control.

I stopped them immediately, though it was already worth celebrating that they didn’t mention anything about killing these people.

“They’re just over-confident. These kinds of people will make things more fun.”

Although I felt that they were pretty moronic myself, we just needed them for a little longer—hearing this, both Shion and Diablo accepted. I was getting better at dealing with them.

The bald warrior Basson.

The black-cloaked mage Gomez.

Plus another four goons.

I decided to let these six be the first batch of challengers.

What followed was a group of unexpected characters.

A trio jumped out and shouted, “We want to challenge it as well!”

*Where have I seen them before—? Eh, was that Elen’s party?*

I thought those three were helping Youm rebuild his country. I told them to report to the Freedom Association at the old Farmus and help out Youm.

B-Ranked adventures already possessed quite a lot of authority, and Elen’s party had, in fact, leveled up to Rank B-plus. They were authorized to take on missions, regardless of borders. They hadn’t come along with Youm, so I thought they must have gone back to their hometown…

I didn’t expect them to have planned such things. It must have been done in secret, fearing an objection from Duke Elalude.

“Are we seriously gonna do it?”

“Of course we are. We haven’t done much adventuring lately—this is our chance!”

“Speaking of it, do I, *the captain*, get to decide anything? Anything at all?”

“Of course not, it’s already settled!”

*How reckless. Poor Kabal.*

I could just about hear Duke Elalude screaming from the next room, followed by a *thump* sound before everything fell silent again. It wasn’t hard to imagine what happened there, but I won’t. I hoped Elen and her friends could exit the scene before Elalude threw another tantrum.

The third to enter was our Masayuki-kun. He walked onto the stage casually and smiled towards the audience.

“MA-SA-YU-KI, MA-SA-YU-KIII!” There was a wave of cheers.

*Enough already, we get it. He’s popular.*

Counting Masayuki, his squad had four people in total. Jinrai had switched out of his shoddy armor into the set I gifted him. It was a magical silver armor that covered his whole body, crafted by Garm. It was high-end rare armor.

While it was heavier than the skeleton full-body armor Youm wore, it had lower quality and durability. However, it was fancy enough to have a poison gas purification effect.

I also gifted Masayuki a rapier. When I asked him why he never drew his sword, Masayuki casually explained, “Because...it was too heavy...” Even I got scared for him, hearing that. *Was he seriously all talk no walk?*

Apparently, he had practiced Kendo before, but a real sword was always much heavier.

Especially in this world, sword-fighting trends were unlike the slashes of a katana. Instead, the mainstream use of swords was to execute heavy chops. Thus there needed to be some weight to the swords. It was already very tiring for Masayuki to hold a sword in a fixed position for a long time.

I told him to at least practice a little bit, so I handed him a relatively light rapier. It was a failed recreation when I was preparing a gift for Hinata. Its weight and tenacity were almost as good as the original rapier, however, it was unsuccessful in recreating the special ability of “killing the opponent in the seventh attack.”

It was already difficult for him to lift this sword, so even if it didn’t have any high-end skills, it would be fine. The sword did, however, have the ability to reduce fatigue. Masayuki only needed to swing it around for show. That rapier was more than sufficient.

Speaking of which, no one else noticed that they’d changed their gear, and instead all four were just showered in applause.

The time limit was three hours. From my calculations, they could, at most make it to the fifth level.

Masayuki’s party also had maps, so they had an edge over the other teams. They had all the support needed to help advertise.

Finally, we had three teams.

Although I felt that this number was small in size, considering that the task was to investigate a suspicious labyrinth of the demon lord, a lot of people were probably hesitating.

We’d have to rely on today’s promotional event to get rid of their unease.

Then, it was about time—

“Hold on, I’m participating too.”

As these words were spoken, a man in black appeared on the stage.

It was Gai the ‘Splendacious Sword Fighter.’

“You made me fall for your tricks with your boring feints and shameful schemes. Fufufu, that’s all you’re capable of as a demon lord’s lackey and one of those despicable ‘Four Heavenly Kings.’ I know you are afraid of my true power, how very naive of you to try and trick me. No matter what kind of conspiracy you have, I’ll crush it!”

I was just wondering why he came. How perfectly timed.

It seemed that he was unable to accept the fact that he was knocked out by Ranga and thought he’d fallen into some sort of trap. He probably also thought that I had some ulterior motive for opening the labyrinth and had come out to stop me.

I did have some other intention, but not what he thought.

“This time allow me to give him a thorough—”

“Um, go ahead, Diablo.”

“To do what? Also, Shion, stop trying to imitate my tone!” I huffed.

*These two... Seriously, why were they acting like this?*

They seriously didn’t hold back against people who spoke negatively about me. Shion’s

tricks had been piling on at this point; I really needed to start figuring out some countermeasures.

Anyhow, that aside, Gai had actually chosen to go solo apparently. Was that okay...?

There was no use for me to worry anyway.

From another point of view, I could also make him an example for people wanting to go into the labyrinth alone.

And so, Gai was our fourth challenger.



With the challengers gathered on schedule, it was time to get started.

The highly anticipated dungeon had finally opened.

We didn't have a lot of time, so we would stream the labyrinth walkthrough with multiple parties advancing at the same time. Souka would stay back and broadcast the livestream with feeds of different teams.

The Dryads were perfect for the role of receptionist inside the labyrinth. They would also serve as the magic communicators (camera crew), moving with each team.

Apart from Treyni's sisters Trya and Triss, there were also other dryads, albeit few in number. They were still young and inexperienced in battle. However, they still possessed highly abundant mana. Now, with Ramiris in charge, they were the best candidates to manage the labyrinth.

"Then—these four will be the managers of the labyrinth. Normally you won't be assigned with any challengers, however, you will need to relay information about everyone's walkthrough progress, so every team will be assigned with one as follower."

Souka read out their names as they began to greet everyone.

They were Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta. It was inconvenient for them not to have names, so I named them randomly. That being said, it didn't consume any of my magicules. Since Dryads were higher monsters, they only consumed their own magicules. These people were Ramiris's subordinates after all, I only needed to help name them.

By the way, these sisters looked quite similar to each other, it was hard to differentiate them by eyesight alone.

Monsters, surprisingly enough, used the wavelength of their mana to differentiate individuals, which was difficult for humans. Partly due to this reason, I had to name them in order to make it easier to recognize them.

"If you run into any difficulty, just ask them for help! Now we are going to talk about rules! First of all, here is something for everyone!"

Souka held up a few items to demonstrate to everyone as Alpha distributed the same things

to each person.

“These are the items that will be sold when people enter the labyrinth. Has everyone got their items?”

Followed by Souka’s words, each item was shown and enlarged on the screen. In times like this, having a projector was also particularly convenient.

The items shown were ten high-grade healing potions, one full healing potion, a ‘Resurrection Bracelet’ and a ‘Return Whistle.’

Since we wanted everyone to have a taste, we of course had to give them out for free. We were asking them to help us test out the labyrinth, so they could even take these items back with them as rewards.

Just in case, we also equipped the Dryads with the same items. If there was a problem, they could get back ASAP.

Given the sheer size of the labyrinth floors, it was unlikely for them to make it out of the first level. Even if they got to the stairs without getting lost, it was still over two kilometers’ walk in terms of distance. Since we made the floor into a maze, it would take even more time to complete.

For the next three hours, it’d be best if they tried their hardest and entertained the audience. When the estimated time was reached, we would pull them back out using the items.

There were, of course, other forms of rewards.

For promotional purposes, we also prepared treasure chests with decent equipment as gifts for everyone. When the labyrinth officially opened, these chests would only be found on the second floor and below, but this time they were up for everyone to grab.

We wouldn’t be mentioning these inside-dealings of course; Souka only explained what was necessary. Near the end, she began to explain the most important things.

“Well then, please have a look at this particular item. This is called a ‘Resurrection Bracelet’. For anyone entering our nation’s labyrinth, you must purchase this item. After all, this has an important ability—it can resurrect the dead!” Souka explained, there was a wave of gasps from the crowd. *How is that possible*—and comments along those lines were uttered.

“Please rest assured! This is very important information, so please pay attention! This item only works inside the labyrinth of our nation! It’s useless outside, so please remember that or you will end up pretty dead if misused. I do hope everyone can understand that it is ineffective outside!”

That was the most important point.

If someone accidentally tried to use it outside... That was not something that you could just get away with an, “Oops, that didn’t work.” Moreover, it’d be problematic if they pushed the responsibility onto us, even though it was totally the fault of the user himself.

With that being said... There were also certain kinds of people in this world called **Karens** difficult customers.

In order to get it through their thick skulls, we had to clarify this point. We had to be

thorough when going through things, in case anyone mistook its use and thought that it could work outside of the labyrinth. We had to ensure that even an idiot knew that it wouldn't work outside to revive people. By that point, even if an accident did happen, it wouldn't be our problem.

I didn't want any of that unnecessary responsibility.

In my previous life, I found that people would always make the seller accountable for any issues, even if it was their own fault. In this way, to me, idiots who intentionally broke the rules and ended up dying was totally their own doing.

But either way, making sure everyone was well-informed was still our responsibility. We had to be extra cautious in that regard.

“—And that's all! I once again urge everyone to not use it outside at all!”

Souka's explanation was very clear for everyone to understand.

*There we go. Done.*

The only problem left was for someone to actually experience using it. Normally, people would hesitate when confronted with such a thing. However, with Ramiris's modification of the ‘Resurrection Bracelet’, any pain and agony could be filtered out when a person was confirmed dead.

In addition, there was approximately a ten second gap between dying and being teleported back to the surface. We intentionally made it this way so people could use appropriate means to revive themselves.

With that being said, there were very few higher magic users that could perform the miracle spell ‘Resurrection.’

By the way, even though a full healing potion was unable to revive the soul of a person, within the labyrinth, the soul would remain in the body. In other words, it was actually possible to resurrect people by repairing their body using the full healing potion.

However, I feared that this again might create some misunderstandings in the outside world—which was why we designed it so that if no proper means of resurrection was applied within ten seconds, the body would be teleported to the surface.

Just as Masayuki said, challenging the labyrinth was like playing a game.

With that, the explanation part was concluded.

Now we would have someone test out the ‘Resurrection Bracelet’ right here.

“Then, does anyone want to try it out now—?”

I doubted anyone would, yet Souka asked away anyway. She was a lot bolder than I expected.

“Hmph, you won't die in the labyrinth? That's some real funny shit. I'm not gonna fall for your bullshit rhetoric!”

The bald, strong man—Basson—exclaimed as the others nodded in agreement, as if saying, “Sure, sure, much agreed.”

Elen's party also didn't want to volunteer.

“Isn't that simple enough? Mister over there, how about you step up for the demonstration,”

Gai the ‘Splendacious Sword Fighter’ pointed at Myourmiles.

He didn’t want to do it himself, and instead pointed at someone else to try—but fine, I suppose that was reasonable.

The way he spoke, however, was not as respectable.

“Me? Your proposal does make sense, so I shall accept.”

Myourmiles, now appointed, seemed to have anticipated how things would develop. He didn’t look particularly moved by it.

Especially since we actually had people experience it in real life already.

Shion’s subordinate, Yomigaeri, had been subjected to that experience many times, so Myourmiles also believed that it was completely safe. There was no need to fear given the past experiments. Myourmiles calmly put on the bracelet and entered the labyrinth. At the same time, many challengers also entered with him.

“Then, I shall attack Mister Myourmiles here—“ Souka said as she unsheathed her sword with one hand and prepared herself to attack Myourmiles. Yet Gai interrupted her by taking actions of his own.

“Don’t think you can fool me now, HYA!”

As he finished, he went on to swing his sword and cut off Myourmiles’s arm.

“—Wait!” Souka shouted to intervene, but it was too late.

“ARGH!” Myourmiles cried out as he held his wound.

Since pain was reduced in the labyrinth, he wouldn’t die from shock, but it was nonetheless unpleasant to have your arm chopped off.

“HAHAHAHAHA! Look at yourself. Time to die!”

*That bastard dares to mock Myourmiles...*

I almost lost control, yet I saw a smirk on Myourmiles’s face. I immediately calmed down at the scene. At the same time, Gai sliced his sword through Myourmiles’s neck—Myourmiles’s body suddenly turned into beams of light before disappearing. It was like nothing had happened. He reappeared at the surface, near the temporary entrance at the center of the stage. Even all of Myourmiles’s clothes turned into light and he revived with his original appearance.

These scenes were all recorded by the Dryads using the crystal balls and passed onto the projector as the footage was shown on the large screen.

“Please have a look everyone, all my limbs are fine as before!”

Myourmiles was standing there casually, unharmed. His cut arm was restored to its original state, bringing us the best performance of the day.

“OHOOOO!”

The crowd gave off waves of loud cheers, some even shouting, “That was a miracle!” Our goal was reached most excellently. It would be troublesome if people suspected that it was some kind of a trick, yet Gai’s overreaction proved to have convinced people even more so.

For people who still didn’t believe at this point, we would just have to invite them to experience it for themselves. However, at the end of the day, these mechanisms were for the worst-case scenario. We would still prefer it if people acted cautiously. Being unable to die was all well

and good, but it was best if they didn't have to experience it in the first place.

That's why we only needed to wait for adventurers who visited the labyrinth to leak such news. Some nut-job challengers would probably want to try it out themselves. But that wouldn't be a problem either.

The point was to encourage people to challenge the dungeon. Thanks to Myourmiles, our scheme came into fruition. As expected from Myourmiles, he had balls of steel. This was exactly the outcome I wanted, which was also why I tolerated Gai's actions.

It cost Myourmiles to endure such horrible things; I would have to go give him my thanks later, I thought to myself while watching the screen.



“Now then, you may start exploring the labyrinth! Once you step inside, you will find yourself in a world of unknowns. What will these brave adventurers encounter there—”

Souka began to broadcast the footage on stage. The large screen began to show the status of each group. As the broadcast proceeded smoothly, it also revealed the interior design of the labyrinth.

Souka's commentary was highly immersive. I was thinking: “She sure pays attention to details,” as I also tracked each team's movement.

Let's look at Basson's team.

The labyrinth walls were designed to have uniform stonework.

Basson's party was moving on the first floor. I thought they would at least have someone sketch down maps, yet it seemed that none of them had the slightest intention of taking notes, nor were they putting markers on the walls. All they were doing was casually strolling down the aisles while shooting the breeze and laughing.

*Is this really okay?*

Cave exploration was a thing in this world, and stuff like taking contracts by people to exterminate monsters deep in the forests wasn't uncommon. In times like this, how did they manage to achieve their goals? Could it be that they had hired people to lead the way every single time...

“Tsk, why are we always walking down the same road! What the hell, these are all quadrilaterals!”

“Boss, didn't we just walk along this road as well?”

Before my worries could have been relayed to them, these people were already lost. We did mention that the area was extremely wide during the explanation, weren't they listening?

“Basson, this is bad! This labyrinth is larger than we imagined...”

*Ah, I get it.*

The first floor of the labyrinth alone was around 250 meters long on each side. We did mention that it was big, but these people seemed to have thought it would be smaller. It is likely that they didn't think the area was all that large when they heard that the labyrinth was a man-made facility underneath the colosseum.

I supposed that was fine, as long as they helped with the promotion, it would be okay. But we couldn't let them die on the first floor right out of the gates. If they ended up making it look like the labyrinth was so unfairly difficult, then no one would want to challenge it.

I hoped that they could at least progress to a certain extent. They could come back if killed anyway, the bracelet had the savior function. Using that mechanic, they could escape from the labyrinth, but they would be considered killed. Alpha and the other dryads would then go to assist.

This time they were even accompanying all of the contestants, so the dryads could forcefully teleport them back to the surface, if need be. That's why I hoped they would relax a bit and progress through the labyrinth carefully, and maybe even start taking it seriously from now on...

Being inundated by his companions' woes had made Basson look disgruntled.

"Are your heads full of shit? There's no way any labyrinth is that big. These are all tricks of the demon lord; he's trying to send us off the trail with magic."

"Y-yeah!"

"As expected from Basson-aniki!"

"Indeed, there's a dense layer of magicule here. As you have said, this is likely some hallucination or illusion magic at work."

"That's right, Gomez. From the start, we have always taken right turns at the intersections, in other words, we can easily turn around and go back the way we came."

No way, the problem was not the difficulty. Their plan sounded very comprehensive, but in reality, that wasn't the case. It'd be okay for them to have taken notes on paper or other items, however, since the hallways all had similar looking walls along them, they couldn't possibly remember every single one of them. There were also crossroads and T-intersections, as well as dead ends. There was complex terrain combined with almost identical scenery. Not even the first floor could be beaten by turning to the right every time.

The challengers were just too stupid. *Looks like I best not put too much hope into these people...*

But just as I thought so—

Basson's party vanished, or rather, they fell down to the next floor.

"A-are...! Did they just fall into a trap?" Souka asked, sharing my same confusion. *Was there a fall trap set on the first floor?*

"Ramiris—"

"U-umm, w-what?"

"—Nothing serious, it's just that I was the one who designed that floor. I don't recall little tricks like that, could it be you who made the change without my permission?"

My eyes narrowed as a smile hung on my face. This was to not scare Ramiris. Although, I had also locked my hands around her body in a vice grip to prevent her from escaping, before asking her the question.

“A-about that, it was because we wanted to further the completion of the labyrinth...” Ramiris answered with an ingratiating smile.

After some more persistent interrogation, she admitted to having set up an enormous amount of fall traps herself.

I angrily cursed at Ramiris, “You idiot!”

*Missy, do you know that we don't need fall traps on a wide-area floor?* The point of them is to get people lost in order to reduce their stamina. Having fall traps that gave them shortcuts would serve the opposite effect. A trap is only useful if its purpose aligns with the intended goal of a floor.

“B-but there are more vicious fall traps down in the lower floors. So I really was just wondering if you had forgotten to set one up in that area or something, my intention was all good.”

She just *loved* poking her nose around other people's business.

*While it was bad to have set that trap up in the first place, the least you could've done was prepare a pit of needles at the bottom.* Ramiris, Veldora, Milim; I knew these three would mess up when laying the traps. That's why I personally designed the first floor...

I hurried to confirm the status of the other teams.

First was Elen's party.

Kabal was originally the leader, but right now Elen had taken control. These people all had a terrible sense of direction, my guess was that they would have difficulty in even getting through the first floor. But my guess was only half right.

Elen's party wasn't tricked by the fall traps, instead they were progressing very carefully. Surprisingly, they were neatly writing down relevant information about their progress on paper; it's the classic dungeon walkthrough strategy.

“Ho? Elen and the boys are so careful. They haven't stepped on any traps, even avoiding ones that I've set. They've also found their third treasure chest. They are progressing way too smoothly...”

“—Ehehe.”

*What the heck? Something about this seems off.*

*Why are they doing so well?*

There was also one more thing that had caught my attention, Ramiris seemed to be trying to hide something with her smile right now.

