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天酒之瓢 & 騎士

Knight's & Magic

Hisago Amazake-no
天酒之瓢
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Knights & Magic

(ナイツ&マジック)

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Amazake No Hisago

(天酒之瓢)

Story Description:

A young man from Japan passed away after a traffic accident. His soul was reincarnated in an alternate world into the body of a pretty young boy Ernesti Echevarria with his memories intact. Influenced by his hobby from his previous life, Eru is a 'robot nerd' in this life too. He meets the giant humanoid battle robots in this world -- Silhouette Knights. The elated Eru started a series of plans in order to pilot the robots. He drags his childhood friend in this world along as he messes around in this world to satisfy his desire for robots.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Prologue: Silver Phoenix Knights Begin

He didn't know how long it had been.

When he realised it, 'Ernesti Echevarria' found himself floating in darkness.

The dark barren space seemed to be endless, his pale white skin and brilliant silvery purple hair was a strong contrast against the background.

He couldn't feel the ground beneath his feet, only a sensation like floating in water.

It was strange, but, he wasn't bothered by it, or interested in this situation. He simply stared into the other end of space with a blank expression.

Finally, something other than him appeared in this stagnant space.

It was a rectangular box printed with colours. On closer inspection, it had a picture of a 'robot' in a cool pose on it, and the 'logo' displayed the name of the robot on the side. The box was labeled with a detailed 'description' on four of the sides— indicating that this was a box containing a 'plastic model'.

And, there were more than one.

All sorts of boxes were chained together, encircling Eru. He was familiar with all the robots depicted on the boxes and would never forget them— He bought all of them right before the 'traffic accident'.

"Aahhh... That's right, these are the 'yet to assemble' ones. It's a rare chance, I have to complete them."

Ignoring why the things he had lost were here, he didn't even care why 'boxes of plastic models' were before 'Ernesti'. He smiled calmly and acted as he usually did.

Holding clippers in his hand, he placed a cutting mat, box cutter, tweezers, file, and glue tidily before him.

This was a habit he had in the 'past', placing his tools and model pieces tidily before assembling it in earnest. It was like a ritual and was a part of

his routine.

Eru, who had finished the preparations, was in a great mood as he reached out for a box floating in the air.

Opening the box, taking out the model parts, and starting to read the instruction manual.

This was a time of happiness as he immersed himself in his hobby, but, for unknown reasons, the box moved unexpectedly and dodged his hand. He tried several times, but, couldn't touch any of the boxes, and they seemed to be drifting further and further away, about to disappear into the darkness of the abyss.

“Hmmm? Please wait, I haven't done anything yet. There are so many I have 'yet to assemble', I want to keep assembling!!”

He gave chase, but, whenever he was about to touch them, the boxes slipped away.

The frustrated Eru started getting serious. The clippers in his hand started to morph into the gunstaff, 'Winchester'.

Mana and script flowed into his beloved staff, manifesting into physical phenomenon through the catalyst crystal. 'Aero Thrust'— The air pressure created from the magical explosion propelled Eru's body forward like a bullet, reaching speeds that surpassed that of any normal man. However, he still couldn't reach the boxes. The boxes shook at a place just beyond his reach, mocking his efforts.

“Don't even think of running... I won't let you get away! My, my plastic models!”

Just a bit more and he could touch them. Eru pounced at the boxes.

He finally grabbed it into his arms, holding it tightly and refusing to let go.

'The box of plastic models' should be something made from thick cardboard.

But, the sensation in his arms felt so familiar, a tenderness that wasn't

too hard or too soft.

For the first time, his mind was filled with doubt and he lifted his head like a spring— — And, he woke up from his dream.

His sleepiness was gone in an instant.

Eru blinked his eyes and sighed deeply. His mind was clear, but, his mood was terrible.

“... It was a ‘dream’. To stop at such a place... Even if it was a dream, at least let me do it until the very end.”

Light shone through the thin curtains and the room gradually grew brighter. It was morning, even though recalling the dream that was becoming vague made him upset; he still prepared to get up from bed out of habit.

At this moment, he realised that something was right before him, and he was being pressed down.

It was too close so he thought it was a blanket. But, looking at it closely, he realised it wasn't ‘something’, but ‘someone’.

Eru slightly lifted his head and recognised who it was. The one hugging Eru in her sleep was the girl who grew up alongside him— ‘Adeltrud Olter’. He understood why the dream ended.

“... Ahh, right, we slept together last night.”

He was confused momentarily, but, remembered the reason in no time.

It happened last night.

He was pulled into a certain incident a few days ago, and Ady was unhappy at being left out.

And, so, she announced that she would punish Eru ‘like a pillow’. So she snuggled into his bed and executed the punishment.

Ady was sleeping soundly without a care in the world, wearing a satisfied expression. Her face looked so happy that Eru hesitated to wake her up.

If he hadn't been rendered immobile by her tight embrace, he might

have let her continue sleeping.

“Ady, it’s morning, wake up.”

It couldn’t be helped since he couldn’t move, so Eru shook Ady’s shoulders to wake her up. A moment later, she opened her eyes in a daze—then smiled brilliantly and hugged Eru tighter.

“... Hmmmm... It’s Eru... Fufu, so warm, so happy...”

Winter is the time when one longs for the warmth of the bed, and the young boy whose size was just right for hugging provided great warmth.

“Time to get up Ady; don’t keep sleeping just because it’s cold.”

“... Just, three more hours...”

There seemed to be no end to this. She rubbed her cheek against Eru’s hair, smiling happily as she dozed off into dreamland once again.

Saying this verbally was useless, so, Eru gave up and adopted drastic measures. He moved his hand under her clothes and used gentle and cautious motions to tickle her flanks and back. Ady, slept for a while, but moved involuntarily in no time, waving her limbs about.

“.....!!! Fu, hya!? Wait, stop, it tickles, Eru, stop!!”

After struggling for some time, Ady finally suppressed Eru’s hands, stopping further attacks. She maintained this position and lowered her gaze, meeting Eru’s, who was smiling gently in the eyes. She blushed and moaned in tears: “Eru~! Boo, hoo, you are becoming mean recently...!”

“No such thing. Good morning, you are finally awake. Come, it is a beautiful morning, let’s get up from bed.”

He then pulled the reluctant Ady up.

She looked displeased with the cool breeze. In contrast, Eru was stretching his limbs and swinging his arms for some reason.

“Now is not the time to lose to the cold. Here, let’s begin the activities of the ‘Silver Phoenix Knights’. I couldn’t do it in my dream, but I won’t give up this time!”

“...? Aren't you unusually excited after forming the Knights Order?”

Seeing Eru full of drive made Ady tilt her head, baffled, but, she still complied with his urgings and left the bed.

“That's right, models are dreams... A dream that is beyond reach, so I have to make a 'substitute'... I won't give up so easily!”

It had been a long time since he dreamed about his previous life.

It gave Eru a weird goal— which was like putting the cart before the horse.

For the time being, it will be a while before his ideas that go beyond the boundaries of worlds take shape.

“Please wait for me, my robots!”

In conclusion, he was full of life today as well.

Arc 5: Centaur Knight

Chapter 19: Uproar in Laihiala Pilot academy

ナイツ&マジック₃

Knights & Magic

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This happened on a certain clear, winter day.

“Well, has the ‘Silver Phoenix Knights’ left for Laihiala, yet?”

The tenth King of the ‘Fremmevira Kingdom’—‘Ambrosius Tahvo Fremmevira’—rested his elbow on the throne as he muttered. He was fifty-seven years old, a very old man in this world, but was lively and youthful in demeanour. However, he was melancholic right now.

“Yes, the carriage ferrying them has set off this morning, they should reach the academy city by evening.”

The one conversing with Ambrose was Duke Knut, or ‘Knut Dixgard’. In the audience room of Castle Shreiber situated within the Capital of Fremmevira, there were several others present besides the two of them.

“Yes, we will need their talent; there has been quite a number of troubling matters recently.”

What was troubling Ambrosius was the recent series of incidents that hit the Kingdom of Fremmevira. ‘C.E. 1277’, this year had been the most tumultuous in the founding of the Fremmevira Kingdom.

What sparked it off was the battalion level Demon beast, ‘Behemoth’ that caused a large scale catastrophe—known as the ‘Behemoth Incident’. That incident resulted in the sacrifice of numerous ‘Silhouette Knights’ and pilots and destroyed a part of the national defence line against the ‘Bocuse Sea of Trees’.

Just half a year later, before the Kingdom recovered from this disaster, it suffered another attack.

Near the garrison situated to the north of the Kingdom, in the Duchy of Dixgard, Fort Casadesus was assaulted by unknown villains. It so happened that the new model of Knights developed after the ‘Behemoth Incident’, ‘Silhouette Knight Tellestarle’, was situated there, and the ‘Red Rabbit Knights’ garrisoned there fought back valiantly. After an intense battle, the fort caught fire and the Knights suffered heavy casualties, including the new models.

This was seen as something that happened because of the Behemoth Incident, and was dubbed the 'Casadesus Incident'.

“... As for those ‘villains’, I don’t know where they came from, but they made loads of trouble for us. To think we, the barrier for the ‘nations of the west’, have to watch our back. It seems the western nations have forgotten the reason why they are safe from the Demon beasts, those ingrates.”

Ambrosius didn’t conceal the displeasure on his face, because the Casadesus Incident was much more problematic than the Behemoth Incident.

The culprit behind the Behemoth Incident was a ‘Demon beast’— the beasts couldn’t be reasoned with and were something akin to a natural calamity. On the contrary, the masterminds behind the Casadesus Incident were rational ‘humans’.

The Kingdom of Fremmevira was the only nation of men on the east side of the ‘Zetterlund Continent’. This nation acted the role of a shield for the western nations, keeping them safe from the invasions of the calamity known as Demon beasts. That was why it didn’t take part in the wars between humans for several centuries. The Casadesus Incident, which pulled them into the strife between men, placed doubt upon the reason for the existence of the Fremmevira Kingdom.

“If it has come to this, we can’t just sit back and wait. Besides, they took a prototype machine.”

The goal of the villains attacking Casadesus was to capture the newly completed prototype. For unknown reasons, that group had their eyes on the Silhouette Knights that were more powerful than the previous generation’s. And after a fierce battle, they had successfully stolen one machine away.

“It is a pity, but it is too late to recapture that machine. What we need to do now is set our sights forward, and move on. However, there is something we need to do before that.”

Ambrosius looked at the group that was waiting behind Knut.

“We need to get the ‘bug’ in the body out. The ‘enemy agent’ who stole the intelligence related to the prototype should be hiding somewhere, right now, in our country... Now is the time for you to shine, ‘Blue Hawk Knights’.”

When they heard this, the people behind Knut raised their heads. This group known as the ‘Blue Hawk Knights’ didn’t have impressive mail or even leather armour. They were dressed like normal citizens. It was strange for such a group to be addressed as an ‘Order of Knights’.

“Yes! Despite having only beasts as enemies for a long time, our ‘skills’ have not dulled with time. We will present results to you as soon as we can.”

A man in the middle of the Knights answered on behalf of the group.

That man had an ordinary appearance with no special features to speak of. The group included young women, old men; all of them seemed to be ‘ordinary’ pedestrians that could blend right into a crowd. They only had one common feature. Their eyes seemed to glint from time to time, and they had a sharp gaze that could see through anything.

Ambrosius, satisfied with their answer, nodded, and turned to Knut.

“Good. Well then, Knut, I will hand the command of the Blue Hawk Knights to you. Do not forget about the failure last time and succeed this time for me to see.”

“... Thank you, Your Majesty, I will definitely capture all of the villains.”

Knut bowed deeply; a sharp light could be vaguely seen from his lowered gaze. The incident was dubbed Casadesus, and Fort Casadesus was situated within his duchy. Furthermore, he had held great expectations for the prototypes that were destroyed.

The Casadesus Incident was a slap in the face, no wonder he hated the villains to the bone.

Like Ambrosius said, this mission not only gave him a chance to restore his honour, it would also allow him to vent his wrath and display his merciless means, famous within Fremmevira.

Ambrose was pleased with Knut's response and his facial expression relaxed.

"I look forward to the performance from all of you. Let's leave that as it is for now; this concerns that 'mischievous lad', after all. Since I gave him an Order of Knights, he will show his true nature sooner or later. For things to proceed smoothly, we need to send someone who knows what is happening to follow him... Right, Knut?"

Knut who kept his fiery rage from showing earlier showed a stiffened face. He wondered what that 'mad dreamer' would do; he was more dangerous than the villains in some ways.

"...Yes, please leave them to me, too. I will arrange for them to work under the perfect conditions."

Even though it was dangerous, they had to do it. To wipe away the shame of Casadesus, the 'results' of the Silver Phoenix Knights were needed.

The prototype that was smuggled out of the nation, and the terrorists that were inside the country; Fremmevira was in an unstable situation. They needed to unite together to face the biggest test since the founding of the nation centuries ago.

While the Capital was having a conference that could shape the future of the nation, the Silver Phoenix Knights were—

"Hey— I can see Laihiala. We are finally back."

The man on the horse said casually. Right now, everyone was moving on a carriage. The group was heading in the direction of one of the cities at the foot of Mount Aubigne— the city walls surrounding 'Laihiala Academy City' gradually became visible. It was home to the largest educational institute in the Fremmevira Kingdom —'Laihiala Pilot Academy'— the home base of the Silver Phoenix Knights, which was comprised of students.

They finally reached the academy city, sighing in relief when they passed through the main gate. After experiencing the construction of the

prototypes, getting dragged into the Casadesus Incident, and the formation of the Silver Phoenix Knights, everyone was highly tense. For these students, this was a heavy burden.

The carriage headed towards Laihiala Pilot Academy, and the group was dismissed on campus. Most of the students stayed in the dormitory on campus, but there were local students as well like Ernesti and his childhood playmates – the twins, Archid and Adeltrud. The three of them walked side by side towards the Echevarria residence.

“Oh—it has been so long since the last time we saw Eru’s home! Ah~ that was tiring!”

“Yup, I want to rest properly at home for a while.”

They couldn’t help cheering after reaching the doorsteps. Eru’s mother, ‘Celestina Echevarria’, rushed out the moment she heard their voices and hugged Eru. Eru also hugged his mother gently.

“I’m home, Mum.”

“Welcome home, Eru. Are you hurt? No? That’s a relief. How was it? Are they happy with the Silhouette Knights everyone made?”

“Yes, they loved it! There were some slight ‘failures’, so it broke down, but they want us to build more.”

“Ara, that’s great. I will work hard for dinner tonight, so you can have a good meal and work hard.”

“Yay, I will look forward to it!”

While mother and son embraced each other, their dialogue was a mess. When Eru’s father saw this scene, he felt at ease, but couldn’t help sighing.

The sun set behind Mount Aubigne and the thick curtain of nightfall covered the entire Laihiala Academy City.

Dinner that night was shared between the Echevarria and Olter families, who were close. The mothers from the two families displayed their culinary skills, filling the table with sumptuous dishes like a carnival. In

no time, the dining table radiated a noisy and cheerful mood.

The group chatted about everything, and most of the food was consumed by the stomachs of the children in short order. The children who were official 'Knights' had great appetites. Both mothers smiled happily when they saw their children's satisfied faces, and started clearing away the empty dishes.

After finishing the meal, everyone was resting. Eru went before his father, Mathias and grandfather, Lauri.

"I have something to tell you, Dad, Grandpa. His Majesty has appointed me as the Commander of an Order of Knights."

That was the opening sentence; Eru's sudden words made his Dad and Grandpa spit out and choke on their tea simultaneously. The children, who were expecting their reaction, stayed well out of range.

"Cough! Cough, E-eru.... What was your appointment again!?"

"The Commander of a Knight Order. To be specific, the Commander of the newly raised Silver Phoenix Knights."

The smiling Eru looked at the stiff Marthias and the dumbfounded Lauri, who was nursing his temple. Chid and Ady watched the entire scene as bystanders.

"... Is, is that so? That's great news, right? But what are you going to do about school? Since you are going to be a Commander of a Knight Order, are you dropping out of school?"

Mathias who took some time to shake off his stiff condition was thinking about this point. 'Dropping out of school' wasn't surprising. Even though most of the people within the nation could go to school, not everyone could complete the entire course.

As the students could decide the length and form of schooling depending on their family situation, there were plenty of people who only studied in primary school and didn't progress to middle school.

Those who had to drop out because of work were considered fortunate.

Although dropping out because one was appointed the Commander of a Knight Order was definitely unusual.

“No, by the grace of His Majesty, my Silver Phoenix Knights will be based in Laihiala. The Order is also special in nature, so, even though I am currently the Commander, I will still be a student until graduation.”

“Eru... I did say I would support you in anything, but this is a bit...”

‘A Knight Commander studying at the Academy as a student’ – this would definitely be the most unique title of all time. Mathias’ head began to ache even though he didn’t drink any liqueur.

“And so, I don’t need to move even though I am a Knight Commander. It is embarrassing to say this, but the Silver Phoenix Knights will use the facilities of the piloting faculty as its base. I think His Majesty will issue the official Order in a few days.”

“Wha, what... Eru, you even took over the Academy...”

Lauri gazed towards the sky; he could almost see the brilliant smile of his old friend on the other side of the clouds. It seemed that his old friend was reverting back to his playful-self after meeting this grandchild of his. Their actions combined were beyond his imaginations. He had already resolved himself that this might happen someday, but he didn’t expected it to be so fast.

Lauri finally recovered from his shock. He straightened his face, which had an expression of pride he had, as the leader of an institute and as an educator.

“... Even if I have to accommodate you, there are things I would not back down from as the principal of Laihiala. Eru, there will be new students entering the piloting faculty next year. If the Silver Phoenix Knights uses the school facilities, where would the new students go? I can’t accept this even if this is the order from His Majesty.”

Lauri stared sternly at Eru, who sat properly and replied with a nod:

“Of course, the Silver Phoenix Knights won’t rob my incoming senpais of their place to study. To be frank, the purpose of the Silver Phoenix Knights

is to ‘create Silhouette Knights the world has never seen before’, just like the Tellestarle. To do so, we will be developing new techniques in the future, too.”

As he listened to the smiling Eru’s reply, Lauri couldn’t help breaking out in a cold sweat. This group had already created the technological breakthrough of the generation, Tellestarle. If they formed an Order of Knights and researched officially, how far could they soar? That was something Lauri couldn’t imagine.

“That’s why we want to pass these techniques to our seniors and juniors in the piloting faculty. It is already a given that our Tellestarle will affect the future development of machines greatly, so, the seniors won’t lose out from learning these techniques.”

This country was changing widely with Eru and the Silver Phoenix Knights at its centre. This overly huge historical torrent made Lauri afraid, but his face looked calm and fresh as if the bitterness from before was not real.

“Eh, if everyone can work together, it won’t be a bad thing.”

“Yes, let’s work hard together! It will definitely be interesting!”

Eru’s smile was so brilliant that it was hard to open your eyes. Several days later, the existence of the Silver Phoenix Knights was officially made known to the Academy by decree of King Ambrosius. This was the start of the huge wave of change washing over the life on campus.

It had been half a month since the Silver Phoenix Knights set up base at Laihiala Pilot Academy.

The pilot faculty students gathered at the familiar school workshop. They had received the official appointment from the King, and were now members of the Silver Phoenix Knights. However, the only thing that changed was their title.

Their life on campus proceeded like normal; no wonder the reality of the situation faded gradually over time.

“Ara... All of a sudden, we are Knights of an Order; it seems funny when

you think about it.”

The ‘Boss’, David Hepken said with mixed feelings. Edgar C. Blanche shook his head.

“Boss, you were there when it happened, I was roped in while lying on a hospital bed.”

“You looked so anxious, worrying whether you would be selected or not.”

“No way, well, probably...”

Helvi Öberg smiled deviously. Edgar’s actions became awkward with her teasing.

“Eh, it was just getting interesting working on the new models. It’s a shame to end it like this, accompanying our Knight Commander isn’t so bad.”

Dietrich Cunitz shrugged. The Boss realised something and clapped his hands.

“Yah, since the silver boy is the Commander and we are normal members, should we watch the way we address him? Like Young Master Commander or something?”

“Guess we should. Maybe Classmate Commander?”

“Too casual. We are an Order of Knights after all; we should call him Knight Commander at the very least.”

“No, no, we should respectfully address him as Sir Knight Commander.”

Before they knew it, the members started joking about Eru. The Silver Phoenix Knights was a strange Order with the youngest Commander ever. Considering the reason and goal of its formation, its discipline was more lax than regular Knight Orders. It was raised hastily after all.

“... I don’t like such weird titles. It feels uncomfortable, just address me as usual. It will make me happier.”

At this moment, the Knight Commander himself appeared. And of course, he was wearing a tired expression.

“Putting that aside, it’s great that everyone is here. I have with me the first mission of the Silver Phoenix Knights.”

“You are rushing us off to work now? You are always like this, so impatient.”

Eru pointed behind him where heavy footsteps and the grinding of metal could be heard. The source of the noise was revealed in no time. What appeared behind him was the two and a half tall mobile armoured suit—the Silhouette gear.

“Oh? Isn’t that the toy you made? What do you want to do with that... Hmm? Hey, could the one controlling it be...”

The Boss’ voice became surprised mid sentence.

Everyone present knew how the Silhouette gear performed wondrously during the Casadesus Incident.

However, they also knew the flaw with the Silhouette gear. As it required a large amount of mana to control it, only a handful with exceptional talent—referring to Eru and the twins—could operate it normally.

But the face of the one piloting the Silhouette gear was Eru’s childhood playmate—the Dwarf boy, Batson.

“That Bat boy isn’t proficient in using magic like you, right? How did he do it? Tell me.”

Even though Batson had played with Eru since a young age, he was just a craftsman and lacked powerful magic abilities.

“Fufufu, this is the result of the enhancement made by me and Batson! Batson, please handle the explanation.”

When he heard that, Batson took a step forward and knocked the chest plate of the Silhouette gear in delight.

“Alright. The previous Motor Beat model could only be piloted by someone like Eru. But this ‘Motor Rad’ is different. A miniature sized Magius Engine is installed inside! As you can all see, even a magic novice like me can operate it!”

No one understood Silhouette gears better than Batson, he knew every nook and cranny, even the Boss had to acknowledge that.

“Ohh! That’s interesting; you mentioned a miniature Magius Engine? Where did you get that?”

“We asked Duke Dixgard for it, and he got one for us.”

Eru made it sound simple, but the Boss simply sighed. The secrecy level of the Magius Engine wasn’t as high as the Ether Reactor, but information related to it was still classified from the general public. Eru was provided with it just because he asked, showing the high expectations they had for the Silver Phoenix Knights. It was a fact that they were part of the organisation, but the Boss wasn’t ready to accept that just yet.

“Fufufu, the important part is this. If Batson can pilot it, it means the Boss and the others, all of the craftsmen can do it, too.”

The Boss squinted his eyes and considered his words carefully. He understood the main point in no time. This Silhouette gear, which could exert a large amount of power as just one machine, was very valuable.

The craftsmen had to work with giant humanoid weapons ten metres in height—the Silhouette Knights. Every component was huge and required a lot of manpower to handle, along with various equipment like cranes and tractors. With the Silhouette gear, they could handle the spare parts with fewer people and cut down on their burden drastically.

“I see, this is getting interesting! Alright, Bat boy, we will make more Silhouette gears, come give me a hand.”

“Yeah, leave it to me! I am also a member of the Silver Phoenix Knights! I will work hard!”

Batson thumped his chest and agreed. And so, the Silhouette gear ‘Motor Rad’ took the first step in becoming the working gear of the craftsmen.

It didn’t take long for the Silver Phoenix Knights to rely on the Silhouette gears so much, that they couldn’t craft anything without them.

As expected, the Silhouette gears performed marvelously in handling

large spare parts. Not just that, either out of convenience or from laziness, the craftsmen did their work directly while piloting the Silhouette gears without getting in or out of it, using it in a way even Eru hadn't imagined.

The teachers in the piloting faculty were shocked by the revolutionary crafting techniques adopted by the Silver Phoenix Knights. In the end, this technique didn't only affect Knight engineering. It was adopted in all sorts of fields.

Since it affected the largest education institute in Fremmevira, Laihiala Pilot Academy, it was only a matter of time before it spread nationwide. From this moment on, the Laihiala Pilot Academy—no, the education system of this Kingdom—had a revolutionary change. The source of the revolution, the Silver Phoenix Knights, was quietly, but surely getting stronger.

The Mountain Range Aubigne divided the Zetterlund Continent in two, with the royal Capital Känkänen at its core. Other large cities such as Laihiala Academy City made up the entire Kingdom. This 'West Fremmevira Highway' was the beginning of it all, the cradle from which the nation was born.

If one was to travel south from these large cities by carriage for several days, one would reach a city far from the populous areas, a fortress city hidden in the thick forest known as 'Dufaure'.

Känkänen and Laihiala were protected by city walls, a necessary defence in the nation surrounded by Demon beasts. Most towns above a certain scale would have defensive walls as well.

Dufaure was the same, but for some reason, its walls were much tougher than normal. Its structure was very unique as well with sparse residential buildings and more than half the city occupied by one single facility. Its scale was even larger than Laihiala Pilot Academy.

The impenetrable walls and the city centred on a giant facility. This was the reason why Dufaure was known as a fortress city.

The true identity of this large facility was the 'National Technological Robotics Laboratory'—or NTR Lab—a research and development centre.

The NTR Lab was the Fremmevira Kingdom's one and only large Silhouette Knight research institute. They were responsible for collating all of the technologies related to the Silhouette Knights and building new models. In the long history since the founding of the nation, they had worked long and hard on their research. The Silhouette Knights requires centuries to develop, so it not only served as a research facility, but also a manufacturing plantation.

This vast development workshop had all sorts of equipment and loads of experimental prototypes. Because of its long history, large amounts of miscellaneous items were piled all over and could only be described as messy. However, machine nerds would definitely jump with glee if they saw this.

Inside messy workshop number one, a large group of craftsmen were completing a certain task. They surrounded four Silhouette Knights with shoddy appearances, its design differing from the mass produced model Karrdator. Were these the prototypes they were designing? That wasn't so. This group was doing the opposite of constructing and repairs, they were taking these Silhouette Knights apart.

“How did they do this... Even the way the Crystal tissues are connected is different; do they have to strengthen it this much?”

“Is this a small arm... To remove something like this after adding it in, unbelievable.”

These machines that were disassembled were already damaged significantly before they worked on them, some of them critically destroyed. The machines were named ‘Tellestarle’—they fell into the hands of the villains during the Casadesus Incident and had to be destroyed.

Logically speaking, they should prioritise repairing them, but the ‘original creators’, the Silver Phoenix Knights’, had already progressed to the next stage like an unreigned horse. These machines were, thus, left behind. In the end, it was decided that they should be given to the NTR Lab for research rather than scrapping them.

“Hmm, I wish we could have disassembled them while they were in

perfect condition.”

The craftsmen looked like kids, who had found a new toy, immersed in the job at hand. Every time they tore down a spare part or found a new structure, it would spark off a theoretical debate regarding the mystery of Tellestarle. And of course, they didn't let their hands idle while doing so.

The machine Tellestarle used the knowledge and concept Eru brought from the alternate world, known as 'Earth', and didn't have anything in common with this world. The mysterious machine that seemed to have fallen from the heavens spurred the curiosity of the craftsmen. They carefully disassembled every spare part that made up the giant machine, greedily making this technology their own.

Despite the passion of the craftsmen, the process of disassembling the giant by normal means progressed slowly. The problem lies in the 'vast differences in technology'. They couldn't understand the strange design and concept that ran contrary to current models and could spend an entire day discussing it. If the 'design plans' that came with the machines were missing, their progress might have been stalled indefinitely.

A new figure appeared in the room full of passionate and determined craftsmen. The person was short in stature with a stout body, his facial expression hidden behind his wrinkles. The carefully braided hair and beard was taller than he was. His eye-catching appearance made it clear he was an elderly Dwarf.

“Workshop Chief Gaizka...”

The craftsman who greeted him had a little bitterness mixed in his face. Workshop Chief 'Gaizka Johannsson' – He was in charge of Workshop number one, the direct supervisor of all of the craftsmen.

“You all sure took your time... Is the work finished?”

The hoarse voice that sounded like the friction of rusty tools sent a chill down the backs of the craftsmen. The group stopped what they were doing as one and looked at each other awkwardly before saying hesitantly:

“We found some interesting parts. Chief, this machine has a structure

not seen in current models, so we need more time to complete our investigation. This is a treasure trove. The more we investigate, the more discoveries we make. If they didn't give us the design plans, who knows how much effort it would take to research this. For example..."

When he noticed his subordinate's bad habit of rambling on when he becomes too engrossed, Gaizka waved his hand to cut him off.

"I see... so how much do you all understand? And is it useful?"

After Gaizka asked that, the craftsman shut his mouth, as if all his rambling never even happened. From their reaction, it was easy to tell there wasn't any good news. Gaizka narrowed his eyes that were covered in wrinkles.

"Eh, like I said, the concept is too different... we could emulate it, but I think we need more time to understand it."

The craftsman didn't continue as he could see the rising anger in Gaizka's eyes.

"... You mean the proud technicians of the NTR Lab couldn't grasp the things made by mere students?"

"That's not it... we already made progress. For example, the way the Crystal tissue is used increases its power and is more efficient."

The craftsman's answer didn't satisfy Gaizka and his expression remained stern. The craftsman was already breaking out in a cold sweat, and he felt like running away when he remembered what he needed to report to Gaizka.

"Actually, Chief... There are a few problems..."

He said timidly. Gaizka's expression eased.

"We can settle the structure part soon... But there are other problems. The Magius Engine seems to be modified drastically; even the scripting engineers can't grasp the entire thing with all their effort..."

"What did you say... Even if they did rewrite the Magius Engine, we can reverse engineer it based on the machine functions, right?"

“We have the design plans, but after looking at the content... We have no idea how they controlled this function...”

Gaizka raised the corner of his eye and the faces of the craftsmen turned as white as a sheet.

“You lot listen up, His Majesty ordered us to develop an entirely new model... an entirely new model! This is the biggest project of the past century!! Once this plan is realised, we will leave our names in history. How can all of you panic at the very first stage!?”

Even though they wanted to explain, they couldn't produce the results to prove it. The craftsmen who were trapped between the wrath of their Boss and reality were soaked in cold sweat, with no signs that the situation might improve.

What saved them from this impossible dilemma were the words of a third party.

“Hey, Gaizka, they will drop their hammers in fright if you scare them like that.”

Both sides reacted dramatically when they heard this. Gaizka turned back instantly while the craftsmen smiled in relief.

“Ara, Director Olver... to think you would come here even though you always complain that your body is getting rusty being glued to the chair all day. What brings you here?”

Olver Blomdahl was the head of the NTR Lab, the director of the entire facility. He had a youthful appearance, wearing a loose robe with a tall and had a skinny build contrasting deeply with the Dwarf Gaizka. He wore a bright coloured bandana on his head, and the most prominent thing was the slit-like eyes of his.

Gaizka wasn't expecting him to come and surprise flashed across his face momentarily. But he concealed that by clicking his tongue before anyone noticed.

“I am here to take a look at the new model, of course. To create an entire new model from scratch was something that has never happened, since

the founding of the nation. I want to listen to a proper briefing, so I made some time to visit. Everyone, this might be a direct order from His Majesty, but rushing it won't do. Progressing slowly is fine; the most important thing is to do the job right.”

The craftsmen practically showed their acknowledgement and returned to their work stations before anyone stopped them. Shortly after, only the bitter faced Gaizka and Olver were left.

“Director, you are making things hard for me. Overseeing the workshop and craftsmen is the authority of the workshop Chief. Bypassing me and giving out orders makes it hard to do my job.”

“Oh, you are right, but I think it's not good to rush. That's why I advised them out of goodwill.”

“I understand your position, director, but don't worry... I will take my leave; I have other places to inspect.”

Gaizka left quickly. Olver watched him leave and shrugged.

“Really, Gaizka is so stubborn... He is capable, but too inflexible. The most important issue in any task is to know your limits, especially in a situation that is obviously a test for us.”

Olver was genuinely curious about the new models, but he had another reason for visiting. He heard the rumours of a new Knight Order being founded, and that group had created the first new model in the past hundred years.

“... It is unbelievable, but His Majesty formed a research workshop that is not part of the NTR Lab and gathered the personnel to develop a new model. On the other hand, we are obviously falling behind.”

In the ruckus of the disassembly operation, no one heard his murmurs. He didn't mean it to be heard by others, anyway.

“Is he testing us? Or... giving us a strong dose of motivation? To think His Majesty is so cheeky, he probably meant to do both. Forming a separate organisation and making us ‘compete’... Am I over thinking this? No matter what, I have to keep my eyes open. Even if we ‘hear it clearly’,

there is only so much we can understand.”

His mutterings were drowned out by the noise and disappeared with the wind.

“Brat... acting so arrogantly because His Majesty likes you... I will show you.”

Gaizka cursed as he took crude strides forward. Anger that was different from what he felt when listening to the report of the craftsmen was welling up.

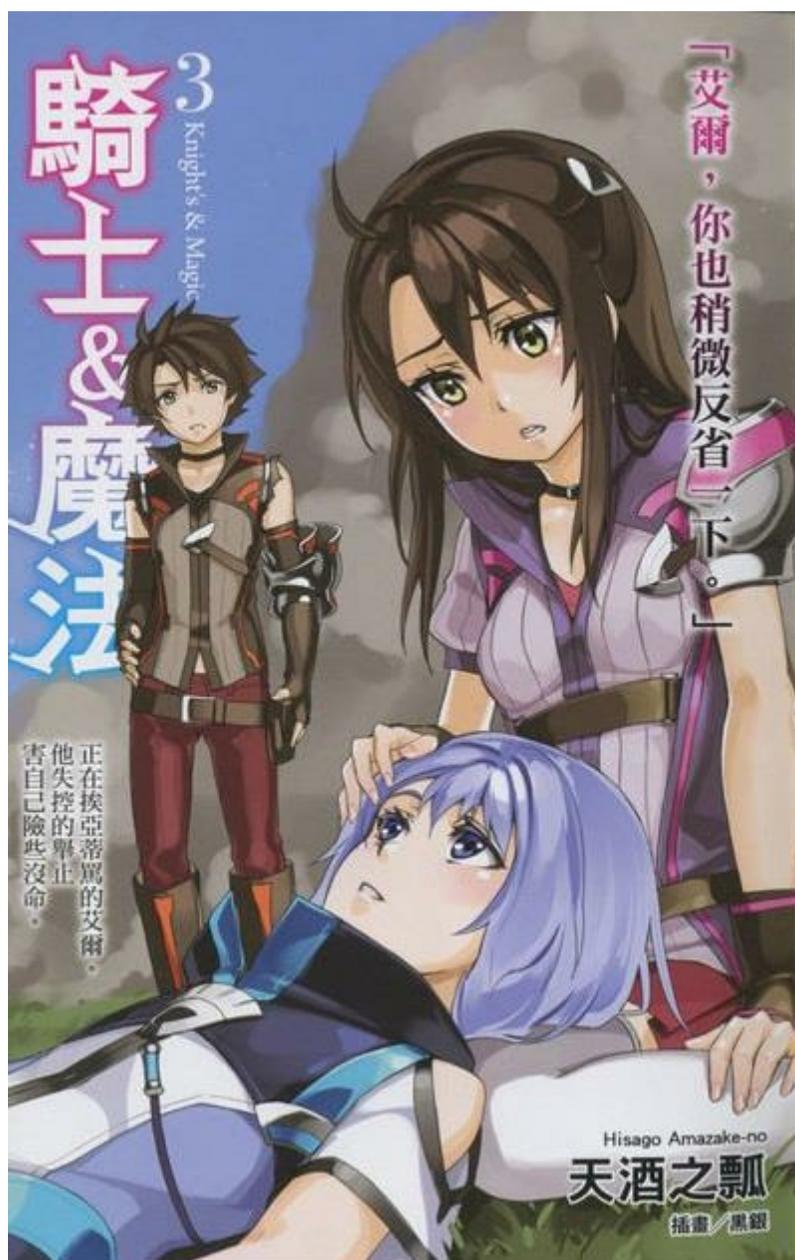
His sunken eyes were burning with wrath as he glared at the wreckage of the Tellestarle with his murderous gaze.

“The next generation mass production model... Yes, if I complete this, my name will be in the history books, I won't need to see that brat's arrogant face, ever...!”

He resolved himself with a heavy heart full of anger and an ominous smile on his lips.

In order to realise his ambition, he shouted at his useless subordinates again.

Chapter 20: Sprint, Silver Phoenix Knights



Beginning of the year C.E. 1278

The new year had just passed into the deep winter, and, it began to snow at the foot of Mount Aubigne.

It wasn't freezing cold, but, the city was still covered in white, enough to deter people from going out. The few people who were out in the streets wore thick coats, walking briskly in the face of the strong winds.

Strangely, there was a group of Knights walking in the middle of the wide road, braving the chilling breeze. They were no ordinary Knights, but, giants taller than a three-storey building— Silhouette Knights.

The residents watched this scene curiously from the houses lining on either side of the road.

Why were they here? In this era, devoid of entertainment, this small matter set off a huge wave. Matters that involved a group of giants would be the topic of interest after meals for quite a while. The Knights' destination was the origin of this city's name – Laihiala Pilot Academy.

In the workshop of the pilot faculty, the noise of hammers rang as usual. However, it was made by huge hammers even dwarves couldn't wield. And, the ones holding them were not people but the Silhouette Gear 'Motor Rad'.

The shape of the Motor Rad had changed drastically within this period of time. It was based on the combat model, 'Model Beat', after all, so, using it for menial work would be too wasteful.

Since everyone was using it greedily, due to convenience, leading to a huge increase in the demand. Hence, the designs were simplified to expedite production.

The changes to the torso were really prominent with all of the armour removed. Only a frame dubbed the 'iron fence' protected the user. The defence was literally non-existent, but the advantage was that the heat wouldn't accumulate, so it received rave reviews in crafting works.

"Hmmm—this is a problem."

The Silver Phoenix Knights that appeared to be sailing smoothly had a problem surfacing from its back.

"That's right... Half of them were destroyed during the Behemoth Incident and modified into Tellestarles after repairs... and, it broke again."

Helvi, who was standing beside Eru, sighed as Eru held his chin, deep in thought.

The commissioning of the Silhouette gears was smooth, but the Silver Phoenix Knights didn't progress much these past few months because of their remaining stock of Silhouette Knights. Frankly speaking, it wasn't enough.

The Silhouette Knights were shared between the Silver Phoenix Knights and the pilot faculty.

Originally, the academy possessed twenty training machines. Some of them were destroyed in the Behemoth Incident, and they only have the repaired Guyale and the remaining ten machines left.

“If we mess with the last ten, the pilot faculty won’t be able to function next year. I’m hesitating to touch them.”

Everyone expressed their agreement after listening to the Boss’ complaints. The Silver Phoenix Knights existed to develop new Silhouette Knights, but, they needed resources to do so. The major incidents that hit them consecutively drained their resources, although, the large amounts of Silhouette gears they made was part of the reason.

“Urghh, I even used my time during class to think of things we need to do, it’s infuriating that we can’t take action right away.”

“No, Commander Classmate, you should take lessons seriously.”

Helvi reminded the strangely arrogant Eru. Dietrich crossed his arms and seemed to remember something.

“Hmm? Didn’t they say they would give us some machines in return? I think I heard that from someone.”

“You are right, that was the plan. They would give us Karrdators in exchange for our Tellestarle... But, Duke Dixgard was the one who proposed that.”

They were smart enough to understand with just that. After all, the Duchy of that Duke was where the Casadesus Incident happened.

“... I see. No matter how powerful that Duke is, he won’t be able to arrange this so quickly. Okay, let’s do Silhouette gear operation training.”

“Okay, I will continue to research and beef up the plans. During class.”

“Why are you insisting on doing that during lessons?”

As they were killing time this way, sounds of exhilaration could be heard outside the workshop. The group looked at each other and then checked outside. A group of students ignored the cold, running over the snow covered campus grounds. Words such as ‘School gate...’ “Group of

Knights...” could be heard. Eru and the Boss realised something was wrong and dashed to the school gate.

Laihiala Pilot Academy used Silhouette Knights during lessons and thus had a place to park them beside the school gate.

It didn't have much chance of being used, but, an army of giants was lined up there, right now. A group of bystanders braved the snow and watched them from afar.

The giants formed up in neat rows, with one knee on the ground. All of them were the mass produced models of the Fremmevira Kingdom—Karrdators. They numbered twenty, equivalent to two squads. This was enough to garrison a small fortress.

The heater function of the machines and the heat that was generated during operations caused steam to rise from the surface of the Karrdators. The lines of giant Knights displayed a majestic aura under the cover of fog. The audience gasped in admiration at the display.

The pilots dismounting from the machines were handing down instructions to the infantry units of the group. Eru spotted a familiar face, and that person noticed Eru, who was making his way through the crowd. Moving his burly body, which was as big as a bear, the mouth covered by a thick beard smiled— this large man was the Commander of the Red Rabbit Knights, Molten Fredholm.

It had been several months since the two last met during the Casadesus Incident. The moment Molten came before Eru, he straightened his face and back in a salute.

“By the orders of Duke Dixgard, I am here to deliver two squads of Karrdators to the Silver Phoenix Knights. Please review the items, Knight Commander Echevarria.”

“I acknowledge receipt of the items, Knight Commander Fredholm. Thank you for your hard work, do send my regards to the Duke.”

The two of them greeted each other, but, they could only maintain their mask of formality for this long. The first to relax was Molten. Looking at

the short boy who was keeping his back straight, he couldn't help it anymore and laughed.

“Pu! Hahaha, you, you acted the part of ‘Knight Commander’ well, Ernesti.”

“Eh— Commander Fredholm ... that's too mean.”

“Haha! Don't stand on ceremony, call me Molten. Since we are both Knight Commanders, age aside, we are equals. In fact, you probably have a higher standing since you report directly to His Majesty while I am stationed at a fortress.”

Eru smiled awkwardly, tilted his head and said:

“Well then, regarding the receipt of the Karrdators...”

“Ahh, we agreed to exchange this for the new models, right? We were delayed because of various troubles, but, I am here now as promised.”

“The Red Rabbit Knights suffered serious damages after the Casadesus Incident. I am happy to accept this, but, is it okay for me to take this?”

After the baptism of the Casadesus Incident, the Red Rabbit Knights were nearly wiped out.

Wouldn't it be a huge burden on Duke Dixgard if Eru's group took all of these Silhouette Knights? Seeing Eru's troubled face, Molten gave him a hearty smile.

“Don't worry; Knights from the other fortresses will fill in the gaps. Also, this is what the Duke said: ‘Others can garrison the fortress, but, only you can perform the task assigned to you. It's easy to judge which side has the priority.’ “

Eru looked behind him at the Karrdators that were expelling steam from their air valves. The giants made from steel and crystal evoked many feelings within him.

“... I understand the Duke's intent. Please relay to him that I will do my best to not let him down.”

“Good, I am looking forward to your results; maybe you can take a look

at my Knight Commander machine next time!”

Molten patted Eru’s head, and led the Red Rabbit Knights back to Casadesus after a short farewell. The twenty machines were controlled by the pilots to stow them away. In the past year, the pilots of the Silver Phoenix Knights experienced many things, but, piloting the official mass produced machines was a totally different experience. It was hectic as they moved them all into the workshop.

The half empty workshop was filled with Silhouette Knights, once again. Being current models that were operated at the front lines, there was no better materials than this.

“In all sorts of way, we can’t back out anymore. This is going to be troublesome.”

“That might be so, but, why do you look so happy?”

Standing before the lines of Karrdators, Eru was grinning from ear to ear. No matter how you looked at it, it was a devious expression.

In a corner of the workshop was a small space boxed out by wooden boards. The members of the Silver Phoenix Knights were gathered in this area known as the ‘conference room’. They pulled out chairs and were seated casually, and the one standing in the front was, of course, the Knight Commander– Ernesti.

“Everyone, let’s attack.”

“Attack, where?”

Chid looked amused, but, he couldn’t tell if his retorts reached Eru. Seeing Eru’s blushing and excited expression, everyone was thinking the same thing: It’s useless to say anything now.

“I’m kidding. However, it is time for the Silver Phoenix Knights to fulfill their mission.”

“Right, we took such a generous deposit already; we can’t give them shoddy works.”

Everyone present nodded in acknowledgement. They were a group that

was formed for 'that' purpose, no one denied on this point.

“Our orders are— develop a machine that will ‘scare NTR Lab out of their wits’. It will be great if it has unique performance and functions, and is easily discerned by its appearance.”

Eru opened the briefcase beside him and took out a stack of paper. He stuck the documents onto the blackboard in the conference room, and said:

“Fufufu, I have a lot of great ideas! We faced many problems during the battle of Casadesus, and unfortunately, a Tellestarle got away. Why is that so? Someone was blocking us? The enemy resistance? No, ignoring all that, I feel the reason is because the speed of the Silhouette Knights is about the same. Right now, there are no machine that specialises in speed in this country. And, so, I plan to develop a new machine that will dominate in terms of speed!”

“Oh, you mean we will be making a light model?”

The speed of Silhouette Knights was largely dependent upon the weight of the machines. Silhouette Knights, which were modeled after humans, move by using their feet. The heavier the burden, the slower it would be; the lighter the weight, the faster it becomes, it was a simple logic. The quality of crystal tissues and the structure of the machine would affect the speed, but, they are mostly negligible. Hence, most people equate speed with light weight.

“Have you all forgotten the example of Tellestarle? If you need something, you have to use the shape that corresponds with it. Even if you have to break out of the mold of the ‘humanoid shape’.”

However, this ‘obvious logic’ only applied to the bipedal humans. In this world, there were many creatures that ran faster than humans. Eru had seen machine designs to the extreme in his past life, and used the best solution that fits this problem that left the deepest impression on him.

Eru took out the ‘design plans’ with the sketch of the machine—

The members in the conference room saw the front view design first.

The upper torso was plainer than they had expected, the balance was a bit strange but that was a small matter. The weird part was the lower body, which was as large as a separate machine. The thick powerful legs were supported by feet designed to support the movement and enormous weight of the machine.

That wasn't the strangest part; from the side view of the plans, they could see that it had 'more than two legs'. Four of them, to be exact.

Below the waist was another creature, something they were familiar with, the animal considered the friends of Knights— a horse.

The design plan proposed by Eru had the upper torso of a human and the lower body of a horse, and was definitely a monster— half man, half horse.

“... Well, will the Silver Phoenix Knights be specialising in creating weird machines?”

After ten minutes of silence, the Boss finally squeezed out a comment that reflected what everyone felt.

“It is weird... No... How should we describe this? What is that?”

“A machine that is fast with a unique appearance.”

“Eh? You are right, but... Eh?”

Dietrich's mind started falling into confusion. Eru's answer was clear and simple in contrast.

When the sub arms were added to Tellestarle, the craftsmen could hear the sound of their common sense crumbling. Right now, what they heard was the death throe after their common sense was knifed. Maybe they were used to it, or maybe they steeled themselves after joining the Silver Phoenix Knights— they accepted this design after feeling a bit troubled.

“I think this will be enough to scare the NTR Lab out of their wits.”

“Not just that, they might burst a vein and die of a heart attack. Taking a hundred paces back... no, a thousand, no, ten thousand, let's say the horse is fine. But, why the upper torso!?”

If they made a Silhouette Knight in the form of a horse, they wouldn't resist that idea no matter how dumb it might be. There was no creature in this world that combines the body of a human with the lower body of a horse— Centaurs were mythical beings after all.

To give life to a mythical being... Was Eru an artistic designer? This worried the craftsmen and sent a chill down their backs.

“Why? Well... because, it's cool!”

““Is that really the reason!?””

Everyone shouted in unison. Eru thought this reason was adequate and didn't expect to be retorted by everyone present. He probably knew that wasn't enough. Looking into the distance, he added:

“Eh, apart from that, let me think... A horse shaped machine is weak in combat, so it is pointless even if it catches up. It is a hassle for another machine to ride it. So in order to be fast and combat worthy, I added the human upper torso. In conclusion, I want to design a Silhouette Knight that can emulate the functions of a Knight on horseback.”

The craftsmen were relieved that Eru had a normal reason. Eru only failed to consider the common sense aspect of it, but, it wasn't impractical.

“Ah— I know what you are trying to say. Your concept should make sense, but let's ignore that for now. Normal people wouldn't install the torso onto a horse for that kind of reason...”

The Boss and the craftsmen studied the remaining design plans, their hearts in a place between resignation and resolution.

“From the design plans, you actually considered the structure seriously... Hey, this is a never seen before design, where did you get this from?”

“The connecting part troubled me for quite a while, but the lower half is based on the bone structure of a horse.”

Eru's knowledge and experience came from him sneaking into the crafting faculty classes, his exceptionally studious attitude made him better than others, but, made others doubt where his ideas came from. His

experience from designing Tellestarle was the main reason why his ability raised so much.

That experience tied Eru's knowledge and concept together. The weight distribution that would affect balance, the inner skeleton that supports the entire structure. While referencing the structure of a real horse, he also considered the power output of the crystal tissue and reallocated it accordingly. The design even detailed the outer skin customised to perform its functions.

“Eh... I am starting to think that making Tellestarle was so much cuter. Come on, coming up with such interesting and reckless ideas won't give me time to put down my hammer.”

The Boss sighed in resignation, making the face of a professional craftsman. He couldn't help smiling wryly but didn't object either. At this moment, Dietrich raised his hand humbly.

“Building the machine should be left to the craftsmen, but, I am worried about something else... From the hard lesson we learn with Tellestarle. If this 'horse' is stolen, normal machines won't be able to catch it, right? In that case, wouldn't this be a bigger problem than last time?”

As the person who experienced that first hand, Dietrich had a complicated expression. He didn't plan on letting anyone steal his machine, but, wishing to avoid that just by being careful would be too naive. They had to consider the worst case scenario of being attacked a second time. If this machine gets stolen and they give chase, it would be like a man chasing a horse, doomed to fail from the start.

“Don't worry, Di-senpai, I made anti-theft measures. Anyway, let's try this out first and work on the other machines if it goes smoothly.”

Eru didn't want history to repeat itself, either. Dietrich simply shrugged after hearing him reply so confidently.

The craftsmen recovered from the shock of seeing the new model design and started working.

They used all of their knowledge and experience to understand Eru's

design, reinforcing and editing it, forging out a rough shape. Seeing the group discussing it fervently, Eru looked satisfied.

“Since we are making an entirely different model, it will take a lot of effort. We can just make one.”

“... You seemed to be hinting at something.”

Eru didn't answer Edgar and deepened his smile. Edgar felt it would be terrifying to inquire further and averted his eyes.

“Let's leave that aside for now, I am very confident in this 'horse'. But, we can't relax with just one machine alright?”

“Yes, I know what you mean... But, we are stretched really thin now, it's impossible to do more no matter how good the Boss is, right?”

Just thinking about the hellish scene last year was enough to make Helvi feel tired. Even if the production difficulty of the horse and Tellestarle were the same, they could still imagine how tough the days ahead would be. The Silver Phoenix Knights had limited manpower; the rest would need to be solved by the passage of time.

“And, so, we will just make one new model that will take a lot of effort, as for the rest... I want to make 'Option Works.'”

Question marks appeared on top of Edgar's and Helvi's heads, when they heard the unfamiliar term. Eru didn't explain and took out more design plans, which he handed to them. On them was a variety of armour combined together that covered the shoulder area of the Silhouette Knight. It looked like outer coat-like armour with some differences. Complicated structures could be seen within the armour plate.

“I dub it 'Flexible Coat'. Simply put, this is the shield version of the sub arm supporting the back weapon.”

“Erm... Ernesti, this is a good idea, but, there is no point in the shield if it is not held firmly. The sub arm is too weak to provide enough defensive power.”

“If that was all, you would be right. Think about this, to toughen the

hardness of the Silhouette Knight, what needs to be done?”

“Strengthening magic... so, that’s how it is.”

Edgar seemed to have figured it out and looked at the designs again. The sub arms were weaker than normal arms; making up for the lack of strength with mana output was the concept of this equipment.

“It will improve the defence capabilities, as for its weakness, it will increase the mana drain while in operation.”

“What an interesting idea. It will depend on the circumstances, but, it should be useful.”

“That’s right. I want to try making several sets of this equipment and installing them. I will need you to test it out and provide feedback for this.”

Edgar and the others nodded in agreement with wry smiles. The pilots would be busy in the coming days, too.

Fulfilling the reason for its establishment, the Silver Phoenix Knights took action to allow Eru’s ideas to take shape. Building and controlling the ‘Centaur’ and ‘Choice Armament’ took all the manpower of the Knights. With everyone engaged, only Eru, who was satisfied after showing everything he had thought of, as well as his happy three friends, Chid, Ady, and Batson were left.

“Yes, let us keep going like this. While everyone else is working hard, let us do what we can, too.”

“Huh!? Eru, there’s more?”

Ady asked with her eyes widened in surprise. Eru threw out a bunch of machine and equipment designs, and now he wanted to do more. She knew that was how reckless Ernesti was, but being this hyper made her go from being impressed to being dumbfounded.

“Well, I did think about it, but there is a small problem.”

“Again? The dark days of endless experiments are here—”

Batson remembered the days of developing Motor Beat, portable bow

cannon, and Anchor wire; tough, but, fun times.

“Fufufu, leave it to me! Chid, Ady, what happens when we use ‘Air Compression’?”

“What happens... We make it explode behind us?”

“Yes, the magic makes use of the recoil from explosions. And, the problem is here; what happens if we use ‘Air Compression’ repeatedly?”

“Eh— let me think, you will keep getting pushed and your speed will get very fast... right?”

Ady tilted her head and imagined herself using ‘Air Compression’.

“Yes, theoretically, it is possible to keep adding energy with recoil and keep accelerating. This not only applies to humans, but Silhouette Knights, too.”

“Are you thinking of piloting a Silhouette Knight and keep on using ‘Air Compression’?”

They knew Eru had the ability to construct tactical level magic scripts. From the flow of their conversation, it was easy to imagine making Silhouette Knights accelerate. However, Eru shook his head and said:

“That would be an ‘incredible tale’, indeed. It would be tiring to keep casting magic strong enough to move Silhouette Knights.”

“Eh, normal people won’t just dismiss it as tiring.”

“Similar to the magic armaments, we will prepare the engravings at home, and then install that on the Silhouette Knights. With this, we can complete a ‘propeller’ that could move as long as there is mana supply.”

“... Erm— that is true, theoretically—”

After hearing the theory, Batson’s face stiffened, while he imagined the steps, processes, and effects. Even the twins looked as if they had just heard a horror story.

“Batson aside, what do we do?”

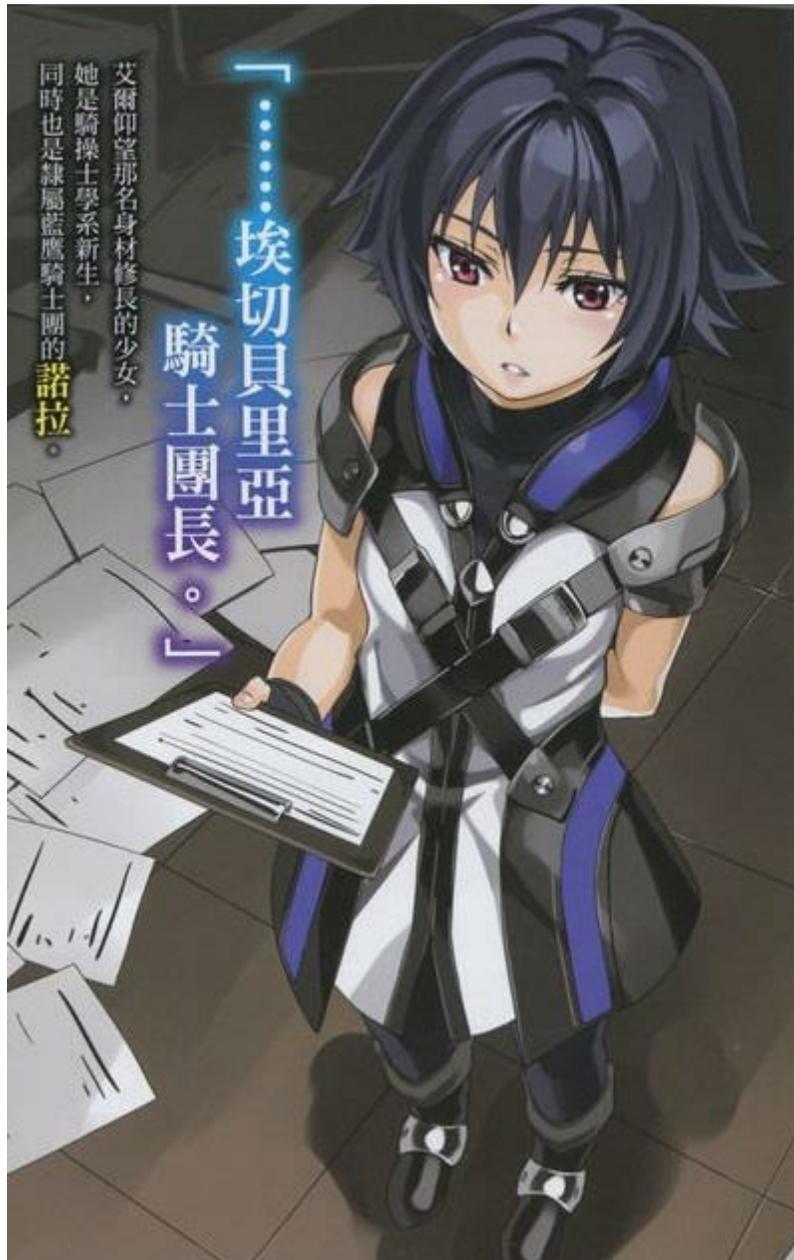
“The two of you are great with magic scripts, so let’s do the engravings

together. I will borrow a Karrdator to test a few days later, we will need Batson, then.”

The three friends looked at each other. Recalling Eru’s record of doing whatever he said, they agreed.

And, so, one new model machine, several new equipment, and a never seen before propeller was brought into ‘this world’ quietly.

Chapter 21: Rival and Determination



The time flew by, and the winter enveloping the Fremmevira Kingdom ended as Spring arrived.

Spring was the time of meetings and goodbyes. The students who finished their courses graduated while freshmen enrolled in their place. Some people advanced to the higher grade while others moved onto the next stage. The old and new students came and went, and others welcomed the new academic year with familiar faces.

The academy was filled with excitement everywhere, and the pilot faculty also welcomed a fresh group of middle school graduates striving to be pilots or craftsmen. They were filled with hope and passion, oblivious to the fact that starting from this year, the pilot faculty would become the

demon world where common sense was nonexistent.

The Silhouette Knights, 'Karrdator', piloted by the instructors strode forward, shaking the earth with every step. The freshmen cadets and craftsmen cheered loudly when they saw this scene. For the longest time, the mass produced Karrdator had been the machine protecting the Kingdom from invaders and was well-known throughout the Kingdom, the term synonymous with the term Silhouette Knight. The new students thought with admiration: As expected of Laihiala, they have the current production model! They were trembling from excitement after coming into contact with these machines.

The group's destination was the workshop the Karrdators walked out from. The workshop looked the same as usual, filled with the heat of crafting, and the repair platform was full of seated Karrdators. At the production platform at the end of the workshop, the craftsmen were busy smithing steel and creating spare parts. The new students peered curiously at the place they were going to train, and tilted their heads curiously, their faces full of question marks.

The craftsmen were creating spare parts— that was natural, it was a scene the manufacturing course students saw many times before. The strange thing was what the craftsmen were wearing, which looked like armour, no matter how they looked at it. It was obvious that armour was a defensive equipment, not something needed during crafting and was an unnecessary burden.

Of course, the craftsmen weren't wearing normal armour, but the Silhouette Gear, 'Motor Rad'. It was commissioned at the end of last year, but the craftsmen were already proficient in controlling it, wielding hammers and knocking it loudly.

When they saw this scene, the new students remembered an incident that happened last year. After all, the predecessor of Motor Rad— 'Motor Beat', was made not by a high school student but a middle school student. If they remembered correctly, the Silhouette gear should be impractical to use. To think it was mass produced and used in manufacturing works; that was unbelievable.

“Oh, freshmen! You are all finally here!!”

As the freshmen stared at the workshop, a greeting that rivaled the sound of the hammers rang out, scaring everyone. Before their eyes was a dwarf student— no, it should be ex-student— with the amazing title of the ‘Silver Phoenix Knights Captain Craftsman’, the Boss, David Hepken. He was short but had a strong and bulky body— the common features of Dwarves. With his arms honed through long periods of crafting work, David emitted an aura like a man crafted from steel. His presence alone was enough to awe the students.

“Haha! I have been waiting, the things that need to be done have been piling up, I look forward to all of your performances. I will train you well. You will be deployed soon, so, get your acts together!!”

“Ahh, hey, Boss, that doesn’t sound caring at all. It sounds just like a threat.”

The sudden speech by the Boss shocked the freshmen; the one lightened the mood with a sigh was Edgar, who was standing beside him. His blonde hair was trimmed short, and his well-worn leather armour suited him, making him look like a veteran. He might be young, but in the eyes of the freshmen, who were even younger, he appeared like a warrior of prestige. By the way, he had the post of ‘1st Squad Captain’ within the Silver Phoenix Knights that was made up of two squads.

“Greetings freshmen, once again, I welcome you on behalf of the pilot faculty. I know you have many things you are unclear of, so I will make a simple explanation. From this year onwards, the facilities within the pilot faculty have been seconded to the special Knight Order reporting directly to the King— the ‘Silver Phoenix Knights’. Everyone here is a member. As for all of you, you are freshmen studying in the pilot faculty, but have also been appointed Knight cadets serving under the Silver Phoenix Knights. I hope everyone will remember this point.”

This opening speech was too much, so the freshmen showed a silly expression at the same time, before erupting rowdily. It was too late; they finally realised the pilot faculty was totally different from the previous

years. The ‘Knight Order reporting directly to the King’ was a shocking title, making them break out in cold sweat. The ordinary school life they imagined didn’t exist here, and the situation developed beyond their expectations.

“Setting the Knight Order aside for now, you just need to act as usual and create Silhouette Knights. You will need to operate the Silhouette Gear sometimes and change the way you do things, so I hope you all work hard to adapt to this.”

“After training on the job for a while, we will need your help in modifying the Karrdator, so prepare yourselves.”

Everyone here were freshmen, and according to custom, they would gain experience by assisting their seniors before doing it themselves from the second year onwards. But the Boss and Edgar skipped several stages, and their situation was becoming direr with time. As if to deal a final blow to them, a bigger catastrophe appeared.

“Ah, fresh... Senpais? You are here.”

In this area full of steel and fire, something jarring appeared— A voice like a chime of a bird broke their trains of thought. The group looked around the area and saw a short young boy walking over, his silvery purple hair swaying in the wind. And of course, he was the Knight Commander of the Silver Phoenix Knights, Ernesti Echevarria.

When they saw Eru, the surprised expressions of the freshmen started cramping up, and it wasn’t because they didn’t know this child. Or rather, they were surprised because almost everyone knew Eru, thinking, why are you here? It all started during the Behemoth Incident last year. To support the middle school Knight faculty students— which were most of the students in the first year of Pilot faculty— the ones who rushed to their rescue were Eru, Chid, and Ady. Even ignoring that, Eru was already famous in the pilot faculty; they knew it was him even though it was their first time seeing him.

Edgar empathised with the freshmen from the bottom of his heart, he cleared his throat and spoke slowly in a cautionary tone:

“There’s another important announcement, regarding the Silver Phoenix Knights I mentioned, the central figure who is serving as Knight Commander... is Ernesti Echevarria over here. I think everyone already knows him.”

In the face of Eru who nodded in acknowledgement, the freshmen couldn’t keep up and became dumbstruck; their troubled faces even made the Boss pity them. Eru noticed the tension in the air and looked at Edgar with an awkward smile.

“Ah— I know everyone has much to ask, but we will begin officially tomorrow, that will be all for today.”

The freshmen didn’t even hear Edgar’s closing words and only understood one thing. Their lives were going out of control.

The Pilot faculty freshmen left gradually after receiving a huge blow on the first day, none of them could conceal their expression of fatigue. However, one of them took a different course of action. That person left the group covertly and walked back to the workshop while everyone was leaving.

“... Knight Commander Echevarria.”

Eru saw the slender and long shadow that reached the side of his feet and turned back. That person was wearing the Pilot faculty’s cadet leather armour, which was newly issued just like any other freshmen. But Eru knew her and nodded with a smile, saying to the Boss and Edgar who were walking ahead.

“Sorry, could you go ahead first? I have something to discuss.”

The Boss and Edgar glanced at each other, and walked back to the workshop. Eru and that freshman headed towards the empty conference room.

“I never imagined that you, who is part of ‘Blue Hawk Knights’, would become a freshman in the Pilot faculty.”

“There was already a plan to send the next ‘contact agent’, and there were other missions, so I was sent here this way.”

Eru looked at the girl who was taller than him, with an expression of comprehension. This person was Nora Frykberg. Like Eru said, she was a Knight serving under the Blue Hawk Knights.

Blue Hawk Knights— this name wasn't made known to the general public. None of the Knight Orders stationed within the Kingdom went by the name Blue Hawk. They don't have a base, and their identity would be what was known as 'spies'. Very few people knew of their existence, King Ambrosius was probably the only person who knew about them completely. As for Eru, aside from the contact agent Nora that was introduced to him, he knew nothing else about the organisation.

This member of the spy organisation joined the freshmen group because of the mission she was tasked with.

"You came to report because there has been some progress?"

Nora flicked her hair, that wasn't too long or too short, and nodded without expression. She then said monotonously:

"I will first report the 'investigation' conducted several days ago. We have completed the re-investigation of the background of the members of the Silver Phoenix Knights and staff of Laihiala Pilot Academy and found several people with suspicious backgrounds."

Around the time when the Silver Phoenix Knights were formed, King Ambrosius issued an order to the Blue Hawk Knights— 'thoroughly investigate Laihiala Pilot Academy'. With the full support of a certain Duke, the Knights started a swift check of the place the villains were most likely hiding, and accomplished their goal.

"... According to the report, the intelligence about the prototype was leaked by a foreign agent that infiltrated in before the incident happened."

"As I suspected. I can't think of any other alternatives. That agent hasn't been here recently, which means the academy had been infiltrated by foreign agents for a long time."

Nora smiled and nodded in agreement.

"My humble guess is that the enemy sends in agents periodically.

According to the reports, we found graduates that disappeared every year.”

The academy enrolled a large amount of students every year, so they could only do the bare minimum for background checks. As long as the students were keen to learn, they would not be expelled, allowing them to learn the latest knowledge with minimum effort. Eru smiled wryly in his heart, certain that their investigation must be absolutely thorough. Nora did not comment on the report itself and continued:

“These suspects have all been ‘dealt with’; we have determined their contact methods as well. The Casadesus Incident dealt a major blow to the enemy as well. Using this chance, we are conducting a nationwide operation to exterminate the enemy forces. To prevent the infiltration of spies, I will assign my subordinates to set up a ‘barrier’ in the academy and city. You won’t have to worry about the same thing happening again, sir.”

The ‘barrier’ was a spy network or surveillance zone. Eru might be good, but he knew nothing about spy warfare and had no idea about countermeasures. And so, he left the anti-spy job to the professionals. Eru was satisfied with their secure countermeasures and nodded with a smile.

“I understand, I will leave all this to you experts. Tell me if there are any problems, otherwise, just report periodically.”

“Understood, I will enroll in the Pilot faculty class as the contact agent. I will report to you if there are any problems, sir.”

Nora bowed respectfully after her report and left. Eru waved to her as she left and squinted his eyes, revealing a dangerous smile.

So we dug the spy out? It is not good to think this is ‘boring’, but I was hoping they would struggle a bit more. Eh, they will come after me one day, so I have to be prepared.

It was fortunate that no one knew what Eru was thinking.

Lost in thought, the distracted Eru didn’t realised someone was watching him from the shadows. That person hesitated for a moment before leaving the conference room.

“... Eru looked so happy...”

The figure that left the conference room, Ady, walked away dejectedly.

“Eru was always treated like a toy, but I have never seen him chatting so happily before...”

This was a serious problem. Most girls would pat Eru’s head when they talk to him or treat him like a soft toy, so he didn’t have much of a chance to have a serious conversation. Together with his unique hobby, the choice of topics was limited, and few girls could keep up. This meant that person was a serious threat to Ady, or that’s what she thought.

She thought about that girl chatting with Eru: Tall for a girl with a slender body type, monotonous in her speech and with pleasant facial features. It was dangerous indeed. Despite the danger, Ady realised something.

“... That’s right! The girls that talk with Eru are all tall. Could it be... he prefers tall girls!?”

It might be rude to Ady, who felt she realised some important truth, but that was a misunderstanding. Eru was just shorter than the people around his age, including the girls. Regrettably, no one was there to correct this misunderstanding, which was usually the job of her twin brother.

“If that is so, I should stand a chance too! But if Eru only likes girls who are cuter than him, I will be troubled...”

Eru was shorter than average, but Ady was taller than girls her age. She didn’t mind it, but with Eru, who was an example of ‘what is cute’, she would compare herself to him. From the fact that she didn’t exclude Eru since he was a boy, Ady had a rather unique interest.

“Ah, but he looked so happy, what did they talk about... The only topics I know Eru is interested in would be Silhouette Knights and the Silver Phoenix Knights.”

The intelligence reports of the Blue Hawk Knights were of the utmost importance, but Ady didn’t even know they existed. This was beyond her imagination.

“A strong rival... I can't take it easy! But I don't understand Silhouette Knights that well... The most I can do is pilot the Silhouette Gear. That means I will only be the support. Hmm, a Knight would be better. To stay together with Eru, I will need a Silhouette Knight, too! I have to get my hands on one... That's it!”

Ady thought of a great idea and waved her fist. She ran out with determination in her eyes.

“Eru! I want to pilot a Silhouette Knight, too!”

That night in Eru's room, inside the Echevarria residence.

Eru and Chid were leisurely engraving scripts onto a silver plate to create the propeller that was mentioned earlier. In contrast to their crazy intention, their casual and innocent demeanor made them look like kids doodling.

In response to Ady, who made such an announcement after showing up, the two of them stopped the movement of their hands and lifted their heads.

“What's up? Isn't that announcement like Eru's 'I love Silhouette Knights' trademark?”

“Think about it carefully Chid, we are also members of the Silver Phoenix Knights, so there's nothing weird about me wanting to pilot a Silhouette Knight! Or rather, I want to do it!”

She stood up straight and said passionately, making the other two grow more suspicious. As expected, Eru wouldn't ignore any request related to Silhouette Knights.

“I don't really get it, but you are welcome to if you want to pilot it. Hmm, let me see... then I will ask the two of you to help.”

“Yeah! I like you the most, Eru!!”

“Eh? Me too? I don't mind.”

With Ady, who pounced over, hanging on him, Eru took a design plan from the table. Displayed before the twins was the new models the Silver

Phoenix Knights were working on— ‘Centaur Knight’.

“Please help me build this Centaur Knight, and pilot it after it is complete.”

Facing the ‘masterpiece’ before her, Ady, who thought she would be starting with a Karrdator, turned stiff with a smile plastered on her face.

“Hey, Eru, you want us to pilot the new model immediately? It is interesting, and I am fine with it, but why us? There are veterans like Edgar-senpai and Dietrich-senpai; why not let them do it?”

Chid studied the plans closely, a little taken aback. Eru nodded, expressing that he understood Chid’s concerns.

“This Centaur Knight is very unique. It has the upper body of a man and the lower body of a horse, after all. And of course, the controls will be totally different; its difficulty will be beyond that of Tellestarle.”

The twins had never piloted normal Silhouette Knights before; it was easy to tell how difficult it would be to control the Silhouette Knight that was half man half horse.

“So I changed my way of thinking— since this is a machine that combines two elements, then let ‘two people pilot it’! Since it is still under construction, we can install pilot seats for two. The body of the horse is big, so there should be room to spare.”

At this current stage, there were no Silhouette Knights with dual pilot functionality no matter where you look. Since Silhouette Knights had a human shape, the controls would be linked to that of a single pilot, so there was no use for double seats, something no one had ever considered. If the Boss heard these words, he would definitely get a headache. Unfortunately, Chid and Ady didn’t really understand Silhouette Knights, so they accepted Eru’s words easily.

“Of course, since it will be two people controlling one machine, it will require great teamwork. So Chid and Ady, who are twins would be the best choice. Also this is my real goal...”

For them, the following words had a much greater impact.

“I want you to construct the control script for the Centaur Knight while controlling it.”

Writing magic scripts. The two of them had learnt all sorts of scripts from Eru, but they couldn't write one themselves. They didn't expect to bear such a heavy responsibility for their first assignment.

“My final goal is to let one pilot control it like a man riding a horse. I wanted to make the relevant control devices, but it was harder than I thought. It is still in the foundational stage. So I want to control it manually, then adjust the script slowly... It will be a big help if you are willing to try it.”

“Can we do it...”

It was natural for Chid to be hesitant. It would be okay if Eru did it himself, he was capable and had a good track record, but the twin's capabilities were still unknown. And this would affect the new models of the Silver Phoenix Knights, something created through the efforts of everyone. For them to take part in the final stage was a huge responsibility.

“Don't worry, leave it to us! But Eru, isn't it hard to construct scripts?”

“Both of you could control the Silhouette Gear, the theory is the same, don't worry. Leave the basics to me, I will teach you the steps as well.”

Ady, who picked herself up, lifted her hand, ignoring the troubled Chid. Chid almost fell, stared at her, asking her to think about it carefully. The personality of the twins were different, but they had many similarities. Ady was full of drive, what about Chid?

He wasn't unwilling but was more cautious. He had an interest in Silhouette Knights, too and wanted to try piloting one. Seeing Ady's smile that seemed to say 'I know what you are troubled about', he had no choice but to raise both hands in surrender.

“Ah— I get it! If we are going to do it, let's make it a good one!”

“That's right! Fufu, we will be doing it together with Eru right? I'm looking forward to it!”

After that, their life became more hectic. They started helping Eru while training and preparing for the day when the Centaur Knight would become complete.

Several days later, Eru headed to the workshop with the amended design plans.

The moment they saw the design plans, everyone, including the Boss, shouted hysterically. The special Centaur Knight design now had an additional 'double pilot' design, making it extremely strange.

Even though the place was in an uproar, no one stopped Eru. The group that decided in the end to follow the plans had adapted well into the Silver Phoenix Knights.

It had been about half a month since that day.

Eru rushed excitedly to the workshop after class. His job everyday was to check on the building progress of the Centaur Knight.

"Hello Boss, have they arrived yet?"

"Oh, silver boy, the twins are here and already working on it."

After greeting each other, they walked into the deepest corner of the workshop.

The Silhouette Knight repair platform was removed, leaving a spacious area. The half assembled machine occupied the corner— it was a monster that was slowly growing in a womb, waiting for its chance to leap onto the stage of history.

The machine itself was very large, almost touching the ceiling of the workshop that should provide plenty of clearance. Due to its unique shape, it couldn't use a normal repair platform and was held in place by numerous chains hanging from cranes. At a glance, the upper torso, which had been stripped of its armour, looked normal, but if you shifted your gaze down to its lower body, the weirdness jumps exponentially. The figure with four legs bent in a resting position made it obvious that the shape wasn't human.

Larger than the Karrdator lined at the side, the weird alien shape was the Centaur Silhouette Knight, officially named Tzendorg, the latest machine being developed by the Silver Phoenix Knights.

“Ah, it’s Eru! Fufufu— you’re just in time! Watch this!”

“Now is a crucial time, Ady, don’t look around. Come on, we are starting it up.”

Ady became excited after spotting Eru from the corner of the Holo monitor, while Chid calmed her down. They were in a small, dark area, which made it hard for them to move freely. That was the cockpit of the Tzendorg.

Chid leaned against the backrest of the seat and opened his eyes. He used the dim light in front of him to see the figure of his sister and asked:

“The control stick and Magius Engine are connected. What about your side?”

The space extended narrowly to the front. Ady was seated in front of and a step lower than Chid.

“Yes— it’s just like what Eru taught us, but it sure is difficult. I will do my best!”

She released the control handles she was gripping tightly, sat up, and breathed deeply. Chid was sitting in a normal pilot seat found in standard Silhouette Knights, but Ady had to straddle over her seat like riding a horse. The only difference was that the control handles were situated to the front left and right, so she had to lean forward to grab them. Simply put, she looked like she was riding a bicycle from earth.

“Let’s start the experiment. Everybody please move back!”

Chid shouted through the microphone and the craftsmen in the area dispersed. At the same time, a Karrdator was on standby for safety, with Eru clapping and cheering from a distance.

“... Tzen-chan, let’s go! Stand up—!!”

The Ether Reactor churned faster with the howl of the air current, filling

the entire body of Tzendorg with mana; the crystal tissue screeched with the sound of friction, and the four legs planted onto the ground firmly. The scene was like watching a newborn horse, its legs trembling to maintain balance as it stood up.

“It will work, it will work, right? Just like body strengthening... think of the position of the muscle... smoothen it, like this? This way; then here, exert more force...”

The chains supporting the body dislodged one by one. Tzendorg don't need their support anymore and stood up with its own strength.

Its movement was very stiff. As everyone had seen a live horse before, the clumsiness of the machine was obvious to them. That might be so, but Ady, who was controlling it on the inside was working very hard. She trained hard under her teacher, Eru, and the mana she built up using the Silhouette Gear kept supporting the incomplete Magius Engine. She might not have noticed— but this was the skill known as ‘Direct Control’, one of Eru’s techniques. Right now, all she could do was use all of the skills she learned to do her best.

It might be slow, but Tzendorg still took its first step. The craftsmen raised their hands to cheer them on. As if it was confirming each step it took, the alien shaped machine was born into this world.

When Tzendorg was just a step away from leaving the workshop, Ady felt something strange and Tzendorg’s body started leaning to one side. She couldn’t exert strength through the legs no matter what she did and couldn’t support the body.

“Eh, why...!? Tzen-chan, work hard!”

Ady’s cheer was in vain, Tzendorg lost all its power, and its knees collapsed. Before the Karrdator standing by could assist, the enormous body fell onto the ground with a loud bang.

“Boo hoo, sorry, everyone worked so hard to build it...! Sorry, Eru was looking forward to it, but I failed...!!”

“It’s fine, don’t cry. The most important thing is that both of you are

unhurt.”

After being rescued from the immobile Tzendorg, Ady had been sitting on the ground wailing. For Ady, who wanted to dive into the production process of Tzendorg with Eru, this failure was a heavy blow. Eru had been consoling her all this while, but she showed no signs of calming down.

“Ara, that was scary. Boss, was this our fault?”

In contrast, Chid was taking it easy as usual, glancing sideways at the Karrdators working together to move Tzendorg back to the end of the workshop. The Boss crossed his arms and replied to his query.

“... No, this isn't your fault. I think the problem is that this horsie is too big.”

“It's bad if it is too big?”

Chid didn't understand and asked with his head tilted.

“That's right, be it the structure or the ratio of crystal tissue, it couldn't be compared to normal machines. It is too big, so the Ether Reactor couldn't supply enough power for the horsie to consume.”

The failure this time wasn't because of the twin's piloting error. From the very beginning, Tzendorg had a critical flaw related to the standard structure of the Silhouette Knights.

Silhouette Knights are man-made giants. However, the size of the parts that could be made by man was limited. In the end, Silhouette Knights could only be assembled from smaller parts. To maintain the structural integrity of the frame, Silhouette Knights needed to continuously consume a part of the mana generated by the Ether Reactor, so it could keep on using strengthening magic. If the strengthening magic was cut off, the Silhouette Knight wouldn't be able to support its own weight and would crumple easily.

Normal Silhouette Knights don't need to consider this problem; even slightly bigger machines wouldn't have any issues. But Tzendorg was different, it was about fifteen meters in height, far exceeding the standard height of Silhouette Knights and had the lower body of a horse as well. It

was larger than normal humanoid machines and was very heavy.

This meant the mana drained by the strengthening magic was too much and cannot be ignored.

“... That’s how it is. I took a look; just the mana consumption from the connection of the frame used all the mana from the Reactor. Also, the amount of crystal tissue far exceeds normal machines, this is a mana glutton. Eh, even though the mana reserves are proportional to its size, but that was drained in no time, so it became like this after a few steps.”

The Boss moaned and scratched his messy hair. At this moment, Eru, who finally calmed Ady down joined the conversation.

“I see, so the strengthening magic increased the consumption... Oh, so that’s why the size of the new versions of the Silhouette Knights didn’t change much, this is the best size for one Ether Reactor to support.”

“Damn it, you still have time to be moved by this? This is bad, the problem is that the bigger the frame, the more mana it consumes. If you want to solve this, you have to shrink it to the size of a normal Silhouette Knight.”

“If we stick to the size of standard machines, we can’t make the body of the horse, the upper body would be the same size as a child too. The combat ability would fall drastically, and there would be no reason for Tzendorg to exist.”

“I know, but what can we do?”

The Boss groaned bitterly. This was a bigger problem than what they faced when making Tellestarle. They couldn’t come up with any effective ways to solve this.

“... Is Tzen-chan broken?”

Ady looked at Tzendorg that was been carried back to the end of the workshop and muttered. Regardless of their original objective, no one would want to see a machine they built turning into a pile of junk.

“It won’t be. Eh, this is a difficult issue, but we need to figure it out...”

“Sorry Eru, it’s all because of me...”

Ady started tearing up as she spoke. Eru smiled gently while looking at her, then hugged her slowly and soothed her like a child:

“It’s not your fault, Ady. I should be thanking you for figuring out what the problem was. I only realised it because of your efforts. Fufufu, I have to settle this, so troubling but so interesting!!”

“... Yes, thank you, Eru!!”

Ady, who regained her smile, hugged Eru back, the fluttery feeling of hugging each other made her smile brighter— But Eru tunneled through her arms and pulled out a blackboard.”

“Well then, to solve this problem...”

Ignoring Ady, who was stiff and in a weird position, Eru’s chalk squeaked on the blackboard. Eru, who had a plan, sketched a simple design. It surprised the Boss who was watching from the side.

“... Hey, boy, did you memorise the design plan of the horsie?”

“...? Yes of course, how could I forget?”

A curse-like passion allowed Eru to possess extraordinary memory with regards to things related to robots; especially Tzendorg, which was designed by him fervently from scratch. Seeing him detract from common sense so readily, even the Boss was shocked.

Eru paid it no heed and muttered as he amended the designs on the blackboard:

“Eh, it can’t be helped. I didn’t want to do this, but there is no other choice.”

If they maintained the size, Tzendorg wouldn’t be able to function normally, and they couldn’t increase the output of the Ether Reactor by customising it either. So what should they do? The answer was simple, and Eru had already thought about it before.

Even so, his expression remained gloomy. After staring at the plans and pondering for a moment, Eru sighed and turned around.

“Oh? What is the matter? Since you have a solution, why are you hesitating?”

The Boss relaxed after seeing him come up with an idea so easily, but his face changed after hearing his next sentence.

“The size of the frame won’t change, the Reactor won’t change, there is only one answer left... increase the number of Reactors. By installing two Ether Reactors, the supply will double, and it could support Tzendorg even though it is so big.”

He said it so simply but was a bit reluctant. The Boss was frozen on the spot. The twins couldn’t keep up with their conversation at all.

After a long time, the Boss finally said with a moan:

“You... want to put another heart inside this monster... ah, this fellow is a machine, so there is no need to be concerned with such ideas...”

The hard to read face of the dwarf was shocked with widened eyes, and then he exhaled deeply. When all the air had been expelled, the Boss’ face was no longer shaken.

“I actually don’t recommend this method. But we need to complete this project first. We will then use this as the base to judge the structure, script and power consumption, and try to adjust it so just one Reactor will be enough.”

Eru’s soft mumbles didn’t seem to be targeted at the Boss, but it looked like he was trying to convince himself.

“So you know what hesitation is? Why? It’s rare to see you this reluctant.”

“Because the Ether Reactor is mind numbingly expensive.”

“... Ahh!? You are right, but is that the problem here!? Your common sense was missing all this time, and now you are worried about the cost!?”

“Isn’t that obvious? The cost is very important, alright? Increasing the number of Ether Reactors means the price will skyrocket. Just making one is fine, but there will be no hope of mass production if the cost is too high,

right?”

“How should I put this... You have a point, but it is hard to accept when you are the one saying it.”

Even though he was complaining, the Boss didn't dismiss the idea. Double Ether Reactor— this had never been done before, but to solve this problem, there was no better method than this. The only problem he had was how to explain this queer idea to everyone.

“No matter what, since we have decided to do this, we need to amend the design plans. Tzendorg has excess space in its frame, but we still need to drastically change the deployment and shape... Hmmm— it's getting interesting! I'm fired up for tomorrow's lessons.”

“Hey, pay attention in class.”

The Boss' retort was slightly off topic, but it was lost on the excited Eru. Eru then turned his head to look at the twins.

“It will be your turn after the modifications are done. Chid, Ady, let's work hard together.”

“Oh, leave it to us.”

“Yeah! I will make sure Tzen-chan walks steadily next time!”

The Boss looked at the three raising their arms up high and turned his attention to the blackboard. On it was weird things such as the Centaur, double Ether Reactor, and the double pilot seats. There should be a limit to how outrageous the design was. But the tougher the objective, the more valuable it was for craftsmen to challenge it. The Boss smiled at his own thoughts.

“Ara, I am becoming rather nosey.”

He then shouted energetically, gathering all the craftsmen in the workshop. A few minutes later, the workshop was filled with screams.

The rollers of the crane rattled noisily moving along the tracks covering the roof of the workshop. A piece of metal that looked like armour hung from the end of the chain and was pushed by a craftsman operating a

Silhouette Gear. Somewhere in the workshop, someone cursed as he was nearly crushed by the metal piece and moved away with hurried steps.

The atmosphere in the workshop became heated, everyone was focusing on finishing the Centaur Silhouette Knight— Tzendorg. It occupied the deepest corner of the workshop at the beginning, but right now, it was placed openly in the middle.

Most of Tzendorg's outer skin had been installed; a horn could be seen protruding from its forehead. Its design was similar to the mythical creature. Compared to its thin upper body, its lower half was large and heavy. Every leg was as thick as a Silhouette Knight's waist, it was obvious from a glance that it had extraordinary mobility. The waist was covered by several layers of metal plates, making it look like one giant metal piece.

Structurally speaking, the 'heart area' comprising of the cockpit, Ether Reactors, and Magius Engine were placed in Tzendorg's lower body, even though it was normally placed in the torso of a Silhouette Knight. This was because the double pilot seats, double Ether Reactors, and the enlarged Magius Engine could not fit inside the upper torso. Of course, this design was only possible because of Tzendorg's enormous body.

On the verge of completion, Tzendorg's majestic and strange appearance made people stop in their tracks. The new craftsmen rushed around glancing at the figure of their senpai from time to time as they did their work quietly.

They were awed by the sight they saw before them, but became shocked when they saw Tzendorg. As they completed the training and work assigned to them, they finally got the hang of it. They even learned how to make Motor Rads recently and constructed their personal machines. They used them timidly in the beginning but were entranced by their convenience over time. Habit is a horrifying thing.

A Knight carrying goods made his way through the students wielding hammers, searching for something. Blonde hair that was slightly long, a thin body with leather armour that was intentionally dyed red. He was the captain of the Silver Phoenix Knight's 2nd squad, Dietrich. After surveying

the workshop, he inhaled and called out to the freshmen working nearby.

“Hey, have you seen the Knight Commander?”

The freshmen shook their head in unison when they heard Dietrich’s question. The Knight Commander was a prominent figure in all sorts of ways, they would know if he was around.

“Is that so? Thank you... Even his childhood friends are not around, where did our Knight Commander go? I hope he didn’t come up with some weird idea.”

However, reality was cruel. What he was worried about turned out to be true.

The Silver Phoenix Knights were about to finish the Centaur Knight, Tzendorg. The craftsmen were busy with this project, while the Knights focused on their training and instructing their juniors, living a hectic life every day. In the mean time, the Knight Commander, who had nothing to do was bored out of his mind.

Please recall that this person made all sorts of things aside from Tzendorg. Such as the new equipment he was developing with his childhood friends— and to perform tests, something horrifying was happening.

The sky was devoid of clouds, and the sunlight was warm; a great weather for a picnic.

This was a forest some distance from Laihiala Academy City without any people. A giant paced through the sparse forest with heavy footsteps. It was the mass produced model belonging to the Silver Phoenix Knights, the Karrdator, and the pilot was Eru. Three Silhouette Gears were jogging behind it, two Motor Beats were piloted by Chid and Ady, and the Motor Rad was operated by Batson. Once they left the city and entered the forest, there would be the risk of encountering Demon Beasts. But even taking that into account, their equipment was still overkill.

They walked as if they were enjoying a morning stroll for a while and finally reached an open space inside the forest. A duel level Demon Beast

might have resided there in the past. Eru's Karrdator unloaded the goods it was keeping, which was opened by the three Silhouette Gears speedily. The strange tube-like equipment was installed onto the Karrdator, which was kneeling down on one knee. The tube was about as thick as a man's hug. The shoulder and waist of the Karrdator was modified in advance and had equipment that could secure the tubes firmly.

"Alright, this should be everything. It is secured, but how should I put this..."

"I'm done here too— that's right, how should I say it..."

"With so many holes, it feels weird, right?"

The three of them completed their work and looked up at the modified Karrdator. The plain appearance of the Karrdator became surrealistic with the tubes sticking out of it.

"Let's begin the testing then. They say that slow and steady wins the race, I am hoping to see good results."

Eru, who was in the pilot seat, either couldn't see the appearance of the machine or decided to ignore his three friends. Whichever it was, he still activated the Karrdator to test the mysterious equipment.

Immediately, the sound of air being sucked in could be heard from the tube, which startled the birds in the forest, making them take flight.

Chid, Ady, and Batson watched from a safe distance as the Karrdator lowered its stance and started running. The exertion of the crystal tissue pushed the ten metre tall giant body into a sprint, reaching top speed in no time.

The test came next. Eru smiled fearlessly and squeezed all the additional buttons on the control stick at the same time.

In that instant, the view of the world changed.

The interior of the tube was the shape of two funnels fused together, the front half was engraved with the script for Air Compression, sucking in air and compressing it before funneling it into the thin part in the middle; the

back half was engraved with a script that produced a forward propelling force through an explosion spell. The compressed air would be transformed into a flame jet stream.

Using 'Aero Thrust' to compress the air, explode it with flame magic, and using the high speed stream of air that was produced to propel the machine forward, was the theory these tubes, dubbed 'Magi Jet Thruster' by Eru, worked under.

The first thing they saw was a bright red flash before a long flame tail emerged. After a moment, the ear deafening roar reached them.

The activated Magi Jet Thrusters revealed their true colours, spitting out flames nonstop. The compressed air expanded consecutively, and the reactionary force from the jet stream accelerated the Karrdator. No, it wasn't enough to describe it as acceleration; 'speed burst' would be a more adequate description.



“Wooooaaahhhhhh!?! Full— speed— ahead—!?”

The force far exceeded what the creator, Eru, expected, dragging the Karrdator along with abnormal speed. The heavy force of inertia pressed onto his petite body, affecting the accuracy of his controls. All this while, the Magi Jet Thrusters followed their given script obediently, generating force without restraint.

While accelerating endlessly, a small turbulent airflow lifted the Karrdator upwards. It lost its balance and became air bound. Normally, it would fall back down shortly after, but the wild beast equipped on the Karrdator overcame the pull of gravity with overwhelming force. Eru was panicking because he was disoriented from the inertia when the machine flew towards the sky freely. The flight didn't take into account the physics of aerodynamics, and it was maintained by the explosive propelling force. Eru did all that he could to control the machine so it wouldn't be swept

away like a leaf in a typhoon. Unfortunately, keeping the machine from falling apart mid-air already took everything he had.

The Karrdator flew into sky with fire trailing behind it, like a meteor flying in the opposite direction. Chid, Ady, and Batson were dumbstruck by the awe-inspiring scene despite Eru's dangerous situation.

The development of the situation was full of impact but ended abruptly. This was because the Magius Engine that was faithfully carrying out its assignment in place of the panicking Eru. Before the mana pool ran dry from intense consumption, the limiter was triggered, cutting the mana supply off. Immediately, the flames erupting from the Karrdator vanished, and the machine started falling because of the gravity.

“Wahhhh–Ahhh!!”

Ironically, the stoppage of the Magi Jet Thrusters gave Eru the chance to regain control. Ignoring the speed for now, it was lucky that the propeller stopped before it climbed too high. The failing machine returned to the ground before it fell apart, but it landed roughly with no drop in speed. Braking at such high speed caused sparks to fly from the legs of the machine, the ground scraping away the outer skin of the Karrdator like a nail file. The legs would reach their limit soon if this went on. Realising this, Eru made the machine fall forward and roll on the ground to disperse the impact.

The Magi Jet Thrusters bent and broke with every tumble, but Eru could not spare the effort to care. The Karrdator rolled like this for a few hundred meters before it slowed to a stop, lying on the ground with its limbs spread out.

“... Is Eru still alive?”

“Hyaa!? That looks bad! Help him!!”

After their surroundings turned peaceful again after some time, the three childhood playmates finally regained their wits.

Eru who woke up locked eyes with a upside down face.

“Eru... You are finally awake, are you alright?”

He checked his surroundings and saw the Karrdator, which had become a lump of scrap metal. He noticed that Ady's thighs were under his head. He was sleeping on Ady's thighs all this time. Eru shook his muddled brain as Ady brushed away the hair on his forehead.

“Ady... I, am fine... But, ughhh, it won't do. This equipment won't work... Rejected!... We don't need to scrap it, but we need to redo it.”

“Eru, you need to reflect on your actions.”

Getting complaints from an unhappy face by someone worried about you, even Eru couldn't refute it. He sat up and awkwardly shifted his gaze, seeing the terrible state the Karrdator was in. It still had the shape of a human, but the outer skin was out of shape and tattered, and the leg armour was on the verge of falling apart. Because of the heat from the friction, some of the parts were welded together. It couldn't be used anymore and was all torn up. Eru made it out safely and only lost his consciousness thanks to his regular training and physical abilities, please don't try this at home.

When he realised Eru had woken up, Batson, who was picking up the spare parts that had fallen all over the place, walked over.

“Oh, are you okay, Eru? That was close, if you had stopped the thruster any later, you might have turned into a star.”

“... No, it stopped by itself. This super glutton burned through the mana reserves in one shot and stopped on its own!! That's how it is. No, this is a complete failure!!”

“Ahh, calm down Eru! There, there, don't be mad.”

Ady tried her best to restraint Eru, who was losing his cool after recalling the situation prior. He struggled for a while and became quiet shortly. Turning behind him, he saw a long line traced across the ground. Everyone was once again relieved that Eru was safe.

“Erm, Eru, how about giving up? This is too dangerous.”

Ady was really concerned about Eru and tried convincing him— however, Eru was still Eru. He lifted his head from his arms and regained his

passionate expression.

“Okay, reflection time is over. I was too rash; things need to be done in steps. First would be the scale of the script and the review of the output. I need to create a new control structure to fit the situation. Mana consumption is still a problem, so it will be controlled just like the output... No, is there a way to work around this by modifying the machine structure?”

His brain was probably constructing a new plan. Seeing how unfazed he was after a major accident, Chid and Batson couldn't help looking up at the sky. This guy is hopeless. Eru moaned for a moment, and then turned to the other three as if he just thought of a great idea.

“By the way, do you want to try it?”

“Who would want to?!”

The answer from the three of them echoed through the forest.

On a side note, when the Silver Phoenix Knight members saw Eru piloting the tattered Karrdator back to base, they thought he was attacked by the enemy and entered high alert.

In a corner of the workshop within Laihiala Pilot Academy, a table and chair that were obviously made hastily were placed there. A name plate that was similarly rushed work was placed on the table, with the words ‘Knight Commander’ scribbled on it. Eru sat on the chair all by himself, looking at the people around him anxiously.

“... Do I have to stay here?”

“Yes, just sit there, Knight Commander, Sir.”

“Yup, with you around, everyone will become tenser.”

“That's right; a Knight Commander has to be steadfast just like this.”

“Haven't you learned your lesson after creating such a big mess...”

And of course, around him were the pride of the Silver Phoenix Knights—the Dwarf Chief Craftsman and the well trained pilots. They were giving off an aura of pressure, standing at the side stiffly while forcing Eru to

remain in his seat.

“You are all so mean...”

“Moron! Who knows what you will do if we don’t keep an eye on you!”

Eru looked at the machine besides him with grudging eyes, the tattered Karrdator. After that terrible accident known as the Magi Jet Thruster experiment, the machine could should walk on its own, but inspection showed that it was a lost case and strictly prohibited from use– the subject of the prohibition was the Knight Commander. Also, this person said he was going to do some motion tests and ended up totaling a Silhouette Knight. Hence, he was being ‘punished’ by everyone in the Knight Order and forced to do his ‘Knight Commander duties’.

“Don’t worry, I am reflecting on my actions. Look, I amended the design plans.”

“Enough already! How is this reflecting!?! You stay here!!”

The Boss grabbed the design plans Eru took out from nowhere. Their Knight Commander was extremely talented and was full of passion; he will do things lacking in common sense like taking on Demon Beasts by himself or challenging Silhouette Knights without piloting one. However, he usually overcomes the obstacle with his powerful capability that verges on the fringe of being cheat-like, so no one attempted to stop him. But what would happen if he was to fail– everyone was losing their minds because Eru almost triggered a tragedy.

“Eh, fine, I get it. I will help with simple tasks for the time being.”

Eru who worked hard to finish the improved designs was unhappy, but he probably felt guilty for causing the accident and offered to help obediently.

“... We can’t let Eru have free time, let’s finish up Tzendorg first. I remember there are a lot of other equipment, we will let the freshmen handle those designs. In conclusion, don’t let him barge into other projects.”

They didn’t have a better solution right now. To avoid their Knight

Commander from stirring up bigger trouble, everyone moved with a strange sense of tension.

At the same time, Duke Knut Dixgard received a report. The content was: 'The Knight Commander of the Silver Phoenix Knights attempted to pilot a Silhouette Knight to fly, but he failed.' Knut's head started to hurt after hearing the report.

"... That Ernesti kid, after the precedent of Casadesus, doesn't he plan to hide the new designs?!"

"What do you think Sir? Should we subtly remind Sir Ernesti?"

The member of the Blue Hawk Knights reporting to him— Nora said expressionlessly. But for an elite agent like her to propose this idea, it showed that she couldn't take it anymore. Knut sighed, thought about it before waving his hand.

"... No, forget it; the Silver Phoenix Knights will clean up the mess. The things made by that kid will spread throughout the nation one day. For now, just concentrate on dispatching any foreign interference."

"Is that fine?"

"That sort of person will challenge enthusiastically whenever he meets a bottleneck, but will lose his drive if he gets bothered by trivial matters... His Majesty was like that in the past."

Seeing him look into the distance while muttering, he must be reminiscing about the past. Nora who sensed his mood decided to not probe further.

"Just let him do what he wants, he will definitely produce results. All we can do is prepare the best environment for him..."

Although tired, Knut was firm in his attitude. Nora bowed respectfully and agreed with him.

Fortunately for everyone, nothing happened during this period of time which passed peacefully. Eru obediently designed the various equipments and didn't do anything that will cause grand explosions.

The members were cautious in the beginning and became distracted because of their busy schedule. The second incident crept in with this chance.

“Ah, Edgar-senpai, please wait.”

Someone called out to Edgar, who was heading out to train the freshmen as usual. He turned towards the familiar clear voice and as expected, Eru was standing there. But unlike usual, he was holding a lot of short sword in his arms and gave one to Edgar.

“Please take this.”

“What? Short sword... That’s rare, made from silver?”

Edgar looked at the short sword given to him carefully; it was decorated elegantly like a ceremonial weapon, and was made of pure silver. Although silver was a type of metal, it was far softer than steel, not a suitable material for weapons.

“It can be used as a weapon, but it has other functions. Please follow me.”

Before he could enquire further, Eru started walking towards a Karrdator. Edgar couldn’t conceal his puzzlement, but he still followed him, believing that he will know if he does.

The two of them came before the normal pilot seat of the Karrdator. Since he lost Earlecumber during the Casadesus incident, Edgar had been piloting a Karrdator and was familiar with this place. He followed Eru’s instruction and sat down, going through the launching procedures with his trained hands.

After tightening his harness and adjusting the position of the control stick and pedals, he pushed the output control stick, shifting the dormant Ether Reactor and raising the output to the active level. The strange thing happened here. Normally, the trembling of the Reactor could be felt from moving the control stick, but he couldn’t hear the noise of air being sucked into the vents. The Ether Reactor remained dormant. The Ether Reactor start up failed— for Edgar who had plenty of piloting experience,

this was the first time he encountered this.

He started to panic and reattempted the startup procedure. But no matter how many times he tried the results were the same, he couldn't startup the Reactor and the machine. His anxiety rises every time he tried. At this moment, he remembered why he was here— the Knight Commander who asked him to come here, who was currently sitting on the open chest armour with a mischievous smile.

“... Hey Ernesti, did you do something to this?”

The boy clapped his hands, a gesture indicating to Edgar that he was right. This was a little revenge from Eru who was being lectured. He enjoyed himself for quite a while and then lowered his head towards Edgar who was glaring at him with folded arms.

“Yes, sorry. Don't be upset, I will reveal the answer now. Eh, please look at your feet, there is a dent, right? Please insert the short sword I gave you into it.”

Edgar did as Eru said with an unhappy expression. When the silver sword went in all the way, it made a clicking sound and fitted in, followed by the startup noise of some device. Shortly after, a strong groan came from beneath the pilot seat; it was the familiar heartbeat of the Silhouette Knight. The Ether Reactor finally started churning out mana and started up.

“This tremour... Great, the Ether Reactor started up. It didn't move at all just now... No, wait, so that's it. Ernesti, this sword is a key, right?”

“Correct. I said this before, right? ‘I will prepare a device preventing the Silhouette Knight from being stolen’, this is the result... I dub it ‘Pattern Identifier’.”

Facing the grinning Eru, Edgar could only sigh deeply and raise both his hands.

“Ernesti... You really scared me. Pranks are fine, but could you be gentler, this is not good for my heart. How does this work? Will inserting any sword be fine?”

“No way, if you don’t use that sword, this Karrdator won’t be able to move. It looks like a sword, but there is an engraved script inside. And this indenture has a script that corresponds to this. If the combination is incorrect, the Reactor won’t start and the Magius Engine won’t work either.”

Without the mana supply from the Ether Reactor and the Magius Engine, the Silhouette Knight won’t be able to start up. This was an anti-theft script which was different from scripts that produce magic phenomena. It is incredibly difficult to decipher it by working backwards. In other words, as long as this sword was secured, the Karrdator won’t get stolen.

Edgar tried pulling the silver sword out, and the Ether Reactor returned to dormant mode and the Magius Engine became unresponsive. Leaving the prank earlier aside, he was really impressed this time.

“I want to ask, is there any meaning in making it a silver sword?”

“Engraving the script requires a certain amount of space, and it was boring carving it on a plate. so I thought of going for a modern design. Engraved scripts and silver work well together, and we are the Silver Phoenix Knights, so I used silver to make the short swords to reflect our name.”

Edgar studied the short sword carefully. With this device, one of the tragedies that happened in Casadesus could have been avoided— that ‘stolen machine’ flashed across his mind. He lifted the short sword as if in prayer and sheathed it carefully.

‘Pattern Identifier’— this anti-theft device for Silhouette Knights became spread nationwide shortly after it was developed, and the use of a silver short sword as the key became the standard. As for the silver short sword becoming a term synonymous with pilots, that was something that happens quite some time later.

After being grounded from the development of the Magi Jet Thruster which Eru considered as important as life, Eru bore a greater grudge than expected. After researching the Pattern Identifier, Eru devoted his

excess energy into the development of other devices.

That might be so, but no matter how much he progressed, he couldn't complete his development without any craftsmen. When Tzendorg was about to be completed, some of the craftsmen had spare time. The freshmen who were getting the hang of things also became reliable, and devote themselves into the development of these equipment. These additional equipment of the Silhouette Knights were known as Option Works.

Following that, the ones becoming busy are the pilots doing the testing. They boarded the Silhouette Knights with various types of Option Works outfitted and stepped onto the training arena to experiment.

Edgar and Helvi were among them.

“Edgar, are you ready? I will be coming from the front.”

The two Karrdator faced each other, with Helvi's machine raising a sword. She only used one hand, but it was a cautious stance that was hard to attack head on; the Karrdator that Edgar was piloting nodded slightly but didn't move or adopt a defensive stance.

Helvi's Karrdator was an original model; Edgar's machine had a strange piece of equipment. The additional armament covered the back to its shoulders. It was a defensive shield consisting of armour plates with a different shape supported by sub arms— the Flexible Coat prototype. It was made by assembling several steel plates together, but it fitted the rugged appearance of the Karrdator, giving it a steady impression.

“Alright, you can begin whenever you are ready.”

After receiving the signal, Helvi immediately hacked at Edgar from the front. The blunt training sword were swung powerfully. Facing her accurate attack, Edgar gauged the adequate distance from his pilot seat before opening the switch added on the top of his control stick.

The additional armour morphed speedily once it received the command and protected the head and upper part of the shoulders with a slight noise. Helvi's sword hit the raised armour and slipped down to the sides

with sparks. The mobile additional armour used strengthening magic to reinforce its weak mobile parts, displaying powerful defensive capability by withstanding a direct hit.

“Well done. Next, let’s try a more powerful attack.”

“No, please wait, I have to check the results... It used a lot of mana; this is a prototype after all. Could this defensive equipment be an unexpected mana glutton? The defence is strong enough, but it does not move smoothly, I have to inform Ernesti... Okay, sorry for the wait, let’s try an attack from a different angle.

Structurally speaking, invoking strengthening magic will drastically consume mana, so the design gave up on defending attack for long periods, changing it to deflecting the attack’s direction to lessen the mana used. The preset moves are all slightly tilting to the side.

Helvi thrusted fiercely several times and was parried without fail. She became excited and started getting serious. Although Edgar was using defensive equipment, this was a spar between Silhouette Knights and any mistake could be serious. But neither of them minded. Helvi ‘believed’ Edgar will parry her attacks and Edgar lived up to her expectations. Their trust in each other turned the equipment testing into spar training.

“... I think that side is getting scary.”

Some distance away from the two machines in battle mode, Dietrich was performing tests for other equipment as well. Helvi was getting less hesitant in her attacks and her strikes became fiercer, escalating the situation. He wished Edgar all the best and turned the red Silhouette Knight towards the silent target board.

“Alright, me too...”

Guyale followed Dietrich’s control and swung its fist in a punch. At first glance, he didn’t have any equipment, but the weird thing was the long distance between the fist and the target he was aiming at. Since the arms won’t grow longer, he couldn’t hit the target, his punch fell short. It was puzzling why he was so fired up about this.

However, he didn't perform this action with no reason. The instant the arm reached maximum speed, a piece of metal shot out from the gauntlet underneath the fist, that was shaped like two stiletto that were joined at the bottom. The speed was very slow, would this kind of attack work?

At this moment consecutive explosions of compressed air erupted behind the metal piece, the reactionary force accelerating it, pushing it to hit the target with a dull thud. The target board that was covered with steel shook and creaked from the impact. The target board was quite heavy, which meant the weapon was effectively strong. But the weapon has yet to display its real prowess.

Dietrich, who confirmed the target, squeezed the additional trigger on his control stick and the devices installed on Guyale's wrists performed the tactical level script in accordance to the command it received. Looking closely, a steel wire containing silver nerves was attached to the metal piece and was connected to the gauntlet. Aside from the ability to transfer mana, it also has the property of metals, which was conducting electricity.

Lightning magic was casted from within the gauntlet, its power comparable to real lightning. Electric current was transmitted through the wire towards the target, making it sparkle from the heat before exploding.

This weapon was named 'Lightning Flail', combining an upgrade of Anchor Wire with Silhouette Arms, it was the state of the art tazing weapon.

"Wah, that is scary! It is sneaky, but I like it."

The lightning flail proposed by Eru was a rather unique design among the Option Works. Unlike the Flexible Coat or Back Weapon which were installed externally, it was built internally. Because of the assembly nature of Silhouette arms, it was never installed inside the Silhouette Knight itself before. The engraving on the silver plate not only lack durability, but it took up a lot of space and was a heavy and fragile equipment. Installing this inside the machine will make it a weakness, not something the Silhouette Knights which were designed for combat should have.

Lightning magic scripts were more complicated than fire magic,

meaning the engraving would need to be even larger. Simply put, unlike the flames which would fly towards the target after shooting it, the lightning magic needed scripts to direct it.

However, Lightning flail solves this problem with the use of Anchor Wire. After hitting the target with steel wires, the lightning would then be directed to it, omitting the part of the script which directs the attack. This not only miniaturises the silhouette arm, but it was successfully built into the machine itself.

That might be so, but only the melee combat Guyale equipped with larger armour could pull this off. To install this on a Karrdator, it would require a massive overhaul of the armour which was inefficient.

“The movement of the arms is still heavy... But the attack can be hidden, which is a great feature.”

The biggest advantage of the in-built Lightning flail was the difficulty to discern it from its appearance. As the silhouette arm component was protected by the strong gauntlet armour, it was more durable than the handheld version. A powerful lightning strike when the enemy least expects it, it was a rather evil equipment.

Aside from Flexible Coat and Lightning Flail, they also designed and tested many Option Works, but most of them turned out to be failures. By doing self reflection and refining the design, the equipment was gradually completed.

And so during this period of time, a bunch of Karrdator with strange equipment appeared frequently around Laihiala Pilot Academy.

“Alright— time for the routine inspection. First is movement... Reactor one, Reactor two output stable. The distribution readings... are within safety parametres.”

Chid checked each the reading displayed before the pilot seat habitually. While he was doing so, the groan of the Ether Reactors filled the entire cock pit, turning from a hum into a rumble loud enough to shake the air. It then quieted down and maintained at a steady pace.

“Magius Engine performance check complete—! The crystal tissue is functioning okay... alright, Tzen-chan, open your eyes—!!”

Next was the energetic cry of Ady, followed by the wall in front of the cockpit lighting with a glaring brightness. It only seemed glaring because the two of them had gotten used to the darkness. That wall— the Holo Monitor displayed the scene captured by the eyes of Tzendorg— the craftsmen who were watching from a distance as usual, and the squad of Karrdator who were standing at the side.

There was a period of time when Tzendorg couldn't operate because of the insufficient mana supply. To overcome this, they used multiple Ether Reactors, something that had never been done in history before. The scale of the project was enormous, but with the efforts of the craftsmen, they finally completed the alterations.

Recently, Chid and Ady spent every day doing testings.

“We will be speeding up a little today, right? Fufu, it is about time Tzen-chan shows its true ability!”

“I heard that after this is completed successfully, only the inspection of the details would be left. I'm counting on you.”

Ady grabbed the control handles tightly once again and slowly push the pedal down, making Tzendorg stand up. The two Ether Reactors repeatedly pump air in and out; all its armour creaked against each other noisily. The horse got up from its sitting position with the screech of crystal tissue contracting. Its feet stamped heavily onto the ground, supporting its huge body. Tzendorg's movement was strong with no signs of unsteadiness. The chains supporting the machines broke away one by one, releasing this monstrosity from its bounds.

The twins had steady control. Using Direct Control taught to them by Eru personally, with the help of the specially made Magius Engine, the Centaur was completely tamed by them. This abnormal Centaur machine and the brand new concept of double pilot controls won't be so easy to master for normal pilots. This duo also has the benefit of not having prior habits engrained into them from piloting normal Silhouette Knights.

Tzendorg moved its body slightly after standing up as if it was checking the situation. After completing the inspections, it began striding forth slowly. This machine has more than twice the weight of the standard models, the weight of its steps were unbelievably heavy, shaking the earth with its every move. Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, it made its way out of the workshop.

And finally, its body basked under the sunlight.

The unfurnished dark green skin and the lone horn protruding from its head reflected the brilliant sunlight. The image of a man combined with a horse was the portrayal of the term, 'speed and might'.

However, that was the end of this moving scene as a dangerous smile came from the megaphone of Tzendorg, giving everyone present an ominous feeling. Just as they feared, Tzendorg's hind leg started digging into the ground, just like a horse getting ready to charge.

"He, fufufu, full speed ahead—!!"

"Ah damn it!! At least watch your surroundings, wahhhh, everyone evacuate—!"

Not having ingrained notion of Silhouette Knights was an advantage for the twins, but having no concept of it at all wasn't a good thing. They sprinted out from the workshop unhesitatingly. As the surprised craftsmen ran away in a panic, Tzendorg started galloping like a real horse, leaving the dumbstruck members behind in the dust.

"That's dangerous! Damn it!! Ahh, those two are definitely the friends of that boy!! All of them are the same!"

"Hmm, the movement when sprinting at full speed is fine, good job."

"Erm, Eru, I don't think that is the issue right now—"

After glancing at the big and small dwarfs' posture of looking at the sky, Tzendorg charged outside the Academy City in one shot.

Equipped with crystal tissues that doesn't feel fatigue and double Ether Reactors churning out massive supplies of mana, Tzendorg ran without

slowing down. The scenery that flashes by like the wind filled the twins with exhilaration.

“Amazing, amazing! Tzen-chan is fast!”

“Haha! So cool! This is too good, Tzendorg!! Alright, let’s take a lap around the forest!!”

“Agreed!!”

After Chid and Ady returned from their joyride, they were greeted by the iron fist of the Boss.

Chapter 22: Presentation of the New Model



C.E. 1278, the beginning of autumn.

Shortly after sunrise, a convoy of carriages appeared on the Fremmevira Highway shrouded in the morning fog.

This merchant convoy mostly consisted of fully loaded carriages with giant figures surrounding them. They were the merchants and their escorts operating in Fremmevira Kingdom— Merchant Knights. In Fremmevira Kingdom, even the merchants require the protection of Silhouette Knights. The scene of them travelling around the area with several Silhouette Knights in tow resulted in their nickname of Merchant Knights.

Basically, merchants were energetic and tend to wake up early. This was

because the faster they move, the more time they have to conduct business. This habit remained unchanged even in this foggy season.

“... What...? There is something ahead, halt!”

As the Merchant Knights were slowly advancing on the highway covered in the morning fog—

The Silhouette Knight taking point suddenly shouted out a warning.

The convoy stopped on his command. The hired pilot escorts were great in detecting any disturbances; there must be something unusual happening if they sensed anything.

The pilots on the escort machines cautiously reached for the swords at their waist. Their vision was too blur, so they had to listen carefully with their ears.

The convoy stopping made the surroundings fall into a silence. A sound from afar could be heard.

The pilot frowned.

His ears told him that was the sound of the horse's hooves, but from this distance, it was too loud. It was like a gigantic and heavy horse galloping.

Moments later, he could make out a giant figure moving in the fog.

Something was running with the loud sound of the horse's hooves. They couldn't tell from the shadowy figure, but the escorts assume it to be a Demon Beast and drew their swords for battle. Protecting the carriages behind them, they tried to shift their position and plan their escape. It was natural for them to make such a judgement, the shadows in the fog was as large as a Silhouette Knight after all. They might not know what this thing resembling a horse was, but it must be at least a Duel level Demon Beast.

As the escort machines went out in order to buy time for the carriages to turn around, the Demon Beast probably noticed their presence. It slowed down with a large sound, and stopped to face off against them.

The escort pilots gulped anxiously. Even through the fog, they could tell the opponent had the shape of a horse. It must be nimble, capable of

shaking off the escorts and attacking the carriages.

But the moment of tension didn't last long. As they were facing off against that Demon Beast, it turned and—

“Neigh—!”

The Demon Beast left the dumbstruck escorts behind with a sharp child-like neigh. The pilots felt as if someone pulled a prank on them. Even so, they didn't dare to relax and kept their guard up. Only when they could no longer hear the sound of the hooves did they restarted their journey and hurried to the next city.

With this incident as the spark, more and more people met this mysterious Demon Beast on the west Fremmevira Highway. With the increase in witness accounts, rumours of the horse-like Demon Beast spread across the various cities, including Laihiala Academy City where the Silver Phoenix Knights were based.

“I have been hearing that rumour everywhere, talking about a horse-like Demon Beast.”

“Yeah, we are famous!”

“Wait, wrong, they don't know that was us, so we are not really famous right?”

“Is that so? Isn't that the same?”

Hidden in the forest were three children, two of them shaking their black hair as they quibbled loudly. The other figure that was a head shorter stood up to stop them, his silvery purple hair swaying in the wind.

“How should we put it... Anyway, the timing is just right. We completed the testing and can't hide it any longer, let's finish this.”

They weren't standing on the ground or the trees, but a steel structure that was hidden in the forest.

The standard armour revealed its identity as a Silhouette Knight. Its body was much larger than normal Silhouette Knights and most strange of all was its horse shaped lower body. Simply put, they were standing on the

real identity of the 'Highway Demon'.

“So we are finally going to do it?”

“Yes, in order to complete His Majesty's orders... Let's scare them out of their wits.”

With time, the widespread rumour of the Highway Demon died down like the receding tide. People no longer talked about it with interest. When the rumour started once again, it was in a totally different form.

When the rumour of the mysterious Demon Beast was at its height, Fort Dufaure to the south of the Royal Capital Känkänen was quietly basking in seething heat. As expected of Dufaure, the headquarters of the national Silhouette Knights development agency— National Technological Robotics Laboratory. The city was filled with numerous facilities related to Silhouette Knights.

There were three research development workshops, the vast warehouse stores all the materials required from research to manufacturing. Apart from these, there was also a training arena for the testing of Silhouette Knights. The scale of the arena was top notch within the Kingdom. Right now, ten Silhouette Knights stood on the field. They were the source of the heat, and was the symbol representing the city's reason for existence.

The training arena was a traditional stone made structure— a rectangular space covered with stone walls. There were seats on the walls with a maintenance facility nearby. The Silhouette Knights were of the same model, on standby in the middle of the arena. The giants made of crystal tissue and steel maintained their position of kneeling on one knee, waiting silently for their master's command.

The machines were rugged in appearance, which was the style of this country. They had no discerning features, designed to be durable and tough, giving it a feel similar to Karrdators. But on the whole, it was obviously different from Karrdators. Its armour was sleeker and efforts were clearly put into the welding and joints, giving it a polished and smooth impression. With the design of the Karrdator as its base, it was understandable why it bore a resemblance. Using the technology of

Tellestarle, this was the next generation of mass produced machines— the prototypes of the model 'Karrdator Dash'.

The chief of the 1st R&D workshop, Gaizka Johannsson, looked at the rows of Karrdator Dash with mixed feelings. They looked like the relatives of Karrdator, but the content differs completely. Aside from using part of the frame, the other parts were newly crafted. The only parts they could salvage from the original was twenty percent, which was a clear display of how much modification and effort the craftsmen of NTR Lab went through to reach this stage.

Karrdator Dash inherited all the functions of Tellestarle— which was the strand crystal tissue, capacity frame and back weapon.

Of course, it wasn't a simple task of replacing all the crystal tissue with strand crystal tissue and installing all the new functions. They carefully adjust the position and amount of crystal tissue within the frame. Gaizka and the rest realised the increase in strength output will improve attack power, but it has the disadvantage of affecting the controls. Simply put, the Tellestarle was too strong which gave rise to the problem of losing control easily. Hence, they decrease the amount of muscles, increasing the power of the machine to just 30% above standard.

Since there were fewer muscles, the machine had more space available. It was filled with capacity frame, improving the unresolved issue of mana storage and increased consumption.

Not only that, with the fervent adjustment to the restricted strength output, Karrdator Dash's controls improved dramatically.

As of now, the Dash had shaken off its notoriety of a wild horse, and grown into a tamed machine similar to the Karrdator, drastically improving the flaws of the Tellestarle.

Gaizka and the craftsmen worked through the stages one at a time, but a final part troubled them to no end. Unexpectedly, it was the back weapon that had been fully developed when the Tellestarle was finished.

Frankly speaking, they had been focusing on improving the Silhouette Knight, but the back weapon was different. This equipment was both

unique and mysterious, and was perfectly designed, leaving no space for modification. Just analysing the Magius Engine ‘courtesy of Ernesti’ overwhelmed them. The only thing they could do was to duplicate it in tears. The Dash had two Silhouette Arms on their back— Culverin, its structure and design was copied from Tellestarle which made the craftsmen unsatisfied— a small bit of dissatisfaction at the very end. The culverin moved smoothly, reaching the goal of mass production.

Increased strength output, improved armour, all sorts of new technology and the tamed controls which was the special feature of the Fremmevira Kingdom. The Karrdator Dash was the combination of all the technology within NTR Lab. Seeing them standing tall filled the people of 1st R&D workshop with deep satisfaction and confidence. Even the narrow minded Gaizka was excited, even more so for the others.

The current Karrdator Dash could definitely become the new massed produced model. Witnessing the birth of a new model after a hundred years was a great honour for all the craftsmen present. They had no doubt about the greatness of the Dash and the prospect of NTR Lab from hence forth.

In a building far away from the R&D Lab, a figure was watching the Karrdator Dash in the arena. He was the director of NTR Lab, Olver Blomdahl.

There was another person inside the room. Maybe it was because Olver refrained from speaking or that the visitor was waiting patiently, the atmosphere differs from the passionate air in the arena and was much calmer. Olver lowered the blinds and took a seat behind his extravagant table.

“This is a great day and should be celebrated.”

“Are you not going to join them, Sir ‘Watchmen’?”

“No, the noise would be too much for ears like ours. It is tiring to keep putting on my disguise.”

As they converse, the other party stood quietly in the centre of the room. They had a similar air about them; maybe it was their facial features, or

their silky blonde hair— and their long ears. Their ears seemed sensitive to sound, and must be hard on them to stay in a noisy environment.

“Alright, since we know the recent circumstances of our opponent, we can’t take it easy anymore. I am the highest ranking officer of this agency after all.”

The other man showed an clear expression for the first time, which was confusion.

“Sir Watchmen really thinks... that the rumoured ‘Highway Demon’ is that?”

“I know why you think otherwise, I want to doubt it, too, but for the news centred on the vicinity of Laihiala to surface at such a time...It's hard to not be suspicious.”

Olver’s eyes had similar doubts as he answered with a wry smile.

“It has been a long time since the Red Rabbits sent the Karrdators to Laihiala. The original new model... was it Tellestarle? I don’t think its creator didn’t make any move all this while. Eh, if the rumours are true, they have made something terrifying.”

An indescribable feeling crept up Olver’s spine. From the intelligence they garnered so far, it was easy to tell how abnormal that Knight Order was. The true identity of the ‘Highway Demon’ was enough to prove this point.

“If that is the case, we don’t need to remain still. Wouldn’t it be better to take the initiative?”

Olver shook his head as if he was shaking off a sudden chill, rejecting the suggestion.

“No, we won’t do anything for now. Remember to continue to collect intelligence in the future, too.”

“Would that be fine? You were so suspicious then, but you are not making any moves.”

“It is precisely because I was suspicious back then. I am not a Knight,

but as a man serving His Majesty, it is in poor taste to stop him from finding entertainment. I feel a bit sorry for Gaizka though.”

After troubling over it for a while, he clapped his hand and said:

“That’s right, could you mobilise ‘Alvanz’?”

“Alvanz? You want to have a battle with them?”

“This is just a cautionary move. They seem to be several steps ahead of us. Since we couldn’t catch up no matter how we struggle, we have to make up for it this way.”

“... I understand.”

The man bowed and left the room quietly. Olver fell into deep thought at his table and stood up reluctantly after making up his mind.

“Alright, if I don’t show up, they will say I am lazy. It is difficult for a man who has to keep up appearances.”

He took the bandana hanging besides him and wrapped it around his head, covering his ears. After finishing his preparation, he took heavy and irate steps towards the workshop.

The incident started from a letter detailing an order from the King.

“I wish to confirm the capability of the new model you submitted in your reports, and will be holding a closed door exhibition in the Royal Capital Känkänen, the itinerary is as follows...”

When the staff of NTR Lab heard this news, they accepted it gleefully. The specs of Karrdator Dash was better than the previous mass produced models, it was hard to make comparisons, but taking the combined figures from offence and defence, they were confident it will produce twice the performance. This wasn’t an exaggeration; the Dash had the capability to handle a variety of problems, and could enter battles without any issues. It won’t be benchmarked against the personal machine of Knight Commanders, but if placed in a fight, Dash would probably win if both sides had equal numbers.

Confident of success, they sent a platoon of ten Karrdator Dashes to the

exhibition.

Royal Capital Känkänen.

This city uses the gentle slope of Mount Aubigne as natural walls, built in the style of a fortress. The 'Royal Guard Knights' was garrisoned in this city, a unit serving directly under the King.

They had their own facilities in Känkänen, including a training arena outside the city. The prototype Silhouette Knights made by NTR Lab were heading there.

In the centre of the arena was an even ground surrounded by audience seats in a shape of a bowl. One corner that was elevated much higher was the VIP seats and the figure of King Ambrosius could be seen there. As the exhibition was not made open to the public, there wasn't many people present. Marquis Joachim Serrati and Duke Knut Dixgard were both present.

"The new models developed by NTR Lab..."

"Yes, I heard it was based off the foundation of 'that' prototype. We will see the details later, but from the summary I heard, the performance far exceeds the Karrdator."

They watched the unfamiliar machines march into the arena.

The Karrdator Dash moved smoothly without any hint of stiffness. After seeing Tellestarle that loses control easily, it was a major improvement. Joachim gave NTR Lab his generous compliments.

The audience around them started discussing the new models. Just hearing about their performance beforehand was enough to pique their interests.

"... Oh, so that's the new models. Using the Karrdator as the foundation, it has the strong appearance of Cardiarria. And the Silhouette Arms on its back! They could fire without using their hands right?"

"Not just that, I heard it could match that huge and powerful 'Hymerwort' from the Red Rabbits in strength."

“Oh! That one is known for its strength in our country... The future is bright.”

The heated atmosphere of the audience showed no signs of cooling down. Joachim looked at all these faces and realised someone who should be here was missing.

“Duke Dixgard, why aren't 'they' here? After all, they contributed to the development of the new models; I don't think His Majesty will leave...”

Joachim had to stop mid-sentence because Knut, who was sitting beside him, suddenly held his temple and looked towards the sky. Using his strong mental restraint, Knut squeezed out a reply bitterly:

“... You will find out soon enough.”

With these words, Joachim was certain nothing good will come of this.

The King of Fremmevira, Ambrosius Tahvo Fremmevira inspected the formation of the Silhouette Knights from the centre of the VIP seats.

“... And this is the result. What do you think Your Majesty? The new look of the well known mass produced Karrdator of our nation. Compared to the previous models, the Karrdator Dash excels in all areas. All the staff of NTR Lab are honoured to have taken part in the development of this excellent product.”

“Good, as expected of the best craftsmen in our nation, well done.”

After listening to the briefing by Olver Blomdahl, the director of NTR Lab, Ambrosius smiled. Gaizka who was standing behind him was listening tensely.

“No wonder you are so confident. For this exhibition, I have found an adequate 'opponent' that will allow your machines to showcase their capabilities.”

Ambrosius laughter seemed to have some hidden meaning behind it, while Olver could only reply with a wry smile. Aside from Olver who investigated beforehand, other people assumed he meant for the Royal Guard Knights to simulate a battle with them.

“By the way, the prototype the new model is based on was built by students, right? Do you want to meet its creators?”

The people around him started feeling confused; this development was unusual. They were thinking the two of them were talking about different things. The King’s words seemed to be implying that the opponent was—

“He seems to be proposing a match, letting people from different backgrounds to spar with their own creations.”

The sound of a horse galloping could be heard from somewhere; that was the sound of horse hooves hitting the ground. But the sound was too heavy and loud for normal horses.

“Open the gates! They will be here soon! The ones who laid the foundation for the new model and formed a new Knight Order by my decree!”

The Cardiarria of the Royal Guard Knights moved to open the gates leading into the arena. The gate was wide enough for five Silhouette Knights to walk side by side, and something could be seen charging in and kicking up a dust cloud. The continuous sound of hooves showed no signs of halting. Everyone concentrated at the gate, wondering what will come forth.

Ambrose raised his hands, announcing their name.

“Come... Silver Phoenix Knights!”

The moment ‘that’ appeared, screams shook the entire arena.

“What...!! What is that thing!?”

Everyone in the audience seats and maintenance workshop shouted and stood up. The ones remaining seated did so because they lost the strength in their legs.

‘That thing’ majestically passes through the gate loudly and with a cloud of dust. What captured the gaze of the crowd was both a man and a horse, large enough to rival a duel level Demon Beast. Its lower body reached the shoulders of a Silhouette Knight; the four legs supporting it contained

endless power. Right now, that astonishingly heavy giant body was moving forward with a fast rhythm. What surprised the audience the most was the 'human torso' coming out from where the head of the horse should be.

The alien combining man with horse. A monster unlike Demon Beasts that should only belong in fairy tales.

They recovered from the huge surprise and calmed down, understanding its true identity. The armour covering the Centaur Knight, and horn protruding from its head and the beautiful arrangement of its plate armours made it clear that it wasn't a product of nature, but a man-made masterpiece. With a halberd in its right hand and a shield that was broader at the bottom in its other hand. The crowd couldn't believe their eyes, but they reach this final conclusion—

This is a man-made product.

Like Silhouette Knights, this was a giant built by man.

A chill different from before travelled down their spines and they focused on the thing being towed by the Centaur Knight. That object obscured by the dust was a cart made from steel and wood, large objects covered by clothes could be seen on it.

Cargo ferried by the giant Centaur Knight the size of a duel level Demon Beast. Everyone thought of the same thing— these must be Silhouette Knights.

“Fufu, wahahaha... well done, Ernesti! That's the talent I see in you! I didn't expect you to make it to this stage! Interesting, so interesting!!”

The thing that pulled everyone back to reality was the laughter of the King. They now remember what the King said— the creators of the prototype, the newly formed Knight Order— the existence of the Silver Phoenix Knights. They knew this was beyond the level of NTR Lab developing the new model— this day, history will change.

The pilots of Tzendorg, Chid and Ady didn't know about the screams from the audience. They followed the procedure and started doing their task after reaching the destination.

“Release the wagon; change the connecting parts into braking mode.”

“The movement script is entering its final phase! Keep the Towing Anchor and maintain braking distance!!”

The audience might not be able to see clearly from afar, but right now, Tzendorg was releasing the four cables connected it to the wagon, reeling it back into its body. The brakes of the wagon activated and they slowed down. Sparks flew from the wheels and the shrill sound from the friction echoed in the surroundings. At the same time, the sub arms connected to the wagon started extending, allowing Tzendorg to pull away from the wagon. The wagon started slowing down and stopped behind Tzendorg with the connectors extended to maximum length.

“Distance okay, final separation!”

The structure of the connectors was similar to the sub arms. The secured parts broke away from Tzendorg one by one before folding to the side of the wagon. The brakes continued slowing the wagon down and it stopped in a cloud of smoke shortly after.

The cargo that was still earlier started moving after the wagon stopped. With clanking sounds, the wires securing the cargo unfastened, freeing the cargo— giants that were in a kneeling position began standing up.

Bright red armour basked under the sun, taking off its dust cover as if it was a cloak. This elegant machine seemed strange with Silhouette Arms shaped like broad short swords on its back and four swords on its waist. The one standing up beside him was a brilliantly white armoured machine, having an appearance of a prototype machine because of its rugged shape. But its solid body would definitely be accompanied with tremendous power output. As for the last machine, it was the same model as the white machine but without any paint at all, showing its original green steel colour. The only difference would be the large layered armour protruding out from the shoulders.

The moment the three Silhouette Knights stood up on the wagon, Tzendorg slowed down by making a detour. The green machine walked forward, welcoming the returning Tzendorg.

The arena suddenly turned so quiet you could hear a pin drop as the tension rises. All eyes fell on the Centaur Knight and the three Knights standing in a row.

The three Knights came before the VIP seats and adopt a standby position, kneeling on one knee. Appearing from the chest armour that opened up were two young pilots; the one exiting the green Knight was a young boy. The audience sat stiffly in their seats, not sure how to react. In the silence, the sound of air decompressing could be heard. The kneeling Centaur Knight had also opened its cockpit. Not its waist, but the position equivalent to the horse's back slightly behind the human torso opened widely, and a boy and a girl stepped out. It was unclear why there were two people in there.

After confirming everyone was present, the boy piloting the green Knight represented the group and performed a Knight's salute elegantly.

“By Your Majesty's order, the Silver Phoenix Knight's Knight Commander, Ernesti Echevarria, together with 1st Platoon Captain Edgar C. Blanche, 2nd Platoon Captain Dietrich Cunitz, as well as the latest Centaur Knight Tzendorg are here to report.”

With his silvery purple hair swaying in the wind, Eru raised his head with a face full of smiles. No matter how you look at it, he was like a kid who was flaunting his toy. His appearance was definitely that of a kid.

“Thank you for your hard work, Ernesti. I see you brought something interesting with you. I want to grill you carefully about them.”

Seeing the two of them laughing ominously, the people around them wore a complicated expression. It had nothing to do with their status, just that no one was able to interject into their conversation.

The alien shaped machine reflected the brilliant sunlight as it sprinted proudly in the arena. The heavy hooves resounded loudly, with every step as loud as thunder, shaking the eardrums of the audience. They forgot to blink as they stared at the strongest and largest Silhouette Knight controlled by men, the Centaur Knight that had a shape largely different from a man— Tzendorg.

The audience wasn't the only ones watching Tzendorg. The pilots of the Karrdator Dash standing in the same arena were also studying Tzendorg curiously.

“Look Zwar, that's amazing, a horse shaped Silhouette Knight.”

“No wonder Sir ‘Watchmen’ wanted us to come... ‘Apprentice’ are not to be underestimated.”

“That's right, but did the Watchmen get played? It is not the exhibition of our new models anymore, this looks like the stage for the other party to perform.”

After hearing the snickers from the machine besides him, he crossed his arms and stared at the Centaur Knight displayed on the Holo Monitor.

“Hard to say... To summon us mean he didn't only get played. More importantly, we should use this chance to think of a way to deal with that thing.”

“I thought we drew the worst lot but somehow... it seems to be getting interesting.”

The eye crystal of the Karrdator Dash glimmered as it kept on taking in images, not missing any movement of the Centaur Knight. The pilots seemed detached from the noise of the crowds. What they need to concentrate on was the shape of the enemy, what they need to know was the movement of the foe. The battle surely and silently entered into its prologue stage.

The rowdy audience couldn't know about the nervousness of the pilots. Most of the guests were nobles and their curiosity were completely on the alien machine pacing around the arena, and the Silver Phoenix Knight that made that monster. Despite the existence of the NTR Lab, a new organisation was still formed— What they were concerned about was the intention of the King.

A normal Knight Order won't stir their curiosity. About a year ago, they suffered a large scale attack from foreign forces, they all knew about this. In order to avoid making the same mistake, increasing a Knight Orders or

two would not be surprising. However, the Silver Phoenix Knights can't be judged by common logic.

The attack, the new models and a new Knight Order. They were part of a massive game formed from these fragments. In that case, what would the next card show? The initiative was in the hand of their King, so they perked up their ears to listen, not daring to miss anything.

Their tense emotions were like a rain cloud passing swiftly, only leaving behind a cool, quiet breeze. It wasn't that they were not curious, but even if they wanted to, they couldn't interrogate the King. Hence they had no choice but to keep quiet; that was how the nobles were feeling. Ambrose smiled as he watch the running Tzendorg and suddenly turn to look at Olver besides him.

"You don't seem very surprised."

"That isn't so, Your Majesty. I might have heard of the Demon Beast terrorising the vicinity of Laihiala, but I would never have thought that it would be a new type of Silhouette Knight. This scene was definitely shocking for me."

A complicated expression flashed across Olver's narrowed eyes, but it disappeared before others could notice. He resumed his usual demeanour, his unmoved attitude making him stand out even more.

"Your are well informed as usual. Did you bring Alvanz along?"

Ambrose asked quietly. Answering with just his eyes, Olver nodded slightly.

"It is the same thing with the new model; I want to use this chance to test 'their' capability. Don't think they are just kids, they had experienced many trying encounters."

He muttered so softly it was as if he was talking to himself, there was no telling if it reached the ears of Olver who was beside him. If not for his keen ears, Olver would definitely have missed it.

"I think they are just right as your opponents. Well done, the stage seemed to have been set."

“I am honoured.”

Olver lowered his head deeply.

“Before that, I will need to explain who they are...”

Ambrose wasn't saying that to anyone in particular. After a short wait, knocking was heard from the door to the VIP seats, announcing the arrival of the Silver Phoenix Knights. The room turned tense as everyone focused on the door.

The well oiled door opened slowly without a sound. Footsteps dented the carpet slightly as the guests entered. Knight Commander of the Silver Phoenix Knights who introduced himself— Ernesti Echevarria, 1st Platoon Captain Edgar C. Blanche and 2nd Platoon Captain Dietrich Cunitz presented themselves.

The nobles seated swallowed the moans they almost uttered out. Normally, they would have started scrutinising their appearance. The two young men walking at the sides— Edgar and Dietrich were still acceptable. From their equipment and well toned body, they look the part of an excellent Knight, but it wasn't obvious they were more valuable than normal pilots.

The problem lies with their Commander Ernesti. The first impression he gave was 'young and short'. His silvery purple hair of medium length swayed with each step he took, his feminine appearance matched his petite body well. No one would doubt it if he was introduced as the daughter of some noble family. And he was actually a Knight Commander reporting directly to the King, what a terrible joke that was. None of them had the eyes to discern his extraordinary talents.

Even basked in the gaze heavy enough to overwhelm a man, Eru showed no sign of being fazed. His clear eyes looked straight at the King with determination.

“I am as you have command, bringing the newest model Tzendorg as well as Karrdators and Tellestarle equipped with Option Works for your review.”

“Thank you for your efforts.”

The content of their dialogue stirred the curiosity of the bystanders further. The Tzendorg he mentioned was probably referring to the Centaur Knight. That was intriguing, but what does the other term ‘Option Works’ mean? Was he still hiding something— It was safe to say the crowd had fallen into the King’s trap. The NTR Lab had shown their cards, but the other party still had cards in their hands. It was clear who had the initiative at this stage.

Ambrosius understood the interest and bafflement around him, he wasn’t sure he had concealed his own smile. The King couldn’t hold back his mischievous heart; his joy was on the verge of bursting out of his chest. Next will the time to reveal the answer, and decide the standing between the NTR Lab and the Silver Phoenix Knights. Making such a big scene to flaunt wasn’t because he wanted to be pull a prank— well, he did wish for that a little— but this was setting up the stage for the discussion that will follow. The situation was overwhelming one-sided.

“Ladies and gentlemen, this child here is Ernesti Echevarria... the grandson of Laihiala Pilot Academy dean Lauri, and the designer of the prototype and Centaur Knight. I had also appointed him as the Knight Commander of the Silver Phoenix Knights.”

And that was how it should had proceeded—

“...You, a kid like you is the designer...!!”

— Until that man interrupted the King.

The chief of the 1st R&D workshop of NTR Lab— Gaizka Johannsson pulled at his messy white hair as he stepped forward with bloodshot eyes. It was obvious he was mentally unstable, plain for all to see when he rebutted his superior— the King.

“No... that’s wrong!! It, it is impossible for that thing to move, there, there must be something else, did someone taught this to you? No, it is made by someone else right!? No, it is impossible to make this. Why? What is going on...!?”

He was no longer aware of his surroundings as he kept mumbling as he closed in on Eru. Ambrosius showed a troubled expression when he saw that Gaizka had lost it.

Oh, was the medicine too strong...? I just wanted to stir his competitive spirit though.

After troubling over it momentarily, he wondered if stopping him verbally would work. But seeing Gaizka falling into complete confusion, Ambrosius doubt he could communicate with him and decided to give up. When he was about to issue the order to restrain him, he locked his eyes with Eru who seemed to have something to say. The curious Ambrosius closed his half opened mouth and gave his permission with a look.

Eru turned to face Gaizka, who was mumbling nonsense. Edgar and Dietrich, who was besides him tensed up, ready to intercept if necessary. Even if dwarfs are strong, he still couldn't win against two Knights.

“Tzendorg is installed with two Ether Reactors.”

The two of them were within arm's reach when Eru said these words directly to Gaizka. After making a weird sound, Gaizka stood stiff on the spot. At the same time, Olver's eyes also widened with a surprised expression, a rare sight to behold. After a brief moment, the people around them understood what Eru meant and the shocked expressions spread out like a ripple.

“Do you know why that is for?”

Eru asked with his head tilted, smiling brilliantly. In contrast, Gaizka maintained his stupid posture and took a long while to recover.

“That, that... I see, it's too big, so one reactor can't support it... You have to go this far to...”

Gaizka mumbled as the light of sanity returned to his eyes. To answer a question, what was needed was logic. No matter how fascinating it may be, things created through technology could be explained through theory and knowledge. ‘The centaur monster with two hearts’— this fact was a big shock for him, but further questions and thirst for knowledge swell up to

his heart.

“Right, you can maintain its structure that way... However, it still won't move. It's not enough, you did something else, too, right?”

“Well, I used a lot of different ideas... Eh, how about letting me explain with the design plans. Edgar-senpai, Di-senpai, if you don't mind.”

Edgar moved with a resigned face and silently opened the luggage besides him. Dietrich also unpacks the box he brought along and set up an easel with a board on it. Eru took out and pasted pieces of paper really fast, and smