

INVINCIBLE SAINT ~ SALARYMAN,
– the Path I Walk to Survive in This Other World –

- Volume 11 -
HOME IS AWAY

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CHAPTER 192

HOSTILITY

Using the magic circle that we arrived at Nelldal on, we were transferred to the magic circle beside Pope-sama's room in the Church Headquarters... or that was supposed to be the case.

However, when I opened my eyes after waiting for the light to fade away, for some reason, we were not in the room with the magic circle but in some kind of an arena-like location.

Why was it that I could recognize that it was a training ground despite it being at night? That's because a large number of knights holding cast-iron torches came out to welcome us.

"...Isn't this the large training ground?... But is it because of the rumors that the atmosphere is so bad? Or..."

Although the knights did not unsheathe their swords, they came fully armed to welcome us.

And although faint, I noticed flashes of hostility.

"What do we do?"

"With such numbers, it looks like escaping would be difficult if we don't attack..."

"...It looks like there isn't a need for that."

The two of them seemed to also notice the strange atmosphere and they were prepared for battle according to my instructions.

At that point in time, a group of knights stepped forward with a single woman in front.

"Good evening, Lumina-san and everyone from the Valkyrie Paladin Corps. I see that you all have not departed for the Principality of Blange."

"Good evening, Luciel-kun. We have been given an even more important mission. As such, we could not immediately take action."

While Lumina-san was conversing with me, I could feel that the other girls were at a loss.

Maybe they were thinking about how I lost my ability to use Holy Attribute Magic.

Well, not feeling the discernible hostility from them is relieving.

“I wonder what is with this exaggerated welcome?”

“Luciel-kun probably doesn’t know as you’ve just returned from Nelldal but currently there are rumors flying about in the streets regarding Luciel-kun.”

“I see. And this line-up is the encircling net meant to capture me?”

I intended to speak calmly but because I never imagined this situation would occur, I wanted to go on a rampage.

Hearing my conversation with Lumina-san, Nadia and Lydia were radiating anger from the overwhelming shock.

“Yeah. There won’t be any problems as long as the doubt is cleared but... do you understand the current situation?”

“Well, somewhat. It’s the rumor about how I was punished by the Gods, lost my Healer job and can no longer use Holy Attribute Magic right?”

When I said that, the hostility from our surroundings intensified but I totally could not understand why we had to suffer such poor treatment.

Lumina-san looked like it was very difficult for her but she probably volunteered to take on this role.

From just now, there was only one person looking at me with worried eyes.

If Lumina-san wasn’t there, I would have blown away this unreasonable situation with my full power.

“Yes, for the crime of tarnishing the reputation of this Healer’s Headquarters, of the Saint Schull Church... there has been a command sent out to restrain you.”

Lumina-san announced that with her eyes shut.

It was a voice without any intonation that indicated Lumina's feelings.

If this was a company, this would be the notice from the Human Resources Department for restructuring so I thought Granhart-san would appear here but... such thought went through my mind as I spoke to Lumina-san.

"I see. However, I'm surprised Pope-sama would allow the command to restrain me to pass given that she knows about my circumstance."

"It's not a command from Pope-sama, there is an Executives Department in the church and this time, the command came from there."

If the church's leader doesn't know about the arrest of the S-rank Healer... then Pope-sama is nothing more than a figurehead.

There might already have been such a department in the background when she came into power a hundred years ago.

Nevertheless, now that it has come to this point, I no longer care for what reason this Executive Department is for.

Getting raised on a pedestal by others just to be instantaneously discarded when the wind changes direction... for the sake of my well-being in the future here, I felt that it was best to crush them here.

Did Pope-sama not put any pressure on them?

"I see. Rather than to protect me, they took a stance to eliminate me. Furthermore, despite knowing that I've been on a leave of absence to Nelldal... it looks like even an S-rank Healer can be subjected to arrest just by making up false charges."

I laughed.

Looking at my reaction, Lumina-san appealed to me.

"...If it's false charges, could you prove it here?"

"Proof? I don't mind. Are there any wounded people?"

If Shisho and Lionel and the others were taken out then, I had confidence that I would go berserk.

Lumina-san replied as I prayed for that worst case future to not come true.

“...I can trust you right?”

For some reason, Lumina-san asked to make sure with a meek expression.

“Yeah. I’m bad at lying.”

Perhaps she was satisfied with my answer, Lumina-san smiled.

However, that smile felt like she made a decision and a bad feeling rapidly rose within me but it happened the next instant.

Lumina-san drew her sword and then there was fresh blood.

What Lumina-san cut was, of all things, her own left arm.

“Extra Heal!”

My head was blank from panic and before I knew it, I was rushing over to Lumina-san and casting Extra Heal.

That was probably a reflex action.

After the magic chant ended, a [Paan] sound resonated through the surroundings.

Lumina-san believed that I could use Holy Attribute Magic but she probably also resolved herself to chop off her arm.

However, feeling her arm regenerate when the light stopped exceeded her expectations as Lumina-san and the surrounding knights were astonished. I don’t know if it was because I really could use Holy Attribute Magic or that it was from the use of a Healing Magic from the legends but they were probably ones who believed the rumors.

I was greatly shocked to see that there were people who I trained with mixed within them.

However, before that, I had to deal with the slap I dealt to Lumina-san's cheek from the previous momentum.

"Are you a fool! What if it leaves a scar?"

I should have been calm but I was scolding her for some reason.

Lumina-san abruptly changed from her blank look to a mischievous smile.

"Sorry. But this was the quickest method to convince the knights who wanted to arrest Luciel-kun. Although I did not expect your healing skill to rise further."

I understood Lumina's feelings... then I should also announce my true feelings to the knights here.

"I don't care! I don't need trust and faith that can crumble from a mere rumor nor do I want it!! I will pursue who is responsible for proudly giving out the command to arrest me and if that doesn't work, I'll quit the Healer's Guild and work as an Adventurer. You guys can take responsibility for that."

I announced before walking towards the exit.

"Lumina-san, please don't push yourself too hard."

"...Luciel-kun."

I whispered in a voice that only Lumina-san can hear when I walked past her.

I clearly understood that her actions were done to save me but although I'm happy, doing so by cutting her arm off ruins the mood.

The surrounding knights were all silent and they opened a path but at the end, Catherine-san drew her sword and blocked the path.

"Catherine-san, could you please step aside?"

"As there has been a command, I cannot do so."

Why won't she stop? Even though she knows full well that I will be innocent even if I am arrested.

Or did she received a new message from Pope-sama? But I can't understand her reason to unsheathe her sword.

"...Catherine-san, you are aware of everything right?"

"Yes. That's why I will be arresting you. Based on your ability to use Holy Attribute Magic, I cannot let you quit being a Healer."

Does she only want to fight, or is there a reason behind it? I've never been able to read her but why is it that even as she is pointing her sword at me, I still can't sense any hostility?

Pope-sama has strong trust in her and I also trust her alongside Pope-sama, Lumina-san and everyone from Ienith.

Just nice I was feeling irritated and if she intends to stand in my way, I decided to face her with all my ability and provoked her.

"...Do you think someone who is afraid of the Executive Department can win against someone like me?"

"Ara? Are you taking me as a fool?"

I noticed a vein appear on her forehead but I continued without minding it.

"...It's troublesome so I won't be treating you."

"Who do you think you're talking to? It seems like some roasting is required. Come at me from wherever you wish."

"It'll be over in an instant if you don't take this seriously?"

"If you can walk the talk."

The instant Catherine-san said that, I took out my Illusionary Sword and raised my magical power in one go.

I made a faint sigh when I recalled the last time I fought against someone was that time against Shisho and the others.

"Holy Dragon, protect this body. Thunder Dragon, leave everything behind."

The next instant, I felt the surrounding sounds disappear.

Catherine-san would certainly be strong as a Knight.

However, she is not as tough as Lionel nor does she have overwhelming attack power. She is slower than Shisho and her technique is not as versatile as his.

Not to mention she can't compare to the pressure from the Twin Dragons and she doesn't have magic like Orford-san.

I no longer felt terrified after I understood that.

Catherine-san was shocked when she saw me emit light but she was full of openings as if she could not follow my speed.

That's why I intentionally hit the sword she was holding onto with my Illusionary Sword to knock it out of her hands but shockingly, the instant my Illusionary Sword contacted Catherine-san's sword, it sliced through her sword without any resistance whatsoever.

If it's just like this, she might call for a rematch so this time, I kicked towards her shield with all my might.

Catherine-san was blown away with an astonished expression pasted on her face.

While thinking that she might find the sudden end disappointing, I cast Middle Heal from afar and my senses returned when I released the Dragon Magic Power.

However, what awaited me was a veil of silence different from the previous one.

It was an atmosphere where even the sound of a person breathing in could be heard.

Probably nobody within the Knight Squad imagined that Catherine-san would lose. Everyone had stunned expressions on their faces as they stood there.

Nadia and Lydia were astonished too but they quickly noticed my gaze and nodded to me.

I didn't think that the fight would be settled so quickly but as expected, the benefits from leveling up and obtaining the Dragon Power is tremendous.

Nevertheless, I'd prefer if they show the spirit of taking a step forward in anger for defeating their leader.

If there was at least a slight indication of that there might be hope for the Knight Corp but is this Knight Corp really still salvageable?

Or is it because my rank is above theirs?

They'll probably have to call Lionel and Shisho over if they want to salvage this Knight Corp.

While having such thoughts, I glanced across the Knight Corp and spoke.

"I worked myself to death to train for this. So? I'd like to hear if there are anybody else with complaints. However, that is only if you hold the resolve to drink the undiluted Object X, God's Grief made by the Sage."

I ended up speaking with a polite tone but I openly provoked them so I thought a couple of them would step forward but there was no indication of anybody making a move.

On the contrary, not one of the knights met my gaze when I looked at them.

No, only Lumina was still looking at me with a worried expression but she did not speak out.

"Since it looks like there's no one, I have to report my return to Pope-sama so please excuse me."

I announced before leaving the training ground.

After the door closed behind us, Nadia and Lydia came over to ask.

"Luciel-sama, why did you take that attitude just now?"

"I'm also wondering about that. You would probably end up getting hated for doing

so.”

“It can’t be helped if I’m hated for this. There will be people who worry about me and encourage me even if I can’t use magic. It’s fine to live with just those people.”

I laughed while feeling slightly lonely as I commented on my own behavior.

When I gave that reply, the two of them did not pursue the topic any further and instead, asked about the fight just now.

“Luciel-sama, how was that attack possible?”

“I totally could not catch it.”

Thus like that, until the time we reached Pope-sama’s room, Nadia and Lydia repeatedly asked me questions about my new power.

CHAPTER 193

DETERMINATION

From leaving the arena and arriving at Pope-sama's room, we did not encounter a single person.

I would say it's a good thing if you asked me if it was good or bad but I couldn't help but feel that it was intentional.

When we arrived at the Pope's room and I knocked on the door, the door opened instead of the usual reply.

Estia was the one who opened the door.

"Enter."

I could easily tell who it was from the air around her but I first entered the Pope's room.

Inside the room were Pope-sama, Estia, Fornoir and Rosa-san, without any signs of the attendants.

The interior of the room was desolate and I was surprised to see that unlike the usual setup where her figure is hidden from sight, Pope-sama was in front of my eyes.

In order to calm my confused mind, I decided to first report my return.

"Luciel, together with my retainers Nadia and Lydia, has returned safely."

I knelt down on one knee and lowered my head as usual.

Nadia and Lydia most likely followed after me.

Then, shockingly, Pope-sama's words began with an apology.

"Luciel, I'm sorry."

“...About?”

I did not expect her to suddenly apologize so I was tongue-tied for a moment but I asked about what she was apologizing for.

“I don’t know where the rumors leaked out from but I was unable to defend you.”

Pope-sama lowered her head but I knew that there was a mastermind behind it since the rumors developed to this state so there was no need for her to apologize.

Instead, I’m interested to know what Pope-sama thought about how I was surrounded by the Knight Corp.

“...Does Pope-sama know about how I was surrounded by the Knight Corps at the large training ground?”

Who would imagine they would receive hostility during a pick-up? If I did not receive training from Shisho and Lionel in the labyrinth, I would probably have trembled in fear.

“I knew that you were transferred to the large training ground but I didn’t know that you were surrounded by the Knight Corps. Rosa came to inform me of the commotion within the church.”

Looking at Rosa-san, I could feel that she was somewhat tense, unlike her usual oba-san demeanor.

Then, Rosa-san asked me worriedly.

“Leaving that aside, Luciel-sama, are you alright? I’ll lend a hand anytime if you need to escape.”

I could tell that she heard of the rumors and was worried.

However, it seems like she has not heard from Pope-sama that I can now use magic again.

Thinking back, it’s definitely weird that there would be so many soldiers around during the night.

They would normally not know when the transfer would be and more importantly since it's been a couple of decades since anybody has been to Nelldal, it's highly likely that they have not been told of the place of return as well.

Thinking about that, it's unlikely that I would fall into such a predicament as long as Pope-sama doesn't reveal that information.

Pope-sama and Catherine-san were both acting strangely but I don't sense any hostility from them so I was confused.

I could not show a timid attitude here so I changed to a smile to give a fearless impression.

"Escape? I won't be escaping. Rosa-san, it's not like I've committed any crimes?"

"You have not. But for better or for worse, rumors determines people's impressions. It's even more prominent when there's malice mixed within the rumors."

Rosa-san said that while looking as though she was recalling something.

That was strangely persuasive.

"Luciel, I understand your feelings but... by the way, where's Catherine? I requested her to bring you here without raising any suspicions?"

Didn't Pope-sama's decision totally backfire? I guess it can't be helped that I doubted her.

But I also can't keep quiet about sending her flying so I honestly told them.

"...She was blocking my way with her sword drawn so I sent her flying. What's strange were the looks of fear the Knight Corps were looking at me with."

"What!? You sent that Catherine flying..."

Pope-sama showed a look of disbelief before she began thinking about something.

At that time, a shadow appeared beside me and bit my head without reading the atmosphere.

“...Fornoir, I’m home. If you don’t mind, could you please bite my head only at the end of everything?”

It was Fornoir who came to bite me.

I requested for her to stop biting but it didn’t look like she intends to stop play biting me.

It seems like she’s been under quite some stress.

I decided to let her have her way but she had a slight odor so I thought that it was the perfect chance to show them that I can use Holy Attribute Magic again so I used Purification.

When I did that, perhaps from the joy of receiving Purification after such a long time, she stopped biting me and instead rubbed her neck against me so I had to stand up to stroke her neck.

I felt that it was disrespectful in front of Pope-sama but I decided that it would be fine.

“It looks like Fornoir has grown attached to you... so Luciel, you think that there’s a mastermind behind this incident but do you have an educated guess?”

She was clearly changing the topic but I could not understand why she suddenly asked about the mastermind.

“No, I’ve just returned so I still don’t know where and when these rumors began spreading... more importantly, I’ve been wondering since I entered this room but could you explain to me why this room has become so bare?”

When I asked, Estia... or more specifically the Darkness Spirit possessing her explained.

“Onee-sama and I have been leaking minute amounts of magical power that we

couldn't detect from this room. Because of that, it seemed like others outside could overhear all the conversations we've had inside this room."

That means it was not Pope-sama's concern that they were tapping into the magic communication bead that was the problem.

"Someone has been eavesdropping on this room?"

"It's definite that the commotion within the church happened immediately after you reported that you would be coming back. When we investigated, we found a magic tool."

As expected of a Spirit, she detected something.

Nevertheless, didn't Pope-sama give out instructions? If not then won't the attendants find it strange?

The Darkness Spirit passed me a baseball-like small communication bead that had a crack in it.

"...I see you've broken it."

"...A lot happened. I investigated all the attendants with Darkness Magic but the perpetrator wasn't among them."

The attendants would definitely find it a pity when they see the current state of the room but I advanced the conversation.

"Pope-sama, what about those who enter and exit this room?"

"Those would be people above the Bishop rank and Knight Corp Captains as well as people from other countries who came for an audience."

"It's impossible to find the perpetrator huh... if there's an unspecific large amount of people who enter and exit."

"That's right. And we don't know when it began."

Pope-sama cast her eyes down as she said that but I believe that for the incident this time, Pope-sama herself, albeit small, contributed to the problem too.

It seemed as though she doesn't have any vision as to what to do, what to improve and what is needed to not let the same thing occur again.

At that time, I remembered the past.

Until I became an S-rank Healer, not to mention the Healer's Guild, I did not even think that well of Healer as a job.

I speculate that Pope-sama is probably being manipulated by somebody.

Pope-sama was probably working hard too but I doubt that she grasped the movements of the Executive Department this time.

Even if Pope-sama remains as the leader like now, I would probably be embroiled in something similar in the future.

Normally, I would have two choices now, to call upon the authority I have or to really distance myself from this Healer's Guild but...

"By the way, regarding my martial arts teacher, the Adventurer's Guild guildmaster of the Meratoni Branch, Broad-san, he's my retainer but have you heard anything about him?"

"I did not receive any information regarding him and I have not caught wind of the army moving so he should be fine."

From Pope-sama's words, I couldn't help but think that even if there was information, it wouldn't reach Pope-sama's ears.

Giving up on that topic, I asked about the Knight Corps that directed that much hostility at me.

"...It maybe can't be helped that the rumors about me spread but why did the majority of the Knights believe it?"

Rosa-san was the one who replied me.

“It’s because of jealousy. Becoming the core of the church at around 20 years of age, achieving the once thought to be impossible task of rebuilding Ienith and even killing a dragon, that’s why there were conversations even in the canteen about how maybe you have ties with the Evil God and the Demons.”

As before, she did not match my gaze as she talked while staring off into the distance.

“Even so, they chose to doubt a member of their own organization without knowing the truth?”

When I asked that, Rosa-san looked at me and said with a sad expression.

“Luciel-sama has two types of enemies in this church headquarters. The ones who make the legislations and the ones who hold confidence in their own Holy Attribute Magic. Regardless of the facts, it was the perfect timing to lay a trap when Luciel-sama was not around.”

Indeed, it was probably easy for people who knew that I’ve gone to Nelldal to frame me.

“...The person who thought of this strategy is quite cunning.”

“That’s right. As long as there’s malice mixed within the rumors, even if people do not immediately believe it, with a trigger, you would be doubted and once people doubt you, it will be extremely difficult to get them to trust you...”

“Who leads the Executive Department that commands the army including Catherine-san?”

“The ones Luciel are acquainted with in the Executive Department would be Bluetooth and Granhart.”

Bluetooth-san who was in charge of liaising between the various departments during the creation of the legislation and that straight-laced Granhart-san huh.

Granhart-san would likely not eavesdrop and if there’s anything he would probably come ask in person but if I remember correctly, Bluetooth-san stepped down from the seat of Priest Knight Captain due to injuries.

I have no idea where their motives lie.

I have an overwhelming lack of information.

In any case, Pope-sama would most likely continue to be nothing more than a

decoration.

I took a deep breath and said merciless words to Pope-sama.

“From this day on, I will abdicate the position of S-rank Healer.”

I prayed that this would be a correct decision.

CHAPTER 194

DISRESPECT?

Everyone in the Pope's room doubted their ears when they heard my words and then they froze.

"You can't! If Luciel's gone, the Church will once again..."

Almost in tears, Pope-sama couldn't say any more.

She probably expected me to and believed that I would definitely lead the church towards a good direction but she likely felt guilty for not stopping the incident this time and for my change in heart.

Actually, this Pope-sama is kind... or if I change the way I say it, too naive.

Pope-sama only experienced this narrow world all this time so maybe it can't be helped but Rainstar-dono probably didn't wish for it to turn out this way.

No, if it's that guy, even if he has entered heaven, once he knows that she has been deeply hurt and crying, he might even manifest in this world.

I ended up imagining that and was about to laugh but since it was a serious atmosphere after all, I somehow endured and told Pope-sama what should be done from here on out.

"...It will be that on the surface. Please swear that you won't tell this to anyone. It's a secret even to Catherine-san and anyone else too. Okay?"

I strongly warned her but it seemed like she could not catch up with the sudden turn of events.

Hence, I decided to advance the conversation for now.

“Firstly, regarding the rumors spread this time around, I think it might be an insider job but I can’t deny the possibility that it might be a conspiracy by another country. That’s why I will leave the church on the surface.”

“What do you mean?”

“The miscalculation of the mastermind for this incident is that he thinks that I have lost my Holy Attribute magic and won’t even imagine that I returned having been promoted to Sage.”

“...That’s true but?”

“He is probably shaken as he did not expect me to reach the Sage job.”

“Umu.”

“He originally thought that I could be easily eliminated but he didn’t expect me to escape from the training ground. The ones who designed this plan should have further plans for the future as well.”

“...Plans.”

“For example, resolving everything with the verdict of God’s Punishment, ending everything without dealing much damage to the church and once I am convicted, they can advertise to the church the next S-rank Healer candidates or something like that.”

“I won’t allow such a thing.”

I’m thankful that she thinks that way but it’s probably impossible.

“Pope-sama, what if it is phrased in this way? ‘It is to protect the church. We are not actually condemning him. We will just have Luciel-dono hide until the situation cools down a little. Of course, the plan is to let him return to the church when a suitable time comes. This is also for the sake of Luciel-dono.’ Would Pope-sama be able to reject a suggestion like that?”

“.....”

Just by saying what I assume might be said, Pope-sama hung her head down.

She likely experienced something similar before.

Pope-sama has probably been won over by similar arguments all this time.

That served as evidence that she's just a figurehead so it wasn't a laughable matter.

In actual fact, I don't know the identity of the mastermind who spread the rumors and since it spread to the other countries too, it meant that large organizations were involved.

And the fact that I didn't really want to know was that, at the very least, the number of allies I have in the church is small.

Even so, while being careful, I have confidence in doing what I am capable of and honestly, it is quite overwhelming but before I am betrayed by who I think are my allies, it's important that I find a way to determine who my enemies are.

I'm sure that even if I stayed in the church to investigate, I probably won't find traces of them and even if I do, it would likely be a scapegoat.

If this uproar surfaces to the public, they would know the real situation of the church that is incapable of protecting the ones they are supposed to protect.

Once that happens, the trust that has been built these couple of years would likely once again crash to the ground.

They were trying to eliminate an S-rank Healer that appears every couple of decades based on rumors after all.

Moreover, the target is the common people's ally who stopped the greedy Healers and created new guidelines and laws to set prices that residents are able to afford.

Even though that alone is a huge shock, if they found out that it was not a punishment from the Gods like the rumors said but a training period to become a Sage that only appears around once a century on average, honestly, the lives of the ones who designed this plan would probably be checkmated.

And the ones who believed it are not exempted.

Looking at the Knight Corps at that time, they understood that they had made an enemy of someone they shouldn't have.

With the matchless warrior Lionel at the lead, I also have my retainers Cathy and Kefin.

Furthermore, even I who had weak combat power reached the degree capable of sending Catherine-san flying so this time they would probably try to delay me.

That's assuming they don't assassinate me... wait, I totally didn't consider assassination.

... I'll have no choice but to crush those who disturb my peace.

"I will announce to the world that I have become a Sage and I will, for now, act to crush the church. But if I really do end up crushing it, I'll create a new church."

"That..."

"Pope-sama, I believe it's best if you see the outside world. The magical power you possess is weeping."

Just now, the Darkness Spirit said that it was impossible to detect the minute amounts of magical power.

However, to be exact, Pope-sama's magical power is in a different league so if she is not conscious of the weak amounts of magical power, she would not notice it.

Pope-sama was hiding that enormous amount of magical power.

"...A strong barrier is set up around this Holy Capital and if I leave the Holy Capital, it would disappear."

... Just like a bird trapped in a cage. It seems like because she has to protect the Holy Capital, she could do nothing but be cursed to not be able to leave.

"...Was that also done by Rainstar-dono?"

"Umu. It was a collaboration between my father and my mother. They left it so that this land would not be dominated by the demon race."

Pope-sama said that joyfully but to me, it was a curse so I couldn't smile back.

Then, a question came up.

"Then why did that labyrinth appear? If it was a strong barrier made with the

involvement of Rainstar-dono, even if it's the Evil God, I don't believe the creation of the labyrinth would have been allowed?"

He even said that she is his favorite daughter so he wouldn't have allowed anything to make something like a labyrinth here even if the opponent is the Evil God.

"...That was originally the church headquarters but along with the aging of the buildings, construction was done to expand towards here and a short while after that, it became a labyrinth."

... I'll have to be disrespectful to Pope-sama a little.

A building constructed by Rainstar-dono would not deteriorate at all so she was probably lied to.

A new, better-looking building was likely constructed due to the increase in people so the labyrinth appeared due to the construction.

It's retribution but since Pope-sama was raised without learning to doubt others, though some problems may have occurred, she probably has not done anything bad to warrant it.

And then at that time, I once again noticed something.

Why was it that even though there was a labyrinth, it wasn't spread as a rumor?

If they have been eavesdropping on her all this time, they should also know about the labyrinth.

But seeing that I've not heard news of it outside, either they don't know about it or that they deemed that it was unnecessary to leak it out despite knowing about it.

Then, it's almost certain that the ones who placed the eavesdropping magic tool were the Executives Department.

In my case, it was leaked to the outside and I've also fully considered the possibility that I leaked it myself but I will torture the person who attempted this plan to the point where he finds death a release.

“Pope-sama, tomorrow, please report to the Knight Corps and all the Healer’s Guilds that I have promoted to the Sage job. Now, I will immediately travel to Meratoni. Please keep tabs on everyone who proposes to pursue me. Everything including who and what instruction was given.”

“Why do you assume that there will be pursuers?”

“Because the ones in the Executive Department who revolted against me will be troubled if I live. I’m sure that the reason why nobody came here is because the entrance to the Church has been blocked.”

“...Is there no peaceful way out?”

Something snapped within me from hearing those words from the Pope.

“That’s no longer required if you are an ornamental Pope right? It’s because you as the leader did not perform your role properly that this situation happened. Did you become the Pope solely because you are the daughter of Rainstar-dono and a high elf? If that’s the case then Rainstar-dono is also a foolish parent.”

“.....”

I spewed out words that blamed her, the Pope, and Pope-sama trembled.

“Why do you hold the role of Pope even though you don’t have the resolve to make drastic changes? Without you, the Holy Capital would be dominated? Then such a country should fall to ruin. Why do you live? Is that what Rainstar-dono wishes for? Enjoy life more, Fluna Aryudeli de Schull!”

“I... I...”

The usual mysterious air around her collapsed and the young girl above 300 years old began crying.

The gazes from my surroundings felt like they were blaming this on me but life must be lived to the fullest so I defended myself in my heart that I should say these words.

“I said these words because it doesn’t seem like anybody has said them. However, these are my true feelings. This should be enough disrespect to deprive me of my S-rank Healer title. From now on, I will investigate the church from the outside. Pope-

sama please do your best to change the church from the inside.”

“Luciel... you”

I turned my gaze away from Pope-sama and talked to Nadia and Lydia while facing them.

“Well, the situation has turned out this way so I think it might be tough to follow me. There’s the option of staying here as Pope-sama’s close guards but what do the two of you want to do?”

“Of course, I wish to follow Luciel-sama.”

“Luciel-sama can’t do it on your own.”

It seems like these two... “Burruru” It seems like Fornoir will be coming along too.

Is it fine for her to not stay with Pope-sama? I thought of it but having Fornoir would be helpful so I’ll welcome her.

“I also want to go but it looks like it would be tough on Fluna here so...”

It looks like the Darkness Spirit would be staying.

“I see, please take care of Pope-sama.”

“Of course.”

“Luciel-sama, I will somehow handle the situation here so do your best.”

Following the Darkness Spirit’s words, Rosa-san also said to protect Pope-sama but is it alright to have some expectations towards this strange sense of security? I bowed and turned to face Pope-sama.

“Pope-sama, the Hermit’s stable please.”

“Umu. But following your words, how are you going to escape the Church Headquarters?”

After receiving the Hermit’s Key and having Fornoir enter, I told her the escape method.

“Well, I’ll manage somehow if it’s not instantaneous death so I’ll be flying out the

window.”

“Oh my, you’ve become able to fly in the sky!”

“...It’s my first time attempting it.”

“Then please promise me. Once you become able to freely fly in the sky, please bring me on a sky journey.”

Even though she was crying just minutes ago, now she had an excited expression.

This is probably the original Pope-sama.

I decided that I will lecture Rainstar-dono that Pope-sama is currently locked up in a birdcage if I ever encounter him again.

I had the Darkness Spirit make Nadia and Lydia fall asleep with magic and placed them in the Hermit’s Coffin before moving to the window.

“Next time, I will be meeting you through the window so please take care to not be eavesdropped on.”

“Please come by to show me your happy and well appearance.”

“Yes. Well then, I will excuse myself. Wind Dragon, become my wings to freely fly in the sky.”

I dived into the pitch black world from the window.

I most likely was able to jump without losing to my fear because the ground couldn’t be seen due to the night.

The wind blew the same time I tossed my body out of the window and instead of losing altitude, I felt wings grow from my body and I was flying in the sky before I knew it.

Thus, I successfully escaped from the Church Headquarters filled with swirling conspiracies.

CHAPTER 195

REQUEST

I wanted to see the blue sky the first time I took to the skies but the moonlight lit sky was quite picturesque too as I landed on the main street before I depleted my magical power.

It was in the middle of the night so there weren't many pedestrians and I didn't end up landing on anybody thanks to the lights leaking out from within the shops and houses.

Even if I was seen, it wouldn't have stood out that much... "Did that shining person just descend from the skies?" "Oh, isn't that the Deviant Saint?", although something like that didn't happen.

While smiling to the residents, I ran towards the Adventurer's Guild.

When I entered the Adventurer's Guild that is open 24 hours a day, many of the adventurers looked in my direction.

When they saw me, one person after the other came over but I didn't sense the same hostility as from the Knight Corps so I didn't intend to run.

"Deviant Saint-sama, so you are alright."

"Priest Knights came from the church and told us to capture and drag you to the church if you came here but honestly, they were irritating so they are currently taking a nap at the underground training ground."

"Deviant Saint-sama, I heard that you can't utilize Holy Attribute Magic anymore but... if that's true then come be an Adventurer like us."

"Don't steal the march on me. I'm troubled because my party's vanguard is insufficient. If it's that Whirlwind's disciple, it won't be a problem."

They were in a welcoming mood for some reason but it seems like even if the church turns against me, the Adventurers were still my allies.

That strangely made me happy and warmed my heart.

Hearing the commotion from the Adventurers, the master of the Adventurer's Guild in the Holy Capital, Granz-san, came over.

"Firstly, I'm glad you are safe."

Granz-san said with a smile.

"Yeah, I was trapped in a conspiracy due to some rumors and was about to be arrested so I escaped from the Church."

"I see. There were also idiots who came here to order your arrest but... Luciel, are the rumors that you were punished by the Gods true? What happened?"

Rather than anger, he seemed more concerned for me and the surroundings immediately became silent after his question.

It seemed like the Adventurers were silently waiting for my answer.

"God's punishment... well, rather than punishment, it was more like God's trial? I somehow overcame it and was stuck in this commotion when I returned."

When I returned with a vague reply, Granz-san took a further step forward and questioned me.

"If you overcame that God's trial, does it mean that the rumors of you losing your Healer job and not being able to utilize Holy Attribute Magic were rumors after all?"

"Yeah. As proof, Area High Heal."

Making it such that everyone could hear me, I chanted Area High Heal with Chant Termination and light enveloped the wounds on the injured Adventurers and the injuries disappeared in an instant.

On the contrary, even lower back pain and tooth decay disappeared so there was a slight commotion.

"Quiet down for a moment you lot. Luciel, it looks like you've powered up compared

to before.”

Granz-san joyfully slapped my shoulder and for some reason, I was surrounded by the Adventurers and it turned into a strange situation where I was hoisted up and thrown into the air.

After that, before I knew it, we had moved to the canteen and the welcome party began.

I was worried about the pursuers but it'll somehow work out if I only have to flee so I let myself be spoilt by everyone's kindness.

“And so, why was the church so eager to capture you despite it being mere rumors?”

“Beats me? But the order to arrest me was given out so I thought maybe there's no other way but to back out.”

“To sever and discard a hard worker, what a demon-like organization.”

“Yeah. I was surprised by that too. Since there weren't any information to deny the rumors, it seems like the Church decided to besmirch the S-rank Healer so that the Church's image doesn't fall...”

When I said that, anger swelled from in front and around me.

It wasn't directed at me, they probably had thoughts against the Church.

“Ah, I forgot to say something important. There was one truth within the rumors, my job is no longer Healer.”

“...Did you become a Paladin?”

I was bathed in attention and I wonder why it felt like I really wanted to escape.

With a wry smile, I announced my new job.

“Because I cleared the God's trial, my job was promoted to Sage. Although like before, I can only use nothing but Holy Attribute Magic.”

“”””” Ehhhhh!? What!!!”””””

I unconsciously laughed at that harmonious cry of disbelief like they practiced for it beforehand.

After that, everyone was thrilled and they were glad like it happened to them.

“...Even though the Church should understand Luciel best... why did they believe in the rumors and release the orders to arrest you?”

Granz-san said with his head tilted.

“Beats me? Pope-sama lamented about this incident but this time it was an independent action from the Executives Department so it seemed like Pope-sama was not informed.”

“For such an important matter to not be relayed to the leader... that’s the worst in many ways. You have no allies?”

“Those who stay neutral or stand on my side are limited to the Valkyrie Paladin Corps. Apart from them, rather than hostility, the others showed amazing animosity. But since I used Holy Attribute Magic, they would have noticed that the rumors were mere rumors and I felt the animosity quickly turned into fear.”

“I see. Then, why did you stop by here?”

Granz-san asked thinking that I had another aim for coming here but honestly, I didn’t.

Then, since I have so many allies here, I thought that there would be people who would accept my request so I made a request.

“Well, I wanted to know what everyone thought about the rumors but I know it well now so I’ll now make a request.”

Just by saying that, the hard-faced Adventurers smiled in embarrassment for some reason.

“What is it? I think it should be possible if it’s the usual?”

Granz-san also looked like he found it weird and gave a bitter smile as he asked for the contents.

“You don’t have to capture the ones who spread the rumors but please gather information on them and the source of the rumors. The reward will be ten white gold coins that will be distributed according to the importance of the information and the remainder will be evenly distributed to the participants.”

“Hey hey, that’s way too much. Moreover, to distribute to all participants... what is your true aim?”

That gaze he gave me didn’t have the welcoming mood of before.

“The Church wants to conceal this incident but once it is made clear that it wasn’t a punishment by the Gods, they would have no choice but to cancel the arrest order.”

“I see. They won’t be able to openly send pursuers. With the arrest order like now, your movements would be restricted.”

“Yeah, that’s the gist of it. Also, I want to broadcast the fact that I was thrown into a conspiracy as I was in the midst of going through God’s trial. Once that is known, I’m sure the number of people who would assist me would increase.”

“If that’s the case then leave it to me. I hate the ones who return evil for good the most.”

When Granz-san said that, the Adventurers behind him gave voices of agreement.

While paying the white gold for the request, I asked about the safety of Shisho and the others which I couldn’t find out in the Church.

“Also, I wanted to find out about Shisho, Lionel, and the others but have you heard anything about them?”

“If it’s the Meratoni guildmaster, there are rumors that he’s been leading the field of guiding newbie adventurers.”

Well, even if they tried to forcefully capture him due to the rumors regarding me, I’m sure Garba-san and Grulga-san would protect Shisho.

However, if Shisho believed the rumors, he might try to be the scapegoat for me.

Given that the rumors spread to the other countries half a month ago, I confirmed when it began spreading here just in case.

“I’m glad to hear that. By the way, do you remember when the rumors started appearing?”

“Yeah. It was about a month ago. Well, even though the rumors were going around, most of us deemed it as mere rumors and some were even thrilled that Luciel would attain great success as an Adventurer if the rumors were true.”

“As expected, rather than the Healer’s Guild, the Adventurer’s Guild is my home.”

From my one statement, the canteen within the guild once again burst with excitement and Granz-san dropped a bomb there.

“Then quit the Healer’s Guild and aim for the SSS-rank in the Adventurer’s Guild, Deviant Saint Sage-sama.”

“I want to live a peaceful life — — !!”

However, the Adventurers ignored me and began talked among themselves with their heads tilted after Granz-san called me Deviant Saint Sage.

“Doesn’t it sound somewhat strange?”

“True. But despite being a Sage, not being able to use anything other than Holy Attribute Saint, isn’t it deviant after all?”

“It’s fun that good joke material keeps rolling in one after the other.”

“I didn’t expect him to become a Sage. Moreover, to be chased by the Church, the scale sure is different.”

As those conversations were being whispered here and there, I finalized the contents of the request with Granz-san.

I prayed that it won’t turn into another strange nickname.

CHAPTER 196

FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

When I was working out the details of the request contents at the Holy Capital Adventurer's Guild with the guildmaster Granz-san, he suddenly stood up from his chair like he was struck with an idea.

"What's wrong?"

"Ah. Luciel, please limit the request period and information range a little."

"Okay."

"Sorry."

Granz-san said before leaving the canteen.

I came by abruptly so maybe he was in the midst of some urgent work.

While thinking that I had inconvenienced him, I wrote down the request contents we discussed on the request booklet.

The rumors spread to other countries too but this time I limited the investigation range to the entirety of the Saint Schull Allied Nations with the Holy Capital as the center.

Taking the speed the rumors spread to the other countries into consideration, it wasn't that swift so I guessed that they might have originally wanted to only have the rumors circulate within the Saint Schull Allied Nations.

Well, the reason is that extending the range to include other countries would introduce other unnecessary factors and I don't intend to prolong this incident.

I wish to settle this incident as quickly as possible.

Instead of getting confused from all the information with low credibility when the range is extended, the plan now is a lot more constructive and I recall a great person saying that information wars are won on speed and accuracy.

Granz-san came back just as I finished writing down the information on the parchment.

He returned a lot quicker than I had expected so I wanted to ask him what he did when I noticed that he was carrying a large magic communication bead.

It looks like he went to fetch a magic communication bead.

“I kept you waiting. You mentioned that you were worried about the Meratoni guildmaster just now right? This here can contact every Adventurer’s Guild so give it a go.”

This consideration for others may be the proof of an Adventurer’s Guild master.

“Thanks. There was a chance for Shisho to travel with us three months ago but he didn’t have a magic communication bead.”

“Normally, those who carry with them magic communication beads are either organizations who need to keep closely in touch with each other or wealthy individuals who have enormous assets.”

Wealthy person... I gave up most of the things I picked up at the labyrinth but I guess I still do have plenty of assets.

But would there come a day when the magic communication bead function as a handphone? I tried asking.

“It might be convenient if it is mass-produced more.”

“It’s also a problem when people have them and use it to contact each other. Since it can be used for crimes as well.”

It looks like they chose to not let it fall into the hands of criminals.

It’s true that it seems like many kinds of unpleasant things will happen in this world if there were handphones. It can even be said that it can be directly linked to death.

It was unexpectedly convincing but I brought up the recognition of magic tools.

“That’s possible. However, I’m sure the outcome of all magic tools depends on the user.”

“A single one of this needs the magic stone of a monster above A-rank and for Adventurers, the priority goes to combat-necessary magic tools. That’s why I don’t think such an idea will be popular for the time being.”

“Haha. I guess that’s true.”

A magic sword would more likely be made so I was convinced by the sufficient counterarguments.

Granz-san entered the counter, moved to face me and placed the magic communication bead.

“Wait a moment.”

Granz-san said as he gripped the magic communication bead with his eyes closed.

After about thirty seconds, Granz-san stiffened and suddenly began speaking.

It seems like he got connected to the Meratoni Adventurer’s Guild.

“This is Granz from the Holy Capital Adventurer’s Guild, is the master around?... I’m sorry for contacting so late at night. There’s someone who wishes to talk to you no matter what.”

The conversation continued so I guess it was passed to Shisho.

It’s night time so he has probably returned to the Adventurer’s Guild? Granz-san opened his eyes and grasped my right hand to place it on the magic communication bead.

I was surprised by the sudden action but then I heard Shisho’s mental communication.

[Granz-dono, I’m also not that free. I’m currently in a situation where I have to train a little.]

“I’ll interrupt you here a little. Luciel, you can speak now.”

While I was still surprised, he suddenly spoke to me and wanted me to speak to Shisho while feeling confused but Shisho’s loud mental voice resounded in my head before I could speak.

[Luciel you say?!! Oi, Luciel is there?]

“Yeah. Shisho, it’s been some time. Today, I safely... or not really but I returned from Nelldal. I’m not sure about the reason behind it but I was shocked when I found out that there were rumors that I can’t use Holy Attribute Magic going around.”

I’m sure Shisho would be able to infer what I was hinting towards.

[... I see. Has there been any changes?]

Since he gave the expected reply, I consolidated everything that happened this three months and explained to him.

“Yes. I somehow overcame the trial and became a Sage. Though as before, I can’t use anything other than Holy Attribute Magic.”

[... And you mentioned just now that you didn’t come back safely?]

“Yes. It seems like there are people who wish to eliminate me.”

[Hou. That would be the Church’s black portion and that Phantom guy who has transformed into Sen’Oni from the rumors in the Empire’s underground world which Garba investigated.]

“Eh? You’ve already investigated that far?”

Including that Phantom person who I totally didn’t know about, he has already investigated it all... I’m slightly terrified of Garba-san’s information gathering ability.

[Yeah. Since I had nothing to do this three months other than training my body. It’s lucky that the people who spread those rumors came to Meratoni and when they told that to the Meratoni residents, the residents overpowered them and they confessed everything themselves after Grulga gave them his special cooking so you can rest easy.]

... It’s as expected of Shisho and them but they gathered information because they believed that one day I would be able to utilize Holy Attribute Magic once again.

Moreover, the Meratoni residents moved for the sake of a stranger like me, I was

seriously happy and something hot welled up within me.

I controlled myself from crying and asked Shisho about the next plan.

“Since we already have the information, how should we act?”

[That’s up to Luciel to decide what you want to do.]

“...What I want to do?”

I intuitively felt that this time, Shisho intends to follow my decisions and entrust everything to me until the end of this incident.

[That’s right. This time, the incident is the beginning of the upheaval by a portion of the church... by the church personnel that were weeded out when you appeared.]

A portion... even so, usually there wasn’t any hostility from the Knight Corps... was that caused by brainwashing? Or was the shock really that large?

“To be honest, I can’t say that I have not received benefits from the Church. But I have exerted myself beyond that to work for the sake of the Church. Although I still have people who took care of me within the Church Headquarters and the Healer’s Guild...”

When I think about it, I realized that I had not decided on what I want to do for this incident.

[Come to Meratoni as you try to clarify your thoughts.]

“To Meratoni?”

[Yeah. Because there’s something I want to request of you. Let Sen’Oni and the others know about this and have them come to Meratoni if possible.]

“Okay. I think I should arrive there tomorrow. But I imagine there would be ambushes so I might be slightly late.”

I wondered why but since the information was there, I agreed that it might be good to gather my thoughts first.

Moreover, for Shisho's request, it might be something serious with somebody injured so I have no option but to go.

[Alright. Oh yeah, what about the two from Blange?]

"They are together with me?"

[That's good then. Since I have something I want to ask the two of them too.]

"I'm quite lost right now but please pray that I reach there safely."

[If you're my disciple, you should be capable of overcoming this amount of obstacles.]

"Okay."

[Alright. Granz-dono, thank you for contacting me this time.]

"No worries, he's my former student who I taught to cook so I'm glad I could help."

[See you.]

Once my conversation with Shisho ended, he thanked Granz-san and ended the communication.

"So the magic communication bead has such a function. This is the first time I've seen it."

"It's troublesome since another party can't join if the communication doesn't connect first. Where would you like to contact next?"

"The Adventurer's Guild at Ienith. It'll be great if it connects successfully."

"I'll try contacting the Ienith Adventurer's Guild."

Granz-san began to contact the Ienith Adventurer's Guild.

And in a corner, the Adventurers were reaching a climax in the decision of my nickname.

But I completely ignored them.

CHAPTER 197

HEART TO COMPROMISE

I ended my communication with Shisho and now, we were trying to contact the Ienith Adventurer's Guild using the magic communication bead.

It's been about thirty minutes since Granz closed his eyes to contact them.

Since the magic communication bead does not have a call history like a handphone, inconveniences like these can be felt but I entrusted this task to Granz-san as I thought about the contents of the request I made to the Adventurer's Guild while waiting for the communication to connect.

The information I want has probably already been investigated by Garba-san and obtained by Grulga-san by making somebody confess.

I felt that it was the correct choice to have the Adventurers only spread the news that I changed job from Healer to Sage and that the God's punishment was misinformation.

But until that information spreads, I would have pursuers so maybe it would be good if I induce everyone to show the intention of investigating the Church.

With that, the opponent might try to hide the information and it will restrict their moves slightly so it might buy some time for me.

'What are your plans for the Church?' Shisho told me that and asked me to make the decision for the incident this time.

Those words sounded like karma... although not quite so but like how I urged Pope-sama to grow, it felt like Shisho was also urging me to grow.

To be honest, after being asked what I plan to do, I once again reconsidered why was it that I had to confront the Church even though I should belong to the Church organization itself and I quickly realized something.

I only know a section of the Church organization.

When I think about it, at Meratoni's Healer's Guild, after learning Holy Attribute Magic, I entered the Adventurer's Guild and spent all my time immersed in training.

After coming to the Holy Capital's Church Headquarters, I conquered the Labyrinth of Tribulations and drafted the guideline law before studying the way of managing a hospital and Healer's Guild at Meratoni and departing to Ienith.

Therefore the work I was involved in was only related to the Healer's Guild and Healers and I did not come into contact with the other Church organizations.

Well, even though I didn't find out about the other organizations, they still did betray me and there was a danger to my life so I won't be satisfied unless I make them reflect on that point.

As the saying goes, knowing your enemy and yourself, you will never be defeated in a hundred battles... although it doesn't work for everything, I believe that I will get to see various other aspects once I find out more about the Church.

At that time, Granz-san started mumbling again so it seems like he connected to the Ienith Adventurer's Guild and I stretched my hand to the magic communication bead.

[I see. That means the rumors about Luciel-sama were false information after all. I knew that the Gods wouldn't punish a person who possesses the Dragon Blessings.]

That voice sounded like the guildmaster Jais-dono.

"Has the rumors already reached there too?"

Granz-san asked about the rumors.

[Yeah. That rumor started spreading here yesterday but nobody believed it. Even so, Sage huh... I must let the residents know as soon as possible.]

I'd prefer if he didn't do so. Ah, and as I was about to request Granz-san so that I can speak too.

"That's great... [In the first place, I didn't believe for a second that the ascetic pervert

who can drink Object X like it is nothing will receive God's punishment at all. After all, only a pervert would train without using Holy Attribute Magic. Wahaha.】

Granz-san was about to tell him that I can mentally communicate now too but Jais-dono began talking and he talked over me.

Having talked ill about me combined with the timing of completely talking over me, he's probably possessed by the God of Laughter.

Since I can now communicate mentally, I made sure to greet him.

“Sorry for being a pervert. Nevertheless, it looks like you are doing fine, Jais-dono. Is Jasuan-dono doing well too?”

【Lu, Lu, Luciel-sama?! Tha, that just now was not an insult, I was complimenting Luciel-sama who became a Sage after treating the God's trial like it was nothing. My dragonewt brother is doing fine as always.】

It looks like my mental communication reached him and he ended up taking a low-rank military soldier's tone.

Since I didn't have the energy to tease him, I'll put what happened this time aside until the next time we meet and continued the conversation.

“I understand. I'm worried about Lionel and the others, the school I established and the factory on my premise in Ienith.”

【Regarding those, there are no problems at all. It's because Luciel-sama and Garba-dono have shown that evil will definitely be destroyed. Moreover, nobody will show ill will towards the Luciel Company that is responsible for single-handedly bringing about equal employment in this country.】

Responsible for single-handedly bringing about? Despite having only left Ienith for less than a year, I was afraid to ask what has happened.

“...Then there are no issues with public safety?”

【Yeah. Until before only the races that were friendly to each other maintained good relations but now having been shown the excelling parts of each other, the public safety is extremely good too. This is all thanks to Luciel Company and school.】

“Erm, what about everyone from the Healer's Guild?”

【It seems like the decree from the Church Headquarters arrived but they said that it

was some conspiracy and tore up the decree. It looks like there are some who made families here too so I don't think there are any problems.]

"...You sure are well informed."

[Well, it's because half of my week is spent at the Special Healing District and having mock battles with Lionel-dono. Lately, we've not been able to distinguish the winner and the loser so I'm troubled. Hahaha.]

It seems like he's been enjoying himself quite a bit.

It also looks like something like an arena has been constructed.

I'm glad that Ienith seems fun.

"Jais-dono, actually I contacted you this time because I have something to tell Lionel and the others."

[What is it?]

"Regarding the rumors this time, there's a possibility that I will be having a dispute with a portion of the Church so could you please tell Lionel and the others to come to the town of Meratoni? There's also the thing about me becoming a Sage."

[Easily done. I will immediately go tell them now.]

"Thank you."

But there wasn't any reply.

"...It seems like he cut the communication."

"It seems like it. Nevertheless, I'm relieved that Ienith is alright too."

Granz-san took his hand off the magic communication bead and drank some alcohol before speaking.

"Currently, is it only the Church Headquarters that is your enemy?"

"I'm not sure. In the first place, I'm worried about the trust I built up in the Church."

I've been in the Church for three years but I've not mingled much.

“...Then, are you going to sleep a night before leaving?”

“No, the moon should be out tonight so I’ll be departing immediately.”

“Then will you eat something before leaving?”

“I’ll make sure to have a feast next time.”

I gave an amicable smile as I knew it would spell trouble if the pursuers came here so I decided to set off.

“Make sure to return safely.”

“Of course. Before that, here’s the request booklet.”

When Granz-san received the request booklet and began reading, he immediately returned nine white gold coins.

“For a request like this, there would be change even with this alone.”

“You sure aren’t greedy for profits.”

“The Adventurer’s Guild is meant for studies, to enhance each other and to fulfill requests. I don’t intend to receive benefits and there are no such Adventurers either... or that’s what I believe.”

Granz-san’s tendency to not be able to say it confidently came up.

“Okay. I’ll take up your offer.”

“Ou. Shall I send you off until outside the city?”

“It’s okay. There’s shouldn’t be any problems if it is this dark. Well then, if you’ll excuse me.”

“Luciel, work hard.”

“Yes.”

I stood up from the counter chair, turned my heels and saw the Adventurers with wide smiles waiting for me.

“...Everyone, what’s the matter?”

When I asked, a Swordswoman answered as representative.

“We’ve come up with some new nicknames for Deviant Saint-sama so if it’s okay with you, we would like permission to use them.”

“...If that’s the case, then I’ve not given permission for the Deviant Saint nickname either...”

“If you fret all the small details, you’ll have many worries and you’ll go bald in the future. Moving forward, the first is...”

I plan to have my hair for a long time so I kept silent.

In my previous life, when I developed male pattern baldness, the shock was so severe that I even forcibly took a day of leave, I was that mentally cornered.

I don’t want to experience that twice.

It can’t be helped if it happens in the future but I’m still worried... If it’s Extra Heal, it should be able to recover even the hair follicles but I’ve not experimented it so what’s scary is still scary.

Leaving that aside...

“You said first, that means there are multiples of them?”

“There are three in total. The first would be Counterattack Sage.”

It was an impromptu naming session but it sounds quite cool.

However, counterattack comes with the assumption that I will be attacked so I’m very troubled by that.

Since it’s said that the name represents a person.

“The second would be Sa(Deviant Sage bound to Holy Attribute)int.” *(TL: It’s a brilliant play on words in Japanese but it doesn’t translate well to English. Pretty much she’s saying Saint 聖者 but since Holy Attribute 聖属性 share the same first character as Saint*

and Sage 賢者 shares the same last character as Saint, she was able to say it this way 聖 (属性に縛られた変質賢) 者.)

Eh? I think I clearly heard something between ‘Sa’ and ‘int’ but was it my imagination? But it is terrifying to be nicknamed Saint.

Well, it’s a lot better than Deviant Saint though...

“The third is “There he is.””

Just when I was about to hear the third one, the Priest Knights appeared looking disheveled.

I sensed hostility from them too but it was directed at the surrounding Adventurers rather than at me.

They were probably the knights that were put to sleep at the underground training area.

The two of them were still young and I’ve never seen them before.

They were glared at by the Adventurers and were frightened so I threw them a lifeboat since I don’t have any grudges with them.

“Can I help you?”

In response to my words, the two of them began speaking from the canteen entrance.

“There has been an arrest order for S-rank Healer Luciel-sama.”

“We’ll be truly grateful if you were to return to the Church together with us.”

The two of them stated their business while looking sorry.

I’m somewhat relieved knowing that there are also people like them who question the arrest but have to move due to orders.

“The charges were that due to God’s punishment, I’m no longer a Healer and can’t use

Holy Attribute Magic?”

“Yes, that was the instructions.”

“The rumors have already spread for more than two months so you can no longer hide from it...”

I don’t recognize their faces but they seem like they know about me so I most likely met them somewhere before.

It’s impossible to know the full story but as a compromise, I thought of resolving their misunderstanding here and used Holy Attribute Magic.

“Firstly, I am able to use Holy Attribute Magic.”

With a snap of my fingers, I activated Middle Heal with No Chant and quickly healed the wounds on the two of them.

The two Priest Knights were startled that I could use Holy Attribute Magic and they knelt on the spot to apologize.

““We are terribly sorry. ””

“It can’t be helped if it’s because of orders. But unfortunately, could you turn a blind eye here? I have to catch the ones who tried to entrap me. Also, I’m not a Healer now, I’ve become a Sage.”

The two of them showed astonished expressions as they looked at each other, nodded and spoke at the same time.

““Understood.””

“We will tell our colleagues that Luciel-sama can utilize Holy Attribute Magic.”

“I believe that Luciel-sama will definitely be able to resolve the misunderstanding one day.”

The two of them reverently bowed.

There are also people who believe in me inside the Church so I decided to first listen to Garba-san’s information and take that as a basis to decide on what to do with the

Church.

Taking into consideration the time they've been captured, support might find it suspicious and be on the way so I will depart now.

“Well then everyone, till we meet again.”

After saying that, I departed from the Adventurer's Guild.

CHAPTER 198

DETOUR

After exiting the Adventurer's Guild, I made sure that there wasn't anybody around before circulating magical power in my body at high speed and quickly ran to the gate.

It was great that with my level ups coupled with my body strengthening, my running speed had increased considerably but as expected, there were soldiers at the gate and there were even a large number of knights on standby.

"I should have guessed~. Even if I have not done anything wrong, they definitely won't let me pass through."

I thought of passing through by knocking them down but that would probably play into the hands of my opponent, so I don't want to use that method and instead tried to borrow the Wind Dragon's strength.

"Just now was a fluke but this time I must have a proper image of taking flight and landing... concentrate, concentrate."

I entered an alley and searched for a place without soldiers using presence and magical power detection.

Then, I aimed for a place on the outer wall where it looked like there weren't any soldiers stations there.

Well, I did say that I would put in my all to jump but I might actually soar beyond what I intend for and as I don't wish to make a gamble now and I might be detected if I am at a low altitude, I decided to escape by flying through the sky.

"Wind Dragon, become my wings to freely fly in the sky."

I sensed that wind was gathering and when I kicked the ground, I soared upwards and my body steadily flew higher, I reached 10 meters, 20 meters, no, even higher than that in the blink of the eye and was flying.

When I looked down at the Holy Capital while I was up there, I found that there were

a few knights hiding under black robes waiting on the outer wall where there wasn't supposed to be anyone.

"A magic tool that blocks presence and magical power? That was dangerous."

Perhaps because they kept staring towards the direction of the gate, they did not notice me.

Well, they probably never would have guessed that somebody would fly through the sky.

Looking from above just like a spectator, I successfully escaped from the Holy Capital.

After flying for about another hundred meters, I once again returned to land.

The magical power consumption was getting intense and considering the road ahead, I felt that preserving magical power was the most important task.

For some time after that, I continued running while activating my body strengthening.

After taking some distance from the Holy Capital, I took out the Hermit Stable's Key from my magic bag. I'll have Fornoir come out.

Fornoir immediately came out after I turned the key.

"It might be hard relying on only the moonlight but can you take me to Meratoni?"

"Burrururuuu."

"Thank you."

After stroking her neck, I straddled on her back.

"Very well, let's go."

"Burrururu."

Without fear of the dark, Fornoir energetically began galloping through the land.

I originally planned to wake Nadia and Lydia up and proceed together with them but since there were no other horses housed in the stables, I decided to keep them asleep

until morning.

But now, that seemed to be the correct decision.

Fornoir's galloping speed on land was faster than before and the bouncing motion was minimal so it felt as if I was flying through the air.

If an ordinary horse was running alongside us, it would probably be left in the dust.

While thinking that she was a really reliable partner, I occasionally cast Heal as we advanced.

Of course, even for an excellent spirit-possessed horse like Fornoir, continuously running would be difficult and she would sweat so while keeping an eye out for our surroundings, I let her rehydrate and cast purification on her to maintain her stamina and motivation as we proceeded.

The moon sank below the horizon and the surroundings gradually turned brighter as the east sky was dyed in a pale red light.

"It's beautiful. Now that I think about it, I've not looked at the sky recently."

When I muttered that, the joyfully running Fornoir gradually decreased her speed and began to slowly trot while staring at the sky.

"Looks like you really understand my words. I'm envious of Pope-sama who can converse with Fornoir."

"...Bururu."

"Ah~ Sorry. Ah, it's already that village huh? Didn't that take even less than half the time I usually take? As expected of you partner."

While thanking and patting Fornoir, I looked at the village in the distance.

"They would probably still be sleeping at this time so I guess I don't need to stop by this time."

It was when I decided to pass by the village.

The Hermit Coffin Key flew out from my magic bag and turned in the air on its own, causing a door to appear and open.

“Ooo, it’s like that huh. Even if it’s inside the magic bag, once the people inside wakes up, it would fly out huh.”

Just as I was feeling surprised, Nadia and Lydia exited looking slightly languid.

“Luciel-sama, good morning.”

“Morning. Why are the two of you looking so languid?”

It was Lydia who answered.

“That Darkness Spirit-sama’s magic was powerful so I feel slightly ill.”

“Ah. I see.”

The Darkness Spirit didn’t say that the magic cast on the two of them would be tough but I could tell that it was from their gestures.

I got off and after casting High Heal and Purification on Fornoir, I cast only Purification on the two of them.

“How is it?”

It looked like it helped regain some color to their complexions.

“I feel a lot better.”

“I can depart anytime if it’s like this.”

“Bururu.”

The two of them looked like they made a full recovery as they thanked me with smiles.

Incidentally, Fornoir also looked like she was saying that her stamina has recovered and she was feeling good so it was slightly funny to see.

“It can’t be helped since you two have woken up. Fornoir, do you mind pulling a carriage?”

“Bururu.”

She replied but unlike the relaxed mood previously, she looked melancholic while averting her gaze.

Lydia panicked.

“We can’t have Light Spirit-sama pull a carriage... that’s right, why don’t we purchase horses from that village?”

“That’s right. With a carriage, it would be troublesome if it gets stuck in a situation where we can’t move forward.”

Looking at her younger sister, Nadia also pointed out the dangers of moving via carriage so I also changed my thoughts.

“Burururuu.”

Looks like Fornoir also understands it well.

I felt like I heard such an auditory hallucination but I’ll leave it aside for now.

“It can’t be helped. Then, Fornoir, you can rest in the Hermit’s stable for now. I might need you to run again at a moment’s notice, so you should get some sleep too.”

Fornoir didn’t show any resistance as she nodded and entered the Hermit’s Stable.

“Then, see you soon.”

Fornoir shook her tail and entered without replying.

“Well then, let’s head for the village. Do the two of you remember that village?”

“It’s the village we visited before we went to the Holy Capital right?”

“Ah, now that you mention it, I do somewhat recall it.”

The two of them answered hesitantly but I reflected on my unreasonable question this time and talked about the village.

“I guess it’s natural that you two won’t recall by looking at it from such a distance and

having only been here once. The previous time, we didn't come in contact with the residents much but there was a demon within the village so it might give some hints to the incident with the Principality of Blange so I'll try asking around."

"Okay."

While thinking about how we fought with a demon in that village and about the village elder who became the demon and the villagers, I said that to the two of them who were pretending to not be concerned about their home country but they replied with a nod despite looking stiff so it was a relief.

Thus we detoured to the village.

CHAPTER 199

SUMMON MAGIC

We arrived at the village when the morning sun could be seen clearly.

However, the village was enclosed by a simple fence and there weren't any lookouts so I was perplexed for a moment as to whether it was fine to enter.

"Luciel-sama, why did you stop?"

"There is no penalty for entering a village that doesn't have guards stationed. It's commonly accepted that Adventurers can enter."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. Generally, the fence is meant to prevent the entry of wild wolves or monsters."

"The monsters in the Saint Schull Allied Nations are weak so it won't be a problem even with a fence like this."

It seemed like Adventurers are free to enter villages.

Taking note of that, I moved the fence to enter the village and closed the fence behind us.

"Firstly, I'll go greet the village elder before requesting a trade for horses. Well, if there aren't any horses, I'll have no choice but to burden Fornoir this time."

"It would be great if they do."

"Also, it would be great if we can have a meal here too."

Nadia agreed with me as we headed towards the village elder's house while I thought of how Lydia had totally turned into a gluttonous character.

While walking, I heard the sounds of life inside each of the houses so I thought to myself that the villagers sure wake up early as we arrived at the village elder's house.

"Well then, I hope he has woken up."

“Luciel-sama, please let us do it.”

“Luciel-sama can wait here.”

I had mixed feelings with how the two of them had really gotten accustomed to being my followers but I felt that the negotiations would go a lot smoother if I was the one who did it so I tried a simple persuasion.

“The two of you are not acquainted with the village elder right? Well, I’ve only talked with the new village elder once but I think it will be more reasonable if I went.”

When I told them that, they nodded and agreed so I took a step forward and knocked on the village elder’s house door.

“I’m sorry for disturbing so early in the morning but is village elder-sama at home?”

When I did that, I heard movement inside so it seemed like he was awake when the door opened slightly.

“Who is it? What is it so early in the morning... wait, isn’t it Luciel-sama?”

When the displeased village elder saw me, his expression turned into smiles.

“Good morning. I’m sorry for visiting so early.”

“Don’t, don’t worry. Leaving that aside, may I know what reason did you come here for?”

“We’re on our way to the Holy Capital but our horses collapsed so if possible I would like to lend a few horses. Of course, I am willing to pay a lot more than the usual.”

“I see, to the Holy Capital huh. However, it might be nothing more but rumors but I’ve heard that Luciel-sama has been punished by the Gods.”

Even though he was fearfully asking about the God’s punishment, I felt that his eyes showed a shrewd spark but I don’t intend to lose time here so I’ll show him directly by using magic.

“Those are mere rumors. Heal.”

When I applied Heal on the village elder, his posture with his right shoulder slightly

lowered changed into a proper posture.

“Oo! My lower back pain has disappeared like it was an illusion. If that’s the case...”

He looked happy while kneading his back as he swallowed the last of his words.

“That’s because they were just rumors. I’m sorry to have troubled the village with that.”

“Eh? Ah, please don’t mind it, Luciel-sama saved this village after all. For now, come on in.”

“Thank you.”

The village elder hid his discomposure as he invited us to enter his home.

When I entered, books were scattered around unlike the previous time I visited.

“Sorry for it being so messy.”

The village elder apologized and swept the books to a corner in embarrassment.

“I’ve said it just now but I stopped by suddenly so don’t mind it. Nevertheless, I’m surprised you possess this many books.”

The village elder shook his head and answered.

“These all belong to the previous village elder. I originally thought that the church would collect them but they were left like this so I read them whenever I’m free.”

I didn’t see them when we were cleaning up previously but we didn’t search the place in detail so it was probably kept somewhere but before entering the main topic, I asked about the books he likes to lower his vigilance towards us.

“That’s a great hobby to have. May I ask what kind of books are they?”

“Important details needed to govern the village are described and there are also many

that preach human supremacy. That's why there are also some from the Principality of Blange that is the origin of the human supremacy doctrine. I guess the majority of the others are regarding Rainstar-dono."

The books were a lot less unusual than I had thought.

The number of books was a little overwhelming so maybe he hasn't exactly had the time to read all of them in detail.

Nevertheless, an organization that believes in the human supremacy doctrine looks to be a polar opposite to my beliefs.

If there was a group working behind the scenes within the church that believes in the human supremacy doctrine, the perpetrators for the disturbance this time would be a religious organization.

If that's the case, that person I am acquainted with would be the instigator for this time's disturbance.

Thinking about it makes me depressed so I continued the conversation.

"I see. Actually, I also like to read and I'm the type that reads through various different kinds of books. That's why I was wondering if there were any books that are out of the ordinary here."

"If that's the case, there are some that records legends regarding Spirits, Dragons, and labyrinths as well as some unusual and suspicious ones like a book regarding summoning and one on eternal youth and longevity."

When I said that with a smile, the village elder became somewhat excited and told me about various genres with a triumphant look.

But some of the titles caught my attention.

Summon Magic and eternal youth and longevity... but why didn't the church personnel collect the books?

"...I'm guessing that the church people investigated those books?"

"Yes. Probably. It's apparently something that is fake in the first place and it was written in the Principality of Blange but books like these can be found almost

everywhere.”

I was extremely uneasy as to for what reason the Knight Corps came here to investigate.

Is it really alright? Or maybe within the church... it's useless to make any more conjectures.

I paused for a second before entering the main topic.

“...I see. And so going back to the horses, would you be able to prepare them?”

“There aren't any excellent horses in this village but would that be fine?”

“Yes. Sorry for making an unreasonable request. If you are alright with 10 gold coins for a horse. I wish to purchase 3 horses.”

“I'll gladly sell if I can receive that much. I'll quickly go to where the stable master is so could you please wait for a moment?”

“Yeah. I'd love to read some of these books during that time if you don't mind.”

“Of course, go ahead.”

The village elder said joyfully as he flew out of the house.

There are probably horses if he's acting that way.

“Well then, what do you two think?”

“It's true that we also followed the human supremacy belief. But after becoming adventurers, that wall thinned.”

“For me, there's also Spirits so I am not that against other races.”

The two of them replied to the topic of human supremacy but I smiled wryly remembering that I didn't specify the subject so I properly conveyed what I intended to ask.

“No, sorry about that. I didn't specify the subject. I was thinking if the mystery of the demons suddenly appearing has something to do with that summoning magic. By the way, does the Principality of Blange still perform hero summoning even till today?”

After I clarified my question, the two of them told me about what they knew.

“Yes. But there are few who knows about the details even among the nobles.”

“We are told that the hero summoning is being conducted but we don’t know if the summoning is successful or not.”

“Is it because the demon lord and demon race didn’t appear?”

“I also don’t know much regarding that.”

“We immediately left home upon coming of age and we weren’t nobles with considerable authority so...”

Oh yeah, they did say that they hated how they were forced into marriage proposals so they became adventurers.

Ordinary nobles... now that I think about it, Elinas-san at Nelldal is also the daughter of an Earl but she’s into research because she doesn’t want to be used for political marriages.

Is the future of the Principality of Blange all right? I didn’t get any valuable information but either way, I decided to look for some clues no matter how minor.

“...I see. We’re short on time so let’s do what we can. If there’s anything that catches your attentions, please let me know.”

“”Okay.””

After I instructed the two of them, I proceeded to read the books on summoning and eternal youth and longevity that the village elder spoke of.

At the moment, I don’t know if there are any common points between the demon disturbance that happened in this village the previous time and the rumored demons that appeared in Blange this time.

It’s been over half a year since that happened but what I still remember and am still bothered from that time were the magic circle that released the miasma that disappeared and the ritual that used a suspicious staff and vase that Cathy and the

others said they saw.

If that ritual is recorded inside these books on Summon Magic and eternal youth and longevity, I might find out the aim of the demons.

I thought as I began to search for the book and I immediately found it.

It was an expensive looking book that was carefully wrapped but the contents were very dirty and looked very timeworn and the words could barely be read.

I wanted to purify everything apart from the words but it might recognize the words as dirty too causing me to not be able to read the book so I restrained myself and began reading.

Because Summon Magic is categorized under Space-time Magic, it has become a myth-like existence but it actually isn't.

In fact, even without attributes, as long as a contract for compensation is carved into a magic circle, it is possible to cast it.

Regarding that compensation, if the intended summon is a human, the compensation is naturally a human as well.

However, not all contracts require life as compensation, apparently it is possible to offer magical power as compensation.

“It leaked that much miasma so the compensation was likely to be all the villagers’ lives. No matter how I think about it, it was definitely meant to summon an extraordinary existence.”

When I flipped to the next page, there was a section on magic tools used for summoning and when I looked at the rituals using vases, terrifying things like soul exchange and soul possessing were recorded in it.

If the summoning magic circle at that time activated, the villagers’ souls would vanish along with the summon and the summoned demon souls would enter the villagers’ bodies.

If this content is true, then at that time, if we were to arrive at the village just a little

later, the demon souls would have been born within the villagers.

“No ordinary person would be able to think of committing such a thing.”

When I flipped to another page, something outrageous was written there.

“Please buy this at the asking price.”

When I closed the book on summoning, I noticed that the exterior was getting noisy and went out together with Nadia and Lydia.

CHAPTER 200

CAVALRY

Before leaving the village elder's house, I gathered the books related to Spirits and Dragons that the two of them were interested in and I told them of my intention to head to the commotion outside.

"I didn't feel any ill intent from the village elder earlier. Since that's the case, there's a high chance that he suffered some kind of accident."

"Is it the pursuers?"

Nadia imagined that it might be the pursuers but I immediately denied it.

"No, just now we told the village elder that we are heading towards the Holy Capital. So it won't cause a commotion even if there's a church personnel involved. I think it's either the appearance of monsters or somebody got injured."

"That would be dreadful. Let's go quickly."

"We have to help if there are people in need."

The two of them looked like they were on a mission or something but I agree with them if there's a person's life at stake.

"Either way, let's go outside. Ah before that, did any of the books catch your attention?"

"Nothing in particular."

"Since the books related to the lore of Dragons and Spirits can be found in Nelldal too. There's nothing noteworthy."

"Then I'll just take this one book."

When I grabbed the book related to summoning and opened the door to the entrance, the cause of the commotion were the guys from the White Wolf's Bloodline.

“What are you doing?”

Hazan-san and his group noticed us when I muttered that as I approached them and they called out to me. *(TL: Hazan was written as Bazan in the past.)*

“Oh, Luciel, it’s been a long time.”

“Oh, Luciel-kun is seriously around, Hazan’s sense of smell is already beyond that of human’s.”

“Luciel, it’s been a long time.”

Hazan-san, Skyros-san and Basra-san took turns to speak to me.

“Good morning. What did you guys do? Village elder, did these people do something to you?”

“...Luciel-sama, do you know these beastmen adventurers?”

The village elder looked at me and asked with a slightly puzzled tone so I could tell that he has been influenced by the human supremacy doctrine books.

Well, I don’t want the situation to worsen now so I accurately conveyed their relationship to me.

“Yes, I am acquainted with them. These people are the White Wolf’s Bloodline, an upper-rank adventurer party in Meratoni.”

“That’s why I’ve been saying I know him. Luciel, we received a request from Whirlwind because he was slightly worried.”

The village elder’s attitude could be inferred from Hazan’s tone that sounded like he found it bothersome.

He has probably faced racial discrimination before just like today.

That thought made me feel a little sad.

But then, a problem arose there.

I told him that I was going to the Holy Capital so I rather if they said that they were here to escort me instead of invite me but the village elder showed a slightly bitter expression maybe because he thought of it.

I don't know if I would be able to deceive him but I tried talking while changing the nuance.

"So you received a request to escort me huh. We needed horses so I came to this village to purchase a few of them."

When I said that, the grim look on the village elder's face disappeared.

"If that's the case, we came by carriage so you can ride in that too."

Hazan-san offered out of goodwill but I sensed the village elder's eyes sharpened at that instant so I decided to politely refuse.

"Well, I've already asked him to go through the trouble of selling them to me and something else came up that I wish to buy too."

"Oya, what is it?"

Seeing his radiant smile that was completely different from before, I decided to stop thinking so deeply about his actions.

It seems like the village elder's aim was gold so I would lose out if I think too much.

"Regarding this book on summoning, I've never read it before and I really want to read it but I don't have the time to do so here so I hope you can sell it to me. Of course, I will compensate you with a suitable amount."

"Ah, I don't mind offering you that book. For someone like me who live in this village, I won't be able to gather the materials written in that book and it's a dubious book after all."

Surprisingly, he did not seek compensation so he was either preoccupied with the notion of selling the horses or that he decided that the book has no value.

"Thank you. So what about the horses?"

"They have already been prepared but if it is okay with you, would you like to have a

meal first?"

The village elder offered but it might be asking for trouble with the White Wolf's Bloodline around so I declined.

A hungry aura was emanating from Lydia so I'll pass her something light that can be eaten once we leave the village.

"I'd love to but I'll have to decline this time. Please guide me to the horses."

"Okay. This way please."

It looks like it was just lip service as the village elder didn't look like he minded it even after I declined his offer.

And he began to walk towards the stables so I followed him.

Behind me, Skyros-san and Nadia were talking and for some reason, the atmosphere felt like they were acquaintances but then Bazan-san talked to me. *(TL: It became Bazan now...)*

"Luciel, it seems like you've become a Sage. It was probably tough but I'm happy for you."

Bazan-san laughed until his sharp canines could be seen and it looked like he was genuinely happy that I became a Sage.

I was glad to hear that but I realized that I had not thanked them for coming to pick me up so I thanked them.

"Well, this time I really didn't think that I would survive though. Leaving that aside, thank you for coming to pick me up. If you guys are around here, doesn't it mean that you guys galloped all the way here?"

"Yeah. Nevertheless, it's because we knew that the life of our life's benefactors was being threatened. We rushed over."

Life benefactor is way too much an exaggeration.

However, I had the power of healing and there was a patient for me to heal, and now it had come around in terms of how that patient was now assisting me so it was quite

moving.

“...Thank you. So about Shisho’s condition, how is he now?”

“...That person asked me to not reveal it but he has recovered to the extent of being able to have a good match with us.”

I felt like he hesitated about something for a second there but if Shisho has recovered until he is able to fight with the A-rank Bazan-san then there shouldn’t be any problem.

“Even though it’s only been three months, to be able to fight with an A-rank Adventurer... as expected of Shisho. He’s really beyond human.”

“But thanks to that person organizing mock battles every day, the Adventurer’s Guild has a strange tense atmosphere though.”

Bazan-san said with a wry grin but thinking of the current progress, it would probably continue the same way as what has been happening the past three months.

Since Shisho’s level and skill were not sealed but just reset, to regain his former ability, he has no option other than to steadily go through mock battles and actual fights.

That’s probably the reason why Shisho was taking the initiative to have mock battles with the rookie adventurers.

Well, if the adventurers knew that Shisho had weakened, he probably won’t have any trouble finding actual fighting opponents who challenge him thinking that they might be able to win now.

It’s probably troubling for Shisho as the guildmaster to be low-leveled so Garba-san and Grulga-san were definitely helping him but... I’m uneasy with how those two allowed the mock battles.

“...Are the adventurers alright? Like whether the requests are being delayed or such...”

“People are continuously losing consciousness but somehow, I would say that the current Adventurer’s Guild is filled with vibrancy.”

“It’s great that it’s vibrant.”

I'll ignore the part about people losing consciousness.

It smells like the kind of Pandora's box that shouldn't be opened.

"So, how did Luciel reach here? Seeing that you all don't have horses, don't tell me you guys made three horses collapse?"

Bazan-san changed the topic for me but it was difficult to explain so I'll tell them later.

"No, I was alone until just now. But I'll talk about that after we leave the village."

"That's true. Oh, are those it? They seem calm."

"...I hope they aren't packhorses though."

The village elder came back with the horse owner and there were three horses lined up that gave a favorable impression.

"It looks like they might actually be swift horses."

"It would be a pleasant miscalculation if that was true."

Bazan-san and party checked the horses and it didn't seem like there were any problems so I passed the village elder a coin pouch with 30 gold coins inside for the three horses.

"These horses look quite fine. This is your payment."

"Oou. I've received it. These three horses run around in this village so they would easily be able to last until the Holy Capital."

He said that with a satisfied smile.

"If any church personnel come asking for me, please tell them that I have already returned to the Holy Capital."

"Certainly."

"This is a tip. Please use it so that everyone from the village doesn't have to experience hunger."

“Haha. Thank you very much.”

I was surprised by the hand that shot out the instant I offered the gold coin but I somehow managed to pass it to him normally.

He would notice that we would be traveling in the opposite direction from the Holy Capital if he saw us off so I decided to part ways here.

“These people can lead the way so you don’t need to send me off.”

“All right. I pray for the safety of Luciel-sama and party.”

“Thanks.”

Nadia and Lydia led a horse each but the horses avoided me whenever I approached them so I had no choice but to have Basra pull the reins as we successfully exited the village.

The village elder was worried that I would return the horses I purchased but I told him that I would somehow make do with them so he bowed and returned to his own home.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve seen a person so obsessed with gold.”

“Leaving that aside, Luciel, it would probably be unreasonable to ride these horses all the way right? Would you like to ride our carriage?”

“No, there’s no need for that. Since I have my partner.”

I used the Hermit’s Key to cause the stables to appear, shocking Bazan-san and others but the ones most shocked were probably the horses.

The calm atmosphere totally changed due to the presence that Fornoir exuded when she came out of the stables.

“Bururururu.”

With just that sound, the horses all bowed down to Fornoir together.

“...I don’t really understand but it has a mysterious presence? That’s not a regular

horse.”

“Yeah. That’s my partner. I noticed that Bazan-san and party’s carriage has two horses pulling it so let’s store the carriage and ride like cavalry with ease.”

“Luciel... you’ve become a lot more strong-willed compared to before.”

“Haha. That’s good.”

I got a little shy from what Bazan-san said so I quickly stored the carriage.

Thus after finishing our preparations, we became a cavalry corps and headed towards Meratoni.

At that time, because the horses were desperately trying to follow Fornoir, I was naturally up in front despite how the guys were here to act as my guards but we had no choice but to travel like that since the horses were unable to run ahead of Fornoir.

CHAPTER 201

REUNION

Along the way to Meratoni, nothing happened in particular but during that journey, I was told the episode that explained the relationship between Nadia and Skyros-san... or rather, the whole White Wolf's Bloodline.

Three years ago, Nadia was helped by the White Wolf's Bloodline when she was still a solo adventurer.

At that time, Nadia was still a rookie but because her swordsmanship caught people's attention, she received many party invitations from rookie adventurers as well as mainstay adventurers.

However, Nadia refused all of them politely.

Adventurers who did not find that amusing hired bandits and laid a plan to capture Nadia.

But it was lucky that the White Wolf's Bloodline party who were coincidentally on an expedition to Grandol came across her when she was about to be attacked and defeated the bandits.

However, at that time, Nadia's thoughts were still deeply rooted in the doctrine of human supremacy due to her upbringing so instead of thanking them, she apparently even suspected if they were the companions of those bandits.

When I glanced at Nadia, her face turned bright red and she looked down in embarrassment.

"I see. But it looks like she isn't that prejudiced towards you all now?"

"Since we were the ones who taught Miss Nadia the fundamentals of adventuring."

"Well, it was just something that happened by chance. Nadia's swordsmanship was decent but her fighting style was too clean and it was as if she didn't learn the fundamentals like hiding herself or investigating the monster's weak points."

“I see. That’s why huh?”

When she met us, she could interact with Cathy and Kefin normally so it was the White Wolf’s Bloodline who changed Nadia’s mindset on human supremacy.

“I didn’t expect her to be in Luciel’s party though. One will never know when and how one would stumble across an acquaintance.”

“That’s very true.”

We’ve been riding on the horses for about an hour while having such conversations.

Fornoir has slowed down her pace but the horses were beginning to tire so we decided to have a break.

“Let’s have a break here. I’ve not had anything to eat since morning so I’m a little hungry.”

“We’ll follow your decision.”

“Luciel-kun, what do you plan to make?”

“Ah, nothing, they are pre-made food.”

I offered them the pot-au-feu and pasta that I made in Nelldal.

“...To be able to take out something warm, is that a magic bag?”

“Yes. I had a tough time in the past when I only had the magic satchel but Pope-sama gave me this.”

“Gave... the Church is rich as expected.”

I tilted my head at Skyros-san’s choice of words.

“I’m not too sure about the Church itself? It’s true that I received it from Pope-sama but it was Pope-sama’s personal belonging in the first place, it was just a transfer of usage from her to me.”

“But, the Healers have such excessive profits so the salary from the Church is obviously good too right?”

Bazan-san pointed that out but I realized that I reached my current position without knowing the ordinary salary of a person.

“True, I believe I receive quite a decent amount due to my title. But I don’t know about the salaries of other people. There’s nowhere to spend the money in the Church as well so I’ve not heard anything regarding that topic too...”

Let’s go to the Healer’s Guild and brush up on the knowledge I lack by asking Krull-san when we reach Meratoni.

Bazan-san was astonished when he heard that and Basra-san spoke.

“Personal item huh? Luciel is cherished by the Pope... she probably has even greater expectations of you.”

“...Possibly. Well then, it would turn dark if we continue this conversation so let’s stop here.”

They didn’t ask any further and we began to have our meal.

Time passed uneventfully after that as we finished our meal and the horses were rested before we once again rode towards Meratoni until we finally saw the outer walls of Meratoni.

The first to notice the out-of-place sensation was Fornoir.

Fornoir stopped running and began restlessly looking around.

“What’s wrong?”

I didn’t understand the reason why she stopped so I closed my eyes and checked the surroundings but I didn’t sense any presence or magical power.

However, the other horses also began to sense the abnormality that Fornoir detected and an unusual number of birds flew off as if escaping to somewhere.

“Is it an earthquake? Or an attack by monsters? Everyone, for now, let’s move forward while keeping vigilant. If it’s monsters, there aren’t any terrain to use as a shield so it’s disadvantageous for us.”

“Understood. Let me take the lead.”

“Okay. Fornoir, let’s go.”

When I said that, I detected a sound gradually approaching us that sounded like it was slicing through the air.

“What’s that? This sound like it’s cutting through the air? It’s coming closer?”

“Is it that? What was it again? Winged Dragon? But it’s a lot larger.”

“Either way, let’s go.”

Fornoir and the horses ran at full speed but the speed of the Winged Dragon? was considerably fast so it gradually caught up to us and I caught sight of it.

“Oi oi, isn’t that over-technology?”

I muttered as if ridiculing it as the flying object slowly descended.

Fornoir realized that I was surprised but not afraid so she stopped fleeing.

“Oi Luciel, I’ve never seen that before. It would be bad if it is a new type of golem so we should run.”

Bazan-san noticed that we stopped and shouted at us but I shook my head and explained the flying object to them in simple terms.

“It’s alright. Because my allies are riding that.”

“Riding? Allies?”

“Yeah.”

A bird-shaped flying ship painted in deep red descended.

“It’s as if it symbolizes the Spirit of Fire, exactly like the Phoenix.”

What's shocking was that there were completely no propellers, I could tell going by the afterglow that it flew by utilizing magical power.

After the flying object slowly landed on the ground, Lionel and the others descended from it.

"Luciel-sama, thank god, thank god."

I was slightly taken aback by the sight of Lionel literally flying over the moment he landed while looking like he was about to burst out in tears but I was grateful and thanked him.

"I'm glad to see you are well too, you guys did well to chase up to us. Cathy-san and Kefin-san too, thank you for your hard work protecting Lionel-dono."

"...Why, is Luciel-sama using honorific language?"

Lionel was confused at why I was talking to them in a reserved manner.

"Nya, Luciel-sama, that forced honorific language so extremely unpleasant nya."

"Luciel-sama, didn't you say that we would still be your retainers even after you released us from slavery?"

"No no, it just seems like Lionel is about to cry for some reason so it made me want to tease him. Nevertheless, you guys really did well chasing up to us. Thank you. Oh! Dolan, Paula, Rician, it's been a long time. You guys made a flying ship that far surpassed my expectations."

The day had come where I could finally see the first step of the things I asked Dolan to make.

"It's been a long time, Luciel-dono. We've had quite a hard time making this. But, by being able to use all the Earth Dragon's ores and with the funding from Luciel Enterprise, I could finally create what I dreamt of creating. I'm truly grateful."

Luciel Enterprise's funding? That was totally a bolt out of the blue but he said that

there weren't any problems when I talked to him through the magic communication bead yesterday? I would just confuse myself if I thought about it now so I decided to give up on thinking about it.

"Luciel, long time no see. When I finished making this with grandpa, my Magic Tool Creation skill reached Level IX. With that, I'll now be able to make the fully automated cooker."

"Luciel-sama, it's been a long time. About the Monster Detector that you talked about before, I've successfully made one that can sense magical power but it looks like I've not put in enough effort."

Paula and Rician said that and walked up to me for some reason, showing me the palms of both of their hands.

"What's with that gesture?... Don't tell me it's magic stones you want?"

The two of them nodded vigorously when I said that.

They probably only recognize me as the person who gives them magic stones.

For some reason, that caused me to feel extremely happy but also slightly at a loss for words.

"I've heard that you have a big one."

"If I have that, I should definitely be able to complete my work."

"There's no way I can pass it to you two here right? Leaving that aside, what about the creation of the magic communication bead."

"That's already done. It's also compact so there are no problems."

"Eh? I'm the one who completed the magic communication bead."

"I'm the one who made it compact and light-weight."

"Leave all that until we reach Meratoni. I won't give you magic stones if you don't behave okay?"

I felt kind of envious at how they could honestly do what they desire without wavering.

I could not give them the magic stones here so I told them I would pass it to them when we arrive at Meratoni and the two of them behaved themselves at once.

“This time, for what reason did you call us to this place apart from the fact that you’ve promoted to Sage?”

It seemed like Lionel didn’t know the reason why they were called here so I began by explaining to them that Shisho was the one who called everyone instead of me.

“Ah. Actually, “Before that, I can’t move this anymore so please store it.””

However, Dolan interrupted me with words that I couldn’t ignore.

“You can’t move it anymore? It can’t move anymore?”

“Yeah. Once it stops, an enormous amount of magical power is required to propel it once again. That’s why it’s impossible to do so immediately.”

... I wanted to ride it even for a short time but it can’t be helped.

Nevertheless, I have to praise them for actually realizing the idea.

“...Luciel-sama, please excuse me.”

Lionel said that and walked to the flying ship before gently touching it, causing the flying ship to disappear in an instant.

“I see that you can use the magic bag without any problems now.”

“Yeah. Thanks to Luciel-sama. Leaving that aside, Meratoni is right in front of our eyes so could we continue with what you were about to say as we walk?”

“That’s true. Bazan-san, I’ve joined up with my retinue so could you all ride ahead to Meratoni first and tell Shisho that we would be arriving shortly?”

“Sure. It looks like it will be fine with this party so we’ll go ahead first.”

“Thank you.”

After I bowed and requested them, they quickly accepted and rode off.

Thus, after seeing off Bazan-san and his party, I walked towards Meratoni while exchanging information with Lionel and the others.

CHAPTER 202

THREE MONTHS FROM THEN

While walking to Meratoni together with Lionel and party, I briefly explained to them the circumstances which brought us to gather at Meratoni and asked them about what has happened on their side these three months.

“...And so, to conclude in simple terms, I went to Nelldal and somehow became a Sage. But, like before, I’m a defective Sage that can’t use anything other than Holy Attribute Magic though.”

I laughed at myself and joked.

I said that precisely because I could say it now. If I could not regain my power even after going through all that, the air around me would definitely turn heavy in an instant.

“As long as you have Holy Attribute Magic, Luciel-sama has nothing to fear. I will receive all attacks towards Luciel-sama and cleave through all the enemies that stand in your way.”

Lionel who was beside me suddenly stood in front of me and declared after kneeling on one knee...

“...Hey Lionel, hasn’t your personality changed a little?”

How do I put it, he’s become a little hot-blooded.

There was a person who agreed with my words. Cathy.

“That’s so true nya. Ever since Lionel-sama heard that he has a child, he’s been training every single second to the point where he’s worn-out every day until we were about to ban him from the Healer’s District nya.”

“Child? With Naria?”

“Even though I’ve lost my level and skills, my combat experience still remain. Also, my

body regained its youth so I'm filled with energy... hahaha."

... It's great that he's rejuvenated in various aspects but doesn't that mean he left the pregnant Naria behind and came here? I'll ask Cathy about that later.

"Well... that's good right? I'll ask more in detail later but has it become easier to live in Ienith?"

"Yeah, it's the embodiment of peace. We've begun interviewing and hiring retired adventurers that show good actual result at the school and Luciel Enterprise has been using the funds obtained from business for the development of the country's economy so new jobs have become available and everyone looks happy."

Luciel Enterprise... it's true that I gathered capable talents but I didn't expect it to reach this level.

If that's the case, why don't I just live in Ienith, eh? I smell nothing but trouble though...

"...I see. If everyone is happy even if I don't manage anything, then it's the best. Now then, what about the rumors about my God's punishment?"

"The half-beastmen squad born in the former slums of Ienith caught the person who spread the rumors on Luciel-sama and we've already fed him the truth serum developed by the Herbalist Guild and we're halfway through the investigation."

... Just like Garba-san, the Ienith residents work quickly too in making the person confess.

"There was no confusion among the Ienith residents?"

"There wasn't anybody who believed it. Furthermore, even if Luciel-sama can't use Holy Attribute Magic, as the head of Luciel Enterprise that invested a huge amount of budget for the development of Ienith, there is nobody who would hold a grudge against you."

Lionel said confidently.

When I turned to Cathy and Kefin, they also nodded with smiles.

“I see. That’s great then.”

There wasn’t any chaos in Ienith at all and I would have felt bad if there were any who held grudges against me so I was honestly relieved.

“Also, when I was talking with Jasuan-dono, I heard that you two have mock battles quite often? About how strong are you now?”

Cathy answered my question.

“It’s about the level where Lionel-sama would win about once every ten rounds if I or Kefin are his opponent nya.”

Lionel had a sour expression but for a person whose level and skill got reset just three months ago, he’s actually capable of winning against Cathy and Kefin whose level surpass 200.

Cathy’s tail was swaying perhaps because she was happy that she won against Lionel but Kefin’s expression was heavy.

I was worried about that behavior and asked him.

“Kefin, what’s wrong?”

“Nowadays, through mock battles, most likely in order to become stronger at a quicker pace, Lionel-san has broken the hearts of rookie adventurers, shattered the self-confidence of intermediate adventurers and lately even upper-rank adventurers have averted their eyes. And that’s not only limited to Lionel-san, it even extends to us.”

Lionel averted his gaze when I looked at him.

“Er, thank you Kefin, it’s great to have you around.”

It felt like I gained a fellow who had the common sense of regular people.

Kefin was probably struggling.

Just as I was nodding, as if hit by a good idea, Lionel began giving excuses.

“Adventurers are unlike soldiers, they don’t have a norm for training and there are none who train until they puke blood so I was a little disappointed. Now I have Jasuan-

dono as my opponent so we can both aim for greater heights together.”

Regardless of what Lionel expected, although he lamented the training method of adventurers, it looked like he did not notice his own strangeness.

However, I realized that the same situation was happening at Meratoni’s Adventurer’s Guild but I felt that it won’t matter even if I said it then so I stopped talking about that topic.

Then, I moved my gaze away from Lionel and looked at Paula and Rician talking to each other about inventions... and spoke to Dolan who was looking from behind with a smile.

“Dolan, what have you been doing the seven months we’ve not seen each other?”

“Time flew by in no time by the time I finished making everyone’s equipment. If possible, I wanted to install magic cannons on that but the development has been slow.”

He probably wasn’t even aware that he was making weapons. *(TL: As in he’s so engrossed in planning and constructing that it has become something like his pet project/hobby)*

Well, it would be useful in defeating flying monsters.

Nevertheless, I couldn’t help but think that it’s really over-technology...

“...You’re completely in your dream world.”

“Yeah. I have Luciel-sama to thank for that.”

Dolan said with a bright and cheerful smile.

I got a little embarrassed and asked about the other two at Orford.

“By the way, how are Grand-san and Toretto-san doing?”

“It seemed to me that their engineer’s soul was burning when they saw that. They enthusiastically asked that Luciel-sama buy it if they make something interesting.”

“...I’ll see. I have a feeling that something outrageous will be built if it’s the two of

them?”

“Umu. They blamed it all on me and Luciel-sama who gave them inspiration.”

“That’s because the researchers in Orford including the two of them are made up of oddballs.”

“That’s so true.”

I prayed hard that they develop a tool to build a peaceful world.

If possible, I’d hope they invent a series similar to Angel’s Pillow.

Just like that, we distracted ourselves by having those silly conversations and before I knew it, we could see Meratoni’s gate... and my feet ground to a stop.

I had a proper reason for doing so.

Even though in the past it was only the Healer’s Guild, now the entirety of Meratoni was covered with banners that said ‘Welcome to Meratoni, the hometown of Sage Luciel’.

“...What’s with this. Even if it is to dispel the rumors, I’m not pleased at all.”

“It’s currently an emergency so regardless of Luciel-sama’s personal feelings, this was quite an effective method to tell the world that the rumors were a lie and that you have actually advanced down the path of Sage so there’s no helping it.”

“...I understand. I’ll vent these feelings on those who spread those rumors.”

And when we reached Meratoni’s gates, the gate soldier saluted me.

Furthermore, the gate soldier-san was delighted for some reason so I asked why.

“Er, why are you so pleased?”

“Luciel-sama might not recall but, just like how I am doing so now, I was guarding the gate when Luciel-sama first came to Meratoni.”

He said that but I do vividly remember him.

At any rate, he was the first person I met in this world and he was holding a spear so he's completely engraved in my memories.

"Yeah. You've become a little plumper."

"You remember me!?"

"Yeah. I don't know your name though."

"Don't mind it, I am just a gate soldier after all. Just having you recall me is an honor, Sage-sama."

"Haha. Thank you. But I've only become a Sage for a few days so I'm not used to being called so."

I replied with a wry smile before entering the town of Meratoni.

Even though it was the evening, it was still slightly early so there were still a lot of human traffic.

For that reason, all the gazes gathered on me and normally Shisho would appear at that time but I couldn't find him no matter how much I looked.

At the same time, I had a bad feeling about it so I quickly rushed towards the Adventurer's Guild.

CHAPTER 203

URBAN LEGEND?

I brisk walked through the town of Meratoni and when I arrived at the Adventurer's Guild, Shisho was there.

"...Shisho? Why?"

"Mu, Luciel you're here? And it feels like the number of people increased..."

"Shisho, what gave you such injuries?"

"....."

Shisho had injuries to both his eyes and his left arm and left leg only extended until his elbow and knee.

Moreover, it looked as if Shisho didn't hear my voice as he didn't reply me.

It looked just like the condition I was in during my special training but it didn't explain the left arm and left foot.

I immediately approached Shisho and activated Extra Heal and Recover.

Dazzling lights wrapped around Shisho's body and he was completely regenerated.

The people around us were at a loss for words at the stunning display but I tried asking Shisho who just recovered what happened.

"Welcome back Luciel. I'm saved thanks to your return."

However, in front of Shisho's smile, I replied reflexively.

"I'm back, Shisho. I've safely advanced to Sage."

"Ou. As expected of the disciple I'm proud of."

Those words made my eyes warm but at that time, as if coming to the realization that Shisho's wounds had been treated, the gathered masses gave out a tremendous cheer.

Just as I was surprised by that terrific cheer, Shisho addressed the gathered residents with a loud voice.

“You all should understand now that the rumors were mere rumors. Or rather, let’s all celebrate with Luciel his return as a Sage.”

With those words, there was another great cheer and this time it was also accompanied by clapping.

“Luciel, do you have something that is impactful? If you do, it can act as a blow towards those who tried scheming against you this time.”

“...There’s that but it feels like I’ll possibly get involved in something else?”

“Well, don’t fret the minor details. So, do you?”

Shisho replied while sweeping my thoughts aside without affirming or denying it.

Although I felt like it was an unreasonable request, I decided that I can do it just once if it’s to celebrate Shisho’s recovery so I decided to fly in the air.

“...Would it be impactful if I fly in the air?”

“Ha?”

Brushing aside Shisho’s question he made with a serious expression, I gave the signal to fly.

“Then, I’ll be going for a short while. Wind Dragon, become my wings to fly freely in the sky.”

The next instant, I rose up into the sky.

I steadily rose higher until about 30 meters up and lightly flew to my left and right for about 10 meters to show everyone before slowly descending.

Let alone Shisho, everyone looked strange with their mouths agape but I guess it’s to be expected as I suddenly flew into the sky.

As I was slowly descending, the setting sun at the distance was breathtaking so it felt

like it was a reward for all my hard work.

Until I landed, and even after I landed, not a single person said a word.

“Er, that’s my new ability but was it a little too plain?”

I asked Shisho but a cheer even louder than before went around without waiting for Shisho’s reply.

The cheers didn’t sound like it was going to settle down so this time, Shisho exclaimed to the surroundings.

“With this, everyone should understand that Luciel is a true Sage. From today, spread the word that Meratoni was the town that raised a Sage. Luciel, let’s go in.”

“Okay.”

Then, clapping started out of nowhere and I waved and bow without knowing if I should feel happy or embarrassed as we changed locations to the interior of the Adventurer’s Guild.

When we entered the Adventurer’s Guild, everyone was surprised with stiff expressions after seeing Shisho instead of me.

Then, they saw me and once again verified Shisho’s appearance before raising their voices.

“Broad-san’s arm and feet have grown back.”

“So it’s true that Sages surpass Healers.”

“Whirlwind will once again go on a rampage.”

“Let’s run... but before that, let’s raise a toast.”

“Alright, let’s go to the tavern.”

Seeing Shisho’s complete recovery, the adventurers were surprised and overjoyed...

but those expressions quickly stiffened and they tried to leave the guild as if escaping.

“Hou. Then I believe the alcohol will be a lot more delicious after working up a sweat. And it can’t be a celebration without the leading actor right? Today, I’ll thoroughly beat you all up. Don’t worry~ This time Luciel is around so don’t be shy.”

The adventurers heading for the exit had blue faces and continued resisting.

Firstly, a warrior with a large shield held his stomach and exclaimed.

“I’m feeling slightly ill. A mock battle with Whirlwind would be very educational though. Hah~ what a pity.”

“Don’t need to worry. Luciel can treat something like that in an instant.”

The warrior fell to his knee at the instant refutation.

Following that, the spear-wielder who suggested to go drink hurriedly gave an excuse.

“Oh, I have an appointment after this so I can’t join you guys.”

“Hou. You’re going to drink right? If you’re satisfied with it, the Adventure’s Guild will provide the alcohol and food so don’t hold back.”

The adventurer’s eyes turned frightened at Shisho’s smile and his gaze slightly shifted towards me.

Or rather, it wasn’t just that man.

Brawny men were all looking at my direction.

Moreover, they were all looking with upturned eyes as if depending on me.

Even I felt bad for them so I decided to reach out to them with a helping hand.

“Shisho, please limit it to one match per person. We can always catch up after today... but we’ve still not decided on our accommodations so...”

“Mu, alright. I’ll accept it for today.”

“Is that alright with you all?”

I moved my gaze from Shisho to the adventurers and the adventurers began spitting

out words of abuse.

“Ugh~ We shouldn’t have expected any better. He’s that Whirlwind’s disciple after all.”

“As expected, even the disciple is a combat maniac.”

“Damn it. Now that I think about it, I heard that he even killed a dragon when he was still a Healer.”

“You idiots, you guys completely bet your hopes on the wrong person.”

It seems like they didn’t know my past nicknames.

While I was thinking that, a single person nodded with a smile.

However, I wonder why I arbitrarily decided from the faces I saw there that there weren’t any adventurers who knew about my past.

Those senior adventurers were still in the Adventurer’s Guild.

“Naive, you guys are naive! Have you all not heard of the legend of the Healer who at level 1 continued to challenge the combat maniac Whirlwind for over a year?”

I recognized the man who said that in jest and the party laughing beside him.

They were the ones who gave me clothes as presents.

“That unbelievable scene where he stands up like a zombie no matter how he is beaten down and he always had a smile for some reason when he’s pulling himself up...”

“That’s right. The person who stands up no matter how many times he receives that Whirlwind’s... that Demon Instructor’s attacks and drinks with a smile that Object X the Cooking Bear takes out, his name is...”

I’d be troubled if I don’t seal it there.

I used all my strength to shut the mouth of the adventurer who was about to speak.

“Holy Dragon, protect this body. Thunder Dragon, leave everything in the dust.”

All sounds disappeared before he could say the words and I held the adventurer’s

shoulder to deliver an electric shock to make him faint.

“MasoooooBuruburu.”

“I won’t let you say that.”

I was able to prevent the spread of that abominable nickname in the guild.

When I dispelled the Holy Dragon and Thunder Dragon state, the adventurer fainted as if having gotten an electric shock.

Well, I would be troubled too if he died so I was about to cast High Heal when...

“Ah~ah, getting called Demon Instructor again reminds me of how you were called Masochistic Zombie.”

That abominable nickname came out of Shisho’s mouth as if he was reminiscing about the past.

“He’s that rumored...”

“That wasn’t just a legend?”

“I didn’t know it was actually real.”

Such words entered my ears.

“Why did you say it Shisho.”

“Leaving that aside Luciel, you said that you can only use Holy Attribute Magic but you’ve been keeping quite some secrets huh. Furthermore, you’ve become quite considerably stronger.”

Shisho gave a huge grin without even flinching.

“...Well, it’s because a lot happened.”

“Then let’s quickly go to the basement.”

I was locked on by Shisho and the other adventurers showed relieved expressions at the change of target.

“Wait a minute, I’d like to have a mock battle too.”

But at that time, Lionel’s voice was heard.

Once two combat maniacs meet one another... I looked at Cathy and Kefin and they averted their eyes.

“Ah? Ah, why isn’t it Sen’oni.”

“It’s been some time Whirlwind.”

“Kukuku. Looks like it will be a festival today.”

“Fu, I’ll give you a blood festival.”

“Talk is useless. Let’s go. Luciel, look forward to it.”

At times like these, usually Grulga-san or Garba-san would be around but I wondered why they didn’t appear.

I wondered where did I make a mistake.

While I questioned myself, Shisho grabbed my robe and we moved to the underground training ground.

CHAPTER 204

SHISHO

I was semi-forcefully taken to the underground training field.

They could have taken the chance to escape since I already took the fall but perhaps they were confident that he won't change his target from me, the Adventurers unanimously came to the training ground to see the teacher-student showdown between Shisho and me.

Then, when we arrived at the training ground, I found Garba-san and Grulga-san there.

The two of them showed a momentary look of surprise seeing Shisho's recovery from his wounds.

But it immediately changed to a smile and they called out to me.

"Luciel-kun, welcome back, in various ways. You healed Broad well."

"Luciel, you returned at a great timing. I've made various new works so I look forward to hearing your comments."

The two of them greeted me like usual.

I wonder why those casual words made me feel like I've truly returned to my hometown? I smiled and joked around.

"Garba-san, Grulga-san, I've safely become a Sage and returned. Also Grulga-san, you can let Shisho eat your new creations."

"Just drinking that stuff is tough so I might just lose consciousness if I have to eat it."

Ah, looks like he's already drinking Object X.

Even though he said in the past that he won't drink something so disgustingly bad.

I teased Shisho more, like I was venting off my past resentments.

"But you'll become stronger just by eating it? Since there's a prime example here."

"Luciel became stronger by learning the basics properly and repeating it. It's a joke to

claim that you can become stronger just by drinking Object X.”

Ah, that’s bad. It looks like he’s about to tear.

“...It’s certain that there’s an effect depending on the amount one eats and drinks though.”

“There’s no way I’ll eat something like that when it has not even been demonstrated to give the same effect after mixing it with other ingredients! I’d rather throw myself into a fight once, no ten, or if that’s not enough, even a hundred times rather than eat that.”

... As expected of a combat maniac, the way he sees it is different.

Now that he mentioned it, it was never proven that it can still raise proficiency after mixing it into cooking.

Maybe it would be easier to drink if I dilute it one is to one with honey and cool it?

Just as my thoughts were derailing, Garba-san and Grulga-san approached Shisho.

“Well then, I believe Broad is aware of it but your sight, hearing, and arms have been healed. You do know that you have a mountain pile of work waiting for you right?”

“That’s right. I’ve tolerated it for five days since you were injured. But, now that you’ve returned to working condition, you can use the time you have for yourself effectively after you finish your work.”

“...Today is the celebration of my recovery so let me do what I please, no, let me just have a single round.”

A genuine combat maniac was here.

That’s why it would have been best for them if they ran away... they have yet to grasp Shisho’s character.

Shisho declared to the Adventurers who were about to flee.

“I’ll increase your Object X quantity if you run away.”

When he said that, the Adventurers had faces of despair like their road for retreat from hell was cut off.

But if he could threaten them with increasing the amount, it meant that they have been drinking Object X. To be honest, I was surprised.

Well, it's not like they are gulping it down but thinking back to how I was the only Adventurer who drank it seven years back, it looked like they have finally understood the benefit of Object X.

"Well, it would end quickly if it's just one round. The preparation for cooking has already been completed anyway."

"It's true that the urgent work has already been done during the afternoon so we do have that little bit of leeway."

"But you have to promise us that you will return to your work after one round."

After Garba-san and Grulga-san warned Shisho and gave their consent to the mock battles, the Adventurers lost the final fort they could depend on.

"Understood. Since Luciel will heal them if it's just to the extent of half-killing them, I can use all my strength at ease and it would probably be good training."

The grinning Shisho alone gave the Adventurers a mild scare.

The mock battle began immediately after that.

First would be the battle between Shisho and the Adventurers.

Lionel and the others were beside me so we made predictions to the mock battle.

"So which side do you think will win? I would usually think that the Adventurers would win. But I have a feeling that Shisho might win?"

But Lionel shook his head.

"It might be possible if he trained in Ienith like me where there are many monsters

but in the Saint Schull's Allied Nations where the monsters are scarce, he would not be able to raise his level that much so the odds are 7 to 3 for the Adventurers to win."

"I think Whirlwind will win nya. He definitely retains his memories of combat so I feel that he has most likely made remarkable growth nya."

"I also think Whirlwind will win. Lionel-san is the same, considering his stoic personality to become stronger..."

That's when I realized that Nadia and the others weren't there.

"Eh, where's Dolan, Nadia and the others?"

"Ah, I think they went to book the inn for today together with a couple of Adventurers."

"I see. Oh, it has begun."

The preparations were completed while we were talking and Shisho confronted a party of six.

"Begin."

At the same time Garba-san gave the cue to start, the Adventurers attacked.

The four vanguards assaulted Shisho with various weapons.

Shisho parried the Swordsman's attack without avoiding it and pushed him towards the direction of the opponent stabbing at him with a dagger. Then, he drew his shield and blocked the attack from the Greataxe-user who attacked from the opposite side.

That fighting style was what I saw in the past... no, what I was taught in the past.

In situations where you face one against many, the goal is to either not receive any attacks or to limit the damage to the lowest amount if you have to take the attack.

The aim is to continue to handle the attacks without attacking until you see an opportunity.

When a person does a strong attack, they would be flustered when you don't get defeated in a single blow and it would lead to mistakes in their cooperation.

Furthermore, he also mentioned that if the attacks were seen to be even slightly effective, it would lead them to feel conceited.

It felt like Shisho was actually showing that to me in a real battle.

However, in my heart, I felt a sense of desolation from recalling Shisho's past god-like speed that gave one the illusion that he was grasping at clouds when trying to hit him and his nimble footsteps that even concealed the sounds of his footfalls.

The mock battle continued.

Even from here, I could clearly see Shisho's movements without losing sight of him.

That was also similar for the Adventurers he were fighting as they collaborated their attacks and completely sealed Shisho's movements.

Just as Shisho defended against the greataxe with his shield, another Swordsman stabbed at him but he kicked the knee of the Greataxe-user and escaped backward.

But, as if they have experienced that countless times, a dagger was thrown and a Fireball flew over as if aiming for that moment.

It wasn't a surprise that an Adventurer could use magic but since he could use magic in such a cramped battlefield, I could tell that he had considerable ability.

Shisho blocked the dagger with his shield but he took the Fireball that was released together with the dagger as well.

The Fireball caused a small explosion when it landed on the shield.

Even though it looked like it was a chance for them, he once again closed in on the vanguards.

He threw the shield at the Adventurers and sped towards them.

The Adventurers showed stunned expressions but they immediately attacked.

I thought that it would turn out badly so I quickly prepared Magic Circle Chant for High Heal when in the blink of the eye, none of the attacks reached Shisho and the weapons in the four vanguards' hands fell to the ground.

Shisho didn't slow down as he approached the Magician and Hunter at the back when Garba-san's voice was heard.

"That's enough! The winner is Broad."

"Ou."

Shisho raised his right arm that was holding his sword.

It looked like Shisho was still the beyond-ordinary Shisho after all.

"Could you tell what happened?"

"...Beats me? But it looks like despite having weakened, Whirlwind is still Whirlwind after all. Haha, my blood is boiling. Luciel-sama, let's go."

I asked Lionel but his attention was already on Shisho rather than on our conversation.

It seemed like the fire was lit for the combat maniac here too.

Lionel led me to the center of the training ground.

"How was that Luciel? Even though I've weakened, I've returned to being able to at least win against B-rank Adventurers with fundamentals."

Shisho looked like he was delighted with a smug look on his face.

Well, I was honestly overjoyed that Shisho won but I said to Shisho while looking at the Adventurers.

"...Try to restrain yourself a little. They won't be able to stand tall if you crush their B-rank party alone."

"Yup. Even though I stress that the fundamentals are important, this is the whip of love for those idiots who try to show off just because they raised their ranks. Since it would be a loss if they get killed by monsters or the likes."

“Well, I do get what you’re trying to say though.”

I gave a bitter smile as I activated Middle Heal on Shisho and the Adventurers.

“However, I don’t get why they hate the mock battles that much?”

I felt that the Adventurers were telling me to not say unnecessary things with their eyes but I already said it so it couldn’t be helped.

“Of course. That’s because the real deal begins now, right Sen’Oni.”

“Yup. It was a draw three months ago but this time I will be taking the win, Whirlwind.”

“Don’t be ridiculous. If you believe that you have the advantage just because you raised your level then I’ll properly carve the truth into your body. The truth of genuine strength.”

As fighting spirit was gushing out from the eyes of the two of them, the Adventurers who I finished treating showed relieved expressions and we left the training ground together. Along the way, I asked Garba-san to be the referee for their mock battle.

“Garba-san, this time the two of them will be fighting so I leave it to you.”

“Alright. Now then the two of you, time is wasting so quickly get ready and start.”

Thus once again after three months, the battle between Shisho and Lionel began.

CHAPTER 205

UNABLE TO DO ONE'S BEST

Shisho and Lionel both drew their weapons from their magic bags and faced each other.

They both had combative grins on their faces as they waited for Garba-san's cue to start.

"Begin."

I imagined that the two of them would instantly move even before the cue to start but, as if they didn't hear the cue to start, neither of them moved, resulting in a stand-off.

If Shisho's style revolves around distracting the opponent with quick movements and speed and winning within a couple of moves, Lionel's style is a calm style that mows down the opponent after he stops all the attacks sent towards him.

But that was if they still had the same condition they had up till now.

Shisho was probably measuring how much Lionel had regained his former strength.

And it was the same for Lionel as he was probably wary of that slash attack Shisho performed after slipping through the Adventurers.

Which could be seen by the sweat glistening on their foreheads.

If I closed my eyes to sense them, I would most likely sense their magical power and presence grow stronger and thinner.

It was when I started to wonder who would break the current stalemate.

Against all expectations, Shisho dropped his stance and slowly approached Lionel with a fearless smile.

Lionel didn't overlook Shisho's behavior as he lowered his posture and tensed the arm

that was holding onto the large shield.

The instant it looked like there weren't any further movements, Shisho suddenly swapped the sword and shield he was holding to two throwing daggers and threw them at Lionel's feet and face.

Regardless of Shisho's purpose, Lionel actually ignored the thrown daggers as he began to advance with his large shield thrust forward.

I thought that the dagger would strike his forehead as I began preparing to cast magic but Lionel didn't need such consideration.

The moment I thought the thrown dagger would hit him, the large shield emitted light and enlarged even further, deflecting the dagger away.

Shisho wasn't surprised at all by that and switched to a dual-blade style with two short swords compared to the sword he held previously and dashed towards Lionel.

Lionel channeled magic into the greatsword he held with his right hand, causing it to become a flaming greatsword as he swung it at Shisho.

Shisho wasn't able to avoid the greatsword and was struck down.

"Extra Hea — !?"

I certainly saw that and immediately applied healing magic in shock.

Shisho's body blurred and disappeared like a mirage and when I realized it, blood sprayed out from both of Lionel's legs.

Then, Shisho appeared behind Lionel but a portion of the blade of the swords he held in both hands had disappeared and he knelt on the ground.

"...Just now, what happened? Cathy, Kefin, did you see it?"

I wanted to find out so I asked Cathy and Kefin who were beside me but the two of them also showed astonished expressions.

"I can't understand it nya. Just when I thought that his body blurred, he appeared at

the same time nya.”

“...That might possibly be something similar to Ninjutsu.”

Kefin replied with that but he didn't sound very certain.

I previously enquired about the body-switch technique(Kawarimi) Kefin used in the past and he later answered that it was actually a kind of Genjutsu(Illusion Arts).

While conversing, I was told that since it is something that is activated by aiming at a person's consciousness, it shouldn't work on people that the illusion technique was not directed at.

However, Shisho didn't show any indication of having done that and the surrounding Adventurers were also surprised so it seemed like everyone saw the same scene.

“So there's no way to tell unless one actually am on the receiving end of that technique huh? How did Lionel see through it?”

I thought to myself as I shifted my gaze back to the two of them.

From then on, the mock battle assumed the form of a mudslinging contest, perhaps his arms hurt from when he lost the blades, Shisho could not swing the blades sharply while Lionel's legs weren't in a condition to plant his feet firmly so he couldn't launch his own attacks.

“This match is a draw.”

Garba-san ended the mock battle.

The two of them exited with expressions showing that they haven't been able to use all of their strength but they reluctantly obeyed the decision.

“Well done.”

I congratulated the two of them and applied healing magic.

The two of them had contrasting expressions.

“Well, my limit now is something like this.”

“Arrogance might have been born inside me without me knowing. I didn’t expect you to master a technique like that...”

Shisho spoke radiantly while Lionel spoke with disappointment.

“Shisho, what was that? When you fought the adventurers, I could somehow understand that you altered the tempo of your movements making it so that your opponents can’t touch you. However, that thing you did in your fight with Lionel was honestly a different dimension altogether.”

“Kukuku. I merely used Foot Techniques and Body Strengthening. Well, there’s a slight trick involved too. It’s a technique that you might be able to achieve if you hone your foundation.”

Shisho said that with a laugh but even if I raised the skill levels for those two skills, I can’t see myself doing something like that.

“That’s impossible!? Shisho’s figure disappeared like a mirage you know? Moreover, Shisho’s current speed is...”

During my confusion, I accidentally made light of Shisho’s physical ability.

“Luciel-sama, what Whirlwind said is true. Whirlwind probably moved to the very limits which made our heads perceive that he didn’t move at all.”

As I was trying to calm down, Lionel threw me a lifeboat but hearing that even Lionel perceived it that way made it even more confusing and I was getting more and more confused.

That wasn’t something so simple.

If not, it would not explain why every one of us saw the same thing.

Once the two of them had recovered, I thought of experiencing that mystery with my own body.

“...The treatment is complete. I can also achieve those movements?”

“Well, that depends on Luciel’s hard work. Now, this time, you shall fight the two of us.”

“Ha?”

I felt like I misheard something.

“That is quite reasonable for a fight with the current Luciel-sama now.”

Instead of whether I can master Shisho’s technique or not, Lionel agreed with Shisho’s statement like it was a fact.

I looked at the two people in front of me.

... No matter how much their levels had dropped, even though it would be difficult fighting any one of these two combat maniacs in a one-on-one match, fighting against the two of them together is insane.

They probably overestimated my ability after I showed them my Dragon’s power.

“I’ll put this out there first, those movements you guys saw just now was my trump card. The magical power consumption is staggering so I can’t use it so freely. If a person like me fight the two of you, I would easily die.”

But Shisho and Lionel looked at me with serious faces and shook their heads.

“Luciel, this is for your sake as much as it is for our sakes too.”

“Luciel-sama, please accept this match.”

The two of them asked with earnest expressions.

“For the sake of you two? Not because you wish to beat up the weak me?”

“I won’t think of something like that! Luciel, you may not have natural talent but you have the talent for hard work. By learning the basics and repeating it, you should most likely be stronger than the current us.”

“...Shisho, did you hit your head? Do you think that a former Healer like me can seriously face an opponent who easily struck down a B-rank party combined with

another opponent who holds similar strength?”

“I do. To be honest, if you move with that speed, the current us would be killed instantly without being able to counter it. But, even without that, you are already strong enough.”

“That’s right. Even without that strength, Luciel-sama had already become quite strong three months back.”

Shisho and Lionel were probably misunderstanding something.

There’s no helping it.

After all, even if I continue to argue, the final outcome would still be us having a bout.

Let’s just do it then.

“At least let me activate Area Barrier.”

“Of course. You can use defensive magic. But don’t hold back.”

“I don’t mind even if you cut off one of my hands.”

... Looking at their fearless smiles, it strangely felt like I was about to be killed.

“...Alright. But please don’t kill me.”

“Ah, I’ll try my best.”

“But, I will also be fighting seriously.”

Shisho, trying your best is not a definite promise.

However, due to their serious expressions, I could not open my mouth and could only reply with a nod.

I transformed my Illusionary Cane to its sword form and took out the Holy Dragon Spear before taking my distance as I prayed that I somehow survived through this mock battle.

Then, Garba-san’s voice that said ‘Begin’ echoed through the training ground.

CHAPTER 206

ARROGANCE

Currently, in front of my eyes, there were two combat maniacs.

Shisho equipped with his original one-handed sword and small shield and beside him, Lionel equipped with his greatsword and large shield.

Those two people were clearly showing combative expressions as they gave off an extraordinary sense of intimidation.

I felt that it was hard to even breathe.

“Begin.”

At the same time I heard Garba-san’s voice, I immediately activated Area Barrier and hastily jumped backward.

After doing that, Shisho’s sword that was a moment late passed through the spot where my neck was at...

If I was a little slower, my head would have separated from my torso...

I seriously felt that but I felt a sense of incompatibility when I landed behind.

Then, that turned into shock.

Shisho had not moved a single step.

To even show me an illusion with just his spirit, isn’t he already going at full strength...
!?

This time, when I flew to my side, a fireball of about one meter in diameter flew past me.

“Luciel-sama, to have the free time to look elsewhere, you sure have a lot more allowance. I’ll steadily fire more then.”

Lionel didn’t use it when he fought with Shisho, or rather, he couldn’t use it but it seemed like it had more power than a poorly composed magic so he had mastered a medium-to-long range attack.

Even though it was troublesome just dealing with the mysterious attack from Shisho, it’s now compounded with Lionel’s ability to fight outside his vanguard position.

I took a deep breath and cleared my head.

At the moment it was decided that I would be fighting the two of them, it was given that I would lose.

Then I just have to do what I am capable of doing.

My actions became slower because I was thinking about unnecessary things.

After slowly exhaling, I instantly activated Body Strengthening and dashed towards Lionel.

I kicked the ground while maintaining my low posture and instantly closed the gap between us before swinging my Illusionary Sword with all my strength.

Then, I struck Lionel’s large shield but I ignored it and sliced through, causing a [Guoooooo] screeching sound to ring out. My single strike sliced through half of the large shield before stopping.

I already knew that Shisho would not overlook the opening I had for that instant.

Shisho’s thrust came from my side but I somehow perceived it.

And it was obvious that it would hurt if I was stabbed.

In an effort to deny that, my brain compelled me to speak the words.

“Water Dragon, build an ice wall to protect my body.”

After muttering that, I used Lionel’s shield as a scaffold and kicked to escape from the death zone.

Then, [Kiiiiiin] [Gaaaaa] I heard two sounds, a sharp and a blunt sound.

The sharp sound was by Shisho, the sword that he thrust with was sealed in the ice wall together with his arm.

And at the same time, the dull sound was Lionel’s Flaming Greatsword that attacked from Shisho’s opposite side and was also blocked by the ice wall.

I was seriously grateful that the defensive method the Water Dragon showed me during training could be of use so quickly.

To be safe, I opened my status and was heartlessly shown that my remaining magical power amount could only last another usage of the dragons’ power.

“Oi oi Luciel, what’s with only being able to use Holy Attribute Magic!! Aren’t you showing how you are capable of using various other kinds?”

“I didn’t expect you to fly in the air, move like lightning and even create ice walls... as expected of a Sage.”

“”How interesting.””

The two of them were increasingly getting heated up and they were totally beginning to exude the presence of hunters standing in front of their prey.

“...The two of you are seriously scary though?”

“”It’s just your imagination. Now, let’s commence the continuation.””

... It was seriously frightening to see that the two of them had nothing but fighting left in their head.

That’s because not only the large shield that’s held with Lionel’s left hand, even his arm was sliced about halfway through so it was quite serious with a large amount of

blood flowing out.

Furthermore, because the ice wall was built at the right timing, Shisho's right arm was also encased within making it such that he couldn't move his right arm together with his sword but he unreasonable pulled them out causing quite severe injuries to his arm.

Despite all that, the two of them did not retract their fighting instinct and even though I looked at Garba-san, he shook his head with a bitter smile.

He most likely knew that he won't be able to stop Shisho once he became like that.

I once again thought of it after a long time but it looks like a person's personality can't be repaired even after experiencing death once.

Looking at the two of them once again, I could tell that the condition of their wounds was severe.

It was a valuable chance where I can easily win by dragging the time but I can't show Shisho such a despicable act during a mock battle.

Having determined that, I decided to defeat the two of them post haste and treat their wounds.

For that to happen, I obviously needed to bring out my all.

That's why I decided to utilize my greatest ability.

"I'll be coming at full power okay. Holy Dragon, protect this body; Thunder Dragon, leave everything in the dust."

The sounds stretched out and disappeared.

I kicked the ground with all my strength and rushed into Lionel's chest first but I was wary of the Flaming Greatsword that appeared in front of my eyes so I side stepped before kicking Lionel in his stomach.

After confirming the definite sensation transmitted to my foot, I next turned to attack Shisho but I was hit by a terrible sense of foreboding.

However, my remaining magical power amount was scarce so I decided to ignore it and end it at once.

But I understood that was an error brought about by my arrogance when I ended up looking up at the training ground ceiling that I looked at countless times in the past as my consciousness slipped away.

Even if I can borrow the power of the Thunder Dragon, it doesn't mean that I can fully utilize its power.

I just only started using this power so it's to be expected.

I ignored such an obvious fact.

It's indeed true that my attacks absolutely become linear due to it and I had not gotten used to the speed so my movements were repetitive too.

Despite that, I believed in my heart that nobody could catch my movements.

I ran in a straight line for Shisho and released a kick that should certainly have connected with Shisho.

However, the instant I kicked Shisho, I totally didn't feel any feedback, or rather, it was too late when I sensed a somewhat thin presence of Shisho.

“T o o n a i v e.”

Just as I registered the slow voice of Shisho, my leg and arm were caught by something and without slowing down the speed that was applied to my body, my back was slammed into the hard floor.

The extraordinary pain threatened to rob me of my consciousness which proved that my brain was working normally.

Just as I had that thought while my consciousness was slipping away, I heard a pain-filled voice from Shisho for some reason but I didn't have any time left to ascertain that.

My consciousness was swallowed by darkness.

I woke up to the uncomfortable feeling and sound of water splashing onto my face.

“Uu.”

Not only my back but my whole body was hurting.

I immediately applied Extra Heal on myself.

Why does it hurt so badly? When I looked around my surroundings after the light subsided, I saw that Shisho and Lionel had collapsed with pale faces.

“Oo, Luciel, you finally woke up. You just only woke up but please treat the two of them.”

Due to Garba-san’s slightly flustered voice while holding a tub, I finally regained my thought process.

“Ah, yes. Okay.”

Lionel did not have any noticeable external trauma other than his arm.

However, the blood loss from his arm was enormous so I sensed that he was becoming anemic.

And Shisho wasn’t only injured on his right arm where he unreasonably yanked it out of the ice wall but also on his back which was scorched and burned.

I quickly applied Extra Heal on both of them.

While watching their wounds heal, I began thinking about why I had lost.

I totally didn’t expect myself to lose after using that dragon’s power.

In the end, I still couldn’t solve the mystery of how Shisho disappeared.

“I can’t replenish the blood that the two of you lost so please have a good balance of food and plentiful rest.”

“Kukuku. Was it that mortifying to lose?”

“To be disgruntled after showing that much power, as expected, Luciel-sama also likes

fighting to a considerable extent.”

“You have such thoughts too? Then we should greatly increase the combat frequency. It would let us both regain other fighting techniques and dispel Luciel’s doubts on how to use his own power.”

I can’t say that it’s not vexing to me to have lost to them but it’s not to that extent... I think.

Rather than that, the desire to solve Shisho’s mystery had a much higher priority.

“No no no, don’t arbitrarily categorize me into the combat maniacs group!! I merely can’t understand why even though my attack should have connected with Shisho, I totally didn’t feel any feedback and even though my attack came in a straight trajectory, how was it that Shisho could follow my speed.”

“Luciel, I’ll state first that the one you kicked was my afterimage. Luciel, are you capable of erasing your presence?”

“No, I’ve never even learned it before.”

“Umu. Although it is easy to say that it is due to a skill, there exists a skill that allows a person to thin their presence and once you become an expert in you, you can even completely shut off your presence.”

“...But, that doesn’t mean that you can really hide your figure and show others an afterimage right?”

“Yeah. If you constantly probe for presence and magical power, and the skill level is not that high, you would probably be able to notice.”

“I did succeed in noticing but even so, my legs were still done in.” (Lionel)

Lionel said like it was natural but that part alone was already a different dimension from me.

It was probably determined that I would lose the moment these two people measured my ability.

And yet I got carried away and wanted to end it with a swift attack.

Wasn’t I ended with a swift attack instead?

On this occasion, I also asked about the other mystery of Shisho.

“Shisho, how did you follow my speed?”

“I figured that you would intentionally, well I don’t know if it was intentionally or unconsciously, hold back and kick my afterimage that I left behind.”

“.....”

“Well, that’s a good thing too. You have not grown accustomed to your power so I would be troubled if you accidentally sliced me and killed me instantly.”

“True, if I did not brace myself, I might not have been able to endure it.”

Lionel said as he rubbed his stomach but while I did certainly kick Lionel, for Lionel who can’t move as quickly as Shisho, he most likely guided the attacks to where he wanted them.

The proof was that he didn’t take any damage other than to his arm.

“Returning to the topic, because you didn’t perceive any sensation from the foot that kicked at my illusion, Luciel’s movement further dulled. After that, all I did was match Luciel who was charging straight for me and throw you.”

“...How did you achieve that motion?”

“I strengthened my body up until I was right on the cusps of using all my magical power. Although just doing that would make me deplete all my magical power after an instant. Well, if I don’t do something like that, it would be impossible to approach that realm of speed.”

Shisho said that with a smile but I realized that there actually are quite a lot of people who can do the same thing in this world.

I had probably become arrogant after obtaining a strong ability.

Ah, so mortifying.

I want to win against the two of them someday.

At that time, I seriously had that thought.

Thus the mock battle ended and the party began in the Adventurer's Guild.

CHAPTER 207

DOUBLE AGENT

After finishing my mock battle with Shisho and Lionel, we were having a huge eating and drinking party in the Adventurer's Guild.

Before the party started, Cathy and Kefin called Dolan and the others over so I could enjoy myself with a peace of mind.

The Adventurers showed huge excitement as they requested that I took care of Shisho's troublesome ways... to be his mock battle partner in the future and they also applied to have mock battles with me.

And as if it has already become a customary thing, they also began to think of new nicknames for me here but I changed location to the guildmaster's room to ask Shisho and Garba-san about the mastermind behind the incident this time to escape from hearing the results.

In the guildmaster's room, there was a large table big enough to have a strategy conference and there was a large map spread across it.

Around it stood Shisho, Garba-san, me, Lionel, Cathy, Kefin, Nadia and Lydia.

"Now then, I apologize for having this in the midst of the party. But this involves our action from tomorrow onward so we have to say this now. Garba, please explain."

"Understood. There's no time so I'll dive straight into the topic. The rumors regarding Luciel-kun started spreading about 10 days after Luciel-kun left this town. The location was Grandol."

"Eh? Grandol?"

I was sure that it had leaked from the Church Headquarters but I was wrong?

“Was it unexpected? Luciel-kun probably recalls but do you remember that there were people who we turned into slaves for committing crimes in Ienith?”

“...Yeah.”

We turned quite a number into slaves and should have sent most of them to Grandol... !? Don't tell me, most of the slaves from that time are in Grandol? But I don't understand how they could have gotten wind of the information so I urged Garba-san to continue.

“Actually, a certain country's noble purchased a large number of those slaves. Because he was afraid of Luciel-kun who seized control and raised Ienith.”

“...Noble huh? If he was afraid then it can only mean that he's in a neighboring country... The Principality of Blange?”

I asked after looking at the map placed on the table.

“That's right. The Principality of Blange. Along with gathering information on Luciel-kun, that noble was also searching for information that he wanted.”

I was holding information that a noble wants? No, I don't hold any information.

If I did, I would probably have already been attacked.

After giving that thought, I looked at my surroundings and came to comprehension when I saw Nadia and Lydia.

“...Is it Nadia and Lydia?”

“Yes. That noble is the former fiancé of those girls, Earl Blade von Kamiya.”

At that time, I noticed that the two of them inhaled sharply.

They probably didn't expect that person's name to come up.

“Then, that person was investigating my movements by using the slaves?”

“Yeah, that's the gist of it. I'll be deviating from the topic a little but Luciel-kun, do you know the hometown of the other people in the Church Headquarters?”

I answered Garba-san's question while looking at the two of them.

“Well, I only know a couple but I have had such conversations before. Apparently, the people come not only from nearby places but even excellent talent from other countries have been called to the headquarters.”

“The conversation will be quicker if you already know that. Then, one more question, are you aware that the Principality of Blange is a country that believes in Human Supremacy?”

“Yes. Though I only got to know it recently.”

There’s been quite a number of timely information so has somebody been intentionally manipulating the scene?

“The conversation will be even quicker if you already know that too. Speaking from the conclusion, the leader of the Human Supremist in the Church Headquarters, who is connected to that Lord Kamiya at the Principality of Blange, leaked information on Luciel-kun to him.”

If we’re talking about the leader of the Human Supremist, it’s most likely that person after all.

From that name, I even felt like I could hear that person’s loud laughter.

“...I see. But why can you say with confidence that the information is absolutely accurate?”

I can’t exactly take everything at face value without knowing how the information was obtained.

“Okay. It’s because I also have a mole in the Church Headquarters. Luciel-kun is acquainted with that person too. For example, it’s the opponent Luciel-kun recently sent flying with a kick.”

Garba-san said that with a smile but the only person I sent flying with a kick was Catherine-san.

“...Catherine-san?”

“Correct. She’s currently acting as a double agent for me at the moment.”

“...I totally didn’t get any cue from her though?”

It’s true that when she confronted me, I didn’t feel any murderous intent, hostility or

anger but that can't act as proof.

"Well, that's to be expected. Actually, she's sensing her limit at holding the Knight Corps together as the Knight Captain."

Garba-san had a bitter smile as he began talking about Catherine-san.

It's true that Catherine-san was troubled by that. Even Lionel and the others knew about it.

"I know that. I felt that from Catherine-san before we left for Nelldal but she showed that she overcame it in the end though?"

"Yeah. Probably because of that incident, she tossed aside her thoughts of quitting as Knight Captain. She desperately wanted to eliminate the evil in the Church. But because she became too desperate, the darkness in the Church pushed back hard."

Catherine-san, what are you doing, making it a fruitless effort by putting too much effort...

Then, was it an act when she confronted me at that time? Lumina-san and the others probably knew as well? Then it's definite that the darkness within the Church is the Executives Department?

"...Is it the Executives Department?"

"Yes. I was shocked when a person like her asked for my help. It seems like that Executives Department is being dominated by Human Supremists. She was apparently pressed with either to be punished with false charges or to be the Executive Department's hound."

"But with Catherine-san's combat strength, they shouldn't be able to overwhelm her though?"

"Well, it seems like they've gotten a hold on some of her weaknesses. Furthermore, the former Priest Knight Captain was there too so there weren't many options she could take."

Were people related to the Pope taken as hostage? Or was it something else? Moreover, if it's the former Priest Knight Captain... Buru...

I shook my head and complied the information within me.

“...I understand Catherine-san’s situation. But, compared to Grandol, I heard that the time the rumors began in the Holy Capital was after a month had passed since I traveled to Nelldal. Furthermore, I heard that the flow of the information to the Rubruk Kingdom happened only recently?”

“So Luciel-kun has information network in the Rubruk Kingdom. Well, it’s just rumors after all. Something like that would quickly fade away. Moreover, since the rumors tried to convert Luciel-kun’s immense reputation and popularity into jealousy and resentment, it was something that everyone just laughed at.”

I wonder why? I felt happy but it looked like I was straying further and further away from my peaceful life.

“...The atmosphere inside the Church was not such a gentle atmosphere but a bloodthirsty atmosphere though? What’s the reason for that?”

“That’s because something was made out of nothing. The Executives Department reported the contents and fabrications they independently investigated and it seems like they made them believe them. They apparently expressly targeted the Priest Knights in training.”

“Ha~. Well, I now understand it. By the way, I heard that you guys caught the person who spread the rumors?”

“That guy’s no longer in this world.”

The one who answered my question was not Garba-san but Shisho.

CHAPTER 208

TANGLED THREAD

Shisho closed his eyes and looked like he was recollecting the scene that happened at that time.

Then, he started describing what happened sequentially.

“After Garba received information that there were rumors being spread around regarding Luciel, without causing any confusion, I asked everyone to let me know if somebody came to them about information on Luciel previously. Then, I found a guy who has been successfully spreading the rumors.”

Shisho continued with his eyes closed.

“Then, you caught him and interrogated him?”

“Yeah. I made him drink Object X, woke him up after he fainted and repeated it countless times but he caved in a lot quicker than I had expected, after about two hours in.”

Shisho and Garba-san could do something like that but that spy probably had quite the resilience.

But I’m surprised he interrogated him just for spreading rumors.

Well, he probably did his preliminary investigations too...

“...Well, it would have been tough if he didn’t have any status resistances.”

“Yeah. Then, after comparing the information I obtained through the interrogation and the information Garba acquired, I could tell that he was saying the truth. At the same time, I also ascertained another fact other than Luciel’s case but we’ll put that aside for now. And I found that the person I caught was just an ordinary human who was hired to spread the rumors.”

I don’t know how much he was paid but the request was absolutely not worth the price.

I inadvertently sympathized with him.

“If he was hired then I naturally take it that you also traced the person who paid him?”

“Yeah. It was the Blange noble who we talked about just now, Lord Kamiya. After he spilled the beans, I immediately asked Garba to investigate.”

“...I see.”

Information gathering is Garba-san’s specialty after all.

“So, given that the human I captured gave me powerful information and looked like he was repenting, I released him after keeping him for the night in the Adventurer’s Guild.”

So it was something like a plea bargaining that I’ve heard of in my previous life.

“Well, if you tried to punish him for spreading rumors then it would likely turn into a problem...”

“Yeah, since anybody is capable of spreading rumors. It was just a detailed talk after we found a suspicious point during our investigation.”

The interrogation was somehow phrased to be a ‘talk’ along the way but it was a Shisho-quality ‘talk’.

“Eh? But then there’s a gap of about two months between Shisho’s injuries and when you released that guy?”

The rumors should have been spread a month after I went to Nelldal. But Shisho said earlier that he’s had his injuries for about ten days?

“...Yeah. Once or twice a week, I also trained myself while having the Adventurers escort me.”

Shisho’s expression stiffened for a second before Garba-san cut in and explained.

“And this guy is a guildmaster you know? Can you believe it? Even though he did

perfectly finish the documentation work he had, he delegated all emergency requests to Grulga you know? I think Luciel-kun is also responsible for this behavior.”

However, Garba-san uncharacteristically narrowed his eyes and glared at Shisho.

Well, he was most likely concentrating single-mindedly on his own training.

“Ei, Garba! Don’t butt in! I’ll continue. Ten days back, I was training in the forest at the foot of that mine when I suddenly heard yelling and sounds of sword clashes. When I rushed over to help, I couldn’t tell if they were bandits or mercenaries but they were fighting with my Adventurers.”

Shisho advancing his story all at once after snapping at Garba who was right to be angry.

“Going by the flow of the events, I guess that the human who spread the rumors was among the people who attacked?”

“Yeah. People who resort to banditry would either get beheaded or sold to another country as a criminal slave so I steeled my heart and took care of that guy.”

But Shisho suffered injuries.

I couldn’t understand how that happened.

If it was somebody capable of dealing such injuries to Shisho, did he let Shisho go? Shisho’s capabilities now shouldn’t be much different from ten days ago.

I felt a hazy feeling well up.

“You had the strength you showed in today’s battle when you suffered those injuries ten days back right? You suffered those injuries even with that?”

“Yeah. I didn’t think that a number of them would transform into demons after all.”

“Wha!?”

The fact that Shisho confronted demons was so shocking that my mouth was left half open in shock as I lowered my eyes to the map.

When I looked at the location after passing through the south-eastern forest from

Meratoni, I saw that it was the Principality of Blange.

Those demons were most certainly the subjugation targets that the Principality of Blange requested the Church Headquarters' help with.

“Well, I didn't sense that they were that strong but I could not properly control this body yet so I had to make use of sacrificial attacks multiple times so I ended up like that.”

Shisho spoke of the demons' strength indifferently but if he had to make sacrificial attacks then... ? Multiple times even?

“Multiple times... then what about the other Adventurers?”

“They were pretty beaten up but we took advantage of our greater numbers and somehow defeated them. Well, despite receiving that amount of damage, it's fortunate that I did not get defeated and that the other guys didn't lose their lives.”

Shisho spoke proudly but I held complex feelings.

If the situation was even minutely different, Shisho would not be here at all.

“Well, thankfully those Adventurers helped me who was suffering from those severe wounds down all the potions that we had and somehow carried me back to Meratoni, saving my life.”

“...I'm really glad that you survived.”

“Ou. It's the life Luciel paid so much to revive after all. There was no way that I would give it up.”

If you think so then cherish your life more!! I wanted to scream that but it all happened due to irregular events so shouting that would only be satisfying myself so I continued the conversation.

“If that person was really a real human at the start then there should have been something that made him a demon... did you notice any suspicious points or characteristics?”

“I did not notice anything on his person. I felt his magical power abruptly rise and his body began to release miasma before his figure transformed in an instant.”

“...I see. It would have been great if we had some kind of a clue.”

“...I don't know if it will serve as a clue but do you remember the slave merchant we fought at Grandol?”

“Yes, of course.”

I won't possibly forget about a reincarnator.

“At the end, that man tried to summon something by using a magic stone as compensation right?”

“Yeah. A magic circle that shined reddish-black appeared...”

“This time, I didn't see a magic circle. However, I saw a burst of reddish-black light. Well, I don't know if it would be helpful or not though.”

Shisho nodded with a serious expression.

After putting together all the information this time, a single fact surfaced.

“...So the one responsible for creating demons is not the Empire but the Principality of Blange?”

“Don't jump to conclusions. We still don't know that for sure... right, Garba?”

“Yup. Information on that reddish-black light and summon art are being kept a secret so I couldn't find out the details. But I succeeded in acquiring other information in Blange.”

“Other information?”

“Yeah. Before going into that, just now Broad told Luciel-kun about the information he got from the person who spread the rumors right?”

“Yes.”

“Actually there was information regarding the Empire too but it would make things too complicated so we spoke about the Principality of Blange first.”

“Then the topic now is about the Empire huh... please continue.”

I looked at Lionel and the others and they nodded to me so I decided that it would be alright and I asked him to continue.

“Are you aware that even now the Sen’Oni General is still in the Empire?”

“Yes.”

It’s probably the guy Wisdom-dono mentioned when I was in Nelldal.

“That guy’s name is Cloud. While being a Swordsman, he’s also a Magic Swordsman capable of controlling multiple different magic so he is an Adventurer that is recorded even in the Grandol Adventurer’s Guild.”

“Is there records of his features too?”

“Nope, only his name and some information are recorded. He apparently couldn’t use the sword or magic at all when he registered but he gradually gained more strength and it seems like he learned Transformation Magic at some point in time but all traces of him disappeared after that.”

“Then now he’s rumored to be in the Empire?”

“It seemed to be so now but to be honest the order is wrong. In the beginning, it was Blange, Rubruk and now it’s the Elimasia Empire.”

“So his aim was the Principality of Blange and the Empire huh... it’s true that the pile of information is getting tangled up in my head.”

“Well to summarize it in simple terms, including the Church Headquarters, I believe everything is related to the Principality of Blange.”

“I see. So that’s why you asked me what kind of relationship I wish to maintain with the Church Headquarters in the Holy Capital of the Saint Schull’s Allied Nations... ”

“Yeah. Since it might even turn into a war in an instant if something goes wrong. Currently, I feel that the safe places would be Ienith and Nelldal as well as maybe Grandol. The other countries are entangled in a complicated manner.”

“...I’ve come to understand the situation. But I would like to have some time to think

about this. I wish to carefully consider it, including whether I wish to involve myself in this or not.”

“That’s fine. Then, this conversation will end here for now. Luciel, what are your plans for lodgings?”

“What do you mean?”

“Your room here is still in the same condition you left it?”

“So it’s still the same huh? Then I’ll borrow that room.”

“Yup. Okay. Then, those who want to rejoin the party can do so while those who want to return to their inns can do so.”

Shisho said that and concluded the meeting.

Due to the information overload, I didn’t want to think about anything else so I decided to have a nice sleep at that nostalgic room just for today and I saw the others off to the inn they booked.

I sensed that everyone wanted to talk to me but I didn’t have enough space in my head left to spare at that moment.

“I just wish for an ordinary... quiet life but I wonder why is it this difficult.”

My muttered sigh was drowned out by the hustle and bustle of the rowdy adventurers at the party.

CHAPTER 209

GOAL

I don't know if it was because I returned to Meratoni's Adventurer's Guild after a long time or because of Angel's Pillow but I had an extremely good sleep.

"I used to practice Magical Power Manipulation here like this in the past. At that time, I was desperate to raise my fighting techniques after all."

Reminiscing about the past deeply, I began practicing Magical Power Manipulating like I habitually did in the past.

"It was tough at that time but I was able to work hard because I had a goal."

Thinking of it retrospectively, I came here to learn the basics of martial arts and train my Holy Magic ability.

After departing for the Holy Capital, although it was misguided, I set my goal to conquer the labyrinth and I accomplished it.

And then, I created the Guidelines and Legislations so that I as a Healer would not be glared at by people in the future.

When I was at Ienith, I had to rebuild the Healer's Guild there, I was involved in Ienith's country building and I also succeeded in establishing a school and a factory.

Thinking about it that way, regardless of how I was led by the flow of events, each time I set my goals and worked to accomplish them.

Thanks to that, I acquired various things and I could meet various kinds of people.

Well, each time, I was also caught in troublesome incidents though...

"So it will soon be a full seven years since I came to this world. It feels like time has passed quite quickly but the time I spent here has definitely been more eventful compared to my previous life."

Encountering Dragons, encountering Spirits, fighting with Dragons and the Evil God, I probably wouldn't have experienced that if I lived an ordinary life.

I could grow due to those events in that sense so I guess I should be thankful.

Then, for now, I organized everything that has happened including the incident that happened at the Church.

Since this time's incident gave me the strongest sense of unease I've ever experienced.

It was almost half a year ago but when I made a triumphant return after rebuilding Ienith, the Executives Department shouldn't have been hostile towards me.

Then, why was it that everything was normal when I headed to Grandol but in just three months, they suddenly planned to set me up...

Something definitely happened during that three months time and they likely spread the rumors when I was heading to Nelldal.

Rather than the Church Headquarters, I wonder when exactly did the Executives Department start to plan to crush me? At the very least, there shouldn't have been any problems until the point where I conquered the labyrinth.

Then was it when I became an S-rank healer and acted to draft the guidelines and legislations? Since the Human Supremacy faction was reluctant to pass them until the end.

But if that was the case, they would have tried all kinds of ways to interfere when I went to Ienith but I didn't face any problems then.

It's true that there wasn't anything at the Healer's Guild there but everyone who came along with me was excellent.

After thinking through what I've done this past half a year, I still could not find the aim of the Executives Department.

Do they intend to make the Church go into decline, or do they wish to regain its

prestige, or was it according to the information obtained, that they were just following the orders from Blange without thinking about anything...

At any rate, regardless of whether it's the Empire, Blange or the Church Executives Department, as long as I don't know their aims, I won't be able to come to an answer no matter how much I ponder. "... My mind's a little jumbled. Maybe I'll freshen up by moving my body a little and having breakfast made by Grulga-san."

I stopped my Magic Power Manipulation and moved to the training ground next door.

When I opened the door of the clinic which also serves as my room, Shisho was already there.

Furthermore, he was already in full gear but I still greeted him despite the atmosphere being hard to speak.

"Good morning Shisho, you're quite early."

"Ou Luciel, you're finally awake. Then let's quickly start."

"Eh?"

After reacting that way, Shisho laughed like he was enjoying it and said words that I had expected.

"It's time for our nostalgic morning practice. We'll use blades that have been dulled."

"So early? We'll be using dulled blades right?"

"It should be done precisely since it's early. Yeah, I don't want to smell like blood from the morning. Moreover, knowing Luciel, you would have been hesitant in deciding on what to do after hearing all the information yesterday and there's no way you would be able to think of anything concrete in that condition. At times like these, it's best to relax by moving your body and sweating it out. You can only do what you are able to do."

"...Shisho, an ordinary person like me can't relax by fighting you know?"

"Eey, I finally got released from my paperwork. If you're my disciple then you should accompany me."

Shisho definitely had not slept.

Aren't Garba-san and Grulga-san actually the strongest if they can corner Shisho to this extent? I agreed while having such thoughts.

"Alright. I also thought of returning to the basics and run around the training ground but I'll accompany you today."

"Today, we'll fight without using Body Strengthening. That way, we'll be able to gauge our own strength."

If we do that, there'll definitely be a difference in our status.

"Shisho, today will be the day I win."

"Hou, don't think that you will be able to win so easily."

Shisho said that and passed me a dull-bladed one-handed sword and a small shield.

I equipped those and immediately poised myself and entered combat readiness. Like in the past, I signaled to Shisho when I would begin.

"Here I come."

Shisho didn't particularly put his whole heart into it.

I also didn't put my whole heart into it.

Even so, I felt the strength behind Shisho's sword swings.

"Luciel, I have been on the battlefield since the day I was born. That's why I didn't feel like I would be able to tell it properly if I didn't do it like this..."

What? This situation is as if...

"Wh, what is it?"

"Luciel, do you have a goal you are aiming for?"

"Eh? What I'm aiming for?"

"Yes. Leaving aside the matter with the Church, if you have some kind of a goal, you would be able to carry through with it wholeheartedly. That also includes the matter with the Sage job this time too."

“Goal huh... I wanted to live a peaceful life and die of old age but I wonder now.”

Maybe because I never had the leeway to think about such things, I inadvertently laughed.

“Your thoughts would gradually twist if you only chase after the goal in front of your eyes. Of course, the goals can change little by little according to the environment but why don’t you try having a midterm goal for now?”

“A midterm goal?”

It’s true that in my previous life, I would work hard by imagining what I would like to achieve in 5 or 10 years later.

I did do something like that in the past but in this world where even a moment ahead was hard to predict, setting a goal in life was quite considerably difficult.

“Ah, for example, not losing to my disciple in my lifetime.”

Shisho’s sword blurred and the sword made of iron bent, striking my flank.

“Ouchh.”

“Kukuku. At any rate, the residents in this town and I are your allies. So you don’t have to be afraid of anything and just walk down the path you like.”

Shisho said those words and climbed up the stairs of the training ground.

“Ah~ ouch. Goal huh?”

Just like what Shisho said, setting a new goal might be just what I need at the moment.

... From what I heard yesterday, even if the human supremacists in the Church Headquarters’ Executive Department were to be expelled, someday similar people would appear too and the Church’s weakness won’t change.

Furthermore, because Garba-san’s information could not grasp the whole picture, we can’t ultimately make a decision on how to act.

The easiest choice would be to hole up in Ienith and turn a blind eye even if the demons appear even more frequently.

“Constructing a city would probably be fun but hindrances would definitely appear. Since that’s the case, the place I should go to now is not Ienith...”

I’ll listen to everyone’s opinion over Grulga-san’s delicious breakfast and decide on our direction from now on.

Making my decision, I chased after Shisho.

CHAPTER 210

AXIS

The Adventurers Guild's dining hall was already tidied up cleanly like yesterday's party was an illusion but various odors still mixed and lingered.

Seeing me enter the dining hall, Grulga-san asked for my help instead of greeting me.

"Luciel, before the meal, do something about this smell, I can't even breath properly."

"Grulga-san, good morning. Sure."

Applying purification magic on the entire dining hall, the various mixed odors became odorless and it was replaced by the delicious smell of the dishes made by Grulga-san.

"Oo! It's really convenient with Luciel around. Just that ability alone is handy."

Grulga-san took off his nose plug and said that.

"Then Grulga-san should be able to learn it though?"

"I'm a beastman so you probably know that I'm not really suited for magic."

"Well, it's something that can't be used unless your Holy Attribute Magic reaches Level VI and above so it's slightly unrealistic."

"Yeah. If possible, I would love to be able to freely use magic as well."

I read in the books I saw in Nelldal that beastmen can also use magic depending on their perseverance but it seemed like Grulga-san had already given up.

"If there was a beastman with almighty magic, it would be quite amazing."

"But the school in Ienith isn't teaching magic right?"

"Ah, I wonder about that. Naria who became the principal left all the curriculum matters to others after all."

"Oi oi, looks like I'll have to ask those guys who returned from Ienith about what's

been happening in Ienith lately.”

“Yeah, you should.”

It sounded like he knew something by asking Lionel and the others when I wasn’t around.

While stunned at knowing that I haven’t heard about all kinds of big news, I took out my notebook that I’ve not written in for a long time and made a list.

Seeing me like that, Grulga-san laughed as he guided me to my seat.

“Very well, for now, let’s have our breakfast. Have a seat.”

“Ah, okay. By the way, I don’t see Shisho?”

“That guy is probably content after fighting with Luciel so I believe he’s taking a nap in the guildmaster’s room.”

Grulga-san told me that with a bitter smile.

It looks like Shisho truly did pull an all-nighter after all.

Nevertheless, seeing how Shisho becomes sleepy after he let out his stress, his way of living is explicitly clear.

Shisho probably also has his obligations as well but I really have to respect him for not showing a single hint of that on the surface.

After sitting down at the counter, Grulga-san brought out the breakfast he prepared but the amount was, as expected, enormous.

“Regardless of being an Adventurer or a Sage, you’ll probably be having a ton of mock battles today so eat up.”

“Now that you mention it, the Adventurers asked me to serve as their mock battle opponent...”

I won’t say that I hate fighting against others but I don’t want to lose if I’m going to do it. Although, it’s the truth when I say I don’t want to fight.

“There are plenty of idiots who think that they can win if the opponent is Luciel. Especially the rookies and the middle-rank Adventurers.”

“I might end up getting a lecture from Shisho if I lose in an unsightly manner. I guess I’ll eat a hearty breakfast then.”

“Alright, then there’s more here.”

After having salad and meat, this time, Grulga-san took out dishes made using Object X.

“...Perhaps those nose plugs were because you were making these?”

“Yeah. I’m used to filth and muck but as expected, there’s no getting used to Object X.”

“Grulga-san still doesn’t waver despite that.”

“It’s because I’m doing what I enjoy.”

Grulga-san said with a laugh.

Grulga-san and Shisho too, they are surprisingly doing what they enjoy doing despite having limited time.

Being able to do that made me envious, or rather, I’ve not had something I can call as an interest or hobby since I’ve come to this world.

“I hope I can find a hobby I can do to relieve stress like Shisho and Grulga-san.”

“Everyone is cut out for different things but the best bet is to do what you like most. Although I think it’s fine if you continue using magic and training like you’ve been doing until now.”

Grulga-san said that and disappeared into the kitchen.

I muttered words that I knew were useless towards that retreating back.

“That’s not an interest but a skill meant for survival.”

My mood fell thinking how a lot of people definitely think that I enjoy training.

After that, in the empty dining hall, I ate Grulga-san’s cooking and finished my poison

tasting of the Object X dishes.

Then, Lionel and everyone came together to pick me up.

“Luciel-sama, good morning.”

“Morning. And everyone, I’m really sorry for yesterday. All kinds of information came in and I was shaken by each and everything so I couldn’t really compose myself.”

“Luciel-sama, we were also all shaken so...”

Lionel said that and everyone nodded.

The atmosphere was becoming worse so I’ll start with some bland topics.

“Everyone, have you eaten?”

“We’ve already eaten at the inn.”

“I see. I’ve been thinking about a lot of things after last night but there are a lot of things that I can’t decide on my own so I wish to get everyone’s opinions.”

“Opinions?”

Lionel asked with his head tilted but each of them should have their own thoughts on what they heard yesterday.

That’s why I honestly told them that I wanted to discuss with them here.

“Yeah. So I want to discuss our plan from now on. You all are no longer slaves. That’s why I want you all to honestly say what you guys feel and think. It doesn’t matter even if your opinion differs from mine, I want you all to speak without reserve... hn? Paula? Do you have something to say already?”

Midway through my talk, Paula walked forward and came to my side.

“Luciel, you said that you would give me magic stones once we arrive at Meratoni.”

Her expression didn’t change much but looking closely at how Paula was subtly glaring at me with her hands on her waist made me calm down a fair bit.

She was probably angry that I broke my promise.

“Ah~ Sorry. I totally forgot about it. I’ll pass you the magic stones but do you have a magic satchel?”

“...It’s inside Lionel’s magic bag.”

“I see. Sorry Lionel but can I do this first?”

“Sure. Dolan-dono and Paula can go ahead first.”

“Okay.”

Lionel took out some magic satchels from his magic bag and passed them to Paula when Rician also came to her side and the two of them began preparing to collect the magic stones.

“Well then, I’ll be taking them out so please collect them.”

I arranged the magic stones on top of the empty table but looking at Dolan who wasn’t joining the conversation, I noticed his pale complexion and I applied purification and recover.

He was probably having a hangover and it was just as I had expected.

“Ah~ That saved me. I felt like I was about to die from that splitting headache.”

Dolan came closer while shaking his head.

“I think I said it before but even though it’s fine to drink, do take your body into consideration.”

“It’s common sense for dwarves to drink if there’s alcohol in front of them. Well, since I don’t have to taste this hellish experience from now on with Luciel-sama around, I can drink to my heart’s content.”

It felt a little strange to be treated as a convenient person like this by Grulga-san and Dolan.

They’ve been addressing me as Luciel-sama no matter where we were so I guess these two people really treat the term ‘without reserve’ very preciously.

Dolan began closely examining the magic stones while smiling.

Since we were at it, I took the opportunity to ask the three of them what they wish to do.

“Do the three of you have anything you want to do from now on... any wishes?”

“Nothing in particular. I have a workshop in both Rockford and Ienith so I can do my work.”

“I heard that you obtained these magic stones at Grandol.”

“These?”

“If we can have a steady supply of quality magic stones like these, staying at Grandol might not be that bad either.”

“That’s certainly a decent point. After all, monsters with magic stones rarely appear in Rockford and even if they did, they would mostly be flying monsters. The ones that appear from the undeveloped forest in Ienith are Orcs and Ogres so we also can’t look forward to their quality.”

It seems like they were totally seeing it from an inventor’s point of view and their first priority would probably be to secure resources but they are a lot more resolute than I am.

“Well, that’s because the two of you are advancing your magic tool inventions. What about Dolan?”

“It would be good to have a mine if we are to craft weapons and armors so it would be best to be around Rockford and the Dwarf Kingdom.”

As expected, it would be best to have good quality ores? Then, Dolan would probably choose Rockford.

“I see. Ah, by the way, at the magic tool shop in the Holy Capital, there’s a girl with talent in making magic tools like Paula and Rician so I was thinking of having her join the invention department?”

“There aren’t many geniuses in this world.”

“That’s right. When I met Paula, I didn’t think that there would be someone else who is as skilled as I am. Well, I’ve been surprised non-stop by the Engineers at Rockford

though..."

I found out that Paula thought of herself and Rician as geniuses and while Rician acknowledges that her knowledge was limited, it seems like she also thinks that Paula is the only person who can rival her.

That's why I added more information.

"She has already established a magic tool shop in the Holy Capital despite being the same age as me you know? The two of you have seen the cooking magic tool I have right?"

"Don't tell me she's the one who invented those?"

"That's right. Don't you think you all would have all kinds of new findings if she joins?"

Paula immediately understood and nodded.

"Luciel-sama, if that girl is in the Holy Capital, won't we be unable to meet her for the time being?"

"It's alright because she has a magic communication bead too. Originally I wanted to call her when I was building the town of Ienith but..."

"Then, I'll look forward to her call."

"That's true. Since we can work anywhere we want to. Please let us know once that person comes to a decision."

Paula and Rician moved back after collecting all the magic stones.

The girls would probably be fine with anywhere as long as they can continue inventing magic tools.

They really don't waver from their path.

"Please let me know once Luciel-sama decides on what to do. This time, I intend to equip the flying ship with magic cannons so I'll be coming with Luciel-sama."

Dolan said that and moved to the back.

I sent off those three people with a wry smile.

While thinking that the Invention Department of Luciel Company is truly reliable, my

number of choices increased with the addition of Grandol which wasn't in my choices.

“Well then, Nadia and Lydia, what about the two of you?”

When I asked that, unexpected replies came from their mouths.

CHAPTER 211

IT IS AN ILL BIRD THAT FOULS ITS OWN NEST

Nadia and Lydia looked like they made their resolve for something.

The two of them looked at each other and nodded before Nadia replied.

“Luciel-sama, we wish to return to our country and speak to Kamiya-dono.”

“Speak? About spreading my rumors? Or about how he gathered information on the two of you? Or about the demon race?”

“We thought that we won’t involve ourselves with the country after becoming Adventurers... but, we can’t turn a blind eye to the topic on demons that can possibly even destroy the country.”

Beside Nadia, Lydia was also nodding vigorously.

“Do you have any plans or have any connections capable of doing so?”

Having abandoned their position of nobility to become Adventurers, I can’t think of any connections that they can use.

Furthermore, without knowing the principle in which the people turn into demons, I can’t expressly let the two of them go.

“...No, we don’t.”

Nadia replied softly.

“The human supremacist Kamiya-dono and the Principality of Blange suspected to be dealing with the demon race. I think that it’s folly to go there without any plan, what does everyone else think?”

Despite that, do you still wish to go to the Principality of Blange? Or should you first carefully gather information? Please think about it rationally.”

“Nadia and Lydia, like Luciel-sama said, it’s better to gather information first. If that Kamiya-dono fellow is the only one involved in this incident, then the problem could be solved quickly. However, if the country is involved, in the worst case, this might

concern the fate of the country.”

While listening to Lionel try to convince the two of them, I once again understood that if all of Garba-san’s information is correct, it might concern the fate of the Principality of Blange.

“...Yes.”

Nadia nodded weakly.

With this, the choice of going to the Principality of Blange was struck off.

“At any rate, I’ll request Garba-san to continue investigating the Principality of Blange and we’ll make our move if anything happens.”

Nadia and Lydia acted like their position was something like a follower of mine but that wasn’t how I see it at all from the start.

I only took them along with me after saving them so I followed-up to reassure them.

“”Thank you very much.””

The two of them bowed but ultimately, their wish was denied and the topic ended.

“Then, go ahead, Lionel, Cathy, Kefin.”

“Luciel-sama, we are people who have already left the Empire. But honestly, I have a score with someone that I absolutely have to settle.”

“Not with the Empire or the Emperor but with the guy named Cloud who is currently using the title General Sen’Oni?”

“Yes. I thought that I was betrayed by the subordinates I trusted. Furthermore, even my former master, the Emperor, did not listen to my words. That’s why I thought that I was betrayed but it looks like I misunderstood it slightly.”

“Then, don’t you want to return as a soldier of the Empire?”

“Hahaha, after such a long time, I no longer have the desire to return to the Empire at all. It is incomparable to how I can get to experience all kinds of things when I follow Luciel-sama and my child is going to be born in Ienith after all.”

Lionel rejected my offer to allow him to return with a laugh.

The first emotion that I felt was relief.

As expected, if I had to fight against Lionel, it can't even be compared with fighting against the Knight Corps.

"Returning to the topic, just like how Lionel misunderstood the situation, I also had a misunderstanding about the Empire."

"Misunderstanding?"

"...To be honest, not all my unease has been dispelled but from the conversation last night, I realized that the Empire actually has not plotted against me at all."

I felt a question mark float above everybody's head after I said that.

"We clashed with the Empire in Ienith and in the Dwarf Kingdom nya."

"That's right. Although we didn't actually fight, Luciel-sama should have a quarrel to settle with the Empire."

Cathy and Kefin were puzzled and began explaining to me the conspiracy by the Empire and our fight with the Empire but what I was referring to was a vastly different thing.

"It's true that I have a quarrel with them but that's because I crushed the Empire's plan. When I thought about it carefully, my contact with the Empire began since Ienith. To further clarify, the conspiracies were already in place far before I even went there."

"What do you mean nya?"

"Please explain it in a clearer manner."

Including Cathy and Kefin, all the gazes were focused on me, asking for an explanation.

"In Ienith, the Empire's people were undercover as slave dealers and they utilized the tiger beastman Shaza to cause chaos. Furthermore, in the Dwarf Kingdom, they pulled the Dwarf King's son to their side and tried to crush the Dwarf Kingdom using huge

ants right? Nevertheless, those plots were already in place before I went there. They weren't aimed at me."

"...That does sound true if you put it that way nya."

"I see. It's true that there might not have been a plot directly aimed at Luciel-sama all this time."

It seemed like Cathy and Kefin understood what I was trying to say.

However, Lionel was still looking unconvinced.

"Lionel, you look like you have some doubts?"

"Ah, I just have something I'm still wondering about."

"Something that concerns you?"

"Yeah. Luciel-sama, do you know where did you have your first battle with the demon race?"

"Where? It was in the village between the Holy Capital and Meratoni?"

"Wrong. It was at the Dwarf Kingdom."

"?! The Dwarf King's son!?"

"Yes. That guy said then that he would obtain the greatest power if he swallows the magic stone. That was most definitely planned by the slave merchants who enter and exit the Dwarf Kingdom."

"Slave merchant huh... if we entered the Empire and it turns into a battle, do you think you are able to win with your current strength, Lionel?"

"If I have Luciel-sama's Area Barrier and Healing Magic then it would be easy."

Lionel laughed ferociously, showing his white teeth.

Hearing that, I talked about Wisdom-dono who I met in Nelldal.

"Lionel and Dolan might still recall him but I actually had the chance to meet the Rubruk Kingdom noble youngster who was a slave at Ienith when I was at Nelldal."

"That guy is still alive?"

“Yes, I think... he has also been released from slavery through some means. It might have been possible that his slave crest was dispelled when I applied Recover and Dispel on him though. More importantly, he had a magic stone embedded within his body. He said that the one who did that to him was the fake Lionel.”

“To embed a magic stone in the body, I can only think of it as an act of sheer madness.”

“Yeah his, ah he is called Baron Wisdom from the Rubruk Kingdom, his body was tampered with using magic engraving and magic stones so he fainted from the immense pain and apparently woke up in a mountain of corpses because they thought that he had died.”

“It’s slightly hard to believe but... why did they do that?”

“He said that the Empire was doing that as a countermeasure against the demon race, to allow them to draw power from the magic stone. However, his case was seen as a clear failure and the magic stone was already gone when I met him but miasma was overflowing from his body and half of it has probably undergone demonification.”

“...Doesn’t that mean if it is Luciel-sama, you can dispel the demonification!?”

Lionel looked at me with a surprised expression and everyone’s gazes gathered on me.

There’s no way I can... actually, it might be possible.

“Eh? Really? No, there might be some kind of a condition but it’s true that it might be possible to dispel it if we encounter similar opponents at the Empire with magic stones embedded in their body.”

“Then we should try restraining a person who has turned into a demon and let Luciel-sama try if it is possible to convert that person back.”

“There’s no way a demon would appear with such an opportune timing. Well, I’ll give it a try if we meet one. So, in the end, do you wish to go to the Empire.”

“If there’s no need to rush, I would like to first continue training. Until I have the strength to protect the ones I wish to protect.”

“I agree nya. I’ve not fought with monsters since then but if another demon of a similar class that we fought in that village appears, it is doubtful if I am able to win nya.”

“That’s certainly true.”

If that’s the case, then it would either be the Grandol Labyrinth Paula talked about

before or the foot of the mountain at Lenith's unexplored forest where the Dragon God resides in.

What should I do?

Just as I was at a lost, Garba-san came rushing over looking slightly flustered.

"Luciel-kun, sorry but could you go to the Holy Capital with me?"

"Why are you in such a rush?"

I've never seen Garba-san panicking before so I replied while wondering why the Holy Capital.

"I didn't receive the regular contact from Catherine last night. Maybe her double spy identity has been found out."

Even if he mentioned Catherine-san's name and tell me that her spying has been revealed, I still didn't think that I have to save her at all cost.

While feeling shocked at myself, looking at Garba-san, he was panicking after all.

There's a lot to consider but there's no reason to reject Garba-san's request.

"Holy Capital huh... to be honest, I don't really want to go but since it is Garba-san's request, there's no way I can reject it. Even though she was a spy, at the very least she still belonged to the Pope's side... Dolan, what would the flying ship need to fly?"

"It flies using the magical power from magic stones or by directly inputting magical power. With the magic stones I received just now, it can easily fly for a long time."

I didn't know how long it would last exactly but in the worst case, I can still use my own magical power to keep it in the air.

If that's the case then there's no problem with going there using the flying ship.

"It's unlikely that they will punish Catherine-san, the Knight Captain, right after what happened yesterday. Furthermore, I'm also concerned about something and I had planned to pick up a talent anyway so lets go together."

"Oo, thank you Luciel-kun."

"In exchange, please properly let Shisho know."

If we don't tell Shisho, I could imagine him asking why we didn't call him along even though it was something so interesting.

"All right. I'll immediately get ready."

Garba-san said that and disappeared.

When I turned back, Cathy muttered.

"That guy might have fallen in love nya."

Ah, that might be possible.

Well, without Garba-san's level of tolerance, it's probably impossible to be with Catherine-san.

While vaguely having such thoughts, I thanked everyone and decided on our direction.

I feel that I won't be able to move forward well if I do not clear up the things I left behind in the church and the promises I made to Pope-sama would be empty promises.

Furthermore, if the Human Supremacists are seriously aiming to cause the church to go into decline, it won't be surprising if they have people inside the Executives Department that can be turned into demons.

Since the magic circle encompassing the church was no longer functioning.

"I'm sorry that the discussion here has been wasted but I think I should go to the Holy Capital and knock down those people who tried to bring me down. However, I will be entrusting all the punishments to Pope-sama so until that ends, please decide on either to continue training or to go the Empire."

I lowered my head and asked them.

"We are Luciel-sama's followers so we will just follow your decision."

Everyone showed their agreement by nodding to Lionel's words.

"Thank you."

Having reliable companions is seriously refreshing.

While thanking everyone, in order to tidy up what I left behind at the Church, just one day after leaving, I was once again heading towards the Holy Capital.

CHAPTER 212

FLIGHT

After leaving Meratoni's Adventurer's Guild and exiting the city, we walked for another 300 meters via the highway and then further stepped into a grassland a distance away from the highway.

Then, Lionel extracted the flying ship from his magic bag but from my viewpoint, it looked like the flying ship popped out of his magic bag instead.

It was surprising how such a large object could fit inside the bag.

I was once again amazed by the wonders of the magic bag but that feeling was extinguished by the cheerful voice beside me.

"Ooo! This is amazing. Can it really fly? Master Dolan made such an incredible construct."

"Hmm. It was Luciel-sama who prepared the materials though. And it is also an achievement by Broad-dono who trained Luciel-sama."

Shisho cheerfully complimented Dolan and the embarrassed Dolan also extravagantly praised Shisho who trained me so it looked like the two of them were getting along quite well.

"Shisho, are you really going to the Holy Capital with me?"

Shisho pulled an all-nighter to finish his paperwork and slept after fighting with me but he woke up when Garba-san went to report to him.

And he was reluctant to let me return to the Holy Capital. However, when the flying ship was mentioned, he immediately invoked his authority to forcefully tag along.

However, even though Garba-san and Grulga-san severely rebuked Shisho last night, Shisho was obstinate.

I don't think I was the only person who felt that it would actually be best if Grulga-san just becomes Meratoni Adventurers Guild's guildmaster instead.

"Ou. I've told Grulga already so it's all right."

"You got his approval?"

"I'll do something about it when the time comes. Furthermore, I'd love to quickly see Garba's panicked look again."

Behind Shisho who was grinning, a face with a smile that could freeze the air appeared.

"Such bad taste Broad. If you're so free, I'm not going to help with the paperwork you push to me with the excuse that you need to undergo training."

That's right, it was Garba-san.

Despite it being a bright day with the morning sun out, I didn't notice Garba-san until halfway through the conversation.

"...When did you appear behind me?"

"When you were in high-spirits Broad. You sure have done a bad thing to Grulga this time."

"It's all right as long as I buy some souvenirs from the Holy Capital right?"

Shisho was unperturbed as he indifferently asked Garba-san that.

Garba-san could only smile at Shisho's simplistic way of thinking.

Sensing that I would only be bringing trouble to myself if I join their conversation, I turned to ask Dolan something that I was curious about the flying ship.

"Yesterday, when I saw it flying in the sky, it looked like it was very steady so it won't sway much when we are inside as well?"

"Firstly, as there is a wind barrier spread across this flying ship, there is virtually no swaying. However, that would make it defenseless against any flying monsters. In the worst case, somebody would have to head out to defeat it so please keep that in mind."

Something terribly important came out of Dolan's mouth. Aren't I the only one capable of flying in the sky? For now, I kept quiet and pondered.

If Shisho and Lionel didn't drop in level, we would probably be fine with their flying slashes.

As it wasn't possible now, I guess I don't have any choice... no, maybe I'll try tackling it in a different aspect.

"If I apply Area Barrier on this flying ship, would we be able to escape?"

"Nope. It might be possible if we are up against regular monsters but if something like a Wyvern appears, I don't know if it would work."

"I will head out if it's a wyvern so for everything else, I'll leave it to you."

I definitely won't have a problem if it's a dragon species.

I indeed held such confidence.

However, I certainly don't want to fight if I don't have to.

I also thought of scattering Object X as we fly to ward off monsters but I realized that it was something that shouldn't be done as a human being.

If we accidentally passed by humans with our flying ship while doing so, there's a possibility that we might indiscriminately destroy their noses and eyes and there's even the danger of causing the mutation of strange plant life.

I better keep the idea of scattering Object X to myself.

After Lionel and the others finished their safety checks to ensure the flying ship won't malfunction, they gave me the signal.

"Well then, let me guide you in."

With Dolan in the lead, everyone boarded the flying ship.

When we approached the flying ship, as if it had a personnel sensor, a round platform for entering and exiting descended.

“Does this work similar in principle with the Magic-guided elevator?”

“That’s right. Paula and Rician remodeled it without letting me know and I got a shock.”

It was a prank that required quite high technical skills but it certainly does make it more convenient so he probably couldn’t even get mad at them.

The lift could only support about 5 to 6 people at one go and I got on together with the first group.

When the lift ascended, I was shocked by the spaciousness of the flying ship interior.

The interior was wider, no... abnormally more spacious, compared to when seen from outside.

“By any chance is this...”

“Spatial expansion!”

Paula answered the question I muttered to myself with a smug look.

However, after smiling lightly in reply to Paula’s smug look, I was slightly confused.

I was sure that I was riding the lift with Shisho and Dolan but now I was riding it with Paula, Rician, Nadia, and Lydia.

“Eh, where’s Shisho and Dolan?”

“Apart from Luciel who is the owner, it’s ladies first. Grandpa and Uncle would be with the second group.”

To address Shisho as Uncle, Paula really is amazingly frank.

But when did they swap places? I had my eyes on the flying ship the whole time so I didn’t notice at all.

I convinced myself that it would be meaningless to be bothered by something like that as the dwarves have many mysterious ways so I asked about the interior instead.

“Even though you’ve learned Spatial Expansion, this can’t be compared to something

like expanding a horse carriage right? Just how spacious is it?"

"The surface area was expanded 5 times so it is quite wide."

From the looks of it outside, its total length was just short of 10 meters and its width was about 7 meters so taking that into consideration, this space would be about 350 square meters.

It was about 3 times wider than the Adventurers Guild's training ground.

"It's way too spacious!"

It's as if I had a class change from a private jet to a jumbo jet.

Paula flinched at my retort but she didn't drop her smug look.

"...Sorry. I was just a little surprised. Are any of the other specifications made with advanced technology as well?"

When I asked that after I gathered myself, Paula and Rician competed to show me the interior.

Firstly, in each of the private rooms, the double beds and wardrobe were expected but I was shocked to find that they were even installed with a unit bath.

There were 10 of such rooms, a dining hall, a storeroom, a place for dismantling monsters for some reason as well as installations that would serve as Paula and Rician's magic tool workshop.

"...Were these necessary?"

"Of course."

"We plan to design the magic-driven cannon here in the future and also plan to develop simple items here."

"I see"

I couldn't bring myself to say anything more.

After they gave me a tour of each and everything, we finally moved to the cockpit.

The entrance to the cockpit was an automatic door and I also felt like it was a waste of advanced technology but I decided to let it slide.

Shisho and the others were already in the cockpit and were all sitting freely at any of the available seats.

“So slow, Luciel.”

“Luciel-kun, I’d prefer if you came here sooner if possible.”

Shisho couldn’t wait to lift off and Garba-san probably wanted to get to the Holy Capital as soon as possible.

“Sorry. Then, shall we set off?”

“Luciel-sama, then please come over here. I’ll set up your personal authentication before you begin piloting.”

“All right... eh? I’m piloting?”

“Of course, it is Luciel-sama’s property after all. Don’t be so stiff. It’s not that difficult so don’t worry.”

Dolan said like it was nothing but everyone’s lives would be in danger if we crash.

The anxiety I felt was unbearable when I thought of that.

“We’ll set up your personal authentication first. Please channel magical power into this crystal.”

Following Dolan’s instructions, I placed my hand on the semi-spherical crystal embedded inside a cylindrical column and allowed my magical power to flow into it.

Upon doing so, the crystal lit up before quickly losing its radiance.

“Did it fail?”

“No, it’s done with that. Please channel your magic power into it once again.”

After channeling magical power as I was told, at the same time the flying ship started up, the exterior which couldn’t be seen just now came into view.

It was clearly a wall until moments ago but it turned into tempered glass before I

noticed and I could look around to see 180 degrees in front of us.

Stunned at the seriously outrageous technology they installed, Dolan looked at me with a smug look and continued his explanation to me.

“If you place your hand on the crystal, you can utilize the magic power stored within. We adopted a mechanism whereby magical power replenishment can be done through that crystal as well as through the core in the technology warehouse.”

“This wasn’t made by just Dolan but also with the help of the engineers at Rockford right?”

“Yeah. It was thanks to Luciel-sama’s efforts that Rockford was not overrun by ants after all. So everyone put in their best efforts.”

“It shows that all the engineers at Rockford are outstanding engineers.”

Rockford and Nelldal that Rainstar-dono made have certainly shown results.

The Church is probably the only one that failed to meet his expectations. Be it that there are no longer many people who Pope-sama or because of Pope-sama’s personality, the biggest problem might be because he didn’t create an escape route for Pope-sama.

Such thoughts vaguely floated through my mind.

“Lastly, piloting, the operation is the same for both levitation and landing, push the crystal down lightly. If the ship is levitating, it would land and vice versa. For movement, it is set with a five-speed settings. If you slide your hand towards the direction you wish to move in, the speed will increase one step. If you slide it in the opposite direction, the speed will decrease. Also, if there is an obstacle like a mountain ahead, pulling the lever on your left would make the ship float further up while pushing down will lower the altitude.”

It felt like it was easier compared to operating a manual car but I may need to get used to it first.

“...It sounds difficult but I’ll give it a try. But what should I do if a monster appears like you mentioned earlier?”

“As the ship is capable of stopping in midair, please defeat the monsters before the flying ship runs out of magical power.”

Dolan replied with a serious expression.

“...Dolan, I look forward to your magic-driven cannons.”

“Kukuku. Leave it to me. And also, if possible, please name this flying ship.”

“Hmm, I’ll give it some thought.”

I turned to everyone and spoke.

“Everyone, thanks for waiting. We will now be heading for the Holy Capital. It will be my first flight so there might be turbulence so please bear with me.”

Taking a deep breath, I pressed the crystal.

I could tell that the aircraft was floating upwards from how the outside scenery was gradually moving upward.

There was a surprising lack of sound and vibrations.

And then, it stopped at a certain height.

Along with my loudly beating heart, I placed my palm on the crystal and moved it.

“Flying ship, setting off towards the Holy Capital!” *(TL: It’s similar to what the Gundam operators say before they launch off.)*

I somehow couldn’t refrain from saying that but I didn’t mind it as the flying ship began flying true to its name.

CHAPTER 213

AIR TRAVEL

The flying ship maintained an altitude of about a hundred meters in the air as it continued flying towards the Holy Capital.

However, the speed settings have 5 stages and we were currently at the highest setting, that's right, we were at max speed.

I would have to return to 2 hours ago to explain why.

When the flight began, I was shocked by the extremely smooth take off and felt impressed by the construct that was flying in the sky.

"It's amazing Dolan."

"Kukuku. Later, you can increase the speed after you get used to it."

After saying that, Dolan moved to sit at an empty seat.

With a change in viewpoint, even the way the forest and mountains look changed and every new sight was fresh.

When I set the flying ship to the first speed setting, it reached about the speed of a lightly galloping horse.

About 30 kilometers per hour? As expected, it felt too slow so after checking that there weren't any people or carriages on the highway, I pressed the crystal forward.

The ship then quickly sped up to a speed comparable to that of Fornoir when she's pulling the carriage.

I judged that the 5-speed setting mode increases the speed by about 30 kilometers per hour at each setting.

As I couldn't feel the rush of the wind, I couldn't really get a good grasp of the speed, just like how it is different between a motorbike and a car.

When that thought went through my head, I felt that it was strange how I was still comparing my current experiences with that of my previous life, telling me that I was gradually feeling less tense with piloting.

“Dolan, when you all were chasing to catch up to us, what setting... what gear did you use?”

What setting was a little hard to pronounce so I changed it to what gear.

“It was the third gear.”

Dolan answered that he used the third gear without showing any resistance to the change in terms.

It means that the speed was close to Fornoir’s full speed with me on her or even greater than that.

I raised the speed to the third gear while feeling excited.

So far it was normal.

But, after that, there were reasons why I raised the speed.

First, it was because I got used to it.

In addition to the lack of any obstacles that surpass a hundred meters in height on the way to the Holy Capital from Meratoni, the flying ship flew without swaying even when buffeted by the wind.

I felt like I was driving on a newly paved high-speed highway and as the aircraft was stable, I didn’t have to worry about slipping.

The only things I had to be aware of were collisions with birds or appearance of monsters so I had a lot of leeway.

Second, it was time.

Silent pressure... was coming from Garba-san.

Even though she might not be executed, imagining how she might be tortured, he was muttering ‘I want to save her as soon as possible’ but I could only hear it like it was a

curse.

And because nobody could speak to Garba-san when he was like that, I felt all the pressure.

Lastly... it was Shisho.

Originally, it was supposed to be Shisho's role in dealing with Garba-san.

Even though Shisho was that gleeful moments ago, now he was extremely quiet and still like a borrowed cat.

He also had a lack of sleep but it seemed like he felt sick seeing the motion outside and he quickly felt sick again even after I apply healing magic on him so he left with the words 'Get to the Holy Capital as quickly as possible' and moved to his own room.

Seeing Shisho leave, Paula and Rician also left to make magic tools while Nadia and Lydia pulled Lionel and the others to the dining hall to ask for detailed information on the Principality of Blange this past three months.

Because of all those reasons, I raised the flight speed to the highest speed but even though it felt fast in the beginning, by the time my eyes gradually got used to it, we had flown over the village we stopped by yesterday morning.

Going by that speed, I believed that we would reach the Holy Capital in just a few hours later.

Even though I couldn't afford to take my eyes off the front, I still had some leeway to think about other things so I spoke to Dolan who remained in the cockpit just in case of emergencies who sounded like he had been doing something behind me.

"Dolan, what have you been up to since just now?"

"I'm testing the magic tool Luciel-sama mentioned before in the past, a magic tool to detect magical power."

The one I talked about when we were on our way to the Dwarf Kingdom? I believe it was Rician who was designing that.

“...Rician’s invention? Has it already been completed?”

“No, it’s just a prototype. The precision is low so it’s not useable.”

“I see. Including Paula who did the space expansion for this ship, those two people are working hard.”

“Yeah. They are friends, rivals as well as collaborators. I’m truly thankful towards Luciel-sama.”

“Then I am also thankful to Dolan and everyone.”

“Is that so?”

I sensed a smile when Dolan muttered that.

That conversation with Dolan helped relieve me of Garba-san’s muttering curse and also helped me successfully accomplish the slightly less than 2 hours flight.

I could gradually see the Holy Capital and I gradually decreased our speed as we got closer.

“Garba-san, could you wake Shisho up?”

“Alright.”

Garba-san replied and quickly walked out of the cockpit.

“Fuu. If we’re this close, there’s a possibility that we are being watched by the Adventurers and if not handled properly, it might give the Church Headquarters justification to attack.”

I exhaled as the air of tension around Garba-san had moved away and I began to think of a place to land the flying ship.

“What are you hesitating for, just continue like this all the way to the Church Headquarters.”

“If we do that, they would consider it an enemy attack and attack us.”

“Unless there are people who are capable of slicing minerals, it doesn’t matter even if we get attacked.”

Eh? Is it me or has Dolan somehow became more aggressive?

“...Even though there is sufficient magical power within the flying ship now, we still

have to consider the situation if we have to escape so I'll land it outside the Holy Capital..."

"Luciel, land it in the Church."

Just as Dolan was about to speak his mind, a voice came from behind us.

"...Shisho, are you alright now?"

Everyone was assembled behind Shisho.

"Ou. It's been a long time since I went on a rampage, it feels soothing."

Shisho was laughing but I felt that it was nothing but unwise to land in the Church Headquarters.

"Shisho, it's true that it's possible to land on the training ground but it might even turn into a battle immediately?"

"It's not like you did anything wrong right? Then, you should just confidently enter. If those church people attack then just crush everyone first and then catch those who gave the orders?"

"It would be too embarrassing for them to leak it to the public if they get their tables turned on them by a small number of assailants so it might be a good idea."

The thought process of the two of them is seriously outrageous but it's strange how it doesn't sound wrong.

"Well, leave the person who gives the command to me."

"Killing is forbidden okay? Since I intend to let Pope-sama perform the judgment."

"Don't worry. I'll just make him find living more painful fufu."

Garba-san's gave a really sinister smile so I averted my line of sight and thought about what would happen after we disembark from the flying ship.

"...I'm assuming that we would store the flying ship in a magic bag immediately. When that happens, Dolan, Paula and Rician, are you three able to fight against the Knight Corps?"

“It’s a little difficult. Against monsters, I can use my full strength but if killing is forbidden then I would probably only be able to defend.”

“Nadia and Lydia, can the two of you protect the three of them?”

“I don’t know the strength of the Knight Corps so I can’t promise anything...”

“I can only promise to do all that I can...”

Now that I think about it, the two of them haven’t fought with the Knight Corps before.

“If it really turns into a fight, I’ll first give support by casting Area Barrier and Healing Magic but if possible, I do not wish to fight. In addition, I have something to confirm so until then, please promise to not start the fight.”

“There’s something you wish to do?”

“Yes. It’s possible that it might turn into a fight with people other than the Knight Corps so I’ll be relying on Shisho and everyone if that happens. Ah, Garba-san, I don’t mind if you wish to go look for Catherine-san.”

“Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it, I am responsible for what is happening this time so please don’t mind it.”

When I replied with a smile, the flying ship had just reached the skies above the Holy Capital.

When I looked down, I saw that the Holy Capital residents had astonished expressions... but for some unknown reason, they had all stopped to look at us.

When I maneuvered the flying ship to the training ground at the back of the Church Headquarters, I could confirm that there were a lot of knights present.

“It’s certainly unexpected that there would be so many Knight Corps present but we’ll be forging ahead.”

However, nobody responded to my words.

When I looked back feeling puzzled, Shisho and the others who were there moments ago were no longer there.

“Eh, is everybody so full of fighting spirit?”

It felt slightly lonely but since it was my first landing, I took extra efforts to be careful and safe and the landing was successful.

“Ha~, there’s no time to rest. But how do I stop this ship?”

Even though I took my hand off the crystal, the ship still didn’t come to a stop so I was waiting nervously before the movements stopped after about 10 seconds.

“It’s great that it stopped. Now it’s time to start.”

While walking to the lift, I made up my mind to do my best for my last task in the church.

CHAPTER 214

DEMARCATIION/DRAWING A LINE

Chasing after the others who went ahead, I met them as they were descending using the lift.

“Wait for me, I’m coming too.”

“Oo! We forgot about Luciel-sama.”

“Luciel, you’re late.”

“Luciel-san, please hurry up.”

Dolan, Paula and Rician spoke respectively and while feeling that the three of them were slightly horrible, I quickly rode the lift.

When the lift descended, the Knight Corps were all gathered but they looked a little strange.

To me, it was an ordinary reaction to be dumbfounded after seeing the flying ship.

However, it was weird how they were poised with their weapons and their combat posture didn’t crumble, as if they had been having a mock battle.

“Shisho, Lionel, what’s the situation... eh? Where’s Garba-san?”

When I looked around as I asked that, I noticed that Garba-san had already reached Catherine-san who was surrounded near the center.

It looked like Catherine-san and the Valkyrie Paladin Corps were surrounded by the other Knight Corps.

“Garba-san jumped into that group without hesitation when he saw that Knight Captain who he had allowed to work as his spy.”

“I’m glad he didn’t get hurt.”

“The Knight Corp’s training is sub-par, they were puzzled by the unexpected event and

couldn't take action."

"Well then, let's go then. Lionel, could you store the flying ship?"

"Yes."

Lionel immediately stored the flying ship in his magic bag upon my instructions.

After confirming that, I began walking towards the Knight Corps.

Seeing my figure, they all stood stock-still in unison, perhaps it was because they knew that I had reached the Sage job, or it was because I was accompanied by Lionel, Cathy and Kefin who have enough combat power to destroy the Knight Corps, as their movements were still frozen until now.

The Captains who gave the instructions probably didn't expect me to arrive on a flying vehicle after all.

"Everyone from the Knight Corps, we meet again after a day. There may be some who don't know me so I'll introduce myself. The other day, I have job changed from former S-rank Healer to Sage, now, I am the Sage Luciel. This time, I came to the Holy Capital because of a request by my benefactor the wolf beastman Garba-san but have everyone been having mock battles since so early in the morning?"

Even though I say 'since morning', it was probably already about 10 o'clock.

Even though those words should have been heard by them all, none of them opened their mouths.

"Well, for now, I don't know how many people amongst the Knight Corps believe in the rumors but realize that the rumors are mere rumors with your own body."

With a snap of my fingers, I activated multiple Area High Heal on the Knight Corps including all of the Valkyrie Paladin Corps at once.

Actually, while I was speaking, I was slowly weaving the magic circle chant.

There may be some amongst the Knight Corps capable of Magical Power Perception but unless they are on par with Shisho or Lionel, they wouldn't have noticed unless they were concentrating.

That's why as an act, I instantaneously cast Area High Heal on six different locations at the same time.

With this, I should be able to definitively prove that the rumors that I can't use Holy Attribute Magic were just rumors.

The knights were really surprised that I used Healing Magic as the surroundings became noisy.

If there were those who still showed a hostile posture against me after doing so, I would be incompatible with them so I decided to draw the line there.

"So, why have you all surrounded the Valkyrie Paladin Corps and Knight Captain Catherine?"

When I asked that question, silence returned as if the noise from before was just an illusion.

It looked like nobody wanted to touch that topic.

That's why I approached the knights who had surrounded Catherine-san and the others.

When I approached, the knights stepped down and opened a path.

When the path was opened, I saw Lumina-san.

"Lumina-san, it's a coincidence but I'll be returning the favor I owe you the day before yesterday."

"Luciel-kun... why?"

"It's because Garba-san said that he wanted to rescue Catherine-san. Well, I also left something I had to do in this Church Headquarters after all... leaving that aside, what happened here?"

"This morning, the orders for the capture and execution of Catherine-sama under suspicion of being a spy came."

The suspicion of being a spy is actually true but it's meaningless to say that at the moment so I concealed it.

"Was it from the Executives Department as well?"

“Yes. The orders definitely came from the Executives Department. I was surprised when they sent the order regarding Luciel-kun just based on rumors but now it led to Catherine-sama so I felt that there was some kind of conspiracy going on.”

“When you went to protest to the Executives Department, they even sent the order to capture Lumina-san and everyone else?”

“That’s exactly what happened. Can you see through everything because you became a Sage?”

“No, I don’t have such an outrageous ability.”

While smiling to Lumina-san, I addressed the Knight Corps.

“Well then, everyone from the Knight Corps who are the walls of the Church Headquarters, now you all are being manipulated by some people inside the Executives Department. I understand that you all must obey the orders from above. However, next time, the next person sentenced as a criminal might very well be one of you.”

Looking at everyone’s faces, the majority of them were lost but a couple of them had begun to leak murderous intent.

However, maybe they felt that they couldn’t make a move now as Shisho and the others had spread out to protect me, they did not attack.

“You all joined the Knight Corps because you all wish to protect the Church’s order and the Saint Schull Allied Nations from various threats right? I believe that is the case. Then, I will now fish out the ones dominating the Executives Department with the help of everyone.”

The knights, as well as Lumina and the others, were stunned by my announcement.

Well, it’s an expected response given that I announced to strike the Executives Department which is an entity outside the jurisdiction of Pope-sama while standing inside the Church Headquarters.

The knights stayed still with hesitant expressions, none of them attacked us.

“Just to be sure everyone is clear, although I feel that it’s all right to just reform the whole department, I will entrust all the decisions to Pope-sama. Now then, since I’ve already voiced my intentions, those who are hostile against me please come at me.

Everyone else please keep your weapons.”

“Luciel-kun, are you serious?”

Catherine-san who had been silent the whole time finally spoke.

“Yeah. Catherine-san, please lead me to where the Executive Department members are.” [Gakiin]

Just as I was asking Catherine-san about the location of the Executives Department, a shrill sound reverberated across the training ground.

A throwing dagger flew towards me from my blind spot and Shisho parried it away.

Moreover, the dagger was also carefully coated with a poison-like substance.

“As long as it is a person who intends to do harm the Executives Department, even if it is an S-rank Healer, there’s no way I can turn a blind eye, Luciel-kun.”

When I looked towards the direction where the dagger flew from, Bulltooth-san was there with a smile and had given that statement.

“Oo Bulltooth-san, it has been a long time. I didn’t think that you would come to find me on your own accord.”

If the situation was evolving just as expected, he might really be on the cusps of transforming into a demon.

I took note of the positioning of Shisho and the others and promptly started preparation for a fight.

“Hmph, so shameless. To make Catherine act as your spy, how utterly immoral.”

“No no. To those delusional people who twist and interpret the teachings of the church using the ideology of the Human Supremacists, I can return that statement word by word.”

Even though it wasn’t tit for tat, I returned with a provocation.

“Luciel-kun, Bulltooth has become so strong that even I can’t get a solid hit on him.”

Catherine-san informed me while hinting that although I won against him in the past, I might not be able to win this time.

This person had supposedly quit as the Priest Knight Captain due to injuries. In other words, he had a sudden power up.

“Hmph, Catherine. Not understanding our noble ideology but to hold good will towards beings like that wolf beastman, such an idiotic woman. However, S-rank Healer-sama, didn’t you reach your this greenhorn standing at roughly 20 years old because of that said ideology?”

It looked like he didn’t intend to conceal the fact that he belonged to the Human Supremacist party.

“Yeah. Since there were many who like to find fault with others and forgot to put in hard work, I could naturally grow higher. Furthermore, it was also because there were many respectable people around me.”

“You’re really straightforward with what you wish to say. However, I’ll be teaching you how the mouth is but the source of evil if it is not accompanied by results.”

I caught a glimpse of red light for an instant before multiple people from the Knight Corps assaulted us and the Valkyrie Paladin Corps.

... As expected, that red light appeared.

If that is really proof of demonization, I’ll give that a try.

Trusting that Shisho and the others would stop the attack of the knights, I performed my own role.

“Truly just like Bulltooth. Well then, in return for your wise saying, I’ll activate my newly created magic 【By the hand of holy healing, by the breath of Mother Earth, against the existences that have fallen to demonization, against those unholy existences, swallow everything with a wave of purification. Purification Wave】

Upon chanting my newly created magic, ripples of pale light spread out with me in the center.

That magic was invented when I was at Nelldal for the sake of escaping when I am surrounded by demons but actually I had not tested it at all.

Even so, I was convinced that it would somehow work, possibly because of the earnest hard work I put in when I was at Nelldal.

Purification Wave was just a convenient spell that cleans away any dirt on ordinary people it touches but to those existences such as demons and undead who rely on miasma as their source of power, it would be a ruthless poison.

I also considered Sanctuary Circle but my Holy Attribute Magic had powered up considerably so there was the possibility that they might disintegrate before I could get information out of them so I abandoned that idea this time.

The Purification Wave seemed to be effective on the ones attacking us including Bulltooth as their screams of pain echoed in the training ground.

Naturally, those attacking knights who were on the verge of demonization could no longer attack in that condition and were kicked away by Shisho and the others.

However, my attention was drawn away from the knights towards the Valkyrie Paladin Corp members Lucy and Elizabeth who were suffering from pain.

CHAPTER 215

THEIR CHOICES

Seeing how the ones among the Valkyrie Paladin Corps who took care of me the most, Lucy who interacts with me like I'm her younger brother and Elizabeth-san who taught me the way to dual-wield swords, were suffering, I couldn't hide the look of surprise on my face.

Since I never imagined that those two would be going through demonization as well.

If I had actually chosen to utilize Sanctuary Circle on the training ground, they might even have disintegrated.

If that happened, it would probably be hard to maintain the current relationship I have with Lumina-san and the others.

While I was feeling relieved for that matter, I asked Lumina-san about the two of them.

"Are the two of them Human Supremacists or related to people from the Principality of Blange or the Elimasia Empire?"

"Elizabeth did indeed come from Blange but Lucy was born in the Saint Schull's Allied Nations. Furthermore, I don't believe they are Human Supremacists. Leaving that aside, why are they suffering like that now?"

Even though she knew that they were in that condition due to the magic I released, Lumina-san asked about their condition without blaming me.

"...Demonization, or they are in a stage close to that. Has there been any possible signs that they are spies from the Executives Department?"

"That's no way that can be true!!"

It was the first time I saw a distraught Lumina-san but it showed how much she trusted them.

When I checked on Shisho and the others, the Knight Corp Captains looked like they couldn't digest the situation as they still remained motionless while Shisho and the others also didn't deal the final blow to the knights who were suffering.

The leader-rank Bulltooth and three other knights were still in the condition to somewhat stand but the other dozens of knights had collapsed in pain similar to Lucy and Elizabeth-san.

“Lumina-san, I have a way to help the two of them. But, I want confirmation that they aren’t spies. Please have them pledge a contract that indicates that they aren’t spies. The punishment should be something that can be seen clearly like falling under a sleep spell if they lie.”

“...All right.”

I felt that Lumina-san glared at me for a split second but humans can change just after a couple of years of not meeting them and it might not be visible to those around them.

I also didn’t want to think that they would betray me but as there’s the fact that the two of them were undergoing demonization, I couldn’t let emotions sway my decision.

However, I prayed that they were not on the side of the Executives Department.

“Lucy, Elizabeth, you heard what Luciel-kun said right? Swear that you are not spies. The punishment for lying will be the freezing of your Paladin job.”

Eh?! It was a much more severe punishment compared to the one I suggested.

That was probably the trust she had in them.

Now that I think about it, the number of members in the Valkyrie Paladin Corps has not changed since five years ago.

There hasn’t been any addition to the squad and there hasn’t been any loss of members either.

They’re quite a resilient group.

“I, I swear.”

“I swear too.”

Not betraying Lumina-san’s trust, Elizabeth-san and Lucy immediately pledged.

Upon those words, their bodies shone for an instant, signaling the completion of the pledge... but, Lumina-san made a huge mistake there.

“Lumina-san, even if they lied for that pledge, since I can’t perform status appraisal, I won’t be able to tell if their jobs are frozen so I can’t judge it.”

“Wha?!”

“Well, it’s alright though.”

While giving a wry smile, I applied the same magic I used to treat Wisdom-dono at Nelldal on the two of them.

“...Are you sure you don’t need to confirm it?”

Lumina-san peeked at me worriedly but the two of them answered instantly after all and moreover, leaving aside Lucy, Elizabeth-san’s face would turn red without fail whenever she tries to lie.

I noticed that from seeing Elizabeth-san and Saran-san interact and Saran-san actually also told me that Elizabeth-san would blush whenever she tries to lie.

Since there wasn’t any need to specially reveal Lumina-san’s blunder to her as well, I just laughed and healed them.

“I’ve already confirmed Lumina-san’s trust in the two of them. Moreover, there’s a suffering guy there who is blatantly telling me that they are undergoing demonization so I can just wrap things up after treating them, don’t worry.”

“Kukuku, it’s futile. Even if you are an S-rank healer, there’s no way you can return a person who has had the demon race factor infused into them back into a human.”

When I began treatment, having heard what I said earlier, Bulltooth laughed mockingly at my futile treatment.

It looked like he really knew that the two of them were undergoing demonization.

In other words, if I could capture him, I will very likely find out who the mastermind is.

I believed so.

“Tch, Luciel-kun please try your best to treat the two of them. I will defeat Bulltooth-

sama, no, Bulltooth.”

While I was thinking to myself, Lumina-san was trembling from anger from the words Bulltooth said and she was wrapped in an atmosphere like she was about to snap at any moment.

“...Can you do it?”

“Even though I look like this, I believe that I am quite strong too.”

I wasn't asking if she was strong or weak but if she understood that our plan was to capture him but going by the looks of it, it was already impossible to stop Lumina-san... oh well, I'll just go the extra mile.

“Then we'll do it together after I finish treatment. Also, if possible, I want to get information out of him so please leave him half-alive.”

“No, I can defeat him alone... ? What now?”

“I'm done with the treatment so let's beat him half to death together.”

“The treatment is done?”

“Yes. The both of you can already get up right?”

After I said that, the two of them checked their bodies and stood up.

Lumina-san was worried about their bodies to the extent of trembling.

“Lucy, Elizabeth, you girls are fine?”

“Yes. My body doesn't hurt anymore and this past few months feel like a lie.”

“It feels like I was released from some kind of restraint.”

“I see. That's great. That's really great.”

Now Lumina-san had dissolved into tears as the two of them spoke about their conditions while smiling.

The other Valkyrie Paladin Corps members defending Catherine-san also gathered.

The knights from the Knight Corps had stood still since just now and it looked like they

no longer felt like conducting the arrest as they adopted a wait and see stance, focusing their gazes on Bulltooth.

He most likely knew the cause of the fatigue the two of them felt for the past couple of months.

“The two of them have returned to humankind so although I don’t know what schemes you had, I’ll extract that information from you guys after we defeat you.”

“Im, impossible. Even gathering more than ten high ranking Healers couldn’t dispel it. To do so alone...”

“You tried to dispel it?... If you accept my conditions, I can even convert you back to humankind?”

Bulltooth was severely distraught but he was not the only one.

That’s right. The demonized knights that were beaten up by Shisho and the others were wavering after finding out that it was possible to return to being a human.

I almost couldn’t feel anymore fighting spirit in them.

I tried to give them the final push.

“I am no longer a Healer but a Sage so I might have been able to dispel it because of that. However, I have no intention of going out of my way to treat people who are hostile towards me. Now then, decided for yourselves to be killed as a demon or to return to being human and await Pope-sama’s judgment.”

At that moment, [Gogogogogo] the training ground quaked.

An enemy attack in the middle of persuading the enemy? Just as I was about to send a cue to Shisho and the others, I found the culprit who caused the earthquake.

“Dolan, what is Paula doing?”

“She thought of creating the strongest Golem if we were going to fight demons.”

“Demons are human-sized right? Then can I just crush it?”

Paula asked with her head tilted but she appeared in a golem that far surpassed the 5-meter class golem I once saw in the labyrinth, she was in a 10-meter class golem.

If something gets stepped on by that, they would definitely meet an instantaneous death.

While feeling like the serious atmosphere had been blown to god-knows-where, I composed myself and gave Bulltooth and his accomplices their final notice.

“Decide if you will return to humankind or depart from this world by getting stomped by that golem. Everyone from the Knight Corps too, clearly decide if you will follow the Executives Department or Pope-sama.”

After I said that, the golem stepped forward a few steps.

In the midst of the earthquakes from each of its steps, everyone was forced into their decisions.

CHAPTER 216

GAP IN THE HEART

They didn't want to verbally admit that they succumbed to the pressure of the golem but almost all of the knights who surrounded Catherine-san and the Valkyrie Paladin Corps stepped down and instead surrounded the knights undergoing demonization who were suffering due to my spell.

If left to their own devices, there was a possibility that they might attack the demonized knights and end up getting the tables turned on them so I instructed them.

"The knight that are currently suffering in pain have had their bodies strengthened beyond normal means. That's why, please do not attack them thoughtlessly."

When I gave that instruction, the knights placed their shields in front of them and maintained a formation a distance away from them.

Feeling relieved that they could act like a proper Knight Corps once they have a clear enemy, I once again spoke to the knights undergoing demonization, beginning with Bulltooth.

"So what are your answers?"

"We Executives Department are prepared to stake our lives for the sake of the Church's order and Human Supremacy, I will not waver at this stage!"

Seeing Bulltooth wield the sword he held, I guessed that there was no avoiding that battle after all as I threw a final question to him.

"I see. There's no helping it them. But before that, just answer me this. You've been singing human supremacy all this time but you guys are already more than half demon so you're no longer human right? What can you say about that?"

"....."

Since fighting was inevitable, I hit them with a simple question.

The knights suffering from the purification magic and even including Bulltooth were so stunned that they seemed to have even forgotten the pain in their body as silence enveloped the training ground.

Eh? What, after all this time? Going by the looks of it, it looks like they didn't realize at all?

"...You guys didn't realize?"

I thought that there was no way it could be true but I still asked to be sure but beginning from Bulltooth who was extremely talkative just now, the color on the faces of the demonized knights gradually drained and they began to panic.

"Luciel, they are already demons that are willing to self-detonate. There is no need for mercy."

"Demons are humanity's greatest enemy so compassion is unnecessary."

My faction's two top members were both combat maniacs who also have high intelligence so they further swayed their spirit by exploiting their emotions. I gave my final notice.

"Shisho and Luciel say so that's why I'll ask the last time. If you can't decide now, it is truly unfortunate but you will be judged as a member of the demon race."

"If, if you kill us, you will not obtain the information you want."

Bulltooth hurriedly answered but it indicated to me that he was extremely confused as he had spoken with the premise that he would lose before we even fought.

I didn't expect to deal this much damage just by using words... let's try inducing greater unease.

"There's no such thing. If I arrest Dongahaha-san who should be laughing loudly now thinking that he had dealt with Catherine-san and Valkyrie Paladin Corps, I should be able to get at least one piece of information." *(TL: Only after seeing the name then I remember him appearing before... refer to Chapter 39. So the author did hint that there was another faction in the church since then, just that it wasn't clear at all.)*

"Wha, what do you want?"

Bulltooth totally didn't realize in his confusion that he was already assuming his defeat as he placed himself on the negotiation table.

“Eh? Did you not do it because you wanted to become a demon? You should have just told me that earlier. If you spit out everything you know, I will revert you to a human.”

“Ugh, no, it's useless. We have taken a pledge. So we cannot speak about confidential matters.”

The pledge was probably true.

Since I can't imagine an organization that doesn't place some kind of control on information.

However, since I have no idea the extent of the restriction, I'll just have to tie him up and perform the interrogation.

For now, I'll hang the carrot of converting him back into a human as I steadily interrogate him.

“There's no way I can believe what you say blindly, or else you can just get away with anything if you just say it's a confidential matter. Firstly, how did you convert Lucy and Elizabeth-san into demons? If you answer me, I will dispel the demonization from those three knights. Ah, the question is not directed to Bulltooth only, anybody can answer.”

Immediately after I said that, the suffering knights quickly answered.

“I was told that when the two of them returned due to injuries from their expedition, they were made to drink powered demon magic stones as healing magic was cast on them.”

“A magic circle meant to muddle the consciousness was set up inside the treatment room dedicated for healers.”

“It looks like actual experiments has already been done to find out if demonization is possible without embedding magic stone.”

“Our instructions always come from Bulltooth-sama.”

Hey now, what happened to there being confidential information...

It looked like they still have plenty more to say but I must first judge if they are speaking the truth first.

“...Okay, stop. Lucy, Elizabeth-san. Did the two of you suffer injuries at the same time on an expedition?”

“Yes, about half a year ago, there was a small skirmish between The Elimasia Empire and The Rubruk Kingdom as usual but a flying dragon suddenly appeared and even though we fought hard, we suffered from injuries.”

“We don’t bring healers along during expeditions so we performed first aid with our awful Holy Attribute Magic and returned to the Holy Capital for treatment.”

“At that time, were you two prescribed some kind of a medicine?”

“...I can’t really recall that well but I think I was.”

“At that time I lost a lot of blood and was feeling bitter that Luciel-san wasn’t part of our squad.”

To be exact, rather than wanting me, she wants a person who can utilize the same level of Healing Magic as me.

“Haha, if I didn’t become an S-rank Healer, that might have had a very high chance of happening but leaving that aside, was there no strange physical condition from the demonization?”

“There was. I was told that magic alone can’t treat me completely from diseases or after-effects so I had to take medications...”

“...It has already been half a year so my memory is a little hazy.”

Those symptoms might have appeared because they periodically drank the ‘medication’.

It was a little too early to come to conclusions but that might have been the trigger.

“Thank you. Very well. I shall dispel the demonization curse on the three who answered me.”

After listening to Lucy and Elizabeth-san’s recount, I judged that there was a high chance that the knights were speaking the truth so I turned to them and told them that

I would dispel their curse.

Having Cathy and Kefin watch over them, I began dispelling the curse.

I treated them one at a time using magic circle chant and once the light from the Extra Heal spell faded, Cathy and Kefin arrested the demonized knights.

Their quick action didn't allow the demonized knights any time to act.

Or rather, because the overflowing miasma from their body disappeared, they might have not been in any condition to move as all the strength has left their body after truly returning back to a human.

"Like I said earlier, I will let Pope-sama make the judgement for all of you. Although you are arrested, as long as you do not take any hostile actions, you will not have to go through any painful experiences."

"I don't really mind if any brave person takes up the challenge though."

"On the contrary, there should be at least one person with that kind of grit right?"

"Shisho, Lionel, could you please not fan the flames anymore? Apart from that, why are you so motivated? Please... keep quiet... Now then, the next question. Why did you accept the demonization? Were you informed of what power it would be?"

I laughed wryly at Shisho and Lionel who were itching to battle.

And in the midst of their warnings, there was a 10 meter class golem posing behind Shisho and Lionel.

It looked like Paula and the others weren't interested with the Church so they were fooling around with the golem... but, it would be disastrous if that golem lost control so I decided to quickly investigate the branching point when they decided to undergo demonization.

"That would come under the confidential information. But there is only one reason why we took up this power, to subjugate the demon race and the Demon Lord and let the world know that the human race is the most capable race."

"How would you let the world know? In the first place, with that body that emits miasma, you would be regarded as a subjugation target by the human race."

“Shit, I, we wanted to once again, in that country that gave birth to the hero, li gyaaaa.”

The instant Bulltooth mentioned the hero, miasma burst out from his body and changed his very appearance.

And it didn't happen to only Bulltooth.

The knights that I had not treated were all suffering and miasma leaked out of their bodies as the demonization advanced rapidly.

“Bulltooth, I didn't expect that even you would betray us. But I, being generous, would forgive you all. That's why, be relieved and stir up chaos in this place. Gahaha.”

Appearing and saying that was the chief of the human supremacist group, Dongahaha.

CHAPTER 217

TARGET

Like before, miasma still overflowed from the bodies of the knights undergoing demonization.

However, unlike before, their skin color gradually turned blue and their eyes shone blood red with no sign of intelligence within them.

They seemed like the berserkers that appeared in stories.

“Dongahaha-san, I didn’t expect a top member of the Executives Department like you would appear here at all. Even if you didn’t come over, I would have dropped by and paid you a visit.”

Without commenting on the berserkers, I first tried conversing with him to delay the time.

“I won’t do that, Sage-dono. It’s natural to be kind to those whose death approaches.”

It seemed like Dongahaha felt that he had an overwhelming advantage as he played along with my conversation.

“Do I sound like I am about to die?”

“Gahaha, as expected of Sage-dono, to still act tough in a situation like this.”

There were 11 knights with advanced demonization, including Bulltooth.

I didn’t yet know how much stronger they had become after the demonization but I guessed that there were probably not many within the Knight Corps that could fight with them equally.

“You are also brimming with confidence. If you have that much confidence, would you mind answering my questions for my future reference?”

“I don’t believe there will be a future for you but sure. Since Sage-dono might become my ally after all.”

Dongahaha confidently said to me but he probably meant ally as when I get demonized or enslaved.

What a lowlife.

Did Pope-sama not notice his true nature? Or did she notice but let him be because of some kind of debt? Well, either way, I can now ask questions and buy time at the same time.

“There is a strong anti-evil barrier extended over the Church Headquarters so putting aside those undergoing demonization, how did the demons enter?”

“Kukuku, anti-evil barrier? Obviously, such a thing is no longer existant. Why do you think a labyrinth appeared in the center of the church?”

Did they notice that the barrier was no longer effective when the labyrinth appeared?

The labyrinth appeared half a century ago so he probably wasn't directly involved in it.

Then, why was it not reported to Pope-sama?

“If you noticed the disappearance of the barrier, why did you leave it be? Although it's in the past, you were once a leader within the Church Headquarters. If you knew that a labyrinth appeared due to a mistake by the Executives Department, don't you have an obligation to report to Pope-sama?”

“That's a given as I hold a grudge against the Church and the Pope.”

His previous smiling expression changed instantly as he glared at me with sharp eyes.

I could tell he harbored strong hatred towards the Church and Pope-sama.

“Grudge? A pillar of the Church hates the Church and Pope-sama... In my case, you people tried to set me up through various means but where did that resentment originate from?”

“Because my father died due to the incompetent Executives Department at that time and the imprudence of the Pope.”

He surprisingly had a solid reason for it.

However, since he knew about Pope-sama's current circumstance, he should understand that his hatred was just unjustified resentment.

"Why do you plan to take revenge after all this time?"

"Revenge... it might be true that it holds that meaning in a certain way. However, I'll clearly state the reason why it turned out this way. It is you, Sage-dono."

"Me?"

He said I was the reason but I don't recall doing anything against him in particular.

"Thanks to your efforts of conquering the labyrinth, they could perform a memorial for my father who was abandoned in the labyrinth and the Pope gave me the belongings he left behind. And at that time, the memories resurfaced."

"That staff."

It was the staff I brought back from the labyrinth.

"This was the staff my father held. Before the main shrine became a labyrinth, my father was the person responsible for managing the main shrine after all."

If the old man that disappeared along with the 50th floor boss at that time was Dongahaha's father, did I misjudge his old appearance or is Dongahaha an adopted son?

"Isn't it a misdirected grudge at Pope-sama just because she approved of the expansion work?"

"Do you think I would harbor so much hatred for something like that? Directly before the labyrinth formed, the Pope requested my father to retrieve something she forgot. Father was caught up in the formation of the labyrinth after that."

"Then you've held that hatred all this time?"

"That's slightly wrong. The Pope invited me to the Church Headquarters just because

I am my father's son and I steadily climbed higher in position. At that time, I was full of thankfulness, I didn't harbor any hatred at all."

"Then why?"

"After I was assigned to the Executives Department, I had an opportunity to look through the past records of the Executives Department and I happened upon it. The record that my father persistently listened to being a Human Supremacist and the record of the Pope requesting my father for a lost article."

I had a terrible feeling about it.

Both the fact that it was related to Human Supremacists and the lost article.

"You probably carefully examined if that record was real or not but aren't you returning evil for a favor?"

"Favor... to the Pope, it should be atonement. That's because the item she sought my father to retrieve was her favorite necklace at that time. I've heard it directly from the Pope so it's undeniable. I asked her on the day she declared to give up on conquering the labyrinth."

I'll put aside if that was really just an ordinary necklace for now but it actually can't be helped if it led to a grudge.

She should have worn it if it was so important.

"Because of that, you plan to crush the Church?"

"Sigh, if that was the case, the Church would have met its demise under the end I envisioned with my hatred. However, after receiving the order to give up on conquering the labyrinth, the Church soon turned rotten without having me do anything."

Dongahaha shook his head showing how deplorable that situation was.

A large number of knights and healers were invested in the labyrinth so it was said that the hierarchy changed overnight, there's even still some influence of it left in the current Knight Corps.

Because Pope-sama's plan of throwing in excessive combat power backfired and even then the labyrinth was not conquered, Pope-sama was completely converted into a

figurehead.

I certainly do understand him but currently, for some reason, his feelings were amplified.

“...If that’s the case, wouldn’t it be fine if you invested your all for the sake of the church? Doing this just causes nuisance.”

“It’s thanks to you. Even if my faction splits apart, you have much more value than that. You not only conquered the labyrinth, you also crushed the unethical healers and regained the fame and dignity of the church in the blink of an eye.”

“...It’s not solely because of me. Even you also helped work out the guidelines and law.”

“What we did was not something extraordinary. It was because a youngster like you could pull off something that people couldn’t. The people are weak to those with charisma. As long as you have something astounding, many people would be attracted.”

“...It looks like you’ve been in cahoots with Blange and the Empire extensively but when did you start interfering?”

“Interfere? That’s a weird thing to say. You are the one interfering. Crushing our plan to convert a whole village into demons using a summoned demon, you went on to Grandol to defeat the demon on the same day we assigned it to the beginner’s labyrinth, just how far did you read our movements.”

So he was aware of everything that happened... However, as somebody who can’t move outside of the Church, it would be impossible to obtain such details if he did not have a collaborator outside.

Because he was aware of things that I did not convey to Pope-sama.

“So those were all contrived by you?”

“Yeah. Of course, I also have collaborators.”

“Then, spreading the rumors about me receiving God’s punishment as well?”

“I just mixed in a few lies within the truth. Even though you self-destructed, I can’t have that, can I? After all, you messed up my revenge plan midway and I had to quickly

revise it.”

He was probably talking about me having lost my ability as a Healer.

However, I felt a sense of incongruity between his speech and conduct.

Like how he admitted himself to having collaborators and how he wanted me to think he was the main culprit.

“Then you spread the rumors to damage the Church?”

“Since you lost your ability as a Healer, you no longer had your uses. I had no choice but to scatter your information but apparently, you were quite popular among the people so that also didn’t turn out as planned.”

... What’s with that. I was feeling slightly happy so I had to control myself from grinning.

“Then didn’t you have the option of giving up there?”

“Gahaha. It would be a waste to throw away a person who far surpassed my expectations and became a Sage in just three months.”

That way of putting it meant that I was his target... !?

“...Perhaps your accusations on Catherine-san and the Valkyrie Paladin Corps were traps for the sake of luring me over?”

“So you’ve finally realized. You being able to dispel the demonization was another miscalculation but... as long as I crush you here and destroy the Church Headquarters, my revenge will come to its end.”

“...Let me ask this final question. Who made this plan? No matter how capable you are of devising the plan, I can’t imagine that you are capable of summoning demons.”

“...That’s a good head you have on your shoulders. Unfortunately, I don’t have to tell everything to somebody who is about to die. Since I’ve also just finished my preparations as well!”

“Chiiii!”

I tried to dispel the knights who turned into berserkers without him noticing but as I couldn’t dispel all of them in time, I had no choice but to switch to setting up a

Sanctuary Barrier.

“Hou. You used a barrier for the sake of saving the demonized people huh. You sure are composed.”

The demonized knights attacked the barrier but it looked like they could not exit it.

“I don’t have enough room to spare but doing so reduces the hands you can play right?”

“Gahaha, my true intent has already been completed.”

“Completed? I can’t control my magical power? Don’t tell me?!”

I was wondering why he was so composed when I realized I could not manipulate my magical power.

“Yeah. A powerful anti-magic barrier has been set up. Because I know that abnormal conditions do not work on you, I thought of this strategy. Now, await your demise in despair.”

It seemed like my magic was sealed like in the 10th-floor boss room in the Labyrinth of Tribulations.

It looks like he really investigated in-depth about me.

If I was the same as I was then, I would probably not be able to use magic on my own.

Sure enough, the staff held by Dongahaha glowed red and a reddish-black magic circle floated in front of Dongahaha’s eye.

CHAPTER 218

PAULA'S MIRACLE

As we didn't anticipate that an anti-magic barrier would be spread across the wide training ground, we had fallen perfectly into Dongahaha's trap and were facing a desperate situation.

Seeing our state, Dongahaha laughed loudly as he constructed the magic circle that gave off a reddish-black light.

That light closely resembled the one made by the reincarnated individual we confronted at Grandol.

"Once you can't use magic, even if you are a Sage, you're just a human. Sage-dono, you have been a worthy foe."

Immediately after Dongahaha said that, a human-shaped object began to form from the magic circle. However, its appearance was clearly atypical as feathers, horns and even a tail formed.

"The one who summoned me... what!?"

A couple of seconds after the demon (?) was summoned, the control on the Golem standing at the training ground was severed due to the barrier and it began collapsing in the direction of the demon.

Everyone was surprised by the sudden turn of events and... quickly took some distance away from the Golem that was falling towards the demon from its dead-angle.

The demon misunderstood that everyone was fleeing from it due to fear and astonishment, so it began to speak in an arrogant tone with the edges of its mouth curled up when it finally noticed the falling Golem but it was already a little too late.

It was already too late to avoid the Golem as the demon was crushed beneath the Golem accompanied by the sound of a loud impact.

When that happened, for some reason I returned to the state where I could manipulate magical power and I had recovered my ability to use magic.

“Did the shock from that impact dispel the barrier seal as well?”

A Paula miracle that could make even Great Luck-sensei and Supreme Luck-sensei surprised had occurred.

I immediately returned the demonized knights trapped inside the Sanctuary Barriers into humans.

The terrifying aspect of the demonized individuals was the suicide explosion attack that cornered Shisho.

I imagined that they won't self-destruct after they regain their consciousness so I prioritized that.

“Hey, raise some fighting spirit. You're a demon right?”

“You can continue summoning them as long as you have magical power right?”

“Luciel, don't dispel the demonization on these guys.”

“I'll show them the reality that I can't be defeated even if they rely on demonization.”

Shisho and Lionel were raring to fight but when the demon was being summoned, they had constantly moved into position to defend me and the Knight Corps.

However, for the two of them who were expecting a fight to the death with the demon, they either could not stomach that disappointing end or they had an excess of pent up energy as, of all things, they began taunting the enemies.

While feeling that their actions were unnecessary, I quickly thought that there was a need to hang the bait called 'battle' in front of the two of them. The instant that thought went through my mind, I noticed the many knights reflected in my eyes. I was immediately hit with the wonderful idea of offering them all to Shisho and Lionel as their fee for acting as a nuisance in this incident.

“Shisho, Lionel, stop provoking the enemy! If you want to fight, I don’t care if you chase all the knights here until they can’t stand so please read the air now.”

“Tch, very well. Luciel, you better keep your promise.”

“There’s no helping it then.”

The two of them reluctantly agreed to it but going by the grin on their faces unlike before, I probably chose the correct choice as my countermeasure.

The knights that witnessed my exchange with Shisho were startled and had looks of despair as the color drained from their complexions but nobody tried to contest it.

Certainly, compared to fighting with demons, they won’t have to worry about their lives if it’s just a mock battle so the choice was clear but they would probably catch a glimpse of hell.

Thinking of that, I felt a little of the stress I’ve built up lighten.

I finished my treatment on the demonized knights. However, perhaps due to the influence of the berserk state caused by the demonization, they all lost consciousness and collapsed on the spot immediately after the treatment ended.

“Their demonization has already been dispelled so just restraining them will do.”

After sending out that instruction, a couple of the knights obeyed and I entrusted it to them as I returned my sight to Dongahaha.

Until now, Dongahaha still had a stunned expression with his staff in his hand as he stared at the spot where he summoned the demon.

He demonized the knights, went further to make them go into berserk state, succeeded in fully catching our attention and then he activated the magic seal barrier.

Then, having grasped absolute advantage, it looked like he summoned a high-ranking demon.

He had achieved the formula to victory he set in his mind and it wouldn’t be strange if he was intoxicated with his own strategy as it was that excellent a strategy.

However, as that all collapsed due to an irregular occurrence, his mind right now was probably completely blank.

Even though he was an enemy, seeing how his carefully prepared plans were unreasonably shattered due to an irregularity cause me to feel slightly sympathetic towards Dongahaha.

Just as my thoughts reached that point, Paula's Golem that caused that irregularity began to move once again.

It seemed like Paula had regained control on the Golem as the 10-meter class Golem stood up and slowly began moving.

Everyone's eyes including mine were pulled towards the location where the Golem's head was, at the convulsing demon's body that had sunk into the ground.

The shocking thing was that even though its breathing was faint, the demon was still alive.

"It's still alive in such a condition?"

As somebody was pulled back into reality after hearing those words being muttered, I immediately decided to use the Holy Dragon's power as I gripped my Illusionary Sword but the summoner Dongahaha took action before me.

"Restore your energy with my magical power and destroy everything!"

Immediately after Dongahaha's proclamation, a reddish-black line connected him and the demon and miasma spewed out from the demon's body as it was wrapped in reddish-black light.

If it continued, we might have to face a high-ranking demon and I fear that the Church's fighting strength would drop from this encounter alone so I convinced myself that it was the situation where I have to defeat it at full strength like I had prepared to just now.

"Holy Dragon, become the blade that will purify the evil demon... [Don!]"

Just as I was on the verge of releasing the Holy Dragon's power, Paula's Golem that had played an active role in the previous irregularity acted quicker than I had.

While it was standing up, the Golem stopped with its knees bent and after rotating its body 90 degrees, it fell onto the demon with its elbow.

It was a splendid elbow drop.

The demon was releasing miasma but perhaps it had not regained its ability to move, it couldn't evade the elbow drop and it became a ruthless blow towards the recently revived demon.

Dongahaha, having supplied his magical power to the demon, perhaps because the magical power that had to be supplied was increased significantly, his magical power was depleted and he collapsed on the spot.

Then, having just fulfilled its role, Paula's Golem also disintegrated.

Everyone was terrified of the demon, everyone was stunned at the instant kill of the demon and everyone also shuddered at the strength of the Golem.

"Dahahahaha, the tasty parts of the battle had completely been snatched away."

"The valuable experience of fighting with a demon has..."

Excluding the two battle maniacs...

After that, to be safe, I inverted the Sanctuary Barrier and expanded it to probe the demon but the demon had already died.

Then, I cast the spells to return a demonized person back to humanity on Dongahaha to be safe and we successfully arrested the person who personally admitted to being the main culprit, Dongahaha.

CHAPTER 219

CHOICES

We had succeeded in capturing the darkness in the Church, the leader of the Executives Department and the Human Supremacist group, Dongahaha as well as who I suppose is the number two... Bulltooth, alive.

Our original aim was to rescue and protect Catherine-san so we had already achieved that goal the moment we rescued her safely from the darkness of the Church.

“Ah... Dispel.”

Catherine-san was surprised at the sudden Dispel cast on her but if she had some kind of curse placed on her, I would be tangled in some other troublesome matter again.

I would honestly rather not have to go through that so I took action immediately.

Well then, since we've achieved our goal, I would like to tell them to deal with the aftermath themselves... but if they could do so, the Church wouldn't have reached such a corrupt state.

Dongahaha mentioned that the Church became corrupted even without him doing anything.

Even though lately the reputation of the Church has improved, nothing much had changed.

For example, the knights were like new company hires, they mistake the company's rating as their rating of themselves as they swing from joy to sorrow depending on the rumors.

As the people who propped up the core of the organization suddenly disappeared, the middle-management squad captains and healer leaders, the priest, didn't want to rock the boat and didn't take up responsibilities. *(TL: I take it he meant they disappeared because they were lost in action during their attempts to conquer the labyrinth.)*

Those in branch manager and sales manager-like positions, the Archbishops and the various Healers Guild Guildmasters gave up on training the ones below them... or it can't be said to that extent but they chose to maintain their authority and power.

And Pope-sama who didn't manage them even though she should have dealt with them strictly.

If what was recorded in Rainstar-dono's biography was true, his reason for creating the Church was because he hoped that he could hasten the creation an era where it was a matter of course to save the lives of those that can be saved just like in our previous life.

That belief was the entire goal of the Church and the Healer's Guilds were founded.

I'm sure everyone was moving in the same direction and were united at that time but because they achieved their huge goal, there wasn't anybody to determine the direction of the organization after that so it resulted in the formation of a crack in the function of the organization.

Originally, the Pope or the Archbishop-rank individuals should have taken the helm.

However, there weren't any such talent in the core of the Church or perhaps their talents were forsaken and not raised.

A rudderless organization is brittle. Even more so when the organization is enormous...

As everyone set their own respective goals, moving forward to this day, it turned out as the situation we had now. Looking at it objectively, that was the only impression I had.

Just like how rotten large enterprises are still large enterprises, a rotten church is still a Church.

Once the Church disappears, the Healer's Guild would find it difficult to survive and once that happens, a lot of people would probably be troubled.

It would still be fine if there were other Church-like organization that could replace it.

However, because such an organization doesn't exist in this world, the Church can't be shut down.

If Pope-sama remained as the Saintess who healed the people with potions and a charismatic individual like Rainstar-dono served the Pope, the present day situation would have probably been different.

Well, that's just a futile hope for what we don't have now.

The majority of the knights here believed the rumors that I was punished by Gods for performing an evil act.

Even though in my point of view they are loathsome people, their feelings towards the Church might be the real deal for all I know.

Even for the large enterprises that caused problems, because they didn't decently control the actions and thoughts of the employees at the bottom, even though they are trying hard, it instead causes unnecessary problems.

I took a deep breath and concentrated on what I had to do now.

"Shisho, Lionel and everyone, please keep watch over Dongahaha and the demonized knights."

"Sure. Okay."

"Understood."

Shisho and Lionel nodded and they split the work to gather the demonized knights.

"Lumina-san and the Valkyrie Paladin Corps, please gather all the staff in the Church Headquarters here."

"...Understood."

Apart from Lumina-san, everyone else also nodded and agreed.

“Garba-san sorry but could you dig up information on the Executives Department and return here? Ah, Kefin, could you help Garba-san too?”

“All right.”

“What should we investigate?”

“Since we’ve already talked that much about the labyrinth, it’s no longer a confidential information but this Church Headquarters has a labyrinth. It was a labyrinth that appeared about 50 years ago but please investigate around the time they decided to give up on conquering it.”

“Understood. We’ll go to the Executives Department with someone who knows the location.”

“Thank you. Now then, for the knights, please line up here. I’ll escort the Pope here. Catherine-san, please come along with me. Also, it would be troublesome if there were remnants of the Executives Department around so Nadia and Lydia please come along too.”

“Okay.”

“”Yes.””

After I gave out instructions to everyone, I looked at Paula and Dolan.

“Paula, nice golem. Dolan, I’ll leave this place to you too.”

“Thanks for the magic stones.”

“Together with Paula, I’ll capture those who act violently or try to escape.”

“...Please try to keep within not killing them.”

“Understood.”

After Paula nodded, she began watching over the knights.

With a wry smile, I began walking towards where the Pope was located.

Along the way to the Pope's room, Catherine-san thanked me.

"Luciel-kun, I've been saved by you once again during this incident. Thank you."

"Don't mention it, Dongahaha's target was me so I also have to apologize for involving you too, sorry. Moreover, I came to rescue Catherine-san because of Garba-san's request who I owe a lot to. So if you wish to thank someone, please direct it to Garba-san."

For Catherine-san who has too many elements of uncertainty, I truthfully didn't want to have too much contact with her until the whole situation settled down.

I do believe that it is important to converse and be sociable but I spoke while drawing a definite line.

"I see... Nevertheless, it looks like Luciel-kun has steadily grown. Since before, nobody could catch up to your Holy Attribute Magic but now even your combat ability is stronger than me. Perhaps even stronger than Lumina too..."

Catherine-san was praising me with a smile but because there was a troublesome portion involved now, I only spoke a little about my true feelings and ended up building a wall between us.

"...I'm sorry for sending you flying with a kick the other day. I only knew of your circumstance after reaching Meratoni so I had thought Catherine-san had also turned into my enemy."

"Fufu. Going down to the root of it, it just shows that I lacked power. Leaving that aside, what do you intend to do now?"

This was most likely the question she wanted to ask the most.

"For Pope-sama to remain on the Pope seat or to express her intent to resign, I'll let herself decide to step up or down."

"You intend to ask Pope-sama to vacate her seat! I won't let you do that!"

I said it during the fight but after I said that I will entrust the decision to Pope-sama, Catherine stood in front of me and stopped.

Nadia and Lydia observed my and Catherine-san's next move and didn't move.

"The one to decide will be Pope-sama. Furthermore, if this continues, the Church will quickly decay and sooner or later the Church will walk down the path of destruction. No matter how noble the philosophy was it built on, after getting weathered by time, it's obvious that there is no longer a clear doctrine left."

After saying that, I tried to cross Catherine-san's side but she blocked my path once again.

"You should understand as well how much thought Pope-sama put in for the sake of the Church and the people. Even then, you still deny Pope-sama!"

"I am not denying her, I just don't blindly accept her. It's true that Pope-sama is kind and thinks of the Church more than the others. I can tell that too. However, no matter how much Pope-sama prays for the happiness of everyone, is there a person in this Church Headquarters who can inherit that and make it take shape?"

Without a clear vision or plan, just speaking of feelings alone will not solve anything.

Catherine-san probably actually understood that too.

This time, she didn't stop me but continued walking.

I don't know the reason why Catherine-san was so fixated on Pope-sama but there was probably a reason for it.

However, I kept to myself that it would probably not be that simple for Pope-sama to step down from the Pope seat.

When we reached Pope-sama's room, Estia? came out from within to greet us.

"Luciel-sama, I see you've returned to the Church."

It was not the Darkness Spirit but regular Estia.

"...Yeah. I am sorry for leaving Estia in the Church and placing a burden on you."

"Don't worry. I like Pope-sama so it's not a problem."

I felt apologetic to Estia who said that with a slight smile as I entered the room.

Pope-sama's room was properly tidied up but there were only the figures of Rosa-san and Estia inside.

"Pope-sama, we meet again after two days. I don't see the attendants?"

"Luciel, I'm glad that you seem well. The attendants are currently substituting Rosa at the canteen. Hn? Catherine is with you too."

"Yes. She and the Valkyrie Paladin Corps were about to be executed so I rescued them."

"What do you mean!!"

"Luciel-kun!!"

Pope-sama and Catherine-san raised voices of surprise at my unexpected words but there was a proper reason why I spoke of the facts this time.

I wanted to know how the Pope faction who believes in Pope-sama would act once they know the truth of the danger they are exposed to.

"Catherine-san, I won't come all the way here to tell lies to Pope-sama."

"Well done Luciel, truly thank you for saving them. But why were they facing execution?"

Pope-sama was delighted that Catherine-san was alive but it looked like she wanted to know the reason for their execution.

"Before that Pope-sama. As I had requested, have you told the Church Headquarters' personnel and all Healer's Guild that I have become a Sage?"

"Umu. I told the Archbishops and Healer's Guild guildmasters whom I could contact using the magic communication bead."

"I informed the Healers and Maids."

It looked like Rosa-san helped out too.

“Is that so? The orders for executions was on the suspicion of being a double spy but that was because of the fact that Catherine-san dove into the darkness of the Church, the Executives Department on her own, was discovered.”

“Catherine?”

“She tried to wipe away the Church’s darkness but unfortunately failed, even so, Pope-sama, do not forget to punish Catherine-san for acting on her own. Well, as she acted for the sake of the Church, I believe it would be fine if she was given an amnesty...”

“.....”

Catherine-san was really glaring at me but did she not consider the risk of being a double spy? I could only think of people who met all kinds of unfortunate ends.

Does Garba-san like her for that? I ignored the glare and explained to Pope-sama the mastermind behind the chain of events in an easy to understand manner.

“...I found out the mastermind who spread rumors about me.”

“What!? Who was it?”

The Pope leaned forward in her seat.

“Led by the leader of the Executives Department Dongahaha, under the command of the former Priest Knight Captain Bulltooth, the Human Supremacist knights have been arrested at the large training ground.”

“Dongahaha... I see.”

She showed an expression that said that she couldn’t believe it but didn’t she make the association when she heard that the Executives Department was involved? I had slight doubts but I told Pope-sama the truth that Dongahaha said, word for word.

“Yes. He planned to execute the girls in order to lure me in. At that moment, he used an evil magic that demonized the knights.”

“...Demonization? Not in other countries but inside the church?”

“Yes. Actually, I’ve seen the usage of the demonization evil magic here and there lately. But I never could imagine that demonization would take place inside the Church.”

“.....”

Pope-sama was desperately trying to think but I told Pope-sama the main subject before she tripped herself in her own whirlpool of thoughts.

“Now we should head to the large training ground and Pope-sama should judge them. I will accept whatever judgment you give. I don’t mind even if you forgive all of them.”

“Luciel-kun!?”

Catherine-san raised a shocked voice but I didn’t really deviate from what I said before and even if I said I will accept it, I didn’t say that I will agree with it.

“I know that Pope-sama places great importance on the Church. It is a place founded by Rainstar-dono so Pope-sama most likely has strong feelings towards it.”

“Luciel...”

“But Pope-sama is just too kind. You’ve been too kind and have crossed the border to end up being too indulgent. I think that kindness is a wonderful thing. I have also been saved many times by Pope-sama’s kindness. However, kindness is different from indulgence.”

I recalled the words Shisho and Lionel said to be before and I was just conveying second-hand knowledge but I altered it with my own words and said it to Pope-sama.

“Kindness and indulgence?”

“Yes. For example, if a child does something bad. What will that child’s parent do?”

“They will scold him.”

“Yes. But will they scold him with feelings of hatred?”

“No. They will teach him what is bad so that the child can know what is bad in the future.”

“Yes. In that example, it is the parent’s kindness that considers the child’s future. However, indulgence is when the parent doesn’t scold the child even when he does

something bad and instead tolerate and accepts it. What happens to the child if that occurs?”

“...He won't be able to recognize that act as bad.”

“Has Pope-sama experience being scolded before?”

“Scolded... I've been scolded a long time ago.”

Pope-sama answered with a smile and a somewhat lonely expression.

“We are not Gods. So there will be times when we are wrong. However, after committing an error, we must correct it. I feel that the current complicated situation the Church is facing is a result of having left the errors alone without correcting them.”

“..... You are referring to how I should have done something against Dongahaha and the people under him?”

Pope-sama started trembling.

“Yes. It is easy to let others decide for you. However, I would like Pope-sama to decide what to do this time. If you can't come to a decision no matter what, you can discuss it with somebody but please hold responsibility as the Pope to make the decision in the end. As an atonement for lying.”

I heard a 'Shing' as Catherine-san drew her sword but she was stopped by Nadia and Lydia pointed her staff at her.

“Take that back.”

Catherine-san probably wanted me to take back my accusation but I had no intention of doing so.

I ignored Catherine-san and spoke to Pope-sama.

“Pope-sama already knew that the barrier around the Church Headquarters... no, around the Holy Capital no longer exist right?”

That instant, only for a moment but I certainly saw Pope-sama's body jerk.

As expected.

In the first place, it would be weird if Pope-sama didn't notice the disappearance of the barrier.

Pope-sama, as the child of the out-of-the-ordinary reincarnator Rainstar-dono and a High Elf of legends, would definitely have noticed it with her Magical Power Perception.

Even if the Holy Capital is attacked by monsters, Pope-sama definitely has the magical power to protect the Holy Capital and there is no doubt that she is skillful in magical power, spells and magical power manipulation.

I wondered why Pope-sama acted incompetent but she was probably too kind to the point that she was afraid to pass judgment.

Thinking about it, for a free-spirited person like Rainstar-dono who constructed Nelldal and Rockford, there shouldn't be any reason for him to lock away his daughter's freedom and force her to live in a bird cage.

"You acted like you did not notice the disappearance of the barrier so that you don't have to punish the people responsible for it. You didn't leave the Church because there's a possibility that you can't protect the Church Headquarters and Holy Capital if anything happens right?"

I still clearly remembered the mystical feeling I had of Pope-sama the first time I met her.

That's why, now that the demons have infiltrated the Church, I wanted to know how Pope-sama will deal with it and for her to decide on the Church's direction for the future.

"From now on, do you intend to live up to the noble ideals set when the Church was established or do you wish to slowly let the Church rot away, please tell me your intentions, Pope-sama."

I bowed deeply.

CHAPTER 220

POWERFUL DRUG

When we returned to the large training ground, waiting for us was orderly ranks of Knights and staffs working in the Healer's Guild.

And standing at the forefront were Shisho and party as well as the Valkyrie Paladin Corps, who had restrained Dongahaha and the demonized knights that were responsible for the tumult this time round and made them sit down.

It seemed like the knights that went berserk had regained their consciousness as well and were similarly sitting restrained.

The knights all showed astonished expressions for an instant when they saw that I had actually brought the Pope to the large training ground but they silently focused their attention on Pope-sama and me.

"Everyone, thank you for waiting. Now, Pope-sama will announce the verdict for the turmoil that occurred this time. Pope-sama, if you may."

Pope-sama stepped in front and continued walking with a dignified expression until she stopped in front of Dongahaha and began speaking to him.

"Dongahaha, has the Church become a detestable place to you?"

"...No, Pope-sama, since the past until now, this Church is like a home to me. And the people here are like my family."

Dongahaha was shocked for a moment when he was suddenly addressed to but he immediately recovered and slowly answered Pope-sama's question with a faint smile.

Pope-sama's abrupt action was due to her wish to speak with Dongahaha as the condition of her sentencing everyone in person.

"Before I pass the sentence in front of everyone, I wish to have some time to talk to

Dongahaha...”

“I am okay with Pope-sama doing it whichever way Pope-sama wishes to.”

It was only a small condition to negotiate for but seeing how Pope-sama’s voice was tapering off at the end of the sentence, I decided to let her make all the decisions.

... Nevertheless, Dongahaha’s expression was extremely calm when he claimed that the Church was his home and the Church personnel his family so it didn’t seem like he was lying.

I can’t imagine this was the same person who wanted to destroy the Church moments ago.

“...I feel the same way too. But if that’s the case, why did you spread rumors about Luciel and even used evil magic to let demons infiltrate the Church Headquarters?”

Pope-sama nodded with a smile in agreement with Dongahaha’s words but her face immediately clouded over and she questioned why he caused the series of events.

“I am terribly sorry towards Sage Luciel but once I found out the truth that he couldn’t use Holy Attribute Magic, I worried for the Church’s future. That’s why I did what I did.”

“It’s certain that there would be a significant impact on the internal and external affairs of the Church if Luciel could no longer utilize Holy Attribute Magic. However, if that situation really came true, we should still be able to overcome it with everyone’s cooperation.”

“It’s impossible! The interior of this Church has already become rotten. That’s why, before it rots even further, I decided to destroy everything.”

Dongahaha looked at me and apologized before he once again faced Pope-sama and clearly stated his intention of destroying the Church.

However, I could not hide my surprise that he, as the leader of the Executives Department, claimed that the Church was rotten.

I had thought that the Executives Department was the one responsible for working behind the scenes in the Church, causing the deterioration of the church but from the way he put it, it sounded as though he was saying that there were other forces at work as well.

I can't imagine there is a different factor that has been corroding the Church with the rise in the reputation and authority of the Church recently so I couldn't understand the real meaning behind what he said.

"What do you mean, I've heard that the Church's authority has been steadily returning."

Pope-sama held the same doubts as well as she further questioned Dongahaha.

"The reputation of the Church has not changed much. Sage Luciel's fame has risen but the guidelines Sage Luciel made has at most made the people not hate the Healers."

Those words shocked me.

I did work hard for my own sake but I did also have some intention of achieving it together with the people from the Church.

But the end result was only my popularity and fame increasing... I thought I had explained it clearly that others put in the effort as well and that it was definitely not something done on my own.

"If the evaluation of the Healers has gone up, the evaluation of the Church should have gone up as well?"

Pope-sama asked the same question I had in mind.

However, his reply was different from what I imagined.

"No. Even among the Knights, the people's evaluation has only improved for the Valkyrie Paladin Corps. The evaluation of the other Knights might have increased

somewhat but there is no great difference. And the leaders that have been steering the Church all this time are treated as incompetent.”

“Why?”

Pope-sama asked Dongahaha to elaborate.

“Because over these couple of decades, the Church has not guided the Healers. Unscrupulous Healers increased and they were left uncontrolled. And when the number of monsters increased, the Knight Corps were not dispatched unless necessary. This bred discontent.”

“That was...”

“Yes. Because a labyrinth manifested in the Church Headquarters. However, that is completely irrelevant to the residents who do not know it.”

“But when Luciel became an S-rank Healer, the Church should have gradually regained the people’s trust?”

“Yes, that is true. Without him, the Church and Healers would have been treated with malice. However, that was until he became too powerful a drug...”

After becoming an S-rank Healer, I don’t recall taking any actions that would inconvenience the Church so I listened to Dongahaha’s words.

“...Did Luciel do something?”

“I mentioned it when the guidelines were being drafted. That Sage Luciel might become too powerful a drug...”

Dongahaha closed his eyes as he shook his head side to side and gave a vague answer.

“But you were also involved in the creation of the guidelines and laws.”

“Yes. However, I did not wish that Sage Luciel would do anything more. But, he is probably the type of person to find satisfaction in being a hero. Immediately after leaving the Church, in addition to conquering a labyrinth and defeating a dragon, he attributed to the stability of Ienith, achieving two large feats.”

I was completely cornered but it's strange how it was seen that way when viewed from the side.

But I was putting in an effort to survive so what's wrong with that?

"It's true that Luciel raised achievements. However, it's an irrational argument to say that everyone other than Luciel is incompetent because of that."

"Yes. But the ones to decide that are the people who do not know the internal affairs of the Church. Prominent achievements will overshadow the surroundings."

That reminded me of the words my superior who was the top salesman said to me in my past life.

"What do you mean?"

"Among the people here, many hold dissatisfaction that only Sage Luciel has been getting recognized. In the first place, not diligently acquiring skill within the Church nor changing their behaviors, it would be strange that they would be appreciated... but not taking that into consideration, they just line up complaints and dissatisfaction as they impeded each other's progress, that is their daily life. This can be said to be the same for both Healers and Knights."

"That is the responsibility of the leaders..."

"That would be me for the Executives Department, Knight Captain Catherine for the Knight Corps and Granhart for the Exorcists."

Dongahaha acted for the sake of crushing the Church for Human Supremacy.

Catherine-san could no longer lead the Knight Corps and was captured by the Executives Department.

Granhart-san could not stop my successors he sent to the labyrinth and they were killed by the Evil God.

It was a situation where only Dongahaha was performing properly as a leader.

And if his claims of the people impeding each other's progress is true, then the Church has surely been deteriorating...

“Since when did you set this plan in motion?”

“Since Sage Luciel lost his magic three months ago. Well, after I encountered the demon race about half a year ago, I have been doing various preparations though...”

Pope-sama had a stunned expression with her mouth half-opened like she couldn't believe it.

“...If Luciel was in a state where he couldn't use magic, what would you have done?”

“I would have given out an official notice of his execution and if nobody came to help, I would execute him for the sake of the Church's foundation.”

Pope-sama changed the topic slightly but what came back were words of indifference.

Even though I wasn't prepared for it, I knew that there were such plans so I could bear with it.

Dongahaha spoke of the truth indifferently so I found it strange why there was no sign of him throwing his grudge at Pope-sama.

“...For things to turn out this way, is it my fault after all?”

“Kukuku. You've always loved to blame yourself. You would not survive the fight with the demon race that way.”

“The demon race!?”

“...Hmm, I spoke a little too much. Could you sentence me already? If a soft-hearted person like you could even do it. Gahahah.”

Dongahaha laughed loudly as he stared upwards at Pope-sama.

CHAPTER 221

APOLOGY

Having worked for the Church for many years and held the executive position, Dongahaha resolutely admitted to his crimes and it seemed like he wished to be executed.

From my standpoint, having spread malicious rumors about me, made his subordinate Knights undergo demonization, and personally summoned demons, I felt that it was reasonable to execute him.

But on the other hand, I could understand his sorrow.

As he viewed the Church as his home and the Church personnel his family, he probably did not want to see the prevalent jealousy, envy, and bias inside in the Church go on any longer.

At that exact moment, he heard the news that I could no longer use magic.

That's why he quickly took action.

Claiming that I could have so many achievements because I did something that would warrant divine punishment...

Doing so might only be temporary but it would allow his subordinates to work in the same direction as him and he might have wanted to take control of the Church.

Thinking it through, now I could understand why the Church Knights held that much hostility against me.

My superior, who had outstanding business results, once reached a ranking that was quicker to count from the bottom when his client's business collapsed and his results dropped.

When that happened, I heard malicious gossip regarding my superior.

"As expected, without that undertaking, that person isn't that amazing after all."

“If I could catch an undertaking like that, even I...”

Saying it that way, they justified their own results and reassured themselves.

However, after experiencing bitterness for three months, my superior once again had a comeback with the top sales and half a year later, the people who spoke ill of him behind his back were no longer in the company.

One day, when I was on the way to have a drink with that superior, I asked about his mental fortitude.

His reply was only an ordinary one.

“Congratulations for your comeback. Thanks to you my results have been overshadowed once again though.”

“Ou. I’ll overshadow everyone’s results and receive all the incentives for this term.”

“Well, I can also see my own promotion coming as well so I will work hard without deluding myself. Furthermore, even if I don’t do anything, your results might just drop again.”

“Kukuku. You bastard, you’re a great guy~. You don’t backbite me but just ordinarily spite me in person.”

“Eh? As expected, even though you stood out with your achieved results, are you still mindful of the rumors?”

“I’m still human after all. Well, it’s true that I underestimated that undertaking. I had to pitch introduction sales to the customer management, advance the business talks that were placed on hold and visit the company that I was in the care of at that time and three months had passed before I knew it. It was like that but I did hear those rumors constantly.”

“I don’t think there are any large differences with what you do but since you could achieve such outstanding results, I guess there’s probably some decisively different part that differentiates you from the rest.”

“It’s because I’m a sore loser. Once I’ve lost, I will analyze the reason in detail and make use of it the next time.”

“If you can produce results with that, then you are amazing after all. By the way, do

you consider the impact you have on the surroundings because of your outstanding results?”

“Impact and such, do you think about such things? If you only focus on such stuff, you’ll go bald you know? You should avoid such things. Furthermore, if you only keep focusing on the results of your peers, the company would dispose of you and it would only be a waste for you alone. Moreover, there are ups and downs in life so I decided to just work hard when it’s the time to work hard.”

“I see.”

Recalling that conversation I had in my previous life, I looked back at my own actions and sighed at how my position matched that of my superior in the past.

“To work hard when it’s the time to do so... huh. If I worked hard here, would the Church and Pope-sama improve?”

Regardless of whether she sentences them or not, unless I get all the information on demonization out of him and locate the one who has been pulling the strings behind the scene, I had a premonition... that I would one day get pulled into this mess even if I distance myself from the Church after this incident.

Pope-sama looked at Dongahaha with a sorrowful expression while Dongahaha was prepared to accept Pope-sama’s judgment.

However, Bulltooth and the others that have been quietly listening to Pope-sama and Dongahaha’s conversation began appealing for leniency as they did not wish to be sentenced to death.

“Pope-sama, we were told by Dongahaha-dono that there is a secret art passed down in the Church that could make us stronger and we merely accepted to have that art used on us. We were just following Dongahaha-dono’s orders. Please at the very least spare us from capital punishment.”

“That’s right. We were just following orders. The commands from above are absolute after all.”

“If we are given this one chance, we will become the new cornerstone for the Church.”

“I swear to become the shield that protects the Church and the spear that slays the enemies of the Church. Please have mercy.”

“Pope-sama.” “Pope.” “Pope-sama.”

Bowing their heads, they appealed towards the Pope.

“Gahaha, these are the best selection of Knights and those with power in the Church currently. In addition to being the elite, they have neither chivalric spirit nor pride. Now, give your verdict.”

Dongahaha mocked the knight squad and once again asked for her verdict.

Dongahaha’s manner of speech that made it seem like Pope-sama and his position was switched caused the surroundings to stir but Pope-sama slowly nodded and once again spoke to Dongahaha.

“Dongahaha. Do you have any words you wish to say to me or any grudge against me you wish to speak of?”

“No, I don’t.”

I assumed that he would have spoken about his own father that he revealed during the fight with us but Dongahaha only shook his head and replied.

“What I hope for is only Pope-sama’s resolution and the revival of the Church.”

“...I see. Come to think of it, your father was also an honest person with a strong sense of justice. If I didn’t request that of him...”

“...Are you referring to your request for him to retrieve an item before the labyrinth manifested?”

“Yes. If I didn’t do that, your father wouldn’t have passed away.”

“Regarding that lie, I know everything about it. The reason why the labyrinth manifested that day, the reason why my father died, and the reason why the plan to conquer the labyrinth was abandoned. So I won’t pass on while holding hatred against you.”

Dongahaha said that with a smile and quietly closed his eyes.

Pope-sama was surprised before her expression of sorrow intensified as she looked

like she was about to cry but she was desperately holding it back.

But those words just now? Apart from knowing that the barrier had disappeared, did Pope-sama pretend to not know about other matters too?

“Everyone, I believe you all heard Dongahaha’s words? Everyone most likely understands that he is still faithful to the Church. And I hope that everyone also places your hands on your heart and asks yourself the same question.”

Pope-sama resolved herself and began speaking.

“The achievements of Luciel who became a Sage is exceedingly large. It’s probably true that there are aspects where he is given preferential treatment. However, is there anyone present who can claim that they have put in similar or greater effort than Luciel had? Step forward for me to see if there are... I guess there are none.”

Nobody stepped forward and the ones who held complaints didn’t move.

“As the Pope, I wish to first apologize to everyone.”

“Please wait, Pope-sama should not apologize.”

“Catherine, I have made mistakes. It is natural to have to apologize after making mistakes. Isn’t that right, Luciel? In the past, that was also what my father and mother taught me.”

“Nevertheless, apologizing here would... [slump] ”

The moment I thought a shadow appeared behind Catherine-san, Catherine-san slumped to her knees like a doll whose strings were cut.

The black shadow quickly supported Catherine-san and held her in a princess carry.

“She’s completely gone overboard. This is her punishment. Luciel-kun, please continue.”

Garba-san said that and walked to the back.

“[Cough], Go ahead Pope-sama.”

“Umu... there is a reason why a labyrinth manifested in this Church Headquarters. That’s because I left the Church Headquarters. I also did not know that the ones who knew of the days I wasn’t present would start to expand the Church Headquarters.”

... I didn’t know that it was on the days where they knew she was away.

Perhaps that was some kind of an important day?... If Pope-sama departed from the Church on that day, isn’t it too heavy to impose a punishment on herself for it?

If the labyrinth manifested because of the people who gave the instructions for the expansion then it wouldn’t be Pope-sama’s fault...

Pope-sama closed her eyes as she recalled the past and began to talk.

“After finding out that the barrier stretched across the Holy Capital disappeared and that a labyrinth manifested, I fainted for a few days from the shock. And the Knight Captain at that time took command to conquer the labyrinth. However, none of the vanguards returned. From then, as everyone knows, the labyrinth was unconquered until Luciel conquered it. I sincerely apologize for the great number of lives lost due to my fault.”

At Pope-sama’s bow, the Knights all were sent into a panic as some knelt down, some saluted and some were left in a daze but none of them lashed out.

“As I said before, it’s undeniable that Dongahaha moved for the sake of the Church... however, I know that I will be betraying everyone’s trust if I forgive them after their evil acts.”

But tears were overflowing from Pope-sama’s eyes.

“The crime for causing chaos in the Church, dyeing your hands in evil arts to perform demonization and summon demons is extremely heavy. As such... as such... all memories will be erased, your job will be revoked and you will be expelled from the Church.”

I thought that it would be capital punishment but Pope-sama avoided that sentence.

“There are probably some who wish for their death sentence. However, the Church exists to save the people. In the future, I will not forgive any further killings in the Church.”

Pope-sama declared as she cried.

And after hearing the verdict, apart from Dongahaha, the ones involved all looked like their souls had left their bodies.

They would fall into a situation where it was unknown how it would turn out after their memories were wiped.

In that sense, it might actually be easier if they had been sentenced to death.

Among that crowd, Dongahaha slowly spoke.

“I respectfully accept that sentence.... Pope-sama, if you had the resolution to give the orders, you would have been able to grasp the labyrinth or the Executives Department a lot earlier. I hope that you would hold onto that resolution and return the Church to its former noble glory.”

“Dongahaha...”

I understood that Dongahaha acted for the Church until the end.

“Sage Luciel. I believe you despise me. However, as an apology for the rumors I spread, before the sentence is executed, I have something I must tell you.”

“What is it?”

“The mastermind behind this incident and the demon race incident is the Principality of Blange. However, if you don’t firstly rush to the Empire, darkness will engulf the Empire. Once that happens, this Holy Capital will also be hit by war. Although you have no obligation to this, I entrust the Holy Capital, the Church Headquarters, and Pope-sama to you... [cough]”

Dongahaha suddenly coughed out blood and collapsed.

I immediately activated Extra Heal and somehow maintained his life but he would probably face Pope-sama’s sentence without regaining consciousness.

CHAPTER 222

GRUMBLES

Seeing Dongahaha spit out blood and collapse, the scene turned noisy for a moment but Pope-sama addressed everyone.

“Calm down. As long as Sage Luciel is here, nobody will die. I’ll first erase his job. Regarding the removal of memories, it will be done after we have interrogated him for information on the demon race and of the other countries.”

After Pope-sama announced that, she repeatedly touched the foreheads of the demonized Knights that perpetrated the crimes this time and muttered something.

“With this, your jobs have disappeared. Repent for causing chaos in the Church with the little remaining time you have. And bear a grudge against me for causing you all to take such actions.”

Pope-sama once again bowed her head before she slowly raised her head and started talking about the future.

“I am responsible for the series of events that transpired this time. Originally, it would be natural for me to step down from the seat of Pope.”

The sudden announcement caused everyone to stiffen.

I was also slightly shaken by that announcement.

“However, I feel that it is irresponsible if I just leave the Church in its present state to somebody. That’s why I will set up an opportunity to interview everyone present here.”

She suddenly announced a drastic claim, saying that she will interview the about 700 personnel inside the Church.

If Catherine-san was here, she would probably make noise again...

Since it was already pretty tough when I brought Pope-sama out.

I shuddered to think how it would have gone if Rosa-san wasn’t around.

Nevertheless, this development where Pope-sama decides on matters might be a good direction.

Just now, I was shocked when the Pope spoke of stepping down and I intended to board the flying ship and leave the Holy Capital on the off chance that she vacates the Pope seat to me.

I listened to Pope-sama's announcement.

"I wish to hear everyone's thoughts during the interview. What you want to do, what you want to achieve in the Church, what you want to see, anything is fine. Of course, I cannot say that I will be able to fulfill everything. However, I wish to start by first hearing everyone's opinion and make the Church agreeable to everyone. Please lend me your wisdom and power."

I don't know for sure if that sincere appeal reached the hearts of everyone.

However, the Knights all knelt down and bowed with their hands to their chest.

The ones who weren't Knights took a praying posture with their hands clasped together.

"Luciel-sama, could I have a little of your time?"

I imagined that signaled the end of the verdict by Pope-sama when Kefin approached my side carrying a few parchments.

Now that I think about it, since Garba-san appeared, it naturally meant that Kefin had returned too.

"What are those in your hands?"

"Information on what you asked us to investigate. Well, the majority of them ended up being unnecessary..."

I asked them to find information that could prove the validity of the content spoken between Pope-sama and Dongahaha but he wasn't making himself clear.

“What do you mean?”

I didn't understand without him making it clear so I asked him again and got a reply that was beyond my expectations.

“It seems like that man actually intended to die from the beginning. This is his will.”

“Will!?”

I raised a slight voice of surprise which caused some reaction from the people around us but it didn't turn into a commotion.

While judging that it would be best to put a close to this incident since Pope-sama had finished her address, I looked over the will.

I felt that it was inevitable that Pope-sama, having just begun to face the future, would be severely damaged mentally after she reads it.

“Since you could tell that it's a will, it means that you read it?”

“Yes. In addition, at the same place, the documents pertaining to demonization and the risks to summoning were written in detail. There were also documents regarding malpractices.”

... If he placed that much importance in the Church, there should have been other ways of doing it.

Did Catherine-san catch onto something when she was in the Executives Department? Or is the information with Garba-san? My mind was a mess.

“...All right. Since the judgment has been passed, there are plenty of things we have to investigate so we can probably tell Pope-sama this later. Can I ask you to guide me there once this is over?”

“Yes, of course. Ah, also, there was a necklace with jewels emitting faint light that neither I nor Garba-sama could touch.”

After I arranged the information in my head, Kefin once again brought up new

information on a mysterious necklace.

... It sounds somewhat suspicious but I must investigate it.

If possible, I would have preferred if Dongahaha spoke about the important details before collapsing...

“...Okay. We’ll go there again before we depart from the Church.”

“Okay.”

Kefin passed me the information and left.

I felt that the will I received would connect everything but for the sake of first bringing the incident to a close, I spoke to everyone.

“In my opinion, this incident occurred because the Church has been surrounded by various speculations that bred confusion. On my end, after becoming the S-rank Healer, I have completely not interacted with a large majority of the people here. That’s why you all believed the rumors. I have thought before that I should maybe take a little time to do so.”

I felt that it was a good time to objectively reveal more about myself so I talked a little regarding myself.

“However, I am not as free as everyone thinks, I live a life that borders death.”

As I spoke, various memories resurfaced.

“I had toiled for two whole years within the labyrinth inside this Church and furthermore, I was forced to spend the last half of year inside the labyrinth without being able to exit. After moving to Ienith, I received various interference including assassination from the many races, but after I defeated the Red Dragon, and conquered the labyrinth, it somehow finally settled down. Next, I then encountered the demon race and ended up fighting with them multiple times. To be honest, I didn’t think that trying to live was so agonizing.”

Midway through everyone withdrew slightly but I ignored it and continued.

“I received a curse during my fight with the demon race and became unable to utilize Holy Attribute magic for a time when rumors filled with malice were scattered and I received hostility from everyone here. I apologize for not being able to approach you all.”

I grinned but everyone tried their best to not match my gaze and looked down.

“My dream is to have a person to love and a family, let the years go by like that and spend a peaceful life. That’s why I look forward to the people amongst you all that will replace me.”

“Luciel, we understand so you can stop now. Won’t that speech make people not want to aim for the top instead.”

I was taken aback when Pope-sama said that.

Looks like I had unknowingly accumulated quite some stress.

“Eh? Ah, sorry. It ended up becoming my outlet to complain halfway through. However, I believe everyone can do the things that I have done. I have faith that your passion can create a new Church (so I leave the follow up to you all).”

“Luciel, after this...”

“Later there would likely first be a meeting between the people responsible for the various sections but since the trial is over, please return to your personal room.”

“All right. I leave Dongahaha to you.”

“Just for this time, it can’t be helped.”

Since there wasn’t anyone to take the lead this time...

Like that, Pope-sama headed back to her room together with Rosa-san and Estia.

After seeing them off, I spoke to Lumina-san in order to send the demonized knights to the prison in the Church.

“Lumina-san, sorry but could I leave it to you to send these people to the jail?”

“Understood... Luciel-kun, could I have some of your time after this?”

“I’ll be heading to the Executives Department room after this but I should have time after that is done?”

“Then, after I place them in jail, I will wait in this training ground. Please come here after you are done with your tasks.”

“All right. Then, I’ll leave them with you.”

“Okay.”

After that, Lumina-san gave out orders to the Valkyrie Paladin Corps and they brought the demonized knights apart from Dongahaha to the underground jail.

Then, for the remaining Dongahaha, I first applied Extra Heal, Recover and Dispel before deciding to keep him in the Hermit’s Coffin for now. We finally reached the end and I addressed Shisho and Lionel.

“Sorry for dragging you into this, Shisho, Lionel. Now then, I don’t mind if you go play with the people from the Knight Corps. Everyone from the Knight Corps, please try having some combat training with my martial arts master and my retinue. Please experience with your body what kind of environment I fight in every day. Well then, I leave it to you all.”

“Ou. Leave it to me.”

“I don’t mind if you take your time to investigate.”

“All right. Cathy and others, please follow up after Shisho and Lionel.”

“Understood nya.”

Thus, I pushed the two combat maniacs onto the Knight Corps and moved to the Executives Department room together with Kefin.

CHAPTER 223

DAILY TRAINING

While walking inside the Church towards the Executives Department room, I conversed with Kefin who was walking ahead.

“I’m surprised you don’t get lost in a complicated place like this. Is it the first time you’ve been here?”

“Haha. I can mostly remember the paths I take after walking there once. Within Luciel-sama’s retinue, my role is to be scout so I will not lose in this field to anybody.”

“So reliable. Do you have a trick to remembering it?”

I still remember the paths in the Labyrinth of Tribulations but I’ve mostly forgotten the ones for the other labyrinths.

“Tips huh. Let me see... a simple method would be to remember the landmarks. In addition, if you look back once you make a turn, you would be able to see a different view so I guess you mostly won’t get lost whichever direction you take. Once you are familiar with it, you would be able to grasp an overhead view of yourself like seeing a map from above.”

“I guess there are no shortcuts to mastering skills. Well, if that wasn’t the case, it wouldn’t be rewarding.”

“That’s right. When you become able to do something, you will soon meet another wall that will block your progress so it boils down to daily training.”

“Exactly. Daily training... I feel like I’ve been doing nothing but training since I’ve come of age.”

“I believe that’s precisely why Luciel-sama could become a Sage though.”

“Hah, that makes me feel slightly better. Thanks Kefin.”

“Nah, don’t mention it.”

While conversing with Kefin, I once again recalled my previous life.

Once, I had the opportunity to listen to a monk's preach.

He said that humans borrow our soul from Buddha and until the day comes for us to return it, we must polish it until it is shiny.

It would be polished just by living but the soul would shine brighter the more it is polished through hard work, making your present life happier, making Buddha feel happy for lending it to you and he might even give you an extra something when you wish to lend a soul again.

I recalled something like that.

Precisely because I've been through reincarnation, I wonder if I am polishing my soul satisfactorily? Even if I do polish it, I feel that the luck I get from Great Luck-sensei quickly consumes the amount of work I've put in.

In line with that thought, even though I wish for a peaceful life, the fact that I am still caught up in all kinds of troublesome incidents is perhaps because the karma I built up in my previous life was quite deep?

The more I think about it, the more I feel that my peaceful life was getting further away if I don't work hard within my limits to train myself so I decided to once again devote myself to doing so and chased after Kefin's back.

After walking for around five minutes, I saw the side entrance to the annex building.

"The whole of this annex building is used by the Executives Department."

Listening to Kefin, I checked out the annex building and although it was only three storeys high unlike the five storied main building, it was large enough that it could probably fit the entire Valkyrie Paladin Corp's training ground inside it.

"They occupy this entire building?"

"Yes, that is apparently the case. Dongahaha's personal room is this way."

Walking for a little bit more, we arrived at Dongahaha's room on the third floor.

"It feels like there's quite a lot of space between rooms?"

"You will know when you enter. This way."

When Kefin opened the door, I could tell that the room class was different compared to mine and Lumina-san's room.

"It's three, no, four times the size of my room. If a single person uses this room, I couldn't tell before but I'm certain an ample amount of funds flow into here."

"That's right. The archive is next to this room and that item is placed in a desk at the end of the archive."

This was probably too much space for a single person to utilize.

While I had that thought, when we entered the archive, it had a compact and slightly gloomy atmosphere which gave a somewhat subdued impression.

When I pulled open the drawer to see the necklace, I found a baseball-sized sphere that was emitting faint light.

However, rather than it being a necklace, it looked more like the chains was there to contain the sphere.

"Were there no documents that had information on this?"

"Yes. I also flipped through his diary but it was not recorded."

Well, Garba-san and Kefin who excel in intelligence likely won't neglect checking something like that.

"Does it register in Magical Power Perception?"

"Unfortunately, Magical Power Perception is a little tough for Garba-sama and I but I can at least tell that this necklace emits magical power."

"I see. Yeah, I can't help but feel that the chain is meant to seal the sphere. There are two different magical powers and the chain is holding the sphere's power in."

"If that's the case then we can't carelessly break it. Nevertheless, why can't we touch it?"

"Perhaps there's some kind of condition required. But I'm afraid that I would be entangled in something else if I unlock the seal now."

"Then could we just keep it in a magic bag? Well, that's if it was possible to touch it though..."

"That's right... Well, no problem. I'll leave it here for now. Kefin, please check once

more if there's anything around.”

“Understood.”

Kefin nodded and left the archive.

“Now then, maybe I'll read the will first. It won't be necessary if it turns out to not be a will after all.”

I began to read Dongahaha's will.

[I have some hesitation knowing that I have no idea who would read this but if possible, I hope that a person who cares for Pope-sama and the Church would read this.]

The will was addressed to somebody who cares for Pope-sama and the Church.

Recorded in it were detailed information on what he saw within the Church from the time he was born until the labyrinth formed.

Continuing on, the sightings of the demon race in the Empire and Rubruk about two years back were also written inside.

Then, half a year ago, when the corpses of the demon race I defeated were brought here, they proved that they were made up of humans and beastmen that had undergone demonization.

He coughed up blood when he began investigating and knowing that he didn't have long to live, he tasked his intelligence team with a letter to investigate the demonization within the Empire but the reply came from Blange instead.

The reply offered longevity by utilizing evil arts and the compensation was to produce demonized individuals.

Then, when I lost my Holy Magic Attribute magic, the Church's existence was in danger.

However, he didn't have the time left to rebuild the Church.

After worrying about it, he chose to use the evil arts on his own body.

Then, for that sake, beginning from the Human Supremacist in the Executives Department, Bulltooth, he asked the people who work unethically and those who sell confidential information if they would like to acquire strength that can easily defeat the Knight Corps.

After he asked that, they didn't hesitate at all as they yearned for power and took the law of the Executives Department to be the law of the Church.

Thus, they spent three months to slowly undergo demonization.

When he showed the demonized knights to the person responsible at Blange, perhaps he obtained his trust as he was taught the demon summoning spell for when he gets caught by the Church and he was told to escape to the Empire when that time comes.

Originally, he wanted to kill those demonized knights with his own hands but then he obtained information on me and it plagued him that I had become a Sage.

[Did I make light of him? Or is this Divine Punishment for deceiving the Church? If that's the case, maybe it won't be a bad choice to bet my life and everything on him.]

That was written.

In addition, as the summoning scroll would combust once it is recited with a magic stone, he transcribed what he remembered.

However, it seemed like he wanted to write his final parting words there.

[If I had passed away and somebody is reading this, please pass this will to Pope-sama or Sage-dono. The Church is a noble and sacred place and I hope that it would become a place that saves people.]

In the postscript, he wrote down the stages of demonization as well as the transcript of the demon summoning spell.

"...Let's read the description on demonization next."

Sin is sin. Retribution is retribution. But I was once again reminded that there are

various aspects to a person.

It seemed like he wrote an observation diary on the progress of demonization.

And then, at the last part, something caught my eye.

[The Principality of Blange performed hero summoning and instead of a hero, they apparently acquired the power to control the world. The demon race research at the Empire was the perfect place to use that power and conceal the demons. That was what the person who came from Blange said. If that was the truth, the Church's barrier must be fixed as soon as possible.]

“Like concealing a tree in a forest, it's best to conceal demons among the failed trials of demonized people? If the Empire falls, Saint Schull's Allied Nations would be sandwiched by the Principality and the Empire that would belong to it... So that's why he told me to go to the Empire. But...”

Even if I plunged into the Empire, it doesn't change the fact that we are strongly lacking in combat power.

Intel says that they even have a flying dragon brigade.

“I'll first have to consult everyone about this... If I don't take action here, despair in the name of regret would definitely await me...”

I left the archive while seriously thinking that I would have loved to live a calm life until I was at least my age in my previous life.

CHAPTER 224

PROMISE

I asked Kefin when we left the archive.

“Did you find anything new?”

“Nothing in particular. In addition, although they were singing praises for the Human Supremacist movement, there aren’t that many documents regarding it.”

It was a little strange how they were Human Supremacist given that they knew that the Church’s leader is a High half-elf.

It might have been a camouflage to take control of the Executives Department.

“Those documents might be in the other rooms but shall we return to the large training ground for now?”

“...If Luciel-sama permits, could I investigate the other rooms a little more?”

“Something bothering you?”

“Yes. We did not find the drug that caused the demonization in this room. So, to support this will, I would like to investigate the other rooms too.”

“Understood. We’ve captured most of the members of the Executive Department so do as you please. But don’t overexert yourself.”

“Okay.”

Then, Kefin guided me to the entrance of the Annex and we parted ways at the path to the large training ground.

When I returned to the large training ground, I saw the bloodied figures of Shisho and Lionel with dozens of fallen Knights but all the other Knights were practically uninjured.

But their facial expressions were not calm in the slightest.

“Cathy, what’s the situation here?”

“Ah, Luciel-sama. Lionel-sama and Whirlwind said that they would not be able to hold back in this condition and might kill someone so they fought without using their hands nya.”

“...Did they want to fight that badly?”

These two were seriously battle maniacs.

Well, they should be good training partners for the Knight Corps.

Although it might leave a large mental scar.

“Making training challenging is exactly right nya. And it is the dignity of a strong warrior to maintain a cool and smart attitude when it comes to a real fight nya.”

Cathy watched Shisho and Lionel with her hands folded.

“That sounds cool. But I have a feeling that in those two people’s case, they just want to fight with all their strength...”

“...Only now you see it nya. Since Luciel-sama is back now, the ban on their weapons is lifted nya.”

Cathy said with a tone that sounded like she had given up as she walked towards the two of them.

Then, after some sort of conversation passed between them, Shisho and Lionel turned their sights to me and after giving a ferocious smile, they slowly took out their weapons and declared to the Knight Corps.

“Now then, play time is over.”

“The weapons ban will be lifted now. With Luciel-sama around, he can treat a missing limb or two in a jiffy so rest easy.”

“Anyone who loses focus would be sent to the other world in a split second so if you want the training to end, pray that Luciel runs out of magical power.”

“Now then, come at us!”

“If you guys don’t, we will be the ones attacking instead.”

Immediately after Shisho and Lionel challenged them to come at them, they charged towards the Knight Corps.

“...They are combat maniacs no matter how you look at it. Moreover, they involve others without hesitation, they really are way too evil in nature.”

There shouldn’t have been anyone who heard my mutterings to myself.

“Despite all that, those two are Luciel-kun’s martial arts masters.”

But, Lumina-san appeared behind me and said to me.

I was focusing on Shisho and Lionel but I still got a shock as I didn’t sense her.

“Since when were you there? I didn’t notice you at all.”

“Fufu, it’s because Luciel-kun’s focus was there. I wanted to give you a little surprise.”

Lumina-san giggled at the success of her prank.

I explained to Lumina-san slightly what Shisho and Lionel meant to me.

“Shisho and Lionel might very well be my martial arts masters, my seniors in life, and a father or brother-like existence that I look up to for how to live my life as a man.”

“You trust them very much.”

“Yes. If I didn’t meet Shisho, I would most likely still be a Healer at Meratoni now and if I didn’t meet Lionel and the others, I might even have died at Ienith. Thinking of it that way, perhaps I have good interpersonal luck. That includes how I was helped by Lumina-san at Meratoni.”

“It’s slightly embarrassing when you say it like that.”

“But if I didn’t meet Lumina-san at the start, my entry into the Healer’s Guild would not have gone so smoothly and if I didn’t hear about the reputation of Healers, I

wouldn't have been able to take such drastic actions."

Thinking back, if I had shunned adventurers, I probably wouldn't have gone to the Adventurer's Guild.

I feel that choice was my turning point.

"Everything you achieve is due to Luciel-kun's effort. Now you've even reached the Sage job. It can't be achieved through normal effort."

"It's been nothing but life and death situations so I've just not been given the choice to give up."

I was happy to be praised but it was true that if I gave up at any point in my journey, I would not be standing here now.

"...By the way, it looks like the number of dwarves and elves has increased?"

"Ah, my followers are all people who were once slaves. I treated them when they were injured but they felt indebted and chose to become my followers."

"Do problems not arise from there being so many races involved?"

Lumina-san surprisingly asked on the topic of race.

I paused for a moment after hearing Lumina-san's question but I had not heard of and had not felt any problems.

"Yeah. On the contrary, I am always thankful for them. For example, the cat beastwoman Cathy and the half-wolf beastman Kefin take on the dirty work without me noticing while I could develop the flying ship thanks to the help from the dwarves Dolan and Paula and the elf Rician, it is unrelated to race."

Lumina-san listened to my words as she silently nodded and chimed in.

"...I see, the reason why the people around Luciel-kun are all lively might be because Luciel-kun holds respect towards them."

“Is that so? I’d be happy if that is true. Since I’m aware that I didn’t properly build up interpersonal relationships with the people in the Church... I wanted to foster a relationship where there was mutual respect among the companions who I am always together with.”

After becoming an S-rank Healer, I felt lonely when I somewhat noticed a distance between us when the girls from the Valkyrie Paladin Corps other than Lumina-san interacted with me.

“Luciel-kun sure is peculiar.”

Lumina-san’s smile didn’t give off the feeling like the happy smile she had when she succeeded in her prank just now, it felt somewhat like a smile for something nostalgic.

“...People often say that about me but am I really that peculiar?”

“Luciel-kun holds a high position in the Church. But when you are on the streets, you interact with anybody in a friendly and relaxed manner. I feel that it is extremely rare to be capable of doing so and to actually do it as well.”

“That’s because I don’t feel that I am anybody great. I originally wanted to stay in the same position I had in the Church...”

I implied that I didn’t want to take control of the Church’s internal dealings and Knight Corps any more than this and I didn’t want to be involved with troublesome matters.

“...For what reason does Luciel-kun throw yourself into battle? Depending on the way you do it, it might be possible to avoid combat.”

I had never once thrown myself into combat merely because I wanted to like Shisho and Lionel.

“That way of saying it sounds like you think I am a combat maniac too.”

“Ah, no, I didn’t have that intention...”

I answered with a laugh and Lumina-san also gave a troubled laugh.

Lumina-san was probably worried for me for living in a life and death situation.

I felt like I somehow always end up making Lumina-san worry.

Nevertheless, why I fight huh...

Without a doubt, it started from the time I met the Holy Dragon.

After releasing the Reincarnation Dragon by clearing the labyrinth, I found out the truth, the future where the hero loses.

That's why if I didn't take action within my means, many innocent people would definitely lose their lives.

I didn't want to accept such a future so I promised to offer my strength within my means to counter the demon race. There's no way I can go against my word.

Furthermore, even though it is really unreasonable, I really hate to admit that it is the most accurate choice to make to survive.

After all, this is a world that has the concept of levels...

"Actually, lately I came to the realisation that I somehow have the constitution of getting caught up in issues and moreover if I leave them unresolved, it would result in the worst case scenario."

Evil God and demon race, if I don't aim to quickly settle each and every problem that comes out, I would definitely ultimately be caught up in them.

Well, I am already knee deep in it so if I don't take action here, it would definitely lead to the worst case scenario.

"...Luciel-kun, do you no longer have the intention of returning to the Church?"

"...Why do you ask?"

"I somehow felt like that was the case."

She glanced at me and I felt like she had guessed it correctly.

“I see... I will be honest with Lumina-san. I do not intend to intervene with the Church any further. Without being bound by the Church, I will continue to defend the Church by healing people like I have done all this time.”

“I see... if possible, erm... I would be delighted if you would come visit occasionally.”

All time seemed to stop when I saw Lumina-san’s slightly embarrassed expression.

I felt that I should at least say something so I gave a reply for now.

“Erm, yes.” “Luciel, please restore this person as soon as possible.” “Okay. Lumina-san, once everything is settled, I’ll put aside some time to talk to you.”

Shisho’s call came at an exquisite timing.

While praising him for a good job, I decided to procrastinate with my reply.

Love and hate are easy simple words but without understanding my own feelings, giving a reply at a time like this would be way too disrespectful.

It might be unfair of me but at the moment I wanted more time.

“Fufu, alright. Go quickly.”

Lumina-san didn’t show any signs of unhappiness as she instead smiled and urged me towards Shisho.

“Okay, until we meet again.”

“Yes, till we meet again.”

Thus, I headed towards the Knights that had collapsed at Shisho and Lionel’s feet and began treating them.

CHAPTER 225

APPOINTMENT

A mountain of Knights from the Knight Corps had piled up in front of Shisho and Lionel.

As if undeterred by the difference in levels, the two of them struck them down like they were practice partners for returning attacks... or the so-called counter technique.

As the Knight Corps of the Church holds the title of Knights, they possess a certain degree of strength.

And the combat style of those Knights was not individual combat but group combat.

Shisho and Lionel felt that it was a valuable experience that they could not obtain by fighting with Adventurers so they were serious in their fight with the Knight Corps.

To the Knight Corps, seeing how Shisho and Lionel stop for me to heal them after they incur a certain degree of wounds before they show off a ferocious smile and charge at the Knight Corps once again after their wounds are healed, it was as if the two of them were spirit soldiers.

Gradually the Knights began to get serious and they earnestly began to attack with the intention of defeating the two of them to end this training.

But the Knights had no way of knowing that those actions merely further fanned their fighting spirit.

From then, it was as if a sword battle scene from the movies as the two combat maniacs avoided and parried the Knights' attacks.

Then, with their backs against each other, Shisho and Lionel gradually spun on the spot as they avoided the fierce attacks of the Knights and adopted the tactic of

occasionally slicing flesh and breaking bones as the number of Knights decreased.

Fear towards their overwhelming strength was being born within the Knight Corps.

And the two of them took advantage of that.

The two who were focusing on parrying began going on the offense... by guiding their opponent's attacks to one that was easy for them to deal with, they separated the Knights from their groups.

Because the Knights were structured as a group, that action also increased the danger of hitting their own allies so the Knights as a group crumbled on the spot.

The body and spirit of the Knights were shattered one by one and sensing that, Shisho and Lionel began knocking them out.

"Are they even capable of protecting the Church from the demon race if they are so weak? Luciel is far better."

"Yeah. With them in this state of affair, just what do they plan to protect?"

Shisho and Lionel spoke ill of the Knights but none of the Knights stood their ground on their two feet.

It seemed like the Knights' attitude threw a wet blanket over their excitement.

"We will be your opponents from here."

"We can tell that Onii-chans' are strong but any more would damage the Knights' reputation."

It was Elizabeth-san and Saran-san from the Valkyrie Paladin Corps.

And they had apparently finished their task of locking the demonized Knights in jail as the others also came holding their weapons looking like they intend to join the fight.

“Hou. That’s some spirit there.”

“Umu, these girls are without a doubt the backbone of the Knight Corps.”

Ever since the establishment of the Valkyrie Paladin Corps, they have continuously been receiving orders to go on expeditions as their duty.

At that time, it was likely done to crush the Knight squad made entirely of women but that instead became food for their growth that allowed them to raise their levels and technique as well as build a trusting relationship amongst themselves.

The Squad Captain Lumina-san was probably the strongest among them.

And I believe that the Valkyrie Paladin Corps that she leads is the strongest among the Knight Squads.

However, the fight didn’t start.

“Luciel, I’m hungry.”

“Luciel-sama, it’s about time you brought me to the magical tool store you mentioned before.”

“Luciel-sama, I already tire of looking at the fights so I wish to return to the flying ship to design the magic cannons.”

The Luciel Corporation Production Department was already bored.

It’s true that we arrived at the Holy Capital when the sun was directly above us and now it has steadily sunk down the western sky and was already setting.

Shisho and Lionel probably have already fought for close to three hours.

Putting aside the combat mania of the two, I could see that the body and spirit of the Knight Corps other than the Valkyrie Paladin Corps were already in a tattered condition.

It might be alright for Shisho and Lionel as they are combat maniacs but it might become troublesome later if I ignored the wishes of Rician, Dolan and Paula so I put

an end to the mock battle today.

“Shisho, Lionel, let’s end it here for today.”

“Luciel, a chance like this is extremely rare you know.”

Ah, as expected, looks like I couldn’t convince Shisho.

Without the lure called combat, I would not be able to stop him...

Then maybe I’ll just have to give a suggestion that would alert the crisis awareness of the Church’s Knight Corps.

“The guys that you two beaten black-and-blue have already lost their fighting spirit. And if you fight with the Valkyrie Paladin Corps now, the sun would completely set. Since everyone would not be able to give their best, let’s end for today.”

“Luciel... fu~ alright. Well, you still have things you wish to do right?”

Shisho surprisingly calmed down immediately and compromised. Well, it should be expected.

A hot-blooded person would not be able to serve as a Guildmaster.

But I also properly followed up.

“Since we have the flying ship now, from today onward, Shisho can come visit the Church for training whenever you wish and if the timing allows for it, we might even be able to enter the labyrinth together as well.”

“Ou. Then next time we drop by, I’ll bring Object X to the Church and let the Knights with broken spirits drink it to rouse them. Since drinking that has tremendous effects.”

Shisho said it so that the Knights could hear it and at that instant, blood draining from the faces of the ones who knew of Object X.

They would probably work slightly harder to become stronger from now on.

Thus, the mock battle between the Knight Corps and Shisho and Lionel ended.

By right, I should be visiting Pope-sama’s room, handing her Dongahaha’s will and reporting but this time, I prioritized my personal tasks.

I had decided to go and greet Ryina, visit the Adventurer’s Guild to cancel the request

I put in as well as enjoy a meal with Granz-san while I'm there.

Leaving aside Garba-san and Catherine-san who have not returned even now, it was just time for me to go when Kefin came to find me.

"Luciel-sama, I'm sorry for being late."

"Perfect timing. So did you discover anything?"

"Yes. It might be possible for Luciel Corporation to make a huge profit from the Church with it."

"That piques my interest but at the moment I plan to walk the streets of the Holy Capital and head for the magic tool shop and Adventurer's Guild."

"Then would we be staying in the Holy Capital?"

"That depends on the situation. I'll be having my meal at the Adventurer's Guild so tell me the information you found out then."

"Okay."

Kefin replied and walked to Cathy.

"Dear Knights, thank you for having the bout with Shisho and Lionel. Well, please have a simulated fight with the two of them again sometime soon. I believe that you all will definitely be able to win against Paula's 10-meter class Golem someday."

At that moment, it was as if the souls had left the Knights' bodies like they had lost all feelings, showing an expressionless face like they were all wearing Noh masks.

And Paula tilted her head after suddenly hearing her name mentioned.

After leaving the Church Headquarters, I asked Shisho and the others to head to the Adventurer's Guild first as I went to visit Ryina's shop with Lionel, Dolan, Paula and Rician as my escorts.

[Welcome to the Magic Tool Shop Commedia.]

“This is wonderful.”

“I see it’s a mechanism set to speak automatically when people come in.”

After entering the shop, Paula and Rician’s excitement rose as they immediately moved to the speaking golem and began touching it all over. I was comforted to see they act like children but I also wished that they had a little more restraint as well.

“Welcome. To the Magic Tool Shop Commedia, welco... ah, are you perhaps the person from before?”

The person who came to greet us was the shop assistant from the previous time.

“Good evening. Is Ryina in?”

“Yes. Please wait for a moment.”

She disappeared into the backroom for a short while before Ryina, who I feel is a reincarnated individual as well, came out immediately.

“Welcome, Luciel-sama. A lot of rumors had been circulating so I’ve been worried about you.”

“Good evening Ryina-san. The rumors are just rumors. Today, I’m here with the top three of Luciel Corporation’s Production Department. Well, there’s only the three of them officially.”

“Ah, nice to meet you, I am the owner of Magic Tool Shop Commedia.”

“Dolan, head of Luciel Corporation’s Production Department. I mainly work on blacksmithing.”

“Paula from the Production Department, expert on magic tool production. I am currently working on a fully automatic cooker.”

“Similarly, ace of the Production Department, Rician. I am working on a monster detection device.”

Putting aside Dolan, the two of them sure were exaggerating their introductions.

“Uwa~ the two of you have amazing ideas too. Even I am still in the production stage for a magic tool capable of Appraisal.”

Ryina smiled but... it felt as if there were sparks flying from their looks at each other.

“So, I think I mentioned it before but would you consider coming to Luciel Corporation’s Production Department to demonstrate your capabilities?”

I had previously obtained her approval already so I did it more as a formal invitation. However, even here my expectations were betrayed.

“...I’m sorry. I won’t enter Luciel Corporation.”

She bowed her head gently.

I did not expect to be rejected so I was stunned for a moment but I asked to at least know the reason.

“..... May I ask why?”

“Actually I had a dream. To create a flying ship that can fly in the sky. Did Luciel-sama see the flying ship that landed at the Church Headquarters today around noon? I have decided to go to the Church Headquarters and learn from the unknown master who created that.”

Her resolve was shown in her eyes.

“...Dolan, what do you think?”

“Umu. It’s good that she has the drive.”

Dolan had been appraising her from the very beginning but it looked like he was positive to Ryina becoming a member.

“Paula, Rician, does it look like you will be able to get along?”

“Engineer’s speak with their techniques, magic tool producers speak with their magic tools.”

“It depends on how much actual imagination and ability to actualize it she possesses.”

The words the two of them said were different but it somewhat felt like they were

happy.

An insightful genius and a hardworking genius, together with a person who possess memories of the alternate world, I look forward to what would come of it.

“Erm, like I said, I don’t intend to enter Luciel Corporation though...”

Ryina put a stop to us moving the topic forward as we please.

“This is Dolan, the flying ship creator, Paula, the person in charge of space expansion of the interior, and the owner is me. If you feel like coming to our company, you will be able to ride the flying ship soon “I’ll join!” Yup. There’s a lot to settle regarding the employment of your shop assistant as well so what about we all have dinner together?”

It was an instantaneous answer.

But this pattern would be a pattern where Dolan gets called ‘Shisho’ (*TL: Teacher/mentor*).

While giving a wry smile, I looked to see Dolan with his hand on his forehead.

“Yes. I’ll get ready immediately. Nanya, you’ll be coming along too.”

When Ryina said that to the shop assistant at the counter, she had a look of surprise as she was worried for the shop.

“Er, what about the shop?”

“We’ll be closed for today. It’s something important so I want you to come along. I’ve found my Shisho.”

“Okay. Understood.”

As expected, she called him Shisho.

But her excitement level was totally different from how she was moments ago.

“Please wait for me for a little while.”

“Ah, yeah.”

The quiet Ryina suddenly transformed into a powerful manager for an instant.

That’s probably her forte and even though she was a queer one as a business partner, that strangeness showed me how I could not understand girls after all as I quietly waited for them to get ready.

CHAPTER 226

ALIAS/NICKNAME

Joined by the owner of the Ryina Magic Tool Shop, Ryina, and her shop assistant Nanya, we arrived at the Adventurer's Guild.

"Luciel-sama, this is the Adventurer's Guild."

Ryina was excited to see the flying ship but her expression stiffened slightly when she saw that our destination was the Adventurer's Guild.

"Because this is our destination. It's probably not as Ryina imagines it."

What came to her mind after hearing 'Adventurers' would probably be the image of rough individuals carrying weapons as they quarreled and drank liquor. Likewise as a reincarnated individual, being a man I was afraid as well so it's natural that she would be afraid too.

Upon entering the Adventurer's Guild, the Adventurers directed their gazes at us and then called out to me.

"Deviant Saint-sama, have you already caught the mastermind who spread the rumors about you?"

"Since you've already given out the request, at least let us get the reward."

"Leaving that aside, we'll have to think of a new nickname... Geh, why is Tempest here?"

"Evacuate! Tempest is here to destroy the guild again!"

"Geh, even after Master banished her from entering."

"Deviant Saint's strange tastes are way too extreme."

"No, it's definitely because Deviant Saint-sama wishes to save that troubled lamb who would become a Destruction God."

"Ah~ I see. Certainly, if it's Deviant Saint, it would be possible."

“We expect good things from you, Deviant Saint-sama.”

Since a while ago, the Adventurers had been speaking frankly while somehow directing respectful and expectant gazes towards me as they inched a certain distance away from us.

“...Ryina-san, what in world did you do?”

“Heh~ To test out my magic tool, I borrowed the underground training ground but somehow the magic tool malfunctioned and went berserk, blowing away the barrier around the training ground and even destroyed the training ground wall. Hahah.”

Ryina-san averted her eyes as she said with a twitch in her facial expression.

I could no longer see a shadow of previous her excitement to board the flying ship.

At that moment, Nanya-san gave the final blow.

“It’s not something to laugh about. It was a grave deal that time, most of the sales from the shop had to be spent on repairs and maintenance expenses so we nearly got chased out into the streets.”

... Well, researchers and engineers also thread a paper-thin line.

“It’s common for magic tools to malfunction. Failure is a stepping stone to success.”

“If you fear the conclusion, you would not be able to move forward.”

“Paula-san, Rician-san.”

Ryina was overcome with emotion and was brought to tears but she was unaware.

That she would be put down from there...

“But normally even if it malfunctions, there should be a mechanism to safely suppress the power and output.”

“To reduce the budget, I usually don’t do that.”

I understood Paula’s point but for Rician, didn’t she borrow money to develop magic

tools and ultimately get sold to a slave merchant? Or was it a conflict within the same race?

“No, I do put that mechanism in now. It’s just that at that time, I had a request to develop a means to defeat flying monsters and I barely made the due date.”

Ryina’s competitiveness was triggered.

Pulling her tension up after it was deflated, these girls might become good compatriots.

I looked at Dolan and Dolan looked at me and shrugged his shoulders.

It looked like we were thinking the same and I quickly led the way to the dining hall.

Upon reaching the dining hall, Shisho called out to us.

“Ou, you guys are early. I ordered the dishes in advance. And I’ve secured those seats over there.”

Shisho was surrounded by Adventurers.

“You’re quite popular.”

“Ou, I’ve been talking about going to the underground training ground after this.”

Shisho said with a smile but if he intends to do the same as he does at Meratoni’s Adventurer’s Guild...

I wouldn’t blame the Adventurers if they wish to escape from Shisho after that.

“...You plan to fight even more?”

“Nah, I just want to see some moves.”

And it looked like his switch had been turned on before I knew it.

But I guess it was their long-cherished desire to have a bout with the admired Shisho.

“Alright. I’ll give you a call when we’re about to leave.”

“Ou. I leave the healing to you if the need arises.”

As expected, he’s full of fighting spirit.

I didn’t see a need to needlessly douse Shisho’s excitement.

“...Okay.”

“Very good, let’s go.”

“”””Yes!””””

To the Adventurers, the man called Whirlwind is someone they actually wish to seek guidance from and it might be a good opportunity for them to be encouraged.

“Have a good bout.”

“Ou. Call me if something comes up.”

“Sure.”

Shisho and the Adventurers left for the underground training ground.

After sending them off, I directed everyone to their seats.

“Now then, Lionel and others, please take your seats first.”

“...Alright.”

With a slightly regretful reply, Lionel went towards the seats where Cathy and the others were at.

“Ah, Ryina, come along with me.”

“Ye, yes.”

And then, together with Ryina who has been forbidden from entering the Adventurer’s Guild, I walked over to where Granz-san was.

“Good afternoon, Granz-san.”

“Ou, I’ve heard. You’ve already found the mastermind. Well, leaving that aside, nobody would believe what happened here the night of the day before yesterday after you left.”

Granz-san shrugged his shoulders before his gaze fell onto the person behind me and this time he crossed his arms.

That gaze was directed at Ryina behind me but he didn’t seem particularly angry.

“Well, usually that would be the case and even I also didn’t expect it to turn out this way. For now, as the request contents have been completed, please help me remove the request. Of course, please distribute the reward to those who have been working on the request for these 2 days.”

“Are you sure? That would save a lot of my work but...”

This world runs on give and take.

Since they worked for my sake, it’s normal to pay them and deep down, my actual reason was that I didn’t want to be the object of anyone else’s hatred.

On the contrary, it would be cheap if I could build trust with just that.

“Yes. I submitted the request with the expectation to do so. On another note, has there been any new information these past 2 days?”

“No, there hasn’t been any information on this matter but... why is Tempest here?”

He looked like he was about to talk more on the matter for a moment before he commented on Ryina-san who he has been curious about since just now.

“Hah. I’ve already been told about her nickname Tempest that came from when she destroyed the underground training ground but this time, I have decided to invite her as a development staff for Luciel Corporation so if possible, I hope that you would be able to rescind her banishment. I won’t ask her to do her experiments here after all.”

“...You’re making quite a brave decision.”

“As long as she has the ability and her personality isn’t broken, it shouldn’t be that much of a problem.”

“Deviant Saint... you’re whimsical after all.”

“Hahah. Having one more unmanageable person when there is already 2 doesn’t change the situation much and since I have Dolan as the pillar of the Development Department, it will work out somehow.”

“I would hate to be in that position.”

Ryina spoke when Granz-san stared at her.

“I sincerely apologize for what happened that time. Next time, I will not use the guild for my magic tool verification tests so please forgive me.”

“It’s not a problem if Deviant Saint-sama takes responsibility.”

“Well then, please.”

“Sure. In the future, I can claim everything from Deviant Saint-sama so feel free to go wild.”

Granz-san disappeared into the kitchen after saying that.

Looking at his retreating figure, I requested Ryina to do just one thing.

“...If possible, please experiment outside of the town.”

“...Yes. Thank you very much. From now on, I will work hard to create magic tools.”

She took a fighting pose so I had a bad premonition but I decided to believe in her for now.

“...I’ll look forward to it.”

After releasing Ryina from her banishment, I returned to the table where everyone was seated at.

The dishes were already lined up on the table but nobody had touched them and were waiting.

We joined everyone and after asking Ryina and Nanya to introduce themselves, we enjoyed the meal.

Then, I asked Kefin about the thing he spoke about before, where we could sell favor to the Church.”

“Ah Kefin, about what you wanted to tell me earlier...”

“Yes. Actually, regarding the barrier that protects the Holy Capital, it may be possible to fix it.”

“Really?”

“It’s just a possibility. Actually, the barrier for this Holy Capital apparently uses a magic tool.”

“Magic tool?”

It was certainly unbelievable but if that was true, then how was it destroyed? The fact that it exists wasn’t uncovered after all...

“Yes. And I found information stating that someone intentionally destroyed it.”

I didn’t think that Kefin would come to that conclusion so easily just based on that information.

Maybe he has even secured that said magic tool.

“Kefin, how did you come to that conclusion just from that information alone?”

“According to the information that investigated the mechanism of the barrier, the magic tool has the condition that fire, water, earth, wind and holy attribute magical power has to be imbued into it at the same time.”

“...That’s the only information we have?”

“Yes. However, the flying ship created by Dolan-dono and Paula has a magic barrier spread across it that completely negates wind resistance. If that can be activated with all five attributes, won’t it be possible to construct something with similar mechanism?”

I asked Dolan who was listening to the conversation.

“Dolan, what do you think?”

“It just a guess but the barrier surrounding Rockford might be the same one as well.”

“Ah~ that’s quite possible.”

If that's the case, then it would be the same for Nelldal too.

After all, Rainstar-dono is good at taking care of people.

As I was smiling, Kefin asked.

“Then are we heading for Rockford next?”

If nothing was going on then it would be fine but now it was a world crisis so there's no helping it.

Why can't a cheat reincarnated individual crush the Principality for the sake of world peace?

While wistfully hoping so, I told everyone my thoughts.

“We'll first head for the Empire and cut through the darkness within the Empire.”

At that instant, everyone's gazes gathered on me.

CHAPTER 227

REASON TO GO TO THE EMPIRE

Previously I did not want to ever step foot in the Empire.

Because it was a militaristic country that was centered on the policy of 'rich country, strong army', focusing on wars to widen their territory and develop their economy.

With their war with the Rubruk Kingdom, their maneuverings with other countries and their human experimentation on demonization, I believe nobody would want to go to that country.

However, I decided that I had no choice but to go there.

Our table fell silent as if the joyous chatter moments ago was an illusion as all eyes fell on me.

To calm myself, I closed my eyes and exhaled, before I inhaled lightly and told them my reason for deciding to travel to the Empire.

"I decided to go to the Empire... because I do not want to fight with the strong Empire soldiers."

"...You want to go to the Empire because you dont want to fight?"

While everyone was befuddled by my words, Lionel asked for the meaning behind my words.

It was out of the blue after all so I guess they wouldn't understand...

"If Lionel wasn't with me, I would not intend to go to the Empire nor would I even think of it. Cathy, how many citizens recognize Lionel, General Sen'Oni's features? And how many common soldiers know him?"

"Only newcomers would not know him nya. Lionel-sama was the apex of fighters in the Empire so everyone knows him nya."

She proudly boasted to me. And I was convinced after hearing those words.

If this plan works out, I would be able to smoothly resolve the issue of demonization and capture the fake Lionel...

“Thanks Cathy. Actually, in Dongahaha’s will, information on demonization came up. It’s written that the mastermind is the Principality. But the hands of the demon from the Principality has already grasped onto the Empire. If left alone, the Saint Schull’s Allied Nation will face a pincer attack.”

“If that is, in fact, true, with the strength of the Church’s Knight Corps, they would not be able to beat the Empire soldiers.”

“Yes. That’s why I plan to resolve it by getting into the Empire before it’s too late and treat all the demonized Empire soldiers before they further lose their sanity and fall into a berserk state.”

The risk wasn’t small and of course, battle was probably inevitable.

However, if even the Empire citizens became demonized, the world would definitely be dominated by the demon race and the Evil god, and the world would be destroyed before the Hero can appear.

I realized that if I do not prevent that from happening, my peaceful life would never come true no matter how much time passes.

“Luciel-sama has already proven that you can reverse demonization so there’s no problems there but how do you intend to enter the Empire? The Flying Ship would be targeted by the Winged Dragon Brigade.”

Lionel’s concern was the most pressing one.

I assumed that as long as we can reach the border, it would be fine to travel by horse after that.

Furthermore, I thought that there would be people on that side that would notice Lionel.

“If the Winged Dragons appear, we can disembark from the Flying Ship and break through the front.”

“That’s reckless. No matter how strong Lionel-sama is, the Empire is full of soldiers that I have trained up.”

The Empire where the soldiers trained by Lionel gather.

My head was hurting just thinking about it.

However, that was hundred times better compared to getting attacked by those Empire soldiers when they have been demonized.

Moreover, I didn’t think that it would definitely turn into a fight.

“It would be a different story if they hated Lionel for over-training them but I’m sure to them, Lionel, you are an object of admiration. That’s why we will be making a triumphant return to the Empire with you, General Sen’Oni.”

“...Triumphant return huh.”

Lionel’s expression turned into confusion and was also slightly gloomy.

“Yeah. We can announce to the Empire soldiers that we plan to defeat the traitor Cloud that used Lionel’s name and tricked the Empire.”

“...I wonder if the Empire soldiers would believe me.”

I shifted my gaze from Lionel to Cathy and she nodded.

“Even if it doesn’t work, if it is the Lionel I know, won’t you fight in the amusement center called a battlefield?”

Was amusement center too much? Lionel’s body was trembling.

“Sorry... “Fufuwahaha. It really makes my heart dance.” or I guess not. Did it motivate you?”

Looks like there won’t be any problems.

It was probably only Shisho and Lionel who thinks of a battlefield as an amusement center.

“If it is Luciel-sama’s command, I would abide with my all. Moreover, my goal is to defeat my imposter and occupy the Empire soldiers right?”

“Yes. I want to assume the worst scenario.”

“The worst scenario?”

“Yes. The scenario that the Empire’s Emperor promotes this demonization plan or that he has been demonized.”

If Cloud, the fake Lionel, enticed the Emperor and promoted demonization, the situation would be completely different.

“...If he has only been demonized, I can hold down the Emperor until Luciel-sama is able to cast your healing magic. And if by any chance the Emperor has been promoting this demonization act, I will defeat the Emperor.”

I could sense the resolve in Lionel’s eyes.

I looked at everyone and re-stated our aim this time.

“This time our goal of going to the Empire is to destroy the research on demonization as well as the research facilities and escape from the Empire with every member alive. No matter how close you are on the verge of death, I will definitely save you so just avoid instant death.”

“””Yes!”””

Among the replies from Lionel and the others, Ryina also voiced out, although sounding slightly confused.

“Erm, Luciel-sama, I don’t get the story but am I and Nanya coming too?”

I totally didn’t think about it but perhaps I should leave them here after all.

“Both choices doesn’t matter but since there’s a possibility that it would turn into a fight, maybe it would be better for you two to stay here. This time the ones fighting in

the Empire are me, Lionel, Cathy and Kefin only but the danger still won't be zero."

"I see.."

The two of them looked at each other and looked visibly relieved.

"Luciel-sama, what about us?"

Nadia asked the same question.

But I had already thought of the role those two would take.

"Nadia and Lydia, please face the Winged Dragons that might come attack the flying ship. And once we give Dolan the signal, please come and get us with the flying ship."

"You know Luciel, you are the only one capable of maneuvering the flying ship."

Dolan chimed in before the two of them could reply.

"Dolan-san, I am sure you will not develop the greatest masterpiece that you yourself can't operate."

"...So you noticed."

"Eh, of course."

There's no way an engineer would create something he can't tamper with himself.

"I see. But, I refuse."

"Eeh!?"

I was flustered after hearing Dolan's unexpected refusal.

Because Dolan had never refused to do anything before.

"That's because the Empire has made me face a bitter experience before. I have a debt I must settle."

Then, Dolan began to explain the reason for this refusal and it was unexpectedly for revenge.

“Er, you plan on bringing Paula and Rician to a land of death?”

“We won’t die with Luciel around. Furthermore, we can buy time with the golem.”

“I also have not forgotten how we were pushed to the brink of starvation.”

... Not only Dolan, the two of them also totally intended to tag along.

“Dolan, our main purpose is not to go there to fight you know?”

“I understand. But the Empire tried to destroy the Dwarf Kingdom. I have to pay that back no matter what.”

Yup, he totally doesn’t understand.

I’ve heard that Dwarves were stubborn once they had made their decision.

But that won’t do.

There’s no choice. I’ll have to shift Dolan and their minds towards invention.

“Dolan, it is not like all the Empire citizens are the enemy and don’t you still have many things under development?”

“Those can be developed after this is over.”

“I don’t mind if there is a later but I assume that if we have the off chance that we need to escape from there, we will need the flying ship. I do not want the all-important flying ship to be shot down by the winged dragons.”

“Muu ”

Dolan had a sour expression as he crossed his arms.

It looked like I would be able to persuade him with another breath.

I’ll give the final push.

“If we are to safely escape with the flying ship, I believe that the magic cannons would be indispensable. In addition, we would also need the magical power radar. Would it be possible to prioritize those?”

“Ku, you’re targeting where it hurts most... very well, if you go that far, I will take responsibility and develop the magical power radar and magic cannons.”

“Thank you.”

It worked out somehow.

“Luciel-sama, so when would we be going to the Empire?”

“If possible it would have been better to go once we discovered the hidden plot behind the Empire and the Principality but I will have to meet Pope-sama after this... and I have to send Shisho and the others back to Meratoni so I plan that 2 to 3 days would be the soonest we would set off for Empire.”

“I see. In that case, I would have plenty of time to work out a strategy.”

Lionel was already fully spirited and I could see he was focused on challenging the Empire.

“Everyone, I will have to ask you to lend me your strength again this time, thank you for your aid.”

Since everyone was moving along with my selfishness, I had to thank them at least once as I looked at everyone and lowered my head.

“Luciel-sama, please raise your head. What Luciel-sama intends to do is something no one else is capable of doing. Furthermore, I will finally be able to get settle my grievance with the Empire.”

Lionel urged me to raise my head and remarked that it was also for his own sake.

“That’s right nya. At that time, the best we could do was escape but this time, we will be clearing the Empire of its darkness nya.”

Cathy also wanted to clear her humiliation of being made into a slave.

“It is a good opportunity to add to Luciel-sama’s legend.”

It felt like Kefin was on a slightly different tangent but thus we had officially decided

on our next destination.

However, I had forgotten something at that time but I wasn't able to notice it.

CHAPTER 228

PRUDENCE/TAKING CARE OF ONESELF

After finishing my meal with everyone at the Adventurer's Guild, I went to the basement to collect Shisho before we left for the Church.

What I witnessed with my eyes there was a beaten up Shisho with a fearless smile and the Adventurers who were even more beaten up clinging on to me with their eyes.

"Shisho, you guys really went at it after all."

"Yeah. These guys are quite strong you know."

Shisho said joyfully but the expressions on the Adventurers were gloomy.

They probably thought that he was holding back and playing with them.

"We're leaving now so I came to get Shisho. Everyone looks like they are exhausted from being Shisho's opponent. I'll treat them immediately."

"Oi, don't say it like they were forced to do so."

I lightly ignored Shisho and applied Area High Heal on Shisho and the Adventurers.

"Whirlwind-sama, thank you for your guidance."

"We still have a long way to go."

"Thank you, Deviant Saint-sama too."

"As expected, only Deviant Saint-sama can serve as Whirlwind-sama's disciple."

"We will do our best as well."

As they thanked Shisho and me, they gradually took their distance and ran up the training ground stairs without hearing Shisho's reply.

Shisho leaked a faint voice after looking at the backs of those Adventurers.

“Tch, those guys have no guts.”

This world sure has plenty of unreasonable things.

While having that thought, we returned to the Church.

After reaching the Church, everyone was agreeable with sleeping in the guest rooms on the Flying Ship apart from Shisho, who decided to sleep under the sky at the large training ground.

He claimed that he felt restless sleeping on the Flying Ship and he was no longer the Shisho who was so excited to see the Flying Ship before.

“Shisho, are you really going to sleep here? The Church has guest rooms too.”

“I might be able to spot the ones who want to sneak into the Flying Ship. So I will sleep here. If you understand then hurry up and get me a bed.”

“Then, I’ll leave the guarding of the Flying Ship to you.”

“Yeah, leave it to me.”

After I took out a bed from my magic bag, Shisho sat on it and began meditating.

After I left Shisho, I saw Ryina and Ninya who I thought had returned to their own shop.

I wondered why did the two of them come here.

And like Shisho was this morning, they were in high spirits.

Including the two of them, all of my followers could enter the Church as an exception but actually, it would normally involve the Executive’s Department.

Well, I’ve had them make various pledges so I don’t think the confidential information would leak outside...

While thinking that, I spoke to Ryina.

“Is it fine leaving the shop unattended?”

“It’s because I never know if such an opportunity will come around again.”

“As expected of the technical capabilities of Dwarves to achieve something like this.”

“That can’t be judged just on the outer appearance. Make your judgment after seeing the interior.”

Dolan’s words and expression didn’t match as he tried to resist from grinning, giving his usual smug look as he gave them a tour of the Flying Ship.

And Paula and Rician were also following behind with smug looks.

“..... I’ll... just leave them be.”

While muttering that, I went to find Pope-sama.

This time I also brought Nadia and Lydia along.

That’s because I could tell that they wanted to do so from their gazes.

After leaving the large training ground, Nadia spoke.

“Luciel-sama, did you find out anything about the Principality of Blange?”

It looks like she was already curious.

Apparently, it was people from Blange who brought the talks about demonization to Dongahaha.

“You’ve heard what Dongahaha said before he collapsed right?”

“Yes. He said that Blange was the mastermind. But there’s too much we don’t know with just that information...”

“Are you worried?”

“Yes. If I did not come from the position of a noble, Blange is a very nice country.”

“It is a country with calm climate and abundant nature as well as the final resting place

for the Sorcerer who made the Hermit series magic tools.”

And that country has now become a country that breeds the demon race. It’s hard to believe.

“Was only the royalty involved in the summoning of the Hero?”

“No, there was also the Knight division and Mage division there for security. But I don’t think they knew about the method for the summoning ceremony.”

“Has people other than the Hero been summoned before?”

“I’ve not heard about that before.”

“Everyone knows that there is a summoning circle but it has never been reported that there has been an incident where a person other than the Hero was summoned.”

“I see. I’ll say it now that if the royalty are either demons or have been involved in demonization, I will also not be able to pardon them?”

“Yes. I have prepared myself for that.”

“We can’t pardon demons after all.”

But I could see that the two of them were hesitant despite their words.

I don’t intend to antagonize them but I had to consider if I should leave them in the Church.

All the things that I have to consider are popping up one after the other.

“What I plan to tell Pope-sama is that, as you two already know, a person from Blange contacted Dongahaha. And that man apparently summoned something more powerful than a Hero from the hero summoning ritual.”

“”

Perhaps they were in shock, or that they knew something but the two of them froze without saying anything.

That might have been a normal reaction too.

Since even though they left home to be independent, they have found out that their family and friends are facing danger.

“If that being is a demon or something that causes demonization, then the rich nature of the country you two spoke of may end.”

The expressions on their faces became even more uneasy.

However, even if the problem wasn't handled poorly, the Saint Schull Allied Nations will definitely be caught in war.

If left alone, the country would face a pincer attack from the Empire and the Principality, and the Free City-State of Ienith behind would be in danger too.

The peace I sought would be gone no matter how I look at it.

I wanted to avoid that by all means.

“I do not want to fight... but I am able to dispel demonization and I can also weaken demons. I will do what I am capable of so the two of you can just do what you two are capable of.”

Ending the conversation, I entered Pope-sama's room.

After obtaining the permission to enter, I saw that Rosa-san, Estia as well as Garba-san and Catherine-san there.

“Pope-sama, I apologize for the late visit. I think that the judgment you made during the day which was mixed with your kindness was a good judgment.”

“...I'm glad to hear you say it that way. I've been doubting myself all this while wondering if that was the correct decision.”

“That is the responsibility of those who judge. That just shows that Pope-sama is sincerely facing the incident this time.”

“I see. It's seriously stressful.”

Pope-sama had a sorrowful look as she looked down.

“I believe Pope-sama will definitely be able to do it. However, for that sake, I think it is crucial that there is a person inside the new Executives Department who will pass all the information to Pope-sama.”

“By the way, why is Garba-san here too? Furthermore, he looks quite exhausted?”

Beside him was Catherine-san who was looking satisfied and was giving off a warm fuzzy aura like the in the past when she was manning the labyrinth shop.

“Umu. Catherine recommended Garba-dono for his skilled information gathering ability so after having a confidential pledge done, he shall be assisting as a Church personnel.”

“Garba-san!? What about the work at Meratoni’s Adventurer Guild?”

“...I would be grateful if Broad returns to Meratoni tomorrow.”

“Shisho said he would be sleeping at the large training ground so please persuade him yourself.”

“Ah, is that so, okay. As expected, one can’t hope that life goes their way.”

It was unlike the usual Garba-san but he only nodded after bringing unnecessary trouble to himself.

“So Luciel, I don’t think you came all the way here at this time to see my condition.”

“Yes. Firstly, I have decided to go to the Empire soon.”

“...Will you be alright?”

“Who knows? But if I don’t go, the Empire will be dominated by the demonized people or be destroyed. Once that happens, the next target might be here.”

“The elite of the Knight Corps are all here.”

“I will not call a Knight Corps defeated by two people, my mentor and follower, as an elite force.”

“Wha!?”

“Knights may have their own way of fighting but if we are talking about individual strength and not collective strength, it would be hard for them to even endure a single day. They might even be completely annihilated. There’s no choice but to whip the Knights into shape as well.”

“Seriously... has the Church’s combat capability fallen that far?”

The Captain of that Knight Corps was listening in but she didn’t say anything at all.

I’m sure that if Garba-san wasn’t around, she would have snapped.

But I also don’t have the hobby of stirring up a hornet’s nest.

I entered the main topic.

“Pope-sama, regarding Dongahaha, he has left a will.”

“A will!?”

“Yes. Pope-sama will likely feel pain once you see this. However, I felt that it might serve as a source of encouragement to Pope-sama so I am passing this to you.”

After passing Dongahaha’s will to Rosa-san, she passed it to Pope-sama.

“Also, inside Dongahaha’s table, we found an unfamiliar jewel that looks like it has been sealed but do you recognize it?”

The instant I took the jewel out from my magic bag, for some reason Pope-sama was in front of my eyes... ?! I totally didn’t see her move.

That might have been the Teleport skill. Moreover, there wasn’t even a fluctuation in the magical power.

I was reminded that as expected of being Rainstar-dono’s daughter, Pope-sama is also out of the ordinary.

“Where was this found?”

After Pope-sams took the jewel from my hands, she immediately asked to find out so it looked like my words just now did not reach Pope-sama.

I once again explained where I found the jewel.

“It was inside Dongahaha’s drawer but what is it exactly?”

“This is a Spirit Crystal, meant to contain the power of a Spirit... thank goodness, really thank goodnessss.”

Pope-sama was overjoyed until her tears overflowed while I could do nothing but stand there stock-still.

CHAPTER 229

SPIRIT CRYSTAL

After waiting for Pope-sama to stop crying, I asked her about the Spirit Crystal.

“What is the Spirit Crystal exactly?”

“...It is something like a place for a Spirit to live in. From the time Spirits are born, they have the nature of looking for a place to settle down. Once they spend a long time at that place, it solidifies and becomes something like a rock, forming a Spirit Stone.”

Looks like it was not as simple as a Spirit simply dwelling inside a rock.

If that forms a Spirit Stone, then for a Spirit Crystal... in other words, “Does that mean a Spirit Crystal forms after an even longer duration?”

“Exactly. However, this Spirit Crystal was created by my father when he infused magical power into a Spirit Stone.”

I apparently voiced out my thoughts midway through.

I have to be careful... nevertheless, Rainstar-dono really is capable of doing anything.

“...Then how is that Spirit Crystal different from a Spirit Stone?”

There’s no way it would be the same.

“The spirit will grow along with the Spirit Stone. And once it becomes a Spirit Crystal, the spirit will become a highest rank Spirit.”

“Does that mean the Spirits we’ve met possess the same thing as well?”

“Umu. There are exceptions but they probably have a Spirit Crystal. If not, highest rank Spirits would not have a place to rest their bodies. And it would be difficult for them to recover their magical power.”

So it is great that the Spirit Stone was not used to gain an advantage.

Incidentally, the exceptions most likely refer to the Darkness and Wind Spirits.

“Those exceptions are for when the spirits dwell inside a person right? A host who has

obtained the divine protection of a Spirit can supply the magical power it needs right?”

“Great job deducing that.”

It looks like it was the correct answer.

I could touch the Spirit Crystal probably because I had obtained the blessings of Spirits.

“If that is all true then isn’t the Spirit that the Spirit Crystal belongs to in grave danger?”

“...That’s right. Spirits expend magical power just by manifesting. Immature/young Spirits would vanish once that happens while highest rank Spirits would have their spirit form dispelled, allowing people who can’t see Spirits normally to see them. That would expose them to danger.”

... Then that is without a doubt Fornoir’s Spirit Crystal.

Pope-sama must have regretted losing her Spirit Crystal.

That’s probably why she bawled in front of everyone just now.

But thinking further, even though her spirit form has dissolved, Fornoir still could grant me her blessing.

Then was that action of repeatedly biting my head to grant me her blessing? The mystery deepens.

More importantly, I must first confirm with Pope-sama the words she said just now about the Spirit Crystal being something meant to seal the power of a Spirit.

“Pope-sama, just now you said that it seals the power of a Spirit but is that a seal placed by the Spirit itself? Or was it forcibly sealed by another party?”

Pope-sama shook her head side to side as she replied.

“What I meant when I said it seals the power of a Spirit is that the Spirit accumulates its own magical power in the Spirit Crystal in preparation for when the need arises. It

is not something sealed by another party.”

“I see. Actually, when I first held it, I sensed that there were two magical powers so I was curious and thought that it was another party who applied the seal.”

It’s no problem if the two magical powers I felt belongs to the Spirit and Rainstar-dono but there’s always the off-chance that it is not.

“Two magical powers?... I only realize it now after you mention it. Mu, this chain doesn’t look like it was originally there. I’m confident that it was because of this seal that I couldn’t find it. We should break it now. I leave it to Luciel.”

Is Pope-sama not capable of using Dispel? I thought as I activated my spell.

“Eh!? Ah, yes. Dispel.”

When I did that, the chains around the Spirit Crystal melted away and disappeared and the Spirit Crystal shone even brighter.

“Luciel, Fornoir please.”

Pope-sama asked me to call out Fornoir with a nervous countenance.

“Yes.”

I immediately opened the stable using my Hermit’s key and Fornoir slowly walked out.

And as if the Spirit Crystal was matching the pace, it floated up and was absorbed into Fornoir.

While feeling dumbfounded by that scene, Fornoir, with her pitch black horse body, suddenly gave off such dazzling light that I couldn’t open my eyes.

The light quickly subsided and when I opened my eyes once again, there was a pure white horse with wings, a Pegasus.

That is Fornoir? While I saw still in shock, Pope-sama already ran over to hug Fornoir before I could say a word.

But Fornoir is supposed to be black forest? If she’s white then don’t we have to change

her name?

While I was thinking about that, I was waiting for Pope-sama to say Fornoir's name but for some reason it was still Fornoir.

She's white so I thought her name might contain 'White' or 'Blanc' or maybe 'Shine' since she was shining but... I decided to leave it be for now.

I approached Fornoir and spoke.

"Fornoir? It's great that you've returned to being a Spirit."

With Pope-sama still hugging her, Fornoir turned towards and I heard a voice inside my head.

[Luciel, I am sincerely grateful.]

That voice was as I had imagined, a female voice.

I once pondered about Fornoir's voice and imagined an androgynous voice since she was a Spirit but I was wrong.

"I was just lucky. Furthermore, Fornoir has always helped me so we're even, partner."

[I see. Then, best regards hereafter as well, partner.]

I could somehow catch glimpses of delight in Fornoir's voice.

"I'll be going to the Empire from here but what do you wish to do?"

[I have not been able to run for a long time. Fufu, I'm looking forward to it.]

... Would it be alright for her to come along with me? Nevertheless, I somehow have the feeling that I've met such a high spirited person recently...

I stopped thinking deeper about it and asked about the Spirit Crystal.

"What happened to the Spirit Crystal?"

[It is now inside me. Once I have finished optimizing the Spirit Crystal, I will once again remove it from my body.]

“I see. Then will you be staying with Pope-sama today?”

[... I guess. I have a promise with Fluna so I will stay here today.]

I still had more questions for Pope-sama about how the Spirit Crystal was lost and about Spirits but I decided to postpone it to another day.

“Okay. Pope-sama, I will come over again tomorrow.”

After talking to Fornoir, I spoke to Pope-sama but her back was trembling so I judged that she was still crying and decided to leave by the door when Pope-sama addressed me.

“Luciel, thank you for finding the Spirit Crystal.”

When I turned back, Pope-sama was still in the same posture as before.

“Don’t mention it, I am glad it turned out well. Please excuse me.”

I once again spoke to her back and left.

“Ah, Luciel-kun, I’m coming too.”

“Pope-sama, I will take my leave too.”

Garba-san and Catherine-san also decided to leave together with me.

What I have to do from now should be something quite simple but for some reason, I had a feeling that it would be extremely troublesome.

CHAPTER 230

ANXIETY AND ADJUSTMENT

I wasn't able to speak to Garba-san on the way to the large training ground.

Because Catherine-san was speaking endlessly to Garba-san with a gentle air like when I first met her.

My instinct was telling me that it would turn ugly if I interrupted them.

I gave up and instead wanted to speak with Nadia and Lydia but on this side, they wore a heavy atmosphere because they were worried about their homeland, the Principality of Blange, so I left them alone for now.

While walking, I thought about how it would be better if the world was simpler... as I reviewed what had happened for the day.

If everything written in Dongahaha's will was to be true, there would be a lot of troubling points.

First would be a worrying element in the Empire, we didn't know how many people were there that have been demonized through the embedment of magic stones inside them.

If possible, I would prefer to return them to sanity compared to killing them. However, if that number was in the tens or twenties, or perhaps even past the hundreds, it would become a problem with my magical power amount so it wasn't that simple.

Next, once we entered the Empire, I have to consider the aftermath of sealing those that have been demonized.

If the Emperor is involved in this incident, it would likely be for war.

We would have to attack the Emperor if it comes to that.

I must then speak with Lionel who is knowledgeable about the Empire's inner

workings to find out what to do with the aftermath of our actions.

If possible, I wish that everything would end when we just stop that Cloud fellow who I hope perpetrated the demonizations on his own...

It's tough seeing how we can't judge without stepping foot there if it only involves the Blange royalty or if that Earl Kamiya who has been monitoring us is involved as well.

Moreover, if they have the power to control the world, I'm also wondering why did they not use that power to invade Ienith.

The more I thought about it, the more uneasy I became.

Previously, when I heard about the Empire and the Principality utilizing demonization, I thought of it as fire on the opposite shore and remained a bystander.

However, such demonization rituals were being carried out even in villages within the Saint Schull's Allied Nations.

Thinking about it deeper, if I leave it be any longer, the world would be overrun by demons before I knew it and there was a high chance that we would fall into a critical situation.

It would probably be easy to throw everything out the window.

But I knew that I would regret that decision in the near future if I did so.

"I just can't live how I want to."

I muttered in a soft voice.

After arriving at the large training ground, Catherine-san looked up at the Flying Ship before she returned to her room alone.

Garba-san had begun talking with Shisho so I moved to my allocated room inside the Flying Ship.

Lying on my bed, I pondered on the questions I would ask Pope-sama and Fornoir tomorrow.

First would be why was Dongahaha holding on to that Spirit Crystal.

Pope-sama mentioned that it would be impossible to touch a Spirit Crystal if one did not possess a Divine Blessing.

If that's true then it would mean that Dongahaha did possess a Divine Blessing.

It showed that there were still plenty of mysteries surrounding Dongahaha.

Then, Estia comes to mind when we come to the topic of the Empire.

She somehow escaped from the Empire by exercising the Darkness Spirit's powers so there's a possibility that she knows of the darkness within the Empire.

And since Fornoir is around, the Darkness Spirit should be able to utilize its power too.

I didn't bring her along to Nelldal due to manpower shortage and mental instability but she is also one of my retinues.

However. There's a chance that her emotions would destabilize if she goes to the Empire so compared to bringing her along to a land of death, it might be better if she stayed together with Pope-sama.

The Darkness Spirit would deal with anything that dangers her or Pope-sama after all.

In any case, I will be asking Lionel to work hard in the Empire.

Resolving myself to not let anyone die and to overcome this aspect, I drifted to sleep.

I wonder how long has it been since I drifted to sleep?

I opened my eyes due to a sudden draft and I saw Dongahaha standing there.

“?! Uoo!”

Now that I think about it, the Hermit Coffin is set to eject a person once they regain their consciousness.

“You don’t have to be so surprised.”

Dongahaha said calmly.

But it’s normal to be surprised.

While retorting internally, I dealt with it calmly.

“Of course I would be surprised if you suddenly stand beside me while I’m sleeping without any lights on.”

... I wasn’t able to deal with it calmly.

There was also the aspect of him being an enemy so it was more frightening than Toretto-san in a sense.

“Looks like I failed to die at that time.”

He said as he moved his body around to verify.

“I would be troubled if you died on me so easily.”

“Unfortunately, I will die in the near future. Summoning a demon involves a contract of the soul so I can’t escape it any longer.”

A soul contract, so is it a different dimension compared to a pledge(covenant)?

“...Shouldn’t you be fine since the demon that you contracted with is already gone?”

“A soul contract does not involve the body but is engraved in the soul so it is impossible to dispel it.”

“If you knew about that then no matter how weak your body was, why did you resort to demonization and demon summoning?”

“...I see you have read my will. I think you should understand since you have read my

will but it was because I understood that there was no path forward anymore. Furthermore, I believed that having Pope-sama vanquish me would serve as a source of drive for Pope-sama.”

How selfish, I was left with nothing but doubts about why he demanded such responsibility of Pope-sama.

However, talking anymore about it would be meaningless at this point and would serve nothing but to satisfy myself.

More importantly, I have mountains of other questions to ask.

“Normally that would devolve into a heated dispute but I have something I want to ask you.”

“As long as it is something I can answer.”

Dongahaha lightly nodded and sat down on a nearby chair.

I decided on what I wanted to ask first.

“How did you obtain the Spirit Crystal kept inside your desk drawer?”

“Spirit Crystal? So that jewel was a Spirit Crystal.”

“You held onto it without knowing?”

“Yes. That room was originally my father’s room. I inherited it.”

I see. Then the necklace he spoke about during the battle at the large training ground was referring to that.

However, that would mean that it would be Dongahaha’s father that sealed it but Dongahaha would probably not remember as he was still young at that time.

But it is undeniable that Pope-sama’s trust was deep.

I will probably ask Pope-sama directly regarding that.

Nevertheless, to be honest there are plenty of things I didn’t know about the Church.

But having two generations within the Executive's Department, I can only see them as excellent.

Moreover, since they both served as the leader of the organization, I could clearly see the contributions they've given to the Church.

I felt that it was a pity how this incident occurred due to a moment of rash thinking.

I shook my head and asked a new question.

"I will now ask you more questions but I don't mind if you wish to stay silent and not answer."

"I will not be surprised if I come to an end anytime. I will answer everything."

He was resolute.

"Firstly, you said to go to the Empire but what are our odds?"

"If it is Sage Luciel who dispelled the demonization and your retainers, or more precisely, if without you, the infiltrators would be caught before they reach the center of the Empire."

"I see. Then tell me everything that you know about the Empire."

Dongahaha nodded and began speaking.

"I will start with information that I believe Luciel-sama wants to know."

"I want to know everything. I'd be grateful if you tell me without putting on airs."

"I see, then, I will talk about the widespread rumors about the General Sen'oni in the Empire."

"About Lionel?"

"Yes. During a battle with the Rubruk Kingdom, there was an attempt on General Sen'oni's life using poison by the citizens of the town he controlled. Due to that, it was said that the General wandered on the edge of death and his memories were hazy."

"Nevertheless, he appeared at the front lines right?"

“No, it was said that after that happened, he seldom left the Empire and placed emphasis on defending the Imperial Capital.”

I wonder what would Lionel say if he heard about that? For an embodiment of a warrior to escape from the battlefield like that, he would probably say that he would prefer a dignified death instead.

(TL: They are likely talking about the fake Lionel, the guy named Cloud.)

“You knew that Lionel is General Sen’oni right?”

“Of course. There were such rumors spreading within the Empire as well but under the Emperor’s orders, the people who voiced such rumors were beheaded so the rumors were forcefully buried.”

Resorting to tyranny means that the Emperor most likely knew about it too.

“Incidentally, how has the border with Rubruk changed this two years?”

“The Empire is getting pressed slightly at the moment. As expected, the absence of General Sen’oni exercises an impact on the morale of the troops on both sides.”

There’s also the possibility that they couldn’t release information because they were losing...

“Do you think that the Emperor is involved with the Lionel case?”

“That can’t be said definitely. Because there have also been cases of chaos in the Empire due to the appearance of demons.”

“Everything leads back to Blange huh.”

“...I have a hunch that those incidents are due to the Empire’s own actions. That fake General Sen’oni has been plotting various plans after all.”

If he’s a reincarnated individual, why can’t he just remain a little more low key? Compared to researching demonization, aiming to be invincible or aiming for a harem would be a lot healthier.

But a worrisome aspect surfaces there.

Lionel's level has dropped and I can imagine a duel between him and that fake Lionel but... I have a feeling that this whole situation should be resolved in a flash.

The quickest method would be to descend into the Imperial Capital's Royal Castle from the Flying Ship but would it be so easily achieved? They have Winged Dragon Squads protecting their skies so we have to plan our strategies.

Leaking a sigh, I suddenly thought of something.

"That's right. How did Blange find out that I defeated a demon at Grandol?"

"I heard that they were approached by Sage Luciel and his retainers when they were acting as Adventurers. Incidentally, it was apparently Kamiya-dono who guided them but I could not confirm the facts."

Just getting that information was amazing but was it really information obtained by only the Church's Executive's Department?

"Did the Executive's Department collect that information?"

"No, it was from an envoy from Blange."

If that was true then it means that they are properly keeping track of what goes on in the backgrounds but I was slightly doubtful of what Dongahaha was saying.

That's why I asked about the characteristics of that envoy.

"I see. But why did the envoy who came to contact your side reveal so much?"

"He apparently carried hatred towards Sage Luciel. He claimed that you seduced his younger sisters."

I was confused by the unexpected answer.

Younger sisters... since it is sisters, it can only mean Nadia and Lydia.

"...Younger sisters? Are you referring to Nadia and Lydia?"

“Yes. It is the brother of the two people Luciel-sama has as retainers. He wasn’t a person inclined towards scheming and he was quick to turn emotional so he was an opponent that was easy to acquire information from.”

Dongahaha said so indifferently and unamused so I could tell that he was speaking the truth.

After knowing that truth, the number of worries I have increased as I had to think if I should tell the two of them or not.

“...I see. What about the ability to control the world?”

“Naturally, he didn’t disclose something like that.”

“I see.”

So even though he was so loose-lipped, he didn’t reveal that many secrets.

While my head was hurting from all the worries, Dongahaha lowered his head to me and said.

“If you are headed to the Elimasia Empire and the Principality of Blange, please conquer the labyrinths. And please protect the Holy Capital.”

While thinking that it was too much with the Empire, Principality, Demons, and Labyrinth, I nodded with a sigh mixed in.

CHAPTER 231

THE BALANCE OF BODY AND MIND

I finished listening to Dongahaha by the time the sky outside started to brighten.

Having answered all my questions without choosing to remain silent, I was about to transfer him to the Church's underground cell but Cathy and Kefin were there so I delegated that to them.

"I pray for the day that I regret betraying you and the Church."

Dongahaha said those words in the end and descended from the Flying Ship.

"It matters not to me if you regret it or not. At the moment, I am just putting all my efforts into completing my goals."

While talking to myself, I rode the lift that returned and rode it down to the large training ground.

Shisho was already doing practice swings at the large training ground.

"Shisho, good morning. You're up early."

"Ou, Luciel. I feel more awake if I start moving my body early like now."

"Well, that's true... Can I request for a match?"

"Ah, you don't have to specify just one, I will accompany you for no matter how many matches you wish."

"Thank you. I'll loosen up my body for a bit so please wait a moment."

"Did something happen?"

"I just wanted to move my body a little since I was feeling uneasy by just doing nothing."

"...I see."

“Yeah.”

Shisho sounded like he wanted to say something but in the end, he didn't say anything and just served as my sparring partner.

Even after everyone else came down, after Cathy and Kefin returned from the underground cells, after the Knight Corps came for their morning training, our mock battle continued.

Even though I lost that time when I used the Thunder Dragon's powers, now I could put up quite a good fight without it.

I felt that currently, I would be able to win if I used the dragon's powers when alternating between offense and defense.

But doing something like that would not dispel the gloomy feeling I had in my heart.

Perhaps he noticed it, or that he could not resist any longer, Lionel joined in midway.

It was decided that the two of them would be my opponents so I released my ban on my magic as I could predict that they would be sending merciless attacks my way from then on.

As I was able to concentrate fully on fighting with the two of them, I could clear my head of all thoughts. I gradually felt the haze hanging over my heart dissipate.

After getting thrown to the ground countless times, I had also made the two of them roll on the ground enough times to need two hands to count.

Compared to the past, I have apparently improved slightly.

I began noticing that there was a part of me that felt slightly joyous knowing that.

By sparring with these two people, I was creating a new me for the future.

That was what I was feeling.

Avoiding Lionel's greatsword, I was about to cut at his chest but then Shisho swung

his sword down, attempting to cut me along with a thin layer of skin from Lionel.

I rotated my body and kicked Shisho's sword from the side.

The next moment, Lionel's large shield came rushing towards me and I was blown away.

Righting my stance after rolling on the ground, I once again readied my sword.

Suddenly, a large shadow loomed over me and when I looked up, I saw a golem.

I could quickly see the operator Paula and she told me while rubbing her stomach.

"I'm hungry."

After hearing what she said and checking the position of the sun, I realized that a couple of hours had passed since I began my mock battle.

"Ah~ sorry. Then, shall we all go for breakfast together?"

When I said that, the golem returned to soil and Shisho and Lionel had no choice but to sheathe their weapons.

While departing from the large training ground, I noticed that the Knights were all looking at us so I apologized just in case.

"Thank you for letting us train in the large training ground. I apologize if we inconvenienced anyone here."

However, the Knights from the Knight Corps only gave confused looks without saying anything so we departed for the canteen just like that.

I totally did not imagine that that was the trigger for when there was a large change in my impression among the Knights.

I believe that a relationship based on trust is important.

And there was no trust between me and the former attendants of Pope-sama who were in the canteen.

Thinking that there was a possibility of being served poison, I applied Recover and Purification on everyone's food.

Since I didn't know if I would be able to act in time if it was a poison with immediate effects.

"Luciel, you're being way too high strung."

I don't know how my actions were seen through Shisho's eyes but Shisho only said that one sentence during the meal.

But that single sentence certainly did calm me slightly.

After leaving the canteen, I parted with everyone and went to visit Pope-sama.

I was able to reach Pope-sama's room smoothly without getting attacked by anybody.

Waiting for me inside the room was Pope-sama with a dignified appearance.

"Good morning, Pope-sama."

"Morning, Luciel."

"I feel that Pope-sama is giving off a slightly different air compared to yesterday but did something happen?"

"Umu. Fornoir told me to act more dignified. She told me that if I remain irresolute like before, it would destroy the future that Luciel went through all the trouble to carve out."

Looking at Fornoir, she had returned to her original black horse form.

"Fornoir has returned to her original form?"

[It's not an issue. It's because it won't be revealed that I am a Spirit if I take this form.]

"What do you mean?"

[I can disappear at will in that form but the magical power consumption is intense and I would return to a Spirit Crystal form in no time. I can't be your partner like that right? So this form would be best for journeying.]

“That means?”

“She will be accompanying Luciel.”

[I’ll be in your care.]

“Okay. I’ll be in your care too. Incidentally, Fornoir, are you able to fly through a place where Winged Dragons fly around without fear?”

[Are you an idiot? Something of the level of Winged Dragons is not a match for me.]

Looks like I can place my expectations on her since she sounded so confident.

“I’ll look forward to it.”

[Leave it to me.]

It looks like most mutual understanding can happen even without putting them into words.

I turned my attention to Pope-sama and moved to the main topic.

“Dongahaha regained consciousness before the sun rose and I questioned him. Based on the answers I got, I’ll be heading to the Empire. I will leave the Church matters to Pope-sama.”

“I’ll do what I can. I won’t let another person walk down Dongahaha’s path.”

“I agree. By the way, Pope-sama, were you the one who created the magic tool that envelops the Holy Capital with a barrier?”

“Umu, that’s right. Although the barrier is no longer present.”

“Did you discard it? Or is the dysfunctional magic tool still there?”

“It is no longer functioning but it is still there.”

“If I had the same thing or something similar constructed, will the Church buy it?”

“What do you mean? Are you saying that you can fix it?”

“I still don’t know. However, there is an engineer who said that he wants to try fixing it. Of course, I don’t mind if the remuneration comes after we’ve completed the magic tool.”

“All right. Follow me.”

Pope-sama said as she opened the door opposite to the room I used to transfer to Nelldal and I saw a golden bell inside the room.

“Something this size can’t be carried on your person right?”

“Umu. However, I used to carry it around inside that item bag and I look forward to and await the day it returns to the Holy Capital once again.”

Pope-sama said as she touched the bell before she returned to her throne.

“I did not imagine that things would turn out this way.”

I collected the bell while sighing and when I returned to my original position, I voiced my intention to leave Estia in her care.

“Pope-sama, lastly, regarding Estia, I originally wanted to bring her along but I can’t leave this place unattended so could she be in your care until I end our fight with the Empire?”

“Estia is welcome to stay for however long she wishes to stay.”

“Estia, can I entrust this place to you?”

“...I underst... I won’t say that.”

Her atmosphere changed?

“Luciel, if you are going to the Empire, bring Estia along too.”

It looked like the Darkness Spirit had seized her consciousness.

“Why!? Didn’t she go through all that suffering to finally succeed in escaping from the Empire!?”

“That’s right. That’s why for Estia, I want her to find the opportunity in the Empire to heal the wound in her heart inflicted by the Empire.”

I saw a glimpse of a somewhat crazed emotion flicker through her expression.

“Luciel, even if you worry for the Church, it will be fine with Rosa-san and me here.”

Perhaps Pope-sama realized as she had decided to send Estia off with me.

Although it wasn't a good idea to bring her along, it was also a fact that it was better to have even a single battle-ready person more.

I accepted the Darkness Spirit's suggestion.

"All right. I will bring Estia along if that is what she wishes for. But she will really be exposed to life-threatening dangers. Please protect her when it becomes dangerous, Darkness Spirit."

"I will have no mercy towards any who hurt Estia. I plan to work hard together with Estia as much as possible."

"You will be scolded by Fornoir if you do anything arbitrarily after all."

"...I'll tread carefully... Luciel-sama, I'll be in your care."

Looks like she's back.

However, Estia had eyes that held a different kind of determination compared to those of the Darkness Spirit just now.

"In which case, I will contact you using the Magic Communication Bead once we safely escape from the Empire."

"Umu. I shall defend this Holy Capital to the death. So I leave it to you, Luciel."

"Yes!"

I got on one knee and bowed.

"Fornoir, so will you be entering the Hermit's Stable?"

[No. I will return to a Spirit Crystal so call me when you need me.]

"...All right."

It's probably because she could come out from the Spirit Crystal whenever she wanted to.

I had a premonition that would happen but I'll let her do as she pleases for now.

Thus, I bowed to Pope-sama and Rosa-san once before exiting from Pope-sama's room together with Estia and headed to the large training ground.

"Luciel-sama, if we are able to safely cut our way through the Empire and escape, can I accompany you to Meratoni?"

Overcoming her trauma huh?

I don't know what kind of emotion does the Darkness Spirit like but I have a feeling that it might weaken it too.

However, if the two of them wish for it then I'll let them accompany us.

"Just Meratoni only?"

"Yes, I'm fine with just Meratoni."

"All right."

After that, I listened to how Estia spent the past three months in the Church before we reached the entrance to the large training ground where we heard angry cries and sword clashes.

"A fight? No way."

I thought there weren't any other demonized people remaining.

But perhaps there were still some demonized people from the Executives Department around.

I opened the door to the large training ground hurriedly and for some reason, there was a similar pile of Knights there just like yesterday.

"...What the heck is this?"

"Luciel-sama's Shisho-sama reverted back to Lv1 right? Why are the Knights losing instead?"

“Ah. Shisho and Lionel are Asura and not human so using human logic to explain it won’t work, at least that’s how I convince myself.”

“Isn’t that harsh.”

Estia said as she covered her mouth with her hand and laughed.

I sighed as I went about treating everyone.



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