“...Oi, Ramiris.”

“W-what?!?”

“I have a lot of faith in you, but could there be anything that you are hiding from me?”

“O-of course, Rimuru!”

“Then let me ask you this, did you do something with Elen’s party?”

Judging by this screen alone, there was nothing out of the ordinary. However, their current record seems way too suspicious. Regarding the treasure chests set by me, most of them, naturally, were empty, yet they had found items inside them three times in a row. There was a good chance that they had been cheating.

“A-about that...”

*Again?*

“What did you do?”

“Ah, I did. Elen and her companions sent some gifts, so we were just chatting and having a good time! And then—”

...

It hurt my head just listening.

While Ramiris and the others were busy building the labyrinth, Elen sent a bunch of cakes to them. They were experimental products made by Yoshida-san, which must have been delicious. As Elen was sending the gifts, she became acquainted with the dryads, and through them, she managed to extract a bunch of information about the first floor.

Halfway through, Ramiris also found it odd, but the charm of the cakes was too irresistible for her...

“You can’t blame me this time! It wasn’t just me, even Mentor and Milim said it was fine!”

And she got desperate and began to argue how she was right. I was dumbfounded at this blatant act of bribery. I didn’t expect her to become corrupted so quickly.

But with that being said, it wasn’t as severe as I had imagined.

I did lower the difficulty of progression during the festival, and they only got information on one floor anyway. The really good treasure chests were not on that floor anyway.

“Kabal’s team has been successfully acquiring treasure chests from the start.”

“Indeed, according to His Majesty Rimuru, there will be treasure chests placed in various locations, such as small rooms. There are also traps mixed in with them, so you have to be careful.”

“I see! Are there any precious items inside as well?”

“There will be on lower levels. Eh—speaking of it... The treasure chests are apparently categorized with three different variations. Those being bronze, silver and gold colors. I heard that only the bronze ones may be laden with traps.”

The three different treasure chests contained different rewards, and there would only be bronze chests on the first floor. Inside these, you would, at most, find high-grade items, usually things such as a healing potion or silver coins. The rest would be failed creations from Kurobee’s disciples, a.k.a. run-of-the-mill gear. If this was what adventurers wanted, we weren’t losing much through that process.

“Surely, their goal would be the golden chests, right?”

“That’s likely the case. However, golden chests will exclusively appear in boss rooms, which are found on every tenth floor.”

“What does that mean?”

“Let me put it this way. I’m sure that everyone already knows Gozer-sama, who’s the guardian of the 50<sup>th</sup> floor of the dungeon. By that deduction, there are similar rooms on the 40<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> floors, guarded by a “Floor Guardian.” Only by defeating these strong foes, will you be able to open the golden chests. They are said to even have rare-grade gear inside them!” Myourmiles explained while reading off the note that I had given him.

Our goal this time was to advertise, so we had to utilize opportunities like this. Although, those words did sound highly suspicious, like some promotion on a late-night TV show. Even I, the writer of the note, felt a bit shameful hearing them, though those words were meant to stimulate people’s desire.

It did have a tremendous effect however, “rare-grade gear” caused quite the disturbance at the venue.

“Everyone has witnessed Gozer-san’s ability. That strong man is awaiting fellow challengers, to those who are confident in your abilities, you should try to challenge him!”

“There’s one more thing. As everyone has seen, the floors are quite vast; I hope that people will be mentally prepared for a single walkthrough taking up several days,” Myourmiles answered, providing answers to Souka’s doubts. The two were a fantastic duo, as both the live broadcasters and commentators.

I confirmed once more that there were only bronze chests on the first floor.

“—Are you sure you haven’t touched the contents of the treasure chests?”

“That, you can rest assured!”

*Okay then.*

After all, their method of progressing was almost a classic strategy, it would be great for promotion. Although I did mind the fact that Elen’s party was playing tricks, I might as well just let them have those trinkets as a reward. It was definitely foul play to have obtained a map as well as the trap locations, but I’d close one eye for them this time. I already knew that Elen’s party would be fine now.

Time to check on Masayuki, who I had leaked information to...

“OH OH—okay, now this is epic. They are already entering the fourth floor! The team known as “Shining” is as the name suggests. They’re zipping through at the speed of light.”

*PEW!*

How was that possible? They had only started the walkthrough less than thirty minutes ago, and they had somehow already gotten to the fourth floor! Masayuki’s party must’ve intentionally stepped on fall traps and cheesed their way to the lower levels.

As for the audience’s reaction—“MA-SA-YU-KI, MA-SA-YU-KIII!”

*Could’ve guessed that from a mile away.*

The same audience that had mocked Basson’s party for falling down the trap, instead gave Masayuki their approval and praise. This was a bit too ridiculous, but it was Masayuki’s power.

I figured that Masayuki must’ve been terribly pissed at me right now, thinking that the

information I gave him was bogus... *Sorry, that's not my fault.* But anything sounded like an excuse at this point.

After reaching the fourth floor, monsters began to patrol the roads. Relying on an incomplete map, that was missing a bunch of fall traps, must've been frightening. I still prayed to myself that he would do his best.

Let's check on the last guy—Gai.

This man was sprinting through the labyrinth, making good use of his physical prowess. Delta was flying around tirelessly trying to catch up with him. She was a semi-spiritual life form (half spirit, half living being), able to use 'Teleportation' via the vegetation. However, doing so would disrupt the live video feed she was supposed to relay. That must've been why she was trying so hard to keep pace with Gai by flying after him. Her dedication and enthusiasm towards her work was truly commendable. Despite Delta struggling, with the fear of falling behind, Gai couldn't have cared less, instead keeping up his steady pace while dashing through hallway after hallway. He kept on sprinting towards the stairs without ever getting lost, he appeared to be using magic or other means to gain knowledge of his surroundings.

«Answer. It is the effect of Elemental Magic "Map Generation."»

So, you could also do that when you didn't have a map at hand. It seemed to be the type of magic used by 'Great Sage' in the past. Magic like that could generate information about locations in his brain, that is, if he could cast the magic consistently. It seemed that not only was he skilled in the sword, he was also good with magic. He sure had some tricks up his sleeve.

I did inquire about him from Fuze, and it turned out that Gai was indeed the rare A Rank personnel. No wonder he had abilities like that.

He was currently tearing through the second floor and would be reaching the stairs soon. At this rate, it would take him another two hours before he reached the fifth floor. That was a lot faster than I expected, I never anticipated their progress to be so fast.

There's something else that was bothering me however—it was Gai's unusual expression. His mouth was twisted grotesquely, and his eyes were bloodshot...

By the time he reached the third floor, he hadn't shown any signs of slowing down either. But unlike the first and second floors, he wasn't even skipping a single small room—he was checking for treasure chests. Or perhaps it was the opposite case—he seemed to know where the treasure chests were at and was able to find the rooms with treasure chests effortlessly.

He was also only picking the silver chests.

"This guy... How's he doing that?" I muttered to myself. Raphael-sensei didn't respond. Looked like even sensei didn't know.

"I feel that this Gai guy has an especially strong desire. Is he perhaps the type that can even sniff out money?" Ramiris commented coldly, while I understood somewhat.

In any case, Gai was definitely not any ordinary person. What he did to Myourmiles was also unpleasant, so if possible, I hoped that we wouldn't be dealing with such a character any longer.

In this way, Gai's labyrinth strategy also made rapid headway.



Another two hours had passed.

Basson's party discovered another hidden room.

"Basson-aniki! There's another room here as well."

One of his companions discovered the door on accident.

"Could this be another trap?" Basson asked, his face filled with doubts.

Just now, they had been battling the trapped treasure chests filled with paralyzing toxin and sleeping gas. There was also a rather weak mimic they fought. They had developed PTSD from treasure chests.

"Oi, Ramiris. What's in the room of that treasure chest? If this continues, it won't have any good promotional effect, even I am starting to feel sorry for them, so it's about time for them to get something good..."

How should I put it, seeing how these people were getting tricked reminded me of the gacha game I played, and the sour memory of ten rolls of absolute garbage. After getting all that trash before, their misfortune weighed even on me. If they ended up losing their motivation, they wouldn't be coming back in the future... That's why I thought it was about time to give them some grand prize.

"D-don't worry. It was because those challengers sucked... Although it's not fair for me to say so, I really didn't expect them to be that reckless. B-but that room has one monster and a silver chest. I don't remember what was in it, but they will definitely get something good this time!"

*Fine, that should do it. I hope they will encounter at least something nice today—*

"AHH! It's a trap again, there's even a monster in here!"

"Tsk, how about we retreat for now?"

"We can't, Basson. It's already onto us!"

"It's a great-bear! It won't be easy for us to escape..."

The two sides were already staring at each other, observing what sort of move they would be making.

—*Eh, what is this?*

Only one monster appeared, there's no way you needed to panic like that. There was only a slim chance for a monster to already appear on the first floor, and there wouldn't be any strong ones on the second floor either. Yet this hidden room had a silver chest containing some quality reward. A strong monster was deployed to guard this chest... This hidden grand prize on the second floor.

Yet it only had a great-bear, a measly Rank C monster. Basson's team, with a combined strength of Ranked B, could easily take care of them. Despite this, Basson and Gomez were shocked upon seeing the great-bear.

"Basson-aniki, there's a treasure chest there!"

"It's silver."

"It may be trapped again, but all we can do now is fight. All right everyone, get ready!"

"Copy that!"

"Let's go, let's go!"

It seemed that Basson's six-man team finally made up their mind to fight. As they were staring at the great-bear, the team carefully raised their weapons.

"I'll be the bait; you guys take the chance and attack!"

Basson really had the composure of a leader, he'd decided to be a competent tank. He rushed into the room and shouted, diverting all of the great-bear's attention to him.

Basson and the great-bear confronted each other face-to-face.

"Oh! Basson's party appears to be engaging a monster in battle! Their opponent is a great-bear? I heard that one swing of its giant paw can easily take someone's life—"

I finally realized my mistake after hearing Souka's explanation.

*Right, this isn't actually a video game.*

Basson and his men were, after all, professional adventurers. They didn't want any of their men to be injured. Even the slightest misstep could have cost them their lives, and so they would most definitely avoid fighting monsters that yielded no profit. Even though they didn't really need to worry about dying in there, it would take some time for people to actually accept such a mindset.

*With that in mind, perhaps I should re-evaluate how I've been trying to promote the labyrinth...*

And soon, the battle began.

Basson lunged forward to take on the great-bear's attack. A look of desperation was etched on his face. The only thing between him and the monster was a worn-out piece of leather armor. A piece that didn't cover up his entire body and left his hands and lower sides completely exposed. He found himself in quite the precarious situation despite confronting an opponent weaker than himself. His great axe could land heavy chopping blows, yet it was not suitable to defend against a bear's claws. That's why Basson had been using his round shield to deflect the great-bear's paw.

His companions, on the other hand, were covering for Basson. To keep themselves safe, they were targeting the eyes and feet of the great-bear when launching attacks. The magician named Gomez, meanwhile, launched the great-magic spell Wind Slash to take its life.

"And it's at this moment that their battle to the death with the great-bear concludes! An excellent fight!"

"Indeed. Their actions were very logical and devoid of unnecessary complications. That was the style of experienced fighters."

As I listened to Souka and Myourmiles's broadcast, I mulled over the fight just now. Indeed, their teamwork was flawless. In the end, there were no casualties in Basson's team, and they took around five minutes to take down the great-bear.

But I couldn't shake off the troubles as new problems started to emerge.

"Oi oi oi, I didn't expect them to fight so cautiously against an enemy far weaker than themselves..."

"Um—I was surprised too. But shouldn't that normally be the case?"

"I suppose. Although not having drawn a map is indicative of poor performance, we seem to have underestimated their abilities."

"That's true, maybe it will take three days just to break through the first floor alone..."

"Um—if that's the case, we should really think about quantifying the rations..."

I didn't expect our project to be disrupted by something like this.

Basson's team had teammates of varying ranks, but their overall strength was the equivalent of Rank B. As for Basson and Gomez, with their good equipment, they may have been around Rank B in terms of skill. Yet we couldn't have anticipated that such a six-man team had to struggle in a fight on the second floor already.

In terms of results alone, it was their complete victory, though taking five minutes was perhaps way too long. However, as professional adventurers, they might also value safety more...

Maybe they should be taught to adapt different fighting strategies, perhaps they could adhere to the strategy of "Use healing potions even if it's only a scratch" to improve their combat efficiency.

Not sure why I was worried, but right now Basson's party was approaching the treasure chest.

"It looks like the room contained a treasure chest, it looks silver as well, what could possibly be inside...?"

Souka's words had tensed up the audience. While the other teams had opened treasure chests several times by now, people were still highly interested in the instant that they were opened.

One of Basson's teammates went up and immediately threw the lid open.

*Oi oi oi, shouldn't you at least check for traps?*

Silver chests weren't set with traps, but Basson's team had no clue of that. Just before this, they had gotten poisoned with paralysis and enveloped with sleeping gas. They also seemed to be taking turns when opening chests, but this wasn't a punishment game... Their crude way of opening the chest even put me, as a spectator, on edge.

In this regard, in the eyes of me, an epic gamer, I could only call them amateurs.

Having treasure chests inside labyrinths was a foreign concept to people here...is that why they were so quick to do something so reckless? From this point of view, Elen's party was at least somewhat better. Their team had Gido, who, so far, had ensured that they wouldn't trigger any traps while extracting items from treasure chests.

Basson's team's issue probably came down to them not having a thief. Professional adven-

turers that exterminated monsters were probably the buff type who weren't suited for situations like this. They should have hired teammates specializing in exploration.

*Hold up?*

It may be that the difficulty of the labyrinth was higher than we expected. I thought that the issue was Basson's party not being professional enough, but it would seem that a lot of people were simply not good at exploring a labyrinth. Their walkthrough couldn't be made faster.

I needed to reflect on the issue.

"OH, WOWOWO! Basson-aniki, it's a sword!"

*NICU!*

They seemed to have hit the jackpot. Moreover, the rare-grade jackpot deluxe. There were many different types of rewards, such as high-grade healing potions, ancient gold coins, or fine quality gear etc. We also designed it so that, starting from level two, there would be a very low chance of the reward being a rare-grade item.

What Basson got was a rare-grade sword.

"By the way, Mentor said that all of the treasure chests were designed to have higher reward drop rates!"

"I-is that so? But so far they have been getting shit rewards all around..."

It was rare for Veldora to be so generous, yet it was ruined by Basson's bad luck. No, had Veldora not raised the probability, they could have been getting shit gear even now.

With that being said, obtaining this rare-grade sword was a game-changer for them. This would be great for publicity. Basson's team would probably also want to test their luck even more. Upon thinking so, I had to compliment Veldora with a "Good job."

"For Veldora, this decision has been amazing. If you failed to leave these folks with some good memories, it would affect the future of the labyrinth exploration."

*I'll thank Veldora later.*

Basson's men whistled upon laying eyes on the sword.

They seemed to be very fond of the treasure.

"You guys, let's keep on going at this pace!"

Basson sheathed his great axe and changed his weapon to the sword.

In the next room, three Rank D bats appeared, all cut down by him in one smooth slash. The quality of the sword had perhaps added a bonus to their overall effectiveness, they seemed to have become faster in dealing with enemies.

This was a sword crafted by Kurobee's disciple. It barely made it to the level of rare-grade, however, to Basson's party, it was a mighty sword, nonetheless.

Gai was no exception in this regard. I heard that even the elite of Rank A had difficulty in gathering a full set of rare-grade gear. No wonder why Basson and his boys were so happy.

As if they were making up for their previous losses, the party pushed forward confidently. In addition, they also seemed to have obtained many "Magic Crystals" from the monsters.

"This sword is really nice, now we're making some profit. We may make more money than we expected."

“That’s right, when this labyrinth is officially opened, we gotta come back for more!”

They chatted joyfully.

And so, Basson’s party continued their walkthrough—

Let’s have a look at Elen’s team.

They were staying on the first floor, where it was difficult to find rare-grade gear. These folks were operating cautiously with safety in mind. One could say that they were overly cautious. But for that same reason, they were also able to pick all the treasure chests clean on the first floor, with the smoothest progression. Yet to their surprise, there was a turn of events.

“Have we farmed enough?”

“Are we really going there now?”

“Uh... Aren’t you going to ask me about it...?”

“Of course we are going! We’re gonna make it big this time!”

Kabal’s opinion was completely ignored as Elen’s party started making their way downstairs. With less than an hour left, they seemed to have set their minds on achieving their goal.

Their reason for staying on the first floor for that long was apparently to collect potions. They had also made full use of the information that Ramiris gave them, setting their target at the tenth level.

“Oh, Kabal’s party seems to be on the move. Switching gears from the conservative strategy and deciding to go all the way down.”

“Hmm—perhaps they’ve changed their strategy in order to find better treasure chests? However, relying on luck alone to find them won’t be an easy task...”

“But just like Basson’s team back there, won’t silver chests also give you a rare-grade item?”

“That’s not something you can get just by wishing for it. Look at Gai-san, he’s opened more than twenty silver chests, yet his current rare-grade item count is still zero.”

“Does that mean the only way to ensure you get a rare-grade drop is through a golden chest?”

“That’s right. However, golden chests only appear in specific locations within the boss room, otherwise it will be...”

“There are other places?”

“Uh... There seem to be areas where you may stumble upon large regional monsters. It is said that a room guarded by this type of monster will also have a golden chest.”

Upon hearing Souka and Myourmiles’s conversation, I had an idea of what Elen intended to do.

“Oi, Ramiris.”

“I’m here.”

“Did you leak information about the spawn point of the region boss?”

“About that...”

“Did you or not?”

“Uhhh! It seems to have been a part of it!”

*Wow. Actually, I should think positively.*

An entertaining region boss would add to the promotional effect—I thought to myself. I recalled putting it near the fourth floor. Once it got beaten, it would change position, so right now it should still be there...

In this malignant monster room, you would have to deal with several Rank C-plus vampiric bats first. People entering without any knowledge would be swarmed by monsters, however, they could handle it if they were aware of the situation. However, there may be the red herring that tricked people into thinking that they had already figured out what awaited them inside. That would lead them into a world of hurt.

—While I was worried up until that point, it turned out that this was all for naught.

Elen's party intentionally used the trap to fall straight to the fifth floor. They pretended to be injured in order to shill the effect of the healing potion. Later, with the excuse of finding a resting place, they moved towards their actual destination.

*They've done everything perfectly, what fine actors.*

“Big bro, big sis, there's a room just around the corner, let's go rest when we get there.”

“All right! By the way, are you all right, Kabal?”

“Um, uhhh. This healing potion sure is effective. Although I think I'm already fully recovered, let's go rest up before earning another pile of fat loot.”

Kabal was the only one that gave a rigid delivery, yet the audience didn't notice. They were mesmerized by the events taking place on the screen. It was then that Gido opened the door of the room.

“WOH! There are vampiric bats here!”

“Don't worry. Kabal, we'll be counting on you!”

“...But I don't want to get my blood sucked.”

Kabal's resistance was futile, the battle began.

He raised his scale shield and hid behind it, taking on the attack of the vampiric bats by himself. While the situation looked dire to the uninitiated, Kabal was unfazed. Since the vampiric bats couldn't really break through the toughness of the shield, he stopped the attack without breaking a sweat.

While Kabal was attracting the attention of the monsters, Elen prepared to cast magic.

“Here I come! Giant Magic Icicle Shotguuuun!”

A salvo of tiny shards of sharp ice rained down on the vampiric bats. The small room they were in made it impossible to escape the barrage. Elen's magic power was enhanced by her dryad staff. The vampiric bats were exterminated without a trace.

“Eh—this looked a bit too simple.”

“Yeah, had this been Basson's team, it would be a battle of life and death...”

“We seem to be running at a deficit by giving them the golden chest that easily.”

“But it's a bit of a stretch to view Elen's party as the norm.”

*Indeed, Ramiris had a point.*

Upon second thought, it was only made this easy due to them cheating. Normally, there was no way things could have gone that smoothly. If anyone ended up finding the golden chest

by running around in the labyrinth, we should definitely give them our congratulations and call them the lucky ones.

“That was a beautiful fight.”

“Indeed, as expected from an experienced adventurer team. They have already held back much during the fight. Oh, Gido-san is opening the chest now.”

“Oh oh! It’s a golden chest, will it really have a rare-grade item?”

As I listened to the commentary, I turned my eyes to Gido’s hands.

It was definitely going to be a rare-grade item, what would he get though?

“This is...a sword...”

“But I wanted defensive gear for magicians.”

“Did you just say sword? Wonderful, I guess the old man above knows how hard I’ve been working!”

The three all had different expressions. Gido seemed rather perplexed, Elen looked upset, and Kabal’s previous unmotivated expression had been ejected out of his system. Each of their reactions was interesting.

“Oh oh, there really was a weapon, Myourmiles-san!”

“Aha, that is for certain. The golden chests all have good stuff in them, that is the message Rimuru-sama wished me to relay to everyone.”

I didn’t remember requesting him to relay anything like that, though Myourmiles was pretty good at playing the crowds.

The item from the golden chest was a storm long sword.

Everyone seemed to think that it was a rare-grade item, yet it was in fact an authentic special-grade weapon. Just like the storm short saber I gifted Gido, it was a mighty sword crafted by Kurobee using a scale of Charybdis. It was likely due to the fact that Veldora had raised the probability of the reward rolls, that Elen had gotten the one-in-a-hundred chance to get the top-tier item.

With their goals accomplished, Elen’s party immediately returned to the surface.

*Should I call these fellows too realistic...*

“We seemed to have given away too big of a prize this time, but never mind.”

Due to the courageous act of Elen’s party, I could only answer with a wry smile.

And so, Elen’s party returned early, before the time limit.

On the flip side, let’s check on Masayuki’s squad and Gai.

The two parties were pretty much racing each other to the bottom floors. However, their difference was obvious.

Masayuki’s party was moving at a terrifying speed. Two hours had passed, and they had already made it to the ninth floor.

“These guys were way too fast...”

“Sorry, I didn’t expect something like fall traps to be used by people in that way...”

“But I don’t actually think Masayuki and his men were exploiting them on purpose.”

When I was talking to Ramiris, Masayuki was already taking down the ninth floor. With around fifteen minutes left on the clock, they were already on the tenth floor. As a result of taking a short cut with the fall trap, they had landed onto a perfect spot near the deepest room on the tenth floor.

It must have been this way due to Masayuki's good luck as well.

"Less than three hours and they managed to reach that place..."

In light of such incredible speed, I was utterly baffled.

Upon arriving on these floors, there will be monsters appearing on the roads. Sometimes they may even appear in packs, but Masayuki's companions were quite strong. They didn't face any significant obstacles and eliminated the monsters with one hit.

Apart from the fall traps, all the other information I gave matched up with reality. That's why Masayuki's party continued onward down the corridor while reading the map.

They finally reached the deepest room.

The stairs leading to the eleventh floor would only appear after defeating the Floor Boss in this hall. The floor guardian here was a great-spider with a difficulty level of Rank B.

Its majesty was truly fearsome—

"HEWH!"

As Jinrai swung his saber with tremendous force, the great-spider was sent to hell.

*W-what a pity. How can a single great-spider stand against Masayuki's party? If only there had not been any fall traps, they would at least have gotten stalled for a while on their way here...*

Masayuki's party managed to open the golden chest and got hold of a rare-grade short sword. They also shrewdly located the save point.

Upon seeing this, I decided to remove all fall traps. After defeating the Floor Boss, Masayuki's party wasted no time in using 'Return Whistle' to return to the surface. They were the second team to reemerge on the surface.

When Masayuki's party vanished from the hall, the once shut door was opened again.

"Masayuki-san and his teammates have returned. This time it will be Gai-san who's gonna challenge the Floor Boss."

"Gai-san has managed to progress so far by himself. He didn't step on any trap or fall into any pits and made it through the passages with incredible speed."

"His speed was so fast, that by the time the trap had triggered, he was already far and away. That is a rather surprising strategy, not one that any average person could adapt."

Hearing Myourmiles's words, some adventurers in the audience nodded in agreement. That's how fast you'd get through solo farming, however, it probably wouldn't be the same with a team.

Gai at least didn't dishonor his place as an elite adventurer. There was no way he'd fall into a challenging battle in the lower floors. For unknown reasons, he even farmed a bunch of silver chests. This guy's gotta be the worst beta tester in history.

But those were just my thoughts, I couldn't really do anything about him under these cir-

cumstances.

“Tsk, did that shitty chosen hero get ahead of me? Never mind, revive the Floor Boss at once!” Gai commanded arrogantly.

*While I may be angry, I am a mature adult after all, so I’m bearing it.*

“By the way, Myourmiles-san. What will happen when an event like this plays out?”

“Umm, the Floor Boss seems to take around thirty minutes to be revived.”

“That must also include the golden chest, right?”

“That’s what I heard. Other than that, there may be situations where adventurers come into conflict over the chance to fight against the boss. Rimuru-sama seemed to have had worries about that.”

“I see. Then Gai-san won’t have enough time.”

“Most likely. There is not much time left, surely this will mark the end of his attempt.”

There were fifteen minutes left on the three-hour time limit. Hearing that there wasn’t enough time, Gai himself began to complain obnoxiously.

“Quit joking around! Are you giving me an order? I know you’re incompetent, so there’s no need for me to cooperate with you. Revive the Floor Boss at once!”

Gai’s bloodshot eyes were burning with desire as he talked to himself. Delta was listening to him rather indifferently, mostly ignoring his words, that is, until Gai’s next line of rants caused her to twist her expression.

“Hmph! Incompetent ruler is incompetent after all. These are rules set by you losers. I don’t have to follow jackshit!”

*Ah, he finally said it.*

He shamelessly said, in front of the labyrinth manager no less, that he was gonna ignore the rules. No matter how much Gai shouted, the rules wouldn’t change. But whether the labyrinth manager would let him off the hook for that one, well, there was only one answer to that.

“Your speech has clearly violated the rules set by our nation. We won’t pursue further responsibility if you are willing to apologize. But if you continue to utter such hateful words, I will not sit by without action.”

“What did you say? How dare a mere receptionist be so pompous, don’t be ridiculous!”

Delta had calmly given him the warning. Gai, on the other hand, took her for a fool and laughed her words off.

“There has been a clear violation of the rules. Proceed to execution.”

“Hmph, did you just say execution? What the fuck do you think you can do to me—”

The next instant, vines emerged from the ground and ensnared Gai’s body.

“—What!”

“The pain resistance of the ‘Resurrection Bracelet’ has been deactivated, will you apologize now?”

Small spikes emerged from the vines binding Gai’s body and had found their way through the gaps in his armor to pierce his flesh. He appeared to be in unbearable agony. Delta had cast Spirit Magic “Vine Bondage” without Gai’s notice.

“D-damnit! Do you think you can defeat me with this?”

“This is the last warning. Will you apologize now?”

“Don’t underestimate me! That kind of lame magic can only—”

Gai suddenly lost his voice midway. That’s because Delta had severed Gai’s head from his body with her slim finger.

Gai really had picked the wrong opponent when choosing to fight against Delta. He was indeed of Rank A ability, but Delta was a dryad. Although she didn’t have combat experience, by her racial instinct alone, she had already exceeded Hazard-class. With more experience accumulated in the future, surely, she would become Calamity-class like Treyni and the other dryads. There was no way someone like Gai could win.

The audience couldn’t help but feel shaken to see that Gai, the active participant during the tournament, was taken down by the nice lady Delta. They deeply believed that Gai was a strong man, yet he was killed instantly, without being given the chance to even resist. There was no way they wouldn’t feel surprised to witness such a scene with their own eyes.

Reading the current mood, Myourmiles began to comment calmly.

“By the way, the words of the labyrinth manager are equivalent to the rules of the labyrinth. If you disregard the rules like just now, you will be adjudicated.”

According to Myourmiles, as long as you followed the rules, you’d be just fine.

“H-how terrifying. Then what will happen to Gai-san?”

“Not anything severe. They will only confiscate the items he obtained in the labyrinth. But the pain resistance function of the ‘Resurrection Bracelet’ was also deactivated, surely he would have felt immense pain.”

While there was a punishment for violators, it wasn’t much in reality. The only punishment being, that all of the achievements by the person in question would be forfeited, nothing else. If the person in question behaved too poorly, we may ban him from entering the labyrinth... But that would have to be done after some investigation.

“Ah! Gai-san is outside. But unlike Myourmiles-san just now, he seems to have passed out.”

Gai’s body turned into beams of light as his head was chopped off, but a new one regenerated on the ground. However, he had been in a coma since. After all, the punishment this time had a lot more punch to it. Delta utilized her special authority to restrict the function of the “Resurrection Bracelet”. It’s certain that Gai would be fine even after being punished, but it would probably take some time for him to recover from the shock of dying.

Considering the way he had treated Myourmiles, as well his arrogant attitude towards Delta, Gai really was an annoying man. That’s why I felt avenged by what had transpired.

Gai would more or less reflect on himself now.

“As long as you follow the rules, the safety mechanism of the ‘Resurrection Bracelet’ will be intact. But Gai-san decided to ignore the rule. In this establishment, adventurers are barred from in-fights. You will also have to listen to the advice of the labyrinth managers. There are many detailed regulations. We will be releasing a pamphlet regarding the must-know after our

official opening. The receptionist will explain it to those who are illiterate. In order to prevent anyone from getting Gai-san's treatment, I hope all will abide by the regulations."

"And with the outcome like this, it is quite a shame for Gai-san. But after the official opening, if you wait for a while, the floor boss will be revived! Fights among adventurers are also forbidden. Please adhere to the rules and explore the labyrinth properly!" Souka announced loudly.

*What do you mean by exploring the labyrinth properly? She didn't answer this question.*

The atmosphere amidst the audience had become a bit awkward, but Souka managed to swing the mood back around.

During that period, Gai also regained consciousness, and upon recalling what had happened to him, he was both shocked and regretful.

Seeing Gai recovering, the audience gradually regained composure.

*This is great, this is great.*

It looked like the audience had realized that Myourmiles's comments were accurate as well. While Gai was indeed annoying, observing him did yield us some useful information.

As long as we re-examined our strategy and employed countermeasures to prevent high-grade adventurers from only coming in to loot treasure chests, we wouldn't suffer too much loss. On the other hand, this moment served to educate people on what would happen if you didn't adhere to the rules.

And so, I was personally rather satisfied by the outcome of Gai's run.



The current situation was that most teams had finished exploring the labyrinth, with Basson's party still remaining. There were around ten minutes left on the clock before the scheduled deadline. It was about time to have Basson's party end this round.

As I thought about it, I heard a scream, "YAAAAA!" as one of Basson's companions fell. He was probably ambushed by the monsters in the room, resulting in his right eye getting pierced by an arrow.

That's why I said that opening a door without a care in the world was dangerous.

There was a skeleton archer sniping anyone who wished to enter the room. The second person to fall was shot right between the eyes, and, unlike Gai, his body only vanished after ten seconds. The labyrinth event was about to end, he picked the right time to die so as to experience death in the labyrinth.

The skeleton soldiers were taken down by the remaining four.

"W-what! There had been no casualties until now, yet two had just been killed. But rest assured everyone, the people who just died would soon be safely resurrected on the surface!"

Souka gave her live commentary on the state of Basson's squad. Myourmiles also helped to fill her in.

Basson's party had a highly immersive fighting style, the audience couldn't peel their eyes off them. Or more precisely, the rather engaging fight, visible on the big screen, had made them immerse themselves in the scene as well. Every time a monster showed up, it was met with screams and yelps from the audience. Such reactions were quite interesting.

Perhaps it was like watching a horror movie. When someone died, there were even people lamenting, as if they were at the scene.

It may be just as interesting of an event to broadcast the exploration of the labyrinth itself. Although playing any footage would probably cause some issues, we should perhaps try to negotiate with adventurers challenging the labyrinth regarding the rights to play their footage.

And just like that, I came up with this small idea.

By the time I snapped out of my thoughts, the time was almost over. The experience itself was sufficient enough. With Basson's party, the atmosphere was unnecessarily nerve-racking. In terms of the outcome, they were very wonderful adventurers.

At the start they were still pompous enough to mock Masayuki, saying that they would unveil the truth about the labyrinth, and that its vast landscape was but some trickery. Compared to their arrogant words from before, they seemed to have completely forgotten those things and lost themselves in the exploration of the labyrinth.

These people were shedding their manly tears and calling the names of their fallen comrades. Not only did they wallow in delusional ideas, they also liked to ignore other people's advice. But that did seem to be how a lot of adventurers behaved. Perhaps it would prove highly valuable to use these people as a case study.

"Well then, everyone, it's about time to get back."

Alpha, who was in charge of Basson's party, announced, clearly not reading the air.

Basson was frustrated by Alpha's attitude, yet she ignored him and forcefully activated everyone's "Return Whistle."

"Son of a—!" the curse words slipped out of Basson's mouth.

But as soon as they got back to the surface, he immediately ate his words.

"Ah, Basson-aniki, I really do seem to have been revived."

His fury fizzled out as his confused companions came to welcome them.

"This is rad! Did you really get revived?"

"Yeah, I thought I was done for as well. But it didn't hurt as I imagined; the revival was very successful."

"What are you on about, there's no way that's true. There're not many people who know revival magic, it's all because of this bracelet!"

Basson's party shared their joy as they chatted to confirm whether their revived companions were safe or not.

"Shit, my right eye—"

"Why don't you try this?"

The man whose right eye was shot by an arrow, was fully healed through the potion.

“This is really awesome. For guys like us, who rely on the strength our body delivers, this is the perfect environment.”

“Is that so? We gotta try harder next time!”

*No no no, you were trying too hard from the get-go. The danger of potential traps didn't even cross your minds, so I can't imagine how you could possibly make it to the lower levels filled with them.*

I managed to hold back all the things I want to point out about them.

The audience's reaction was the important part. They had taken in the entirety of Basson's party's walkthrough and also got to learn just how safe the dungeon was.

The promotional event was arguably a huge success.

The challengers stood together on the stage. I also walked on stage and stood before them. This would be my final address towards this public demonstration of the dungeon.

“I'm not sure how everyone else felt, did you all have fun? This dungeon is planned to be open in the near future. It's guaranteed to be safe, and we welcome those who are interested to challenge it. For those who made it to the 100<sup>th</sup> level underground, you will have the right to challenge me!”

The microphone in hand, I ended the event with this line.

*That was pretty good.* The final match just now also excited everyone, the viewing of the interior of the labyrinth also gave the audience an immersive experience.

And with that, the public demonstration of the dungeon concluded peacefully.

—If it had ended there, it would've been perfect.

“Rimuru, what's the situation? How long do I have to wait until the challengers arrive?”

*He has obviously not listened to any of my words,* this Idiotic King of the Labyrinth Veldora had contacted me through ‘Telepathy Net.’

My good mood was completely ruined.

“So noisy, how many times do I need to tell you! Listen, there won't be any challenger going to the bottom floor this time!”

“W-what? That's not what you said before!”

“THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I SAID, YOU BIG DOOFUS! You have to listen to my words carefully!”

We went on arguing for a while. This was a new low for this misbehaving brat to hit during this festival, though It was practically normal at this point. He just got too excited and messed things up. That was why, this time, I was going to criticize Veldora non-stop until he reflected on himself.

**Chapter  
5**

**After the  
Festival**

*That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime*

# Chapter 5

## After the Festival

On the last night of the festival, we made sure to go out with a bang, hosting a grand banquet.

Chefs like Shuna and Yoshida-san were going all out to provide us with some breath-taking and extremely luxurious cuisine. All of this was to make a good impression on everyone.

Perhaps some new relationships had sprouted over the past three days since I could see nobles having a great time together. Unlike the first night, the mood at the banquet was a lot more relaxed.

Right, except for Veldora, Ramiris, and Milim staying inside the labyrinth, people like Karion, Frey, and Midley all came to attend. Everyone was enjoying the night cheerfully.

Treyni and the elves were also preparing dishes enthusiastically. I would have to show up with some dessert later on, as thanks.

And the townsfolk were not idle either. Visiting merchants, adventurers, nearby farmers, and the town residents were all enjoying the food and drinks in harmony. None of the stores were charging service fees tonight, it was a rowdy scene with people drinking and singing all evening. Everyone seemed to have lowered their guard, monsters, and humans alike, all were happily enjoying the night.

We also had music at the scene, some people were singing along to the tune, and some others were dancing to the rhythm.

*It's a shame it's going to be over so soon...*

Starting tomorrow, everyone would be back to work. The thought of it made me sad yet excited at the same time. What a bewildering feeling. Even if I wasn't the only one thinking along those lines, everyone was enjoying the moment.

*Maybe this is what happiness looks like.*

Watching this joyous scene, I sincerely hoped that this peace could last a long, long time. And just like that, the night quickly passed—



After everything that happened, the festival was finally over.

In Gobta's absence, Rigur was kept busy taking care of security—the roads could barely contain the flood of visitors returning to their own countries.

“Wouldn't you have wanted to sleep until noon on the day after the festival?”

“Hahaha, Rimuru-sama. Those foolish enough to lose themselves to things such as alcohol can't manage the security force!”

Rigur was earnest. As expected from Rigurd's son.

If it were Gobta, I'm certain that he would have said something along the lines of “I wanted to sleep until the afternoon for at least the day after the festival.” Although I myself felt the same way, which is why I often spoil the guy by accident, *it's for the best if I just don't bring this up.*

Unlike Gobta, Rigur swiftly ordered his subordinates to move without a single complaint. Thanks to his efforts, we were able to move the guests without any big problems.

The road was wide enough so, as long as the road wasn't blocked by the carriages, there wouldn't be cases where the line for humans would stop. I left the traffic control to Rigur and went back to do my own job.

That's right, today was the day I gave out gold coins as payments.

Over a hundred merchants gathered at the conference room.

Currently, Rigurd and Myourmiles were sent to do the explanation, but it seemed about time for me to take the stage as well. I knew that what came next would be the main show, so I lightened myself up and went to the venue.

As I arrived at the conference room, there were noises of arguing coming out of there already.

“As I've said before, we will pay up the fee in time, so please calm down and wait!”

“Are you saying so just to deceive us?”

“We've already waited until the festival ended. Pay us our money right now!”

“Hold on for just a moment, please! You all have a point, but is it possible for you all just to sell me a favor?”

“Indeed. Are you planning to destroy our reputation after we have already introduced you to our friend Myourmiles?”

“Let's not put it that way, my lord. After all, we only wish to be paid by the amount promised by them—”

“That's why I'm asking you to wait for another moment. This country is not going to run or disappear. They've already said that they have other means of paying than through dwarven

gold coins. Can't you guys let this pass for our sake?"

"No way we'd believe that!"

"Yes, that's right. Pay up already—"

It seemed like Myourmiles's friends—the big store merchants, were stepping up to comfort the retailers.

Although they may have just been acting in accordance with the way of a merchant, I still felt very happy about it. It showed that Myourmiles had keen eyes when examining a person's character<sup>16</sup>.

"Now, now, everyone, how about we all calm down? I am Muze, the representative for the kingdom of Guston. Even the people of the monster kingdom wouldn't dare repudiate the debts of those people. Am I correct, Myourmiles?"

*Looks like there is some big shot here.*

Representative of the kingdom of Guston—in other words, does it mean he's a noble from the trade nation Guston near Ingracia?

"Yes, Duke Muze-sama! That is correct. But—"

Hmm, although Guston was not a big nation, this was still the duke of the kingdom. Noblemen were already of high social status, and to have the title of duke implied he was some big-shot nobleman.

"Then I hope that you will reassure these people quickly. Let us proceed according to the international charter designed by the Western Nations and conclude the payment as soon as possible."

Looked like Duke Muze was not only a powerful nobleman, but a gentleman in negotiation.

While Myourmiles was a key figure in our country, as of now, he was not given neither a title of nobility nor a status. He was someone who was serving as my substitute and had only temporarily been given authority. In terms of his political stance here, he was probably the equivalent of "a guest that was invited for a meal."

While Rigurd was present as well, not only did he remember Myourmiles's name, he even responded to him personally. Perhaps this might have been the highest degree of courtesy to him.

For a noble to remember a commoner's name—while most nobles would not be able to remember, even those who did remember would probably just act ignorant to abide by the noble way. This was something I heard from Myourmiles; I could only imagine that he himself was the one most shocked at the scene.

"P-please hold up a second, Duke Muze-sama. We said from the start, when signing the contracts, that we will be paying according to the custom. And naturally the custom is—"

"Myourmiles, I don't really care about those minor details. It's the same to these merchants for whatever you were going to say. Trust is the most valued aspect in an exchange between nations. And trust only seeds when both sides follow through with their promises, isn't that the

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<sup>16</sup>Therefore, who he befriends.

case?"

"What you said was correct. But—!!"

"Shut it! These people made a deal with your people because they trusted you. Are you perhaps planning on insulting this trust?"

"Of course not. But we have our reasons as well—"

"Heh heh, I see how it is now. Myourmiles, luckily enough, I got a solution to your worries. Would you mind having a chat with me in private? Rigurd-san over there can come as well."

*—Ahh, now we can confirm.*

This had unfolded just as Elmesia predicted.

It was like looking at an exam question that you had studied for, a feeling of relief that I couldn't put into words started to flow inside me.

*Now we can win with ease.*

"W-what do you mean?"

Myourmiles was acting in a meticulous way. As expected from an experienced merchant, he was both bold and great at acting. Just like me, he had already realized the truth, yet he continued the conversation without a change in expression.

I think the problem could have just been solved with our competent Myourmiles alone. But if that were to be the case, I wouldn't be able to get over my anger.

*Well then, let's move out. There is no point in just listening here so let's just quickly resolve this mess.*

Diablo pushed the door open with great force.

"There will be no need for that," I announced while entering the room. Benimaru and Shion followed. Diablo entered last and quietly closed the door.

"Have we kept you all waiting for too long? The arguing here just now sounded quite intense." Benimaru glared at the merchants as he finished.

Surprised by my appearance, the merchants turned blue upon hearing those words. They probably assumed that I would leave the matter entirely to Rigurd and Myourmiles to handle. But now that I had shown up with my executives like this, these people didn't know how to react.

"Demon Lord Rimuru-sama has arrived. Salute at this instant," Rigurd said while giving the merchants a hard glare.

Some of them immediately stood up and bowed in salute. But at least half of the people instead looked at me with confusion, they simply sat in their chairs and observed the situation.

Well, for retailers that did not get proper education such as the nobles, this was probably how they would react in such circumstances.

Even Duke Muze tried to stand up, but I spoke out to stop them.

"No need to abide by the formality, Rigurd."

After I said that with a smiling face, I glanced around the conference room. Rigurd obeyed my order and fell quiet and observed the room.

I could see not only the merchants, but also disguised reporters. It seemed like in the case of our nation doing anything inappropriate, they would go back to their respective country to report the matter.

Whether we were to cry and beg about how we couldn't pay or to shut the merchants up with violence, no matter how we reacted, they would probably report something ridiculous regardless.

But we were already informed about that. They couldn't expect that some of the more friendly reporters had already let Diablo in on the plot beforehand.

*Kufufufufu, how very moving for them to have such a thought*—Diablo complimented the reporters with this line, but they only seemed to respond with a numb smile out of fear. They had probably experienced something horrible in the past and had sworn not to antagonize Diablo—that's the strong will that was giving off with their reaction. They may have received some form of threat, but that was between the reporters and Diablo.

*I shouldn't really ask too much about the matter.*

“I see it is Your Majesty Rimuru. A pleasure to meet you. I sincerely apologize for only greeting you just now.”

Duke Muze had quite the style of a nobleman as he bowed elegantly. He only panicked for a second upon seeing me before regaining his composure. A gentle expression emerged on his face as he greeted me in the place of everyone else at the scene.

“So you are Duke Muze of the Kingdom of Guston. Why are you here? Shouldn't you have no business here?”

I smiled and said the line that I prepared.

There was no need for me to be timid just because he was a nobleman, so I responded quite smoothly. Practice and rehearsal sure are important.

“The thing was, a lot of these people were trading with your nation for the first time. They came complaining to me about how their legitimate rights were despised upon. It is the duty of a nobleman to protect my citizens. So I came despite knowing the rudeness of my intervention in order to have a verdict on the matter.”

*How shameless. This guy's a wolf in sheep's clothing.*

*Although with that being said, I'm not any better than him, except that I'm a slime, so I'm pretty transparent.*

“I see, how tireless of you. But there's one strange thing I must say, Myourmiles over there said that our nation has a big enough budget to afford the payment, but there was a delay in the final transaction, how was that the case?”

“Well, about that, it's because these people would only accept dwarven gold coins—”

Myourmiles was a good actor. He pretended to panic upon hearing my question and tried to explain. But he was interrupted by Duke Muze.

“That is only natural. Myourmiles, if you were a licensed merchant in the Kingdom of Blumund in the past, you should be well-versed in the international charter with regards to trade! Unlike whatever rubbish that's been carried out in that Freedom Association, these people only

trust dwarven gold coins,” Duke Muze explained calmly to back up the merchants gathered here.

He was definitely acting like a neutral third party with good intentions on purpose, trying to mend the matter for us and sell me a favor. That’s why no matter how you looked at his attitude now, it would appear justified.

But this is no different from forcing others to follow their rules.

I quickly glanced at Diablo.

Having understood, Diablo smiled and nodded back in response.

*Now we have everything prepared.*

“I see, so that’s how it is. I was wondering what happened when I heard that reporters from all the nations gathered here. So this is for something this minor.”

“So Rimuru-sama, please just leave me to handle it...”

Seeing the pressure coming from Benimaru, some of the merchants were terrified. Everything seemed to be going according to plan, they were taking the bait that we were pressuring them into submission.

“Don’t get so worked up, Benimaru. It is understandable why the merchants were worried after hearing their explanation.”

As I tried to calm Benimaru down, he seemed surprised. He almost looked unpleasant as the ordeal got interrupted despite the smooth smiling before.

“But Rimuru-sama, I am confused. Even if we didn’t have dwarven gold coins, we still have ancient gold coins. If they won’t take that either, we can always just give them the equivalent value of our nation’s specialties. Why won’t they accept these terms?”

“I believe that the merchants surely had their reasons as well.”

I observed Duke Muze’s reactions while making these conversations. It seemed like he was looking for an opening to interrupt. He wanted to be the guy to convince the merchants and lend us a favor.

“How about we do it like that? Would you first place your trust in our nation and as Benimaru-sama suggested, to conclude the transaction with a certificate or actual goods?”

To finish things once and for all, Myourmiles took the first shot.

If they agreed, then everything could be concluded peacefully.

But if they were to decline...

*If they won’t even step down now with my presence, we will be forced to act with resolve.*

“H-how can we entrust you with that!”

“T-that’s right.”

“It was precisely because this was the monster kingdom, that we wished to be paid in a safe currency such as the dwarven gold coins. I do hope that your nation will b-be considerate about it—”

It seemed not all of them were merchants who were not accustomed to such situations, there were people who knew how to deal with the nobles. But what they said was all incredibly selfish and didn’t consider us at all.

*Ahh, what a pity—I thought.*



Muze believed that the time was now.

He was worried that after being intimidated by the demon lord, these merchants would leave out of fear. But they were still listening to Muze's order.

But that was natural, to be honest. Muze was the duke of Guston. Even though he was of the young age of thirty-five, he managed to be acquainted with the great Rosso family.

They were one of the dominating forces of the Western Nations, with extraordinary statuses. Only a few had this power.

Therefore, in reality, those who dared to oppose Muze's order were less than few. The plan he was sent to enact this time came from the divine order of the elder of the Rosso. He ordered Muze to "Give favors to Demon Lord Rimuru and earn his trust." He also promised to promote him to one of the Five Great Elders when his task was completed.

The Five Great Elders—the people who stood at the top of the world. Muze was overjoyed. And he swore to carry out this order with all the power he had, no matter what.

Muze promised those greedy merchants that he would help them rise to affluence. He dragged the reporters of different nations down with him in order to ensure his personal safety. Muze was going to confront Demon Lord Rimuru himself. This was a job only he could accomplish.

It was said that Demon Lord Rimuru, not long after his birth (as demon lord), butchered Demon Lord Clayman, who was known for his cruelty. He then established himself as the new demon lord. Moreover, according to rumors, he was also acquainted with the "Storm Dragon" that massacred twenty-thousand soldiers in the past. He was a fearsome demon lord.

He was initially afraid to be in contact with Demon Lord Rimuru directly, but when comparing his fear to the future glory that he would bear, he managed to overcome his fear easily.

Muze was a man that only saw profit. And it was for this reason that he was manipulated by people, which he himself had yet to notice.

All of this was exactly as predicted by Elmesia El-Ru Sarion.

It was honestly surprising to Muze that the demon lord would personally come to such an occasion with his executives. He was planning to take down the man called Myourmiles before requesting to meet the demon lord.

Although it turned out differently from what Muze had planned, this in a sense had saved him plenty of work. There were reporters at the scene right now, and apparently more reporters were flooding in on the main lobby downstairs.

That meant that all his preparations were in place.

When the merchants rejected the demon lord's proposal, Muze's plan would be a success.

The rest would be for him to calm the merchants and take over the situation. This alone should have Demon Lord Rimuru in his good grace already.

Muze was convinced of his success, and spoke with a calm expression—



“I am unsure about your view on the situation right now, your Majesty. But if you are troubled, would you mind discussing the matter with me personally? One should treasure every encounter, and I would love to offer my aid to your Grace—”

*Should I say that I've seen this coming, or should I call his acting too horrible.*

This was the suggestion that Duke Muze came up with.

Every executive standing behind me was giving the duke a cold glare. Observing their expressions, Duke Muze looked quite anxious. It seemed that he had realized that something was not going as expected.

*Now, time to wrap things up.*

“How kind of you to have such a thought, but there is no such need. Come in.”

Geld entered the room upon hearing my command. In his hands was a plate with mountains of gold coins piling on each other.

“Uh?!”

“No way...”

“Are those all...?”

The room was riled up.

Duke Muze’s expression changed drastically upon seeing the gold coins. It seemed that he had realized the failure of his plan.

“Since you’ve asked us to pay. Very well, here are the dwarven gold coins as requested.”

Rigurd announced. At that moment, the room fell silent.

“P-please...hold on a moment, Your Majesty Rimuru!”

Duke Muze was panicking. But it was already too late.

“What is it?” I asked coldly as Duke Muze asked me with a desperate expression, “A-are all of these dwarven gold coins? Y-you know it’s illegal to make counterfeit coins!”

*Heh—and you dare talk to me in that way?*

*How very rude of you, Muze-kun.*

“You dare say something so disrespectful towards Rimuru-sama—”

Diablo walked forward as he finished. Benimaru also gave a furious expression while Shion who stood behind me had been giving off a dangerous aura from just now. It was precisely because this was how things would turn out that I had hoped Muze would mind his tone.

“M-my apologies for the intrusion. But, but are these really all—?”

“You may have them appraised if you have doubts.”

As I said so with a smile, Duke Muze shivered.

“Then do indulge me and allow me to use my precious magic item to investigate.”

It was already rude enough for this person to interrupt my conversation between Muze... Never mind, there's no need to penalize him. This merchant was probably one of the co-conspirators under Duke Muze's command. Out of panic, he might have forgotten the good manners he was raised to abide by.

This guy was all pretending to be courteous to begin with. Although I was no better, I cut out to be a ruler either, so I couldn't really judge them.

*Whatever the case, we should continue the conversation.*

“Rimuru-sama, many reporters were asking if they could document the negotiation as part of a news report. What do you think?”

Shuna asked from the other side of the door through ‘Telepathy Net’ after she had acted in accordance with my plan.

The reporters had gathered outside according to the demand of Diablo. If I gave the order, they would rush in as witnesses.

“If that's the case, isn't it perfect timing? We will have the reporters as witnesses to your appraisal on the authenticity of these gold coins,” Benimaru announced, playing along with Shuna.

And as planned, the reporters entered the conference room.

“Th-these are authentic—!!”

*Muze's henchman shouted in astonishment. It took us so much work to get these, of course they are all real.*

“There's no way these are fake. From appearance alone you can tell they pack a punch. Some even looked quite dated, they must not have been flowing in the market,” a reporter who looked knowledgeable commented. Those were probably the ones exchanged from Elmesia.

That gal seemed to have saved up as much as she could.

Now that even the reporters were analyzing the authenticity of the gold coins, Muze's henchmen couldn't really do anything to aid his cause. The reporters were useful in that they could prevent these people from switching the gold coins to counterfeits. But even if they did, Souei, who had been observing in the shadows, wouldn't allow it to transpire.

“Now, is that enough? Those merchants looked quite concerned about the payment, hurry up and pay them already.”

As I announced so arrogantly, Rigurd and Myourmiles nodded and said: “Yes sir!”

They then began the process of verifying contracts and paying the merchants.

And—

There wasn't much slip up later. Under the watch of the reporters, the transactions were completed smoothly.

“Looks like you were the last one.”

With that, all payments were delivered. This concluded all transactions during the festival.

“Ha,ahaha, as expected of Your Majesty Rimuru. How did you manage to gather so many dwarven gold coins...” Duke Muze said with a stiff face.

As we finished counting, there was a mountain of gold coins before Muze’s eyes. A mountain of shining, almost uncountable amounts of gold coins. The merchants looked confused. They probably didn’t know what to do either as things had deviated so greatly from their original plan.

It was then that the suspected henchman spoke again.

“Well, since your nation has done according to the international charter, we have no more complaints. We will be in your care from now on as well—”

“Oh, that wouldn’t be necessary,” I answered.

The merchants looked shocked as they heard my words. So were my executives.

“Wh-what would that mean...”

“Our business with you all ends here, from this instant onward. There won’t be a next time. That’s what I meant,” I announced casually.

The executives were all filled with surprise. Except Diablo, who had been giggling at my answer. Only this guy saw through my thoughts. *There’s nothing I could do with this lad.*

“I don’t quite understand what you are getting at...”

“Wh-what are you planning? Isn’t it enough that you’ve earned our trust by paying us?”

“Are you looking down on us because we are just retailers? But without us wandering merchants, nations can’t do much of any trade among each other!”

They finally seemed to come back to their senses as the merchants began to shout and complain.

“You people, don’t you think it was *a bit too rude* to speak to Rimuru-sama, the ruler of this nation in that tone?”

Shion spoke with a hidden cluster of fury. Realizing this, the merchants all shut their mouths.

Since they all went quiet, it was time to finish the whole ordeal.

“Since it’d be too much trouble to be subtle about things, I’ll just put this out there. Weren’t you guys complaining about how our nation has no ‘credibility’? This so-called credibility should be established on the basis that both parties trust each other, not for one party to force the other into accepting their own terms. That is just how I see it. Didn’t Myourmiles already requested many times for you guys to trust us?”

“T-that’s...”

“But...”

“Well, I can’t say that we don’t understand your sentiment. We are monsters after all, even when we announced that our nation wished to communicate with the Western Nations, you were still unsure as to whether we would really follow through with regulations set up by humans—that must have been how you felt.”

“Ye-yes that’s it! So that’s why—”

“However, we did make compromises as well. Didn’t we offer you to exchange goods as well as payment in forms of ancient gold coins? But none of you even cared to consider these options once.”

“...!!”

“Ugh...”

Myourmiles had already desperately tried to negotiate with these people countless times, even humbling himself to begging for a solution. Yet all of his efforts were rejected by the merchants here. *That I cannot forgive.*

“Just like you all wanted to trade with trust-worthy partners, we too would only want to deal with trustworthy people. That’s why all of you, from now on, are forbidden from trading in our nation. We will not allow you to enter our kingdom, nor will you dream of getting a trade license.”

The merchants realized the severity of the situation upon hearing my announcement. On this land filled with potential, they were no longer welcome.

Duke Muze looked pale as he seemed to have realized his plan had been foiled completely.

“T-this is outrageous! These people were merely defending their rights based on the international charter—“ Muze, having lost his temper, protested.

*It’d be the end of him if they can no longer trade with our nations.* He must be thinking so.

Indeed, this land was expected to develop into a town with significant economic influence. It may be as powerful as the entire Western Nations combined.

That must have been why he tried to befriend us in the first place—*if you have already seen that far into the future, you shouldn’t have played tricks like these.*

*Because I show no mercy to my enemies.*

“Rights you say. You seemed to have been mistaken. Allow me to clarify, our nation has yet to join the Western State Council. We did have the intention to join, but it’s really not that big a deal even if we don’t.”

“What—?”

“Well you see, this land will no doubt grow to be an important economic hub. This is an undeniable fact at this point, or at least that’s what I am driving towards.”

“What nonsense!! By what? Your own will? How dare you say something this arrogant—”

“It’s not arrogance at all. Everyone here has united to head towards the same goal. And in the end, there will only be one outcome. I’m simply part of our momentum.”

I tried to make it sound nice... But in reality, I did put what I personally wanted on priority and to make them into reality. That’s why I honestly couldn’t deny it when he called me arrogant. But nonetheless, I still managed to argue back sounding all justified.

“I also wanted to build an equal relationship with the Western State Council. But the deal’s off if they try to suppress our nation in any way. We don’t really need to play along with them as long as we trade through the Freedom Association. Is that understandable to you?”

Besides, even if we needed to, we could always just make an exclusive deal with countries such as Blumund or Dwargon. We only had to make such deals with countries we trusted.

We also had plenty of tricks up our sleeve, so there's no need to panic. We could also just develop our country and raise our influence until countries willing to trust us stepped forward. This thought had solidified in my heart.

"Uh, I understand. Then allow me to be the bridge to connect your nation and the council. It seems that there has been a grave misunderstanding, but I still hope to be at least of some use to you, Your Majesty Rimuru."

*You sure tried your best, Duke Muze. Seriously though, had you decided to stand down early on... I didn't plan to say what I have to say now.*

"Huh—I can't really have Muze-san as my intermediary. Since you've lost the power to do such a thing?"

"What?"

Duke Muze was shocked by my words and wasn't able to react for some time.

Since the whole ordeal has already concluded anyway, I didn't want to say this to his face directly. But at this point, I suppose explaining things thoroughly to him would be a form of mercy.

"Every reporter in this room will write about this incident in their respective nation. The content will be that there was a secret power struggle behind the Founding Festival of the Monster Kingdom, which has to do with the payment for the merchants. They will make sure of the facts and write what must be very interesting articles."

"..."

Duke Muze was completely baffled at the moment, upon thinking what would happen later, his expression looked dimmer and dimmer. This was precisely why I didn't want to say those things.

"The merchants ignored our request and would only take dwarven gold coins. The strange thing was, despite being completely unrelated to the whole ordeal, some big-shot nobleman came forth all of a sudden and managed to calm all these merchants down. I wonder what people would think when they see news like this."

"Th-that's..."

Well, this was Diablo's plan.

He gathered a bunch of reporters for them to observe all of the details. This way our nation would be portrayed as the reasonable side while the merchants would appear as though they were all working towards some sort of a conspiracy.

I agreed with his method.

Since information was only useful when used correctly. As opposed to allowing people to fabricate stories about us, I'd hope that facts of the matter could be reported word for word from the start.

That being said, it was thanks to Gazel and Elmesia's advice that we were able to come up with such a strategy.

Even Diablo said that "I still have much to learn" before expressing gratitude to them both.

This time we were totally in their care. I'd have to thank them properly when such opportunities arose.

"That's how it is. We have no need for you to do anything. Also, I have one hundred percent trust in Myourmiles, who you have looked down upon. I'm even willing to hand our nation's financial sector entirely to him to manage. He's a lot more useful than you."

"Uhhh—"

Duke Muze's face twisted out of humiliation.

The merchants all looked desperate.

In comparison, the reporters looked happier than I expected. Since they were not the victims here, instead, some of them were even writing down the details of the negotiation with much vigor. Some have even brought expensive magic items such as video recorders. Surely the story of this incident would quickly spread among the nations.

These merchants brought the reporters here as insurance, yet now they had become their doom.

"I'll leave the rest to you."

"I will take care of everything now, Your Majesty Rimuru."

Myourmiles acted with extreme courtesy. As I passed him, I gave him a pat on the shoulder and whispered: "Be counting on you, Myourmiles-kun." After which, I left the room with the executives.



I thought I saw Myourmiles-kun giving off a wry smile. Well, it wasn't really a physical one. And next, he switched to his elite look, unique to a merchant, and turned to Duke Muze, as well as glancing around the merchants.

Surely Myourmiles's prowess had also been observed at length by my executives.

People shouldn't have any complaints now, even if I appointed Myourmiles as the minister of finance.

"Then the transaction has been completed successfully, and our festival is officially over. Please follow me to a different venue—"

Myourmiles's stately voice came out of the room.

Now we could finally say that everything had concluded.



Having chased away Duke Muze and his lackeys, there were still many problems left for us to tackle.

We would hold our routine conference to reflect on ourselves.

We were not going to the guest lobby, but the usual large conference room. We gathered there on the night following the end of the Tempest Founding Festival.

Gazel, Elmesia, Youm's party, Fuze and even Yuuki, Hinata and Masayuki got a seat as visitors. There were also a few rare guests that had come upon receiving my invitation.

Since all of my executives had gathered as well, the room felt crowded.

I didn't invite Milim and the other demon lords. If there were too many people, the conference could last for days. Especially considering the many incidents that occurred during the festival, there were tons of motions for us to go through.

My only concern was Veldora. He was moping in the corner of the room, and he was bound to interject at some point. Probably along the lines of "No challenger came to fight me," etc. *Ah, what a bunch of useless complaints.*

*It's best that we don't complicate things further. Let's get the reflection conference going.*

"Eh—first off, I want to say this to everyone, thank you all for the hard work this time!"

I started by praising everyone and began the conference.

The first one to speak was, surprisingly, Benimaru.

"I was genuinely shocked just now. I didn't expect Rimuru-sama to punish those merchants like that."

The executives nodded in agreement.

Most of them probably thought that I would conclude the matter after the payment. But upon seeing my serious treatment towards them, everyone, without exception, looked surprised.

“Right, I didn’t expect you to give such a severe punishment,” Rigurd agreed with Benimaru.

Gazel, who had been listening to our conversation, intriguingly asked me: “So? What was your verdict, Rimuru?”

Having been asked, I retold the whole story.

“To have severed ties with them while mustering such resolve...” Gazel said, rather dumbfounded, after hearing the story. But he wasn’t mad, quite the opposite, as he actually agreed with my method.

“Heh heh heh, I think you did the right thing. An eye for an eye. That being said, have you considered what to do afterwards?”

*I’ve really been outsmarted by Elmesia.*

Her insight was to the point of being frightening. It seemed that she had seen right through me.

“What did she mean by that, Rimuru-sama?”

Since Benimaru asked, I had to express my view.

“It’s like what I said before, I’m not gonna play to the Council’s score. If possible, I wish to be on equal and friendly terms with them.”

“I understand that. That’s why, in my humble opinion, we need to make a certain level of compromise.”

I nodded to Rigurd and continued: “Listen well now! As Elmesia-san has said, that Duke Muze was just someone else’s lackey. We followed their rule and rejected Muze. That’s why, next time it will be his boss taking the lead in person.”

“That is most likely the case.”

“—In other words, will we be able to negotiate with them once more?”

“That’s right. Since it was them that first failed in negotiating with us, when the opportunity arises, we can utilize our advantages in that regard to have better terms in negotiation!”

“I see...”

“In my opinion, they didn’t want to antagonize us directly. That’s why they wanted to put a collar on our neck by first befriending us. Now that they’ve failed, surely, they will have to consider us an opponent to be reckoned with. In that case—”

“Surely they will come across us again if they intend to launch economic warfare. Neither of us is prepared well enough to be able to do that. Therefore, both can form their own self-sustaining economic circle even without the opponent. That’s most likely the case.”

Gazel continued to further elaborate. For now, things had concluded with our negotiation. And it would seem that we had the upper hand in the long run.

“In that case, we don’t need to be restrained by the international charter set by the Western State Council, and will be able to take over different nations by ourselves. But this will not be a militaristic invasion, but rather an invasive act via economy.”

“Kufufufufu, leave it to me. I shall put all of the Western Nations on a platter for Rimuru-

sama!"

*You don't have to. That's not what I wanted anyway...*

Diablo's comment was giving me a headache again.

"Diablo, if you do something like that, you will only make our life more difficult!"

Rejected, R E J E C T E D!

"A-apologies for my offense."

"Cut the crap, errand boy, go fetch Rimuru-sama more tea, now!"

Shion gave a finishing blow to the frustrated Diablo.

She also made me upset to be honest, but I'd give her a pass for now.

"I think what Diablo has just suggested may still be achievable given time. But right now, doing that serves no purpose. We may give it a try if conflict breaks out, but it will, nonetheless, be a lot of hard work. We just need to build a friendly relationship. Honestly, I don't want any more trouble to deal with."

As I explained matters like that, everyone seemed to agree.

We just had to try our best at making our own nation better. To create a firm economic circle on this land—that was our priority.

"Indeed, there's not really any other option than to negotiate with your opponent. But I'm actually pretty sympathetic towards them. They can't really restrain you with economic sanctions nor through military suppression. It'll really be hard for them to give any condition."

Elmesia shed a crocodile tear for our opponent.

*But doesn't that logic apply to Sorcerer's Kingdom Sarion as well...*

However, she had a point. Now our opponents were limited in their methods of comeback.

"I see. I am aware of these already. But, did Rimuru-sama have other plans as well to have treated those merchants so harshly—?" Geld asked.

He thought that I was being too harsh. Not every merchant was Muze's lackey, some were probably just pressured into doing it, having been blackmailed by Duke Muze. The fact that I punished them regardless of that was truly surprising to everyone.

Naturally, I had my reasons.

I smirked and was about to explain before Myourmiles, who was all smiles, interjected first, "Fufufu, that's very simple, everyone. Just as Emperor Elmesia said, we were simply giving them an eye for an eye."

"What does that mean, Myourmiles?"

"An eye for an eye?"

"I still don't get it..."

Whether it was Benimaru, Rigurd or Geld. All of them were still confused by this explanation.

Diablo seemed to have understood, but he was still quietly making tea. It would seem that he hadn't recovered from his frustrated defeat just now. Seemed a bit beaten.

*Aren't you a demon and all, are you really that weak-minded...*

"Rimuru-sama said that I would handle the rest of the matter. In other words, I was to do a

favor for those merchants that now had nowhere to go, and convert them to our side instead.”

Myourmiles sure was amazing. I thought that he might have known what I meant, but I didn’t expect him to understand this so clearly. I was going to confirm with him later, but that doesn’t seem necessary now.

—If you want to make these people behave, rather than resorting to threats or intimidation, it is better to do them a favor. It is much simpler and has a higher rate of success—

*It was what Elmesia said, and I’m putting it into practice. Sticks and carrots all at the same time. That’s pretty much our tactic.*

“I see, as expected of Rimuru-sama.”

“So that’s the case. You have my approval.”

“So, Myourmiles-san, did we really manage to convert those merchants?”

“Fufufu, we are guaranteed not to fail. I said that I would personally plead for them, and that was already a favor for those merchants. Thanks to Rimuru-sama’s threat back then, this whole thing was surprisingly simple!” Myourmiles, with the expression of a scheming merchant, reported joyfully.

*It’s great that we have succeeded, but this seemed to make me look like some sort of a villain. I’m somewhat offended by it, but I’ll give it a pass.*

And as such, everyone was on the same page and we proceeded to the next motion.



Rather than calling it the next motion, I should have called it the main issue of the day.

“As I’ve just said, the matters regarding those merchants will be handled by Myourmiles-kun. The problem that has been troubling us for days has finally been resolved, I want to have everyone comment about how they felt during the Founding Festival. Any thoughts are welcome, don’t reserve any of your opinions!”

As soon as I finished, Gazel let out a few dry coughs before quickly interjecting, “Rimuru, as the leader of your ally nation, there’s something I want to bring to your attention. I’ve already commented on your out of line actions last night, this time my question is the same. What were you thinking when you did it?”

“Eh, what do you mean?”

I didn’t quite get what he said, but considering how pissed Gazel looked, I may have messed things up again.

*However, I still have no clue. If I have to decide, it would be with regards to the handling of the merchants mentioned just now, but it didn’t seem to be the case...*

“Are you really that self-aware? That’s why I have to keep an eye on you this entire time! Vesta, weren’t you and Gabil-san the ones that developed the projector machine? Wasn’t it

also your idea to give it some advanced application so that even long-distance images could be replayed in real-time?"

"King Gazel, a-about that..."

Vesta's face had "Oh shit" written all over it.

*Did Mr. Vesta get so into researching that he forgot to report back to King Gazel?*

Kaijin also muttered rather perplexedly: "This guy is still as careless as always." It looked like he was right.

"King Gazel, it's not like that. Vesta-san and I indeed developed what you just described and proposed to keep Demon Lord Clayman's legacy. However, the one who wanted to combine video recording magic items and the projector, was Rimuru-sama!"

Gabil was famous for his frankness. He revealed the whole ordeal without hesitation.

His words made Vesta look awkward while I looked troubled.

"—It's just as I thought. Next time before you go public, could you at least give me a heads up and discuss it with me a bit," Gazel, looking worn out, gave me this rather straight-forward bit of advice.

To us, the projector's value was that it was a convenient and irreplaceable invention for entertainment. But to the eyes of the kings and nobles of the Western Nations, it was an entirely different case.

"This thing has way too many applications, to the point that they're uncountable. At least to the crowd at the scene, everyone could tell its value," Gazel said unpleasantly.

*I just thought that it would be great to have a large screen to watch the expanded footage of the martial tournament and the labyrinth interior. And the people loved it too...*

But the device had given the officials of different nations quite a cultural shock, it seemed.

"With something like that, it would change the whole concept of war," Gazel's friend Vaughn said, Dolph-san also nodded in agreement.

They said that an immediate application would be in the military. One huge advantage was that they could now command the army from a safe distance. The officials of the army no longer had to risk themselves in any dangerous situation. Instead they could send out scout troops to check on the enemy status and quickly gain feedback to apply to their own army.

As opposed to the one-to-one "Magic Communication," this method would enable many times more volume of intelligence transfer. Everyone could share the same batch of information, and the accuracy of command would be greatly improved.

We published the technology at random, and it could already be called ultra-futuristic. It seemed to be a revolutionary technology.

I was only thinking "It'll be good to have something like this" and ordered people to construct the device. Yet it turned out that we made something incredible.

I muttered unconsciously that "You should have told me this earlier," but I was met with Gazel's stare and scolding "That was my line!"

*I am reflecting now, but that's not the point of this meeting. Not everything in this world will go according to our heart's content.*

“B-but, you must require a high level of magicule to operate the machine. If the mana of the user isn’t high enough, it won’t work. The distance and quantity of the intelligence transfer also depends on the user’s ability. It’s not that simple to apply it universally!”

I managed to cover my tail with this explanation. I had actually made improvements regarding these drawbacks by developing a system to store magicule. But it would be wise to save these words for later discussions with Gazel in private.

“Anyhow, just don’t publish something that can be suspected to be of military usage so casually. You’re the only one who wants to use it for entertainment...” Gazel told me, baffled.

And when I thought it was over, it was Elmesia’s turn to cut in.

“I can actually purchase similar inventions in the future. I heard that there’s something called a ‘patent’ in your world, right? I’m willing to pay the necessary price to purchase the rights for your invention, and grant me the privilege to use it first.”

“Ah, then El-chan, please get this nation’s bathing technology as well!”

“I got it, Elen. My negotiation with Yoshida-san has also gone well, you have to drop by my place more often in the future!”

“That’s for sure!”

I didn’t even get the chance to respond before Elen cut in to add to the mess. Elmesia also agreed happily. The two were sitting together like close siblings. This was the emperor, who Elen was facing, so at the end of the day, even if they were related by blood, this attitude was still way too casual.

On the other hand, I saw Elalude, her father’s expression changed drastically as he began to shout in panic, “Elen, what are you doing!”

“Y-your Majesty! Even though she’s my daughter, please don’t spoil Elen! Also, Elen, you can’t just call her Majesty the emperor ‘El-chan.’”

“Elalude, why do you talk so much?”

“Seriously, dad’s always so dramatic.”

I had a feeling that when these two got mixed together, things may get dangerous. I suddenly felt bad for Elalude. Elen and Elmesia also shared a surprisingly good chemistry. You can’t fake a friendship like that, they were really close to each other, going so far as to give high-fives. I couldn’t feel their difference in status at all.

Even the aristocrats of the Western Nations couldn’t approach her—to most, Emperor Elmesia El-Ru Sarion was indeed such an elusive top figure. Yet the sight in front of my eyes was really hard to imagine. Even the members of the Emperor’s Imperial Knights standing behind Elmesia looked surprised at the scene.

“Members of the Magus! What you saw is the equivalent of a national secret, you must not leak this information!”

Although Elalude came out to give closure, there’s no saying as to how effective it was.

Elmesia, on the other hand, paid no mind to what Elalude or anyone else said, she was gonna speak her mind regardless.

“Given this to be the case, I hope that you will send researchers to our kingdom. Of course, it will be considered an official employment. We will be paying the proper fee for instructing tech research.”

“In other words, will you be in charge of finding the labor as well?”

“About that...I do want to do that. But if you are afraid of a possible leak of your core technology, we can also export the necessary instruments to address the issue.”

“Um um, in that way, there will be a need to transport components made in our nation.”

To respond to Elmesia’s request, many conditions had to be satisfied first. For instance, the plumbing required for facilities relying on water, such as a kitchen, bathroom, or toilet, were all the product of dwarven technology contributed by Kaijin and the other dwarves. I wasn’t sure whether technicians from Sarion could recreate them or not, but it would also take too much time for them to learn the technology from scratch.

With that being the case, it would be faster for us to export the domestically produced machine parts directly to Sarion.

“Since you are sending the parts, I hope you will be using that thing called a train. I will be providing funds for that as well; can you finish developing it faster?” Elmesia said, seemingly having seen through my thoughts already.

*Gazel has a Skill that can read minds, but does Elmesia have one as well? So far there's no sign of that, but I better not get careless. Regardless of that, her proposal is still worth considering.*

“We still have yet to develop the train itself. That’s why, if any scientists or experts in magic from your nation are willing to offer assistance, it will certainly help speed things up.”

“Of course we will! Elalude—?”

“Yes ma’am! I’m on it right now.”

Elalude was as loyal to Elmesia as it gets. He didn’t look like a nobleman of high authority, instead he seemed more like a conveniently placed errand boy. Seeing how Elalude was behaving, Gazel turned to him with a sympathetic look. Gazel had also previously mentioned that he couldn’t raise his head before Elmesia either, surely, he related a lot to Elalude.

And as such, Emperor Elmesia of the Sorcerer’s Dynasty Sarion was willing to personally provide assistance to us.

Sooner or later we would be signing a research agreement and begin research cooperation officially. On one hand, we had Sarion with its pride of magic science, and on the other hand, we have the spirit engineering developed in Dwargon. It wouldn’t be long before the dream of uniting the land was accomplished.

As for the “Surmounters” sent by Luminas, we considered also letting them join based on the circumstances. We would have to wait to see what kind of people they were. *However, they may actually come up with some interesting ideas, nonetheless.*

“That’s truly reassuring, Elmesia-san. Now that our research program has been settled, surely our magitrain will be on its way soon.”

“Ho? Is its name ‘magitrain’?”

“Yes, it is installed with a motor using spirits—the ‘Spirit Magic Core’—and manipulated using magic spells that would be implemented by magic science. Isn’t it perfect?”

“Hmph, as if it’s that easy.”

“How interesting! How very interesting. I really hope you make it real soon.”

Gazel was calling me overly optimistic, but he said so with a smile on his face, confident in my future success. *It seems that he won't be giving me life advice anytime soon.*

Elmesia’s reaction on the other hand was like a child discovering a new toy. Her eyes were sparkling. It left a big impression on me, as it drew a very deep contrast with the gloomy face on Elalude.

*Anyhow, there's bound to be a lot of progress from now on.*

“Let’s lay down the tracks to Sarion first. We can build it alongside the road construction. It will save us time as well.”

Since our country was leading the charge, it was easy to standardize things. Laying down the tracks wouldn’t be throwing up any issues.

I responded based on these considerations.

“Hold on! I have a question about the ‘tunnel’ proposed by Benimaru-sama in the past, is it really needed in the future?”

An unexpected question from an unexpected person. It was Momiji.

She asked us “Whether the tunnel was necessary,” *does it mean that she's willing to let us dig through their mountain?*

“If it’s possible, I hope to dig tunnels in the future. First, we will set up a checkpoint in Blumund, and then go through Farmenas until we reach the west gate of Armored Kingdom Dwargon. Based on that, in order for people to be able to move south from Blumund, we are expected to lay tracks to the streets of the Sorcerer’s Dynasty Sarion. It is hard enough to get the rights to use the land in western kingdoms already, we will also run a lot of losses by taking the long route around the mountains. But if this is something you dislike, then I wouldn’t pursue the project any further.”

“I see. Then I will trust Rimuru-sama’s words. If you guarantee not to cause any harm to the holy mountain, I may consider giving you permission to dig this ‘tunnel.’”

“Really?”

“Yes, however, I have one condition. I hope that you can send Benimaru-sama as the person in charge—“ Momiji said while blushing. It went without saying that I was an understanding man.

“Benimaru-kun!”

“Hold on! Rimuru-sama, are you selling me out?”

“Don’t put it that way. Geld is handling some major cases now. If anyone’s better at leadership than him, it would be you.”

Geld nodded in agreement to my words. In contrast, Benimaru looked shocked.

“There’s no way I can handle it. To begin with, I don’t even have any relevant knowledge about construction work!”

*Oh yeah, I guess he has a point.*

“I see, so it really can’t be...”

I was thinking about sacrificing Benimaru to get this thing over with. It would seem that life just doesn’t always go my way. I wasn’t planning for Benimaru to stay out for too long to begin with, this deal couldn’t be done from the get-go.

“It is unfortunate, but Benimaru is my right-hand man. I suppose we still can go together to inspect the construction at times—”

“Ah, that would do just fine. Please come and rest at our village when you do,” Momiji said with a smile all over her face. Seeing Hakuro on the side, smirking like his plot had come to fruition, it seemed that both of them had figured that this matter would quickly solidify Benimaru and Momiji’s relationship.

“Benimaru-kun, why don’t you just give in to this?”

“I’m not doing that. But I suppose I can be Rimuru-sama’s guard during inspection,” shrugging, Benimaru replied.

This was perhaps as much as Benimaru could back down for. I guess I’ll take what’s on the table, Momiji was happy as well. If I pushed now, it would be abuse of power. How their relationship would play out from here would be their own doing.

And so, I managed to profit from it.

“Please just call me Momiji, Rimuru-sama.”

Hakuro acknowledged as well, apparently, I didn’t have to be that respectful after all.

“Then, Momiji-san, is it okay for me to run an investigation to see whether the locale is convenient for tunnel drilling?”

“It’s fine. We don’t have a problem with it, though I hope that you will run your investigation carefully.”

In other words, if the investigations showed that there was no issue, we could begin the tunnel drilling.

The attitude of the Tengu clan had softened on the matter. The project could finally proceed smoothly. How wonderful.

*Next time I should also visit Momiji’s mother Kaede-san.*

I’d go with Hakuro when the opportunity arose.

“As you can see, Elmesia-san, we still hope that you can grant us the permission to cross the border into Sarion and run the investigation—”

“Everything has been approved. Elalude, do as you see fit.”

This was my ideal model of a ruler—Elmesia’s attitude of pushing everything to someone else to handle was giving me a lot of ideas.

“Yes ma’am. Your Majesty Rimuru, I will print out the necessary permits. However, regarding the construction within our nation, please allow us to prepare civil engineers.”

Elalude seemed to have grown more and more wary. There’s no way he wasn’t an excellent

minister, having worked under such a free-spirited emperor. But Elalude was still unwilling to comply with our terms without his own additional condition.

If we were to handle all of the construction, it would probably cause much inconvenience to them. I personally didn't object and agreed. Since both sides had agreed to help each other, the deal was sealed.

We were going to open a reflection meeting, yet the important topic suddenly got settled.

Since all of the big heads were gathered here, we skipped all the complicated procedures and went straight to the deal-making. Everything progressed surprisingly fast.

Well, most of this was thanks to Elmesia.

Under these circumstances, Youm, who had been listening to us quietly, had something to say.

"Young master—no, Your Majesty Rimuru. I have a question to ask, if it is convenient?"

With all these powerful figures gathered at the meeting, raising his own opinion already took a lot of courage. Youm seemed to have grown considerably since the last time we met.

"What is it, Youm-san?"

"I was going to explain it personally, unfortunately, I'm not as educated, so is it okay for my wife to explain?"

*Wife? Does he mean Myuran? It'd be surprising if Youm got some concubine, surely that wouldn't happen to Youm.*

Although it turned out that my worries were unnecessary, the one who stood up next was indeed Myuran.

"You look just as great as always, Your Majesty Rimuru."

"You too. Myuran-san, you look good, how wonderful."

"With the great debt I owe towards Your Majesty Rimuru, it is fine for you to call my name directly."

*No way. The meeting has been foiled by Elmesia with a bunch of casual nonsense, we can't have ourselves stray from formality, though it seems it's too late to say such things.*

*Then we will leave that for future discussion. Let's just talk casually now.*

"Then, Myuran, what's on your mind?"

"Yes, your Majesty, the question is about the proposal Rimuru-sama just mentioned—the route starting from the Kingdom of Blumund, crossing through our nation, and reaching Dwargon. I believe you used to have a goal—to strive for the common prosperity of man and monsters—could you consider the project as part of this goal?"

Man and monsters... Circle of common prosperity<sup>17</sup>?

<sup>17</sup>This section's translation slightly deviates from the source, as in Japanese, the "Circle of common prosperity for men and monsters" was a short phrase as opposed to this very long sentence in English. Rimuru's inner monologue praises that it "sounded good to him," it was actually referring to that the phrase Myuran used was smooth on the mouth. The phrase was used a couple more times (as a name) later but would not be reflected in the English translation.

*That sounds good to me.*

“I suppose you can see it that way. By the way, great choice of words. You get the idea immediately upon hearing the phrase.”

To work towards a state where humans and monsters could prosper together. Monsters as a whole came in a lot of different varieties too, though many of them should actually be called demi-human. But putting that aside, the phrase common prosperity really reflected my ideal.

With Tempest at the center, there was Dwargon in the east, Blumund in the west, and the huge monster circle led by Milim in the south.

There was also a large area of human residences further past the Kingdom of Blumund. It was connected to the Kingdom of Farmenas in the north, as well as the grand domain of the Sorcerer’s Dynasty Sarion in the south.

In addition—the Kingdom of Blumund was the window to the Western Nations.

If we had these kingdoms cooperating as well, the circle for human-monster prosperity was gonna live up to its name.

“Thank you for your response. Then my question is this: our kingdom will do what we can to help Rimuru-sama achieve this goal. Fortunately, our nations’ nobles were all very initimi—persuaded by Diablo-sama there, they have become very obedient—I mean willing to help, well, mostly to the two of our opinions. That’s why we plan to start a national business as the first step of a newly-rising nation. Based on these considerations—”

What should we do as business? That was Myuran’s question.

“S-surely you should operate just as we planned before, running agriculture—”

“It shouldn’t be an issue. Everything has been proceeding as planned, we’ve ordered people to handle specific crops.”

“I see, what about—”

*Huh—what about what?*

I tried asking her about all the ideas I had, but it seemed that she had arranged everything in order. Diablo had obviously tamed the noblemen, Youm also gained massive support among his people. In terms of the military might of different factions within the nation, a consensus had also been reached.

The old Farmus had fallen, and the new nation of Farmenas had risen in its place. The first step was to end the unrest within the nation, which seemed to have been accomplished. In addition, they needed to comfort the citizens and gradually move the nation’s industrial focus to agriculture...

Diablo must have been behind the scenes to help, but Myuran also seemed to have executed the long-term plan extraordinarily.

“Then could you gather those who are currently unemployed?”

“We shall obey Rimuru-sama’s order. If possible, we were actually thinking about using our own manpower to lay down the railway tracks. Since it will become a method of transportation

for our agricultural products, surely, the transportation network will be a major lifeline for our nation.”

“Hmm, it would indeed. If you are not just growing the amount for your own nation’s consumption, you are going to get a lot of surplus in the future. You will need to ship them to other nations in need, before they go bad. I think it will be an important industry for your nation.”

In the past, the Kingdom of Farmus would resell goods from Dwargon, those were mostly handcrafts and gear, there was no concern over any items going bad. The merchants were responsible for transporting these items, and the country could easily profit via taxing tariffs.

This would no longer apply. The merchants would no longer be the sole responsible party for the goods, the nation itself would be forced to raise its own credibility. In store for them was the era of nations ensuring the legality of the flow of goods.

“I look forward to the day when the magitrain runs through the great plains. Surely the merchants in the future will change their trade model as well. We will need to continue to learn in order to catch up with the trend.”

“It will be faster than horse carriages. Goods that are expected to be delivered in a week, it will only take three hours in the future. The storage space required will probably be a hundred times more than before.”

“ “ “WHAT!” ” ”

Gazel and Elmesia had seen this coming, so they didn’t seem surprised, but the same couldn’t be said about the rest of the people at the scene. The news was probably too shocking, making everyone go numb. As for Yuuki, Hinata and Masayuki, they gave off a slightly different dry smile respectively.

“Anyhow, we need to purchase the land for laying tracks early, I want to plan out a straight and effective transportation route. Geld’s men, as well as the beastmen studying at our town, have already learnt how to survey land. I will still do the final confirmation, but the rest of the work will be left to them. Myuran, you can find labor for them to command. Please bring someone who’s literate to lead them and also divide them into different platoons.”

“Understood. It’s truly making me look forward to it,” Myuran accepted my proposal.

Apparently, they were planning to offer us aid in the first place, the matter had been resolved smoothly.

Then it was Fuze’s turn to raise his hand.

“Because of all the important figures gathered here, I waited until now to say anything,” he ended his sentence with a wry smile.

Fuze was there since the pre-festival night. But he was timid, seeing all of the people gathered around, and didn’t come up to talk to me.

I noticed that as well, but I couldn’t find the appropriate time to talk with him. Although he seemed to have enjoyed himself during the festival, I planned to greet him later and just forgot about it.

“Ah, sorry. I was going to greet you back then.”

“Rimuru-sama seemed busy then as well, it’s all right. By the way, my friend wanted to talk to you too, this is great timing. What he has to say relates to what has just been discussed.”

Fuze then introduced me to Baron Veryard, who I also knew well. I recalled him to be an experienced man who should not be underestimated.

“I am Veryard. I kind of forced my way to the meeting today. First of all, I want to thank Your Majesty Rimuru. And to everyone here, it is a pleasure to meet you.”

He stood with great gesture and bowed elegantly. He clearly knew how to deliver a good greeting, nothing like some lowly noble from a small kingdom.

“Then, allow me to ask a question in the stead of the ruler of the Kingdom of Blumund, King Dolam.”

Veryard suddenly squinted his eyes at the seats next to him.

The aforementioned royal couple were sitting there. *So, you guys actually came? I’m really not sure, considering how little presence you’ve shown throughout the meeting.*

I told King Dolam that we would have a proper conference planned after this meeting, now it would be unnecessary. This was the equivalent of the later conference.

Although Dolam was smiling like a nice guy, I couldn’t help but ask, “Is this really okay.” *Let’s put that aside for now,* Veryard began to speak.

“As Fuze has mentioned, what Rimuru-sama has said is highly relevant to the future development of Blumund. King Dolam also predicted that our nation will become an important hub for the flow of goods. I’ve also had my theory before finally understanding after hearing your speech. In other words, your Majesty wishes to make our country a gathering point of all exports, is that right? Your Majesty mentioned that once this magitrain appears, the concept of logistics would change forever. If you are making our nation into a hub of sorts, surely goods from all over the continent would come through. In that case, we will need people managing these goods. In addition, if your Majesty wishes us to investigate what each nation is lacking in supply, that should also be properly arranged. Rimuru-sama, is this the role that you wish our nation to play?”

As expected from Veryard, being nothing like Fuze, he was quick on his feet.

He had spelt out everything in my head.

“That’s the role indeed, will you be willing to do it? While it goes without saying, you can also just provide us with the venue to operate. I shall promise to pay up the fee for using the land with the amount of tariff we earned each year.”

“Surely you jest. You shouldn’t underestimate our people as folks who are satisfied with a lazy life of making profits from margins, and exclude us from the system. We will be training our people from now on, so as to prepare for the future!”

*Oh snap. Just how far ahead is this guy planning?*

I at least had the very competent Raphael-sensei with me, but how could this guy catch up with me, using just a human brain? This was beyond being a visionary, this man was very intelligent.

Surely the Kingdom of Blumund would have dramatic change that completely altered their past values. That was not just limited to Blumund, but surely there would be some major reformations.

Veryard had seen that clearly from the start, and so he had announced that they were already preparing for it. This man was something else. No wonder he managed to get his way with me. I was right to not underestimate this type of person.

*It's a relief that he's not an enemy, seriously.*

"Then there is a favor that I must ask. I'll need to trouble you guys with investigating the export items to each nation and build a system that delivers what is needed to where they are needed. Since your kingdom has a good intelligence network, won't you be great at the job?"

"Aha, I see Rimuru-sama is not one to be underestimated. Very well, I shall reflect in detail regarding the matter when I return."

*You can say that about yourself,* I thought to myself as I nodded.

I was only planning to open a reflection meeting about the festival, yet it turned out to be something so troublesome that it had worn me out. But it had a lot of value nonetheless, since our negotiation with Blumund was successful. I thought it would take a lot more time to finish this difficult negotiation. Thankfully, Baron Veryard was there.

*I'm unsure as to whether that was a blessing or a curse, but since we've reached this point, let's just ask them nicely for cooperation.*

Upon thinking so, I began to worry over what to ask of Veryard.



All right, now that we had finished talking about the difficult topics about running the nation, it was time to proceed with the reflection meeting.

I switched up my mood and wanted to hear what everyone had to say.

"Next—does anyone else have any opinion—?"

Hearing my words, someone stood up anxiously.

*It's Veldora.*

*I've got a bad feeling about this, so I'm just gonna pretend that I didn't see...*

"Rimuru, what the hell was that?"

*How am I supposed to answer that?*

"What do you mean?"

"The labyrinth! Of course. I was looking forward to it, and in the end, no one managed to get to the 100<sup>th</sup> floor!"

*Didn't I just give him a good scolding? Was he not reflecting at all?*

He really just ignored everything I said.

And I wasted my time practicing what to speak—Veldora kept on complaining, which really made me want to reply with a “so what.” But I held back. If I were to say something like that, he’d definitely lose control.

“Well, personally I’m not that satisfied with that part either.”

“Right? You are still so reliable as usual. How do you plan to adjust things going forward?”

It wasn’t as if I would get an immediate result upon making adjustments. At least not until we had adventurers who had the abilities to reach there.

“In any case, based on what happened, there’s no way we can proceed with this. Those adventurers were mostly either average or somewhat experienced. They are already pretty good challengers—”

“Pretty good...”

“That sounded pretty rude...”

“But I don’t feel like we can deny it either...”

The Kabal trio seemed down, *but you guys spent all your time treasure-hunting, so I can be a little salty.*

“Don’t be discouraged. All I did was walk the entire time. And for some reason we ended up at level ten. By the time I realized, my companions had already killed the Floor Boss...”

Masayuki was probably trying to comfort them, but no matter how you saw it, he sounded like he was ridiculing them. But Elen didn’t seem that discouraged by it. Perhaps, to the trio, it didn’t sound as bad. They looked surprisingly calm, so it was probably okay to leave them alone.

“—In other words, you should think that it is still not your time to shine yet!”

As for Veldora, there’d probably never be a chance for him to shine.

“WHAT! Then were Milim, Ramiris and my efforts in vain?!”

*Please count me in as well.* While I thought this to myself, it’d be best not to quarrel with him for too long.

“Don’t worry. The labyrinth demonstration had a very good promotional effect on the different nations.”

“Huh?”

“Myourmiles-kun, please come and explain!”

As I ordered, Myourmiles stood up.

He then began to explain very confidently to Veldora.

“Due to the public display of the interior footage of the labyrinth, all of the nations were very intrigued. The fact that a random treasure chest had the chance to give rare-grade items also added on to the promotional effect.”

“And it’s all thanks to me...”

*Um—I suppose you can put it that way... I guess?*

“All the noblemen from the nations would definitely want to send their adventurers there!”

Myourmiles concluded his explanation.

It seemed that many noblemen hired adventurers or powerful mercenaries as guards. In other words, once these people caught wind of a labyrinth with piles of treasure, they would probably send a large group of adventurers to strike it rich.

Myourmiles also mentioned that the noblemen may sponsor challengers in order to obtain the treasure. In addition, unemployed adventurers may want to get involved for the money. They may try to challenge the labyrinth repeatedly.

They could probably tell from the experience of that Gai guy, that it was very difficult to obtain rare-grade gear.

I wasn't gonna reveal anything here, but Myourmiles is in fact planning something even shadier. It was something like a lottery, he had decided to spark people's desire to draw lottery tickets. He was gonna intentionally let people see others getting expensive items from the lottery in order to create a competitive spirit. His plan was to make the adventurers and the nobles be our captives (money trap).

Moreover, Myourmiles had other things planned out as well.

"In addition, I also want to establish a prize system. We will tell everyone that once they reach level 100—in other words, when they actually conquer the labyrinth—they can receive a huge prize. Naturally, many nobles would want to sponsor adventurers and other challengers and send them down there," Myourmiles said with a smirk.

*As long as we make the impression that the labyrinth is a place that will generate enormous profit, even the scrooge of noblemen will fall for it. They will probably hire the best of the adventurers, sponsoring them with gear to have a better shot at challenging the labyrinth.*

These noblemen were the so-called benefactors. If their adventurers performed valiantly, the nobles themselves got to share the glory. Moreover, this had tremendous potential for profitability. In other words, this was enough to motivate the nobles.

Moreover, while the noblemen sponsors stayed in our nation, they would also enjoy all the entertainment.

It also seemed like a good idea to use the live footage of the labyrinth walkthrough as an attraction. We would also be opening a variety of other projects as ways to attract more consumers.

Speaking of sponsors—I was even more impressed by Myourmiles upon hearing his proposal. He was already a bad boy in my book, but I didn't expect him to take it that far.

*Indeed, surely the sponsors will be happy as well if their challengers acted violently.*

He really did think of everything.

One last thing.

I needed the help of the Freedom Association with several project ideas I had with Myourmiles.

Veldora also seemed to have been suppressed by Myourmiles's presence and became a lot more well-behaved. This was a good opportunity for him to bring it up. Myourmiles began to discuss the matter.

“Leader of the Freedom Association, Yuuki Kagurazaka-sama, the thing is, we have a favor to ask, or rather, we have a proposal.”

“Proposal? What would that be?”

“As I have just mentioned, our nation will be providing prizes for the labyrinth walkthroughs. I would like the Freedom Association to handle the matter.”

“Why?”

“The biggest reason is for the promotional effect. Your association has divisions set up in different nations. It will be the fastest and most effective way to promote.”

“I see, that makes sense. But what other reason do you have?”

“Yes. In order to manage the challengers, I would like to utilize the identity cards of the adventurers.”

“I see now. Seriously though, that’s some idea you’ve come up with...”

I’m not sure if Yuuki was impressed or shocked, he fell into his own thoughts as he sighed.

Our nation could also issue the permits to enter the labyrinth, but that would take a lot of extra work. We wanted to lower the budget as much as possible and borrow the labor of the Freedom Association. Such planning to exploit others was the core of Myourmiles’s proposal.

“There’re also benefits for the Freedom Association.”

“Umm?”

“Due to Rimuru-sama’s rule, the monsters in the Great Jura Forest have been under control. We would be running the long border near the Great Jura Forest. With that being the case—”

“I see, so you are saying that there will be less work for monster extermination?”

“Indeed. However, there’s a solution. It can be imagined that the interior of the labyrinth will spawn a large number of monsters. By defeating these monsters, you can gain ‘Magic Crystals,’ fur, monster teeth, claws, etc. You can farm monster materials on the regular—”

“...!”

“Surely the guild would gain profit through it?”

You could gain materials by exterminating monsters. Adventurers would sell the materials as rewards. If not, the Freedom Association would act as the middleman for purchasing these materials before selling them to buyers that needed them, making money via handling the transaction.

And our nation could hand over part of the management of the labyrinth to the Freedom Association and tax them for it. In this way, even if adventurers lost their job in the future, they could also find new employers. This project would provide multiple benefits.

*How would Yuuki react to this?*

“Will Rimuru-sama help out with ideas in the future as well? You must be Myourmiles-san. I will consider your proposition; we will handle the matter and build a division of our organization in this town. Will you be able to provide us with the facilities?”

“Most certainly. When the staff are settled, we will discuss further.”

“I’m truly defeated here, Rimuru-san...”

Yuuki gave off a wry smile.

And so, Myourmiles's and my proposal were taken.



I spoke to Veldora.

“Have you heard, the proposal has been accepted. There’s gonna be more adventurers coming in the future.”

“Um, um.”

“Within the first year or so, it may still pose a huge challenge. But after two, three years, I think there will be more capable people.”

“Ho? Do you have any proof for that?”

“Well, the reason is simple. There is a very low chance of dying in the labyrinth, so you can practice your skills in it. There’s no reason why you wouldn’t become stronger throughout the process.”

“I see. As expected from Rimuru, now I’ve got to look forward to it!”

To someone with longevity such as Veldora, two or three years would pass by in the blink of an eye. That’s why his face was plastered with a smile as he commented about his expectations.

*Right, right, it’s great now that I’ve managed to convince him.*

While I was laughing internally, Hinata suddenly raised her hand to speak.

“Can I interrupt for a second?”

“What is it?”

Although I didn’t think she objected to the matter until now, my nerves were still kind of tense. *I suppose I’m once bitten, twice shy.*

“I have a request, or rather, a proposal.”

Her tone was giving me a bad feeling.

Myourmiles on the other hand, was sweating while trying to avoid eye contact with her.

“...I’m listening...”

“Thanks, then allow me—”

What Hinata brought up was “Crisis awareness may be reduced as a result of labyrinth activity.”

If they become accustomed to not dying in the labyrinth, it may cause them to become careless outside. That was Hinata’s fear. I was worried about that too, but I felt that the adventurers should see to that themselves. I was a bit short on words while Hinata pointed it out.

“Uh—I guess we can only remind them to pay more attention...”

“Don’t think that you can just hand wave this away, this is a matter of life and death.”

“Ayy, let’s not put it that way.”

“No.”

“Come on, Hinata-san?”

I begged Hinata. She finally decided to bring up her own proposition.

“—But, if you are willing to accept my proposal, I may just approve your plan.”

“What proposal would that be, please indulge me?”

*Making Hinata angry will make me die pretty horribly. That's why I should humble myself.*

But I may have worried too much.

“Hehehe, Rimuru, Rimuru—it’s nothing really. You don’t have to be that nervous, this proposal would benefit us both.”

“Eh?”

“The labyrinth poses a pretty good challenge. Not only can one train their ability down there, we can also practice effective fighting strategies against monsters. However, I’m worried that people may put their guards down against death. That’s why I want to dispatch the Priests of the Western Holy Church there.”

“The Priests! No way, are you serious, commander Hinata-sama?”

It was Fuze who suddenly interrupted.

Many at the scene were shocked, and upon inquiring about it, I learnt that Priests were very capable users of holy magic.

*Now that you've said so, I believe I've heard similar rumors.*

There was a group of people whose ranks were above the average ministers and have learnt the secret “Holy Magic” of the Western Holy Church. And Bishops, as well as higher ranked personnel, could even perform “God’s Miracle,” a spell strong enough to restore damaged body parts.

“Yes, I’m serious. It was indeed a secret technique, but with how things are progressing, they won’t grow in the future. Even though these people may have the talents of geniuses, none of them are able to cast God’s Miracle “Resurrection.” If this is to continue, the knowledge passed down from ancient times will be buried. It may be a different case when it comes to wartime, but such a technique is difficult to pass on during peaceful time.”

*In summary, are their resurrection skills rusting because they don't have people to revive?*

While I felt that something was off, I understood what Hinata meant. She wanted to use our dungeon in order to train their “Holy Magic.”

This was also pretty beneficial from our perspective.

Even though not everyone could practice God’s Miracle of “Resurrection,” if people capable of using revival magic in general increased, combat outside the labyrinth would be safer as well. In addition, it was also helpful for me to quickly fully understand the “Ultimate Secret of faith and grace” of Luminism via actual information of their practices.

*I don't oppose the idea.*

“Same here, we would be troubling you as well.”

“Hehe, I knew you would say that.”

Disregarding the shocked crowd, Hinata and I agreed to each other’s proposals. Now the matter of dispatching Priests into the labyrinth was also settled.

Just as I thought that the matter was finished, Hinata raised another proposal.

“By the way, there’s something else. I want the Holy Knights to challenge the labyrinth as well as part of their training.”

“Huh?”

“Veldora-san over there—eh, weren’t you selling takoyaki out there?”

“T—that’s irrelevant to the topic, right? Let’s get down to business already!”

“R-right, I definitely did not sell takoyaki under an ‘alias’!”

“...Oh, and I almost managed to convince myself otherwise... It was you after all. Never mind, it’s really nothing,” Hinata muttered to herself tiredly.

It was impossible to deceive Hinata. Honestly, to anyone who had heard of Veldora in the past, there was no way you could fool them either.

Because Veldora was insistent on opening up a takoyaki shop, I asked Myourmiles to help him prepare shop staff. Veldora later came up with some ideas and requested Kurobee to prepare some iron griddles. It was the specialized iron griddle that is commonly seen in Osaka, Japan for takoyaki.

The condition for Veldora to open shop was to not expose his own identity. With that being said, the residents of the town already knew who he was. That’s why I told him to at least hide his identity from the staff, and use an *alias*... And Veldora actually decided to use the name “Alias.”

Allegedly, the shop called “Alias Takoyaki” had quite the popular sale.

*But that’s really irrelevant to our topic right now.*

“Please forget about that first, I want to discuss in detail about the Holy Knights’ training.”

I managed to force the topic back on track. Hinata didn’t seem to mind, so we continued as if nothing had happened.

“In my opinion, those who have just been enlisted as a Holy Knight wouldn’t be able to win against Gozer. That’s why I want to split them into groups of five to six people to challenge the labyrinth. On one hand they can practice combat, on the other hand, we can also train the Priests we mentioned. I believe anyone with experience can easily break through level 50.”

“Ho? I’m fine with that. In fact, that’s just down my alley!”

Veldora’s spirits were high.

*Indeed, all members of the Holy Knights are over Rank A. Considering their abilities, only a group of a few Holy Knights may have a chance against Gozer.*

“In addition, I wish to let some of the captains join.”

Hinata dropped the bomb on everyone at the scene.

“Are you serious? Hinata-sama!”

“Are we to join the labyrinth challenge as well?”

Arnaud and Bacchus, who were stationed in our nation, immediately asked Hinata. She was not fazed one bit and answered quite casually:

“Isn’t that only natural? This is the perfect training ground, there’s no worry of death. Since there is already someone that strong guarding level 50, surely it would mean there would be even

stronger guardians as you go further down, perhaps someone even you guys won't be able to win against."

"Um um um," I heard Veldora responding as he listened with extreme satisfaction.

On the other hand, Arnaud and the others began to protest. It seemed that their displeasure was at the maximum as well.

"No no no, there's no such thing, Hinata-sama. We are the strongest of humanity, the Holy Knight Order—and 'Saints' who can stand against 'Demon Lords.'"

"Indeed, we would agree if the opponents are the demon lord's subordinates, but mere labyrinth monsters—"

"If that's the case, show your strength to me now."

Arnaud and Bacchus's opinions were crushed before Hinata.

*Indeed, if they could manage to break through all 100 levels of the labyrinth, they may stand correct.*

*That would be a simple truth that cannot be rebutted.*

However, the sad thing was—

"Eh, hold up a minute, could the one guarding level 100 be..."

"Kukuku, GA-HAHHAHA! This is supposed to be a secret, but let me tell you real quietly here. Indeed, the guardian on that floor is me, 'Storm Dragon' Veldora!"

Veldora-aniki looked really happy about that. In comparison, Arnaud and Bacchus were white as sheets out of despair. The yin and yang here made a pretty drastic contrast.

And so, I agreed to Hinata's proposal.



Given the state of the matters, everyone seemed to have spoken.

There was one more thing that I hoped to confirm with the opportunity. Or rather, it was the reason why I gathered all my connections.

"There is one thing I hope to ask—"

With that said, I began to ask about the eastern merchants.

I was guessing those people had been busy scheming behind everyone's back, mentioning this matter was also a reminder to everyone.

"Dwargon welcomes and accepts all, so with everyone coming and going, the eastern merchants probably also passed by. However—"

"To answer your doubts, King Gazel. All people entering and exiting our nation are under our surveillance."

While near the border of the Armed Nation of Dwargon, anyone would be under the surveillance of the spymaster Anrietta. To try to sabotage things would be the equivalent of committing

suicide. So, the eastern merchants would probably behave there.

“Unfortunately, our nation was too weak as a trading partner. Moreover, the only advantage our nation had was the espionage department. Even though we do have a record of the flows of relevant goods, we don’t often see any eastern merchants.”

“Oi oi oi, your king is present right here, how can you say something like that...”

It seemed that not many people traveled to the Kingdom of Blumund. And since the nation itself was capable of surveilling these people, we didn’t need to be worried about them.

“Is our nation fine in that regard?”

“Of course. All the foreign imports are overseen together, the thirteen royal families were not given authority over them.”

Basically, Sorcerer’s Dynasty Sarion was almost in a lock-down state. There wasn’t much communication with other nations, so the eastern merchants wouldn’t be able to sneak in there. Moreover, there were few people that could manage to fool the eyes of Elmesia, so I didn’t think it would be an issue.

The only nation that concerned me was the newly established nation of Farmenas run by Youm.

“Right, Diablo-san did order Razen-san to run the books logging trades.”

“Seriously, don’t put it that way. Excuse us, Diablo-san asked Razen to read through all the materials and check on the influence of the eastern merchants in order to cut them off from our nation.”

*That’s reassuring,* Diablo seemed to have handled everything. He’s way too competent, how scary. I was going to praise him, but perhaps not in front of the guests.

“As for the Freedom Association, I’ll have to leave the judgement to each division.”

He had a point. Not all eastern merchants were schemers, surely there were people who just wanted to do business normally. You couldn’t order the association to just suddenly pause trade with these people. The members of the association needed to make a living as well.

To this point, Yuuki promised to send people from the Freedom Association HQ to instruct things in secret. I’d leave it to him.

“The Western Holy Church—actually, Holy Empire of Lubelius have ceased trading with any eastern merchants.”

“Eh?”

Hinata said something unexpected.

Upon inquiring, I learnt that Hinata was almost manipulated.

“The merchant’s name was Damrada, some kind of a big-shot. That’s why I trusted his words... And it turned out he deceived me.”

“Deceived you?”

“Right, that night—Demon Lord’s Walpurgis—someone invaded Lubelius. I managed to get back in time to chase him away, but in reality, the enemy seemed to have a meeting with Damrada.”

“Um, they must be connected.”

Upon hearing Hinata's explanation, Gazel also agreed that Damrada and the invader were in the same band.

I concurred.

The mysterious rival Hinata mentioned—*are these people tied in with the eastern merchants?*

*Speaking of which, it was the day that Demon Lord Roy was murdered. Could it be, that it was the invader who killed Roy?*

"Right, anyhow, I hope everyone has an idea of the situation now," I concluded as everyone nodded in agreement.

*That's good. We are going to put up our guard against the Eastern Merchants, and we should do our best in getting hold of their future movement.*

After confirming everyone's will, the meeting was dismissed.



Later, the conference room was left with me and my companions alone.

"So, Rimuru-sama, do you have a conclusion?"

"Um, I'm certain now. 'That lord' spoken by Clayman must have been Yuuki Kagurazaka."

"Kufufufufu, my thoughts exactly. The only major hindrance was the lack of evidence, however, it was definitely him."

I answered Benimaru's question with Diablo's agreement. There was no longer any doubt. After hearing Luminas's advice, I was mostly certain about the fact. While I'd reserve my judgement about the other person, Yuuki was no doubt the puppet master.

After all, there were few people that knew about my relationship with Shizu-san. I was wondering who gave the information to Hinata, and she admitted herself that it was the eastern merchants. Moreover, as I was gathering information, I came across something interesting.

"Myuran claimed that she has never heard of the Moderate Clown Troupe."

"Clayman was a conniving demon lord, but he didn't even trust his own subordinates enough to reveal the existence of the clowns."

I nodded to Geld's words.

Indeed, Clayman didn't trust anyone, and so no one knew there were the clown troupe behind the scenes.

"But on the side of the eastern merchants, the result checks out with Shuna's investigation. Clayman seemed to have publicly gone into contact with them. Myuran has seen them a couple of times, she was even a consultant to the merchants."

"Ho, in other words—"

"Have those clowns been disguising themselves as merchants and kept on being in contact

with Clayman?"

Geld and Gabil seemed to have understood as they nodded in response.

"Regarding that, Adalmann also provided us with some evidence. The Moderate Clown Troupe seemed to have revealed themselves before him. They didn't disguise themselves as merchants in front of Adalmann and didn't care to hide their tracks."

It was now for certain that the clown troupe appeared near Clayman's base, though no one in the castle had seen them. *In that case, my theory may turn out to be correct.*

"The Moderate Clown Troupe has ties with the eastern merchants, that's gotta be how it is," Diablo's smile deepened as he commented.

"It would also mean that the person that murdered Demon Lord Roy was Laplace. The guy that vanished during the great war."

Benimaru gave off a smirk as he presented his own theory.

We knew that there were three clowns in total, with Footman and Teare acting behind the scenes during the great war. They seemed to be managing majins that were suspected to betray Clayman.

*Under those circumstances, what could the last clown be doing...*

According to Benimaru, we could assume that he invaded Lubelius in search of a certain object.

I nodded and continued:

"Those who knew my relationship with Shizu-san have all been present during the meeting just now. That's why I asked him that one last question."

With the exception of Kabal, Elen and Gido, both Gazel and Elmesia were also off the list. As for Fuze, Veryard and the Blumund Royal Court (the King and Queen), I guess you can say that they've washed themselves of suspicion. Since their connection with the eastern merchants was decidedly minimal. There also wasn't any clear motivation for them.

There was also Hinata, but given the fact that she was almost manipulated, there's no way she was the one behind the scenes.

That left us with Yuuki.

"He has admitted that he has ties with the eastern merchants."

"He couldn't really deny it. For instance, the high-quality paper they use were obviously exported from the Eastern Empire. The fact that Yuuki had plenty in stock meant that there's undoubtedly a tie between him and the eastern merchants."

"Kufufufufu, if he really wants to deny it, we can use this against him. What a missed opportunity."

*A missed opportunity indeed, but you don't have to be too pessimistic.*

I didn't tell anyone unfamiliar to the whole ordeal about my special relationship with Shizu-san. If someone deliberately leaked out such information, it would obviously mean that such a person was hostile towards us. More importantly, the same person was certain that the information would enrage Hinata—that's gotta be Yuuki.

I had my doubts towards other people as well, such as Kabal's party. However, it was thanks

to Elen's suggestion that I decided to become a demon lord in the first place. And after learning that she had Emperor Elmesia behind her back, to leak my information to the Eastern Empire would gain her nothing.

Such an important secret must have only been leaked as bait.

The same logic could apply to the people from Blumund. In the hypothetical scenario that they had wished to be hostile towards us, why sign all the treaties. They should have been quietly observing and profiting from the start and wouldn't have tried to find ways to communicate and deepen our relationship.

"I'm afraid that the goal of these eastern merchants may be to expand their influence on the western continent. Is that why they felt that the church was in their way?"

"I think so too. The reason why they had Hinata and Rimuru-sama duel each other was probably to exhaust both of their strength."

"It didn't matter who would win, their goal was very obvious."

Benimaru and Diablo agreed with my views, and so I continued:

"Among the Western Nations, there are the two major powerhouses that are the Council and the Western Holy Church. I believe the eastern merchants have infiltrated both. They were probably thinking about expanding their influence slowly over time. And the organization assisting their goal would be—"

"The Freedom Association?"

Hearing Diablo's response, I nodded deeply.

This was the most likely explanation in terms of motivation.

Although I didn't have any concrete evidence, I was almost certain.

"Well then, what should we do?"

*Let's go kill him right now*—that seemed to be what Diablo was hinting at, *please stop*.

"Let's watch what they will do next, first. Since he has already generously agreed to provide aid, I almost doubted whether my suspicion was misplaced. But we must act cautiously from now on to catch their tails."

"Understood. Then I will be observing the newly built department of the Freedom Association in our town first."

"I'll be counting on you, Souei. And everyone, you must not act on your own!"

" " "Yes sir!" " "

This would do.

Honestly, I really wanted to just question Yuuki now. But we didn't have any evidence, and he may just run away after spouting out some clever rhetoric. Yuuki was the head of the Freedom Association after all, we couldn't touch him without proof.

*There's also the possibility that I may have misunderstood him.*

«Answer. The estimated chance for that case is extremely low.»

*Estimate, you say. I suppose it's the same for Wisdom King Raphael-sensei, even you can't make a definite claim without concrete evidence.*

“Anyhow, in the country I stayed in my past life, there’s a principal that protects people who are not guilty. The general gist of it went ‘One is innocent until proven guilty.’ With that said, please don’t put your guard down!”

The lieutenants nodded firmly to my words.

*What was Yuuki thinking—that I have no idea.*

Me, Hinata and Clayman.

Even the eastern merchants, the Freedom Association, or perhaps the Council itself. Everyone had been manipulated by Yuuki.

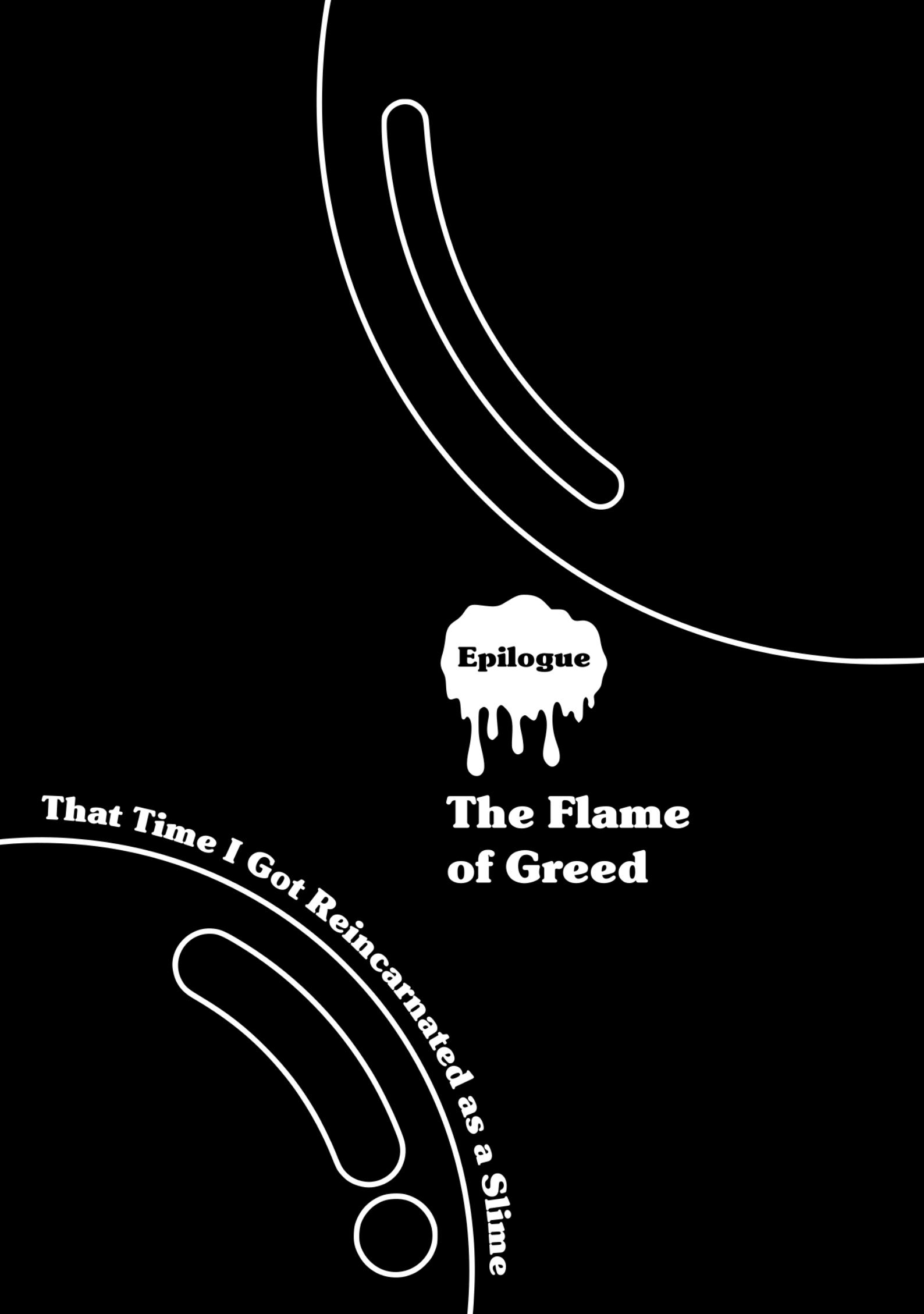
While we couldn’t prove that yet, it wouldn’t be the same in the future. Right now, he was a target that had been locked on by us. We just had to prepare quietly before our final confrontation—

The happy days of the festival had ended.

The busy daily life returned.

There were still tons of things for me to do, and there were still more problems for me to resolve. Right now I had no time to be upset.

The thought that I’d have to put on a mask during my future encounters with Yuuki made me sigh with sadness.



**Epilogue**

# **The Flame of Greed**

**That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime**

## Epilogue

### The Flame of Greed

Duke Muze stumbled as he left.

He felt fear. He got a taste of desperation.

Demon Lord Rimuru. A rival that Muze had no way of defeating.

*I'll cleverly do him a favor and let him dance to my score*—that was Muze's original plan, but as he recalled the events that had transpired, he had bitten off more than he could chew.

Muze even found himself laughable. He thought he had played them like fiddles, yet it turned out that he was the one that was played.

He had the urge to laugh out loud, but he had already lost the strength to even do that.

*Now that I think about it, those guys had it worse than me...* Muze thought to himself as he was thinking about the merchants he'd hired. A handsome man had emerged from the shadow of Demon Lord Rimuru, announcing the countries, names, and the trade records of those merchants, one by one.

Those words were curses wrapping around Muze's heart.

*Just how much research did those people do...*

Since they wouldn't be able to do business under the demon lord, they were forced back to their home nations. But that was probably within the demon lord's predictions. They said that as a result of the event, the home nations of the merchants were posing a threat to them as well, and that they would be applying pressure on the nations.

Surely the territory of the demon lord would expand in the future, alongside their allied kingdoms. This would form a huge economic circle. And as for the countries excluded from it, it would mean that they would fall behind in the competition with other nations.

How could a nation choose to ignore a newly prospering economic circle over protecting some merchant? As for the reason why, having seen the prosperity of this nation during the festival, Muze knew it would only be natural.

These people had beautiful music and innovative technology. Delicious delicacies that were rare among the Western Nations also surprised Muze.

*The Monster Kingdom, in the middle of bumfuck nowhere...* That was Muze's impression

at first, and he didn't really think anything of them prior to his visit. But now he was the one that was embarrassed.

Having experienced cultures that he'd never seen before, his heart was beating at an alarming rate.

Severing ties with a demon lord like that was a devastating loss that he should have tried to prevent at all cost. Yet Muze had been too overconfident with his own strategy and engaged the demon lord in the wrong way.

*Those merchants have nowhere to go now, and neither do I...*

Muze sighed.

His road to more affluence and power had ended.

The Five Great Elders were no merciful lords that tolerated failure.

All of his fortune would be taken from him and he would probably end up dead as well. But even if this were the case, right now, Muze's only option was to report how things had turned out.

In this vast land, no matter where you were, there was no way to escape from the grasp of the Rosso...



“They have indeed failed, grandpa.”

“Yes, Mariabell, I should have sent you to handle the matter from the start. It’s all because I felt that it’d be a shame to destroy this kingdom after hearing all the reports of it...”

“That’s only natural. I’ve seen, heard, and experienced it all myself. Indeed, it was an all too familiar culture that I reminisced, but that’s precisely why we must destroy them before the rest of the world finds out.”

Mariabell hinted at the fact that Granbell’s order was too soft. He felt so himself as well. That’s why Granbell Rosso, the head of the Five Great Elders and the Rosso Family, agreed with Mariabell unwillingly.

The Monster Kingdom had sent invitations to nobles and royals alike, all around the world, to attend their Founding Festival. It was Granbell who didn’t listen to Mariabell’s advice and decided to see things for himself. If he could do Demon Lord Rimuru a favor, they could use this in their advantage to invite them to join the council—or so he thought.

The pawns at his disposal were drastically reduced. Granbell had suffered great losses prior to the festival. That’s why he didn’t have Mariabell handle the matter and instead sent out his own lackeys to test the enemies’ motive.

And the result was the shameful defeat of Duke Muze.

With Mariabell, the Rosso were invincible. This was an idea that Granbell believed deeply.

This was also why he was hesitant to let Mariabell, the childish looking girl in front of him, handle the matter.

“Grandpa, you should let me go after all.”

“—Have we come to this at last?”

“Don’t worry so much. I am Mariabell. I am ‘Greed.’ I desire all and will take all. This world belongs to the Rosso!”

“Very well. I will grant you full authority on the matter.”

As he finished, Granbell gently patted Mariabell on the head.

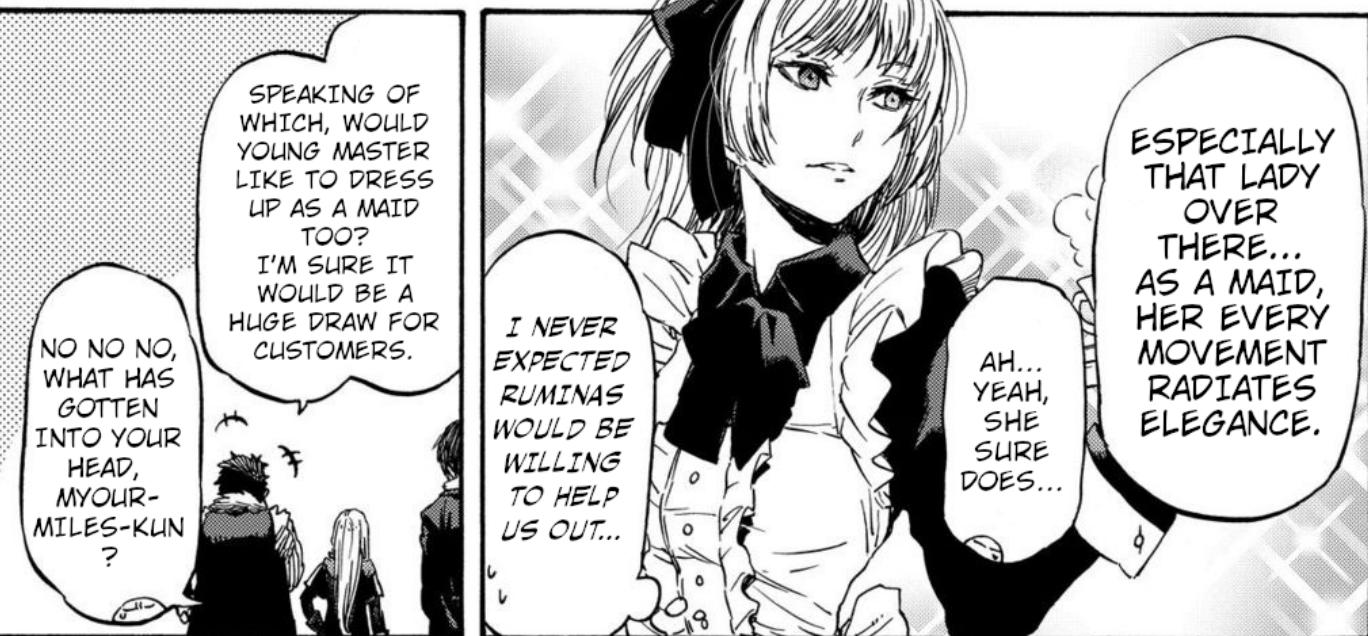
—And so, Mariabell the Greed was on the move.

The Tempest Federation would then receive a letter from the Council of Western Nations, but that would be a month later.

# Cafe

By Taiki Kawakami

画. 川上春樹



## Afterword

Long time no see, now I bring you volume 9.

The deadline this time is quite early, so it's a relief that I caught up just in time.

Then, as for volume 9, it's part 2 and the finale of the previous volume of the "Founding of Monster Capital."

Ahem, actually.

Although I only had the idea after finishing writing, it is an absolutely impossible mission to write both volume 8 and 9 into one book. The reduction of pages in the last volume put it back on the right (regular) track, but the situation is reversed again.

Yep, reversed to the old time.

It's like suddenly getting back to start after a bit slack after taking much effort to successfully lose weight. My weight didn't spare me any mercy, possibly due to me not having time to exercise during the writing. I've regained around seven kilograms. I need to avoid repeating the same mistake next time and don't rush that much during writing.

First of all, the most important thing is to write the outline of the story. Outline was a bit too vague, so let me get more specific. I'll write down the characters that will appear alongside the events! That's the minimum that I'll start with. Regardless of the sequence of events, how I interject all the events was a very important thing that I took note of when writing.

As for why I'm saying this now. It's because when I finished writing the whole thing and realized "AH, I forgot to insert this event into the story!" or "Eh, that character didn't make it in..." etc. I made plenty of major missteps.

But seriously, there were too many characters in this volume.

I'll reflect a bit on myself, but still, I got to say—

You can't blame me for messing up a bit. Because this is a festival volume, it's not easy trying to cut any character. By the way, this reminded me of early on in writing the light novel—around the time of writing volume 2?—I remember talking to Editor I-san.

"You shouldn't put so many characters at the start of a volume."

"Eh, why though?"

"Well, if the readers can't remember who is who, they won't be able to tell about that either later on. And in the end, they will get distracted by the names and not focus on the story."

"I see..."

“There are also other reasons, like you’ll have a hard time setting up characters.”

“Should I cut some people then? Kurobee doesn’t really get a lot of screen time, how about I make Hakurou a sword smith as well?”

“No, you should keep it as it is. The charm of the characters in ‘Tensura’ is very important. I think it will cause a problem if you cut characters randomly like that!”

That’s how I recall. My memory is not as good as before, maybe I’ve imagined some of the dialogue, but that’s the gist of it.

I had like an enlightenment after the conversation and felt that “Thank god I didn’t cut the character.”

Kurobee is still around now, all because I-san was in charge of the book.

I basically used this as my excuse to no longer limit the amount of new characters coming in.

And then, when I was writing the seventh volume—

“Umm, can I talk to you about something...”

“Yeah, what is it?”

“Hinata’s subordinates have increased in number, is that really okay?”

“...How many people will there be now?”

“Not a lot, I plan to have six captains with another three in addition.”

“That seemed a bit too many—”

“No no no, hold on, it’s because Hinata is gonna lead two different organizations. So, shouldn’t we have more characters that actually have names?”

“Now that you’ve put it that way...”

“Also, in order to strengthen Luminas’s faction, I’m thinking about adding some new major characters!”

“I see! I understand now. In that case, please write in that direction!”

And so, I could already tell that I-san really liked Luminas. And after my persisted persuasion, Arnaud and the boys, as well as “Three Martial Sages” were set to show up in the volume.

And after volume 8 we came to volume 9. The previously added characters alongside new characters have surely caused a situation of too many characters in one volume.

It must be pretty chaotic.

Had I confirmed by writing down all the names from the start, there’s no way I’d make a mistake like that.

I’ll learn step by step and use these past experiences well in the future.

Anyhow, I thought of this when doing some final confirmation with the volume. But—

Eh, did I not mention that the “Three Martial Sages” wasn’t gonna be in this volume?

In that case, except for Glenda-san who betrayed her comrades to cooperate with the Rosso, what were Sare and Grigori up to now?

The chance of these two appearing in volume 9—ZERO.

A-Ahaha, that really does happen sometimes.

“Characters that are forgotten by the author”—for those who didn’t make it to the volume this time, please expect their activities in future volumes!



Let’s change the topic next.

There is a major writing mistake that I wish to inform everyone. It’s about the pronoun that Luminas uses to refer to herself. She always uses “Wa-Ra-Wa (妾, わらわ),” which to me was a pronoun used by arrogant females. But in reality, this seems to be a humbling pronoun instead.

I’ll admit that I was mistaken.

When Luminas was first introduced in the light novel, I had already known the correct usage of the pronoun at this point, but it was strange to suddenly change her tone. Based on these considerations, I decided to continue its usage.

When I was publishing the web novel, I already got a lot of criticism for misuse of “役不足 (Yakubusoku)” (Does not have sufficient power/authority to do something)<sup>18</sup>, but to be honest, I still want to directly use the phrase in the light novel.

Even though there may be misuse, I just have to clarify with the readers. But, if I continue to use wrong phrases, it may cause the accurate message in my book to not be correctly understood by future readers. An author shouldn’t be limited in the way he chooses to express himself—that’s my two-cents, but then again, it’s important to use the correct grammar and phrase in writing.

If I encourage misuse, it will cause a lot of problems. That’s just how I think about it. That’s why I’m clarifying here, even though the tone of a character is not going to be revised in the future.

Luminas does not have any intention of kneeling to anyone! It’s only because I pay attention to the atmosphere as a whole that I let Luminas who has an untamable personality use “Warawa.”

That’s what this is all about, please be forgiving about the matter.



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<sup>18</sup>I think this is referring to the confusion of “役不足” and “力不足,” the former refers to the inability to do something due to lacking in authority (specifically referring to not having a high enough role/power to perform a task), the latter refers to the lack of personal ability in performing a task.

And so, the afterword is about to finish.

I-san also very casually demanded me to “Please write six pages of afterword!” …When I handed in the initial draft, there were a lot of words. With the help of others, I added more to the character description before adding the afterword.

I-san seems to be less and less repulsed by thicker volumes.

It’s better than him telling me to cut stuff, so I don’t have an issue with that—just kidding, I have no clue what will happen in the next volume and I’m actually kind of nervous. After all, the story was planned to go through some key plots…

I’ve prepared a lot of events, and as to how to write the story in the future, even I am looking forward to it.

First off, I’m gonna finish the dungeon that I didn’t manage to finish this time—with this thought in mind, I plan to focus on outlining things clearly.

See you all in the next volume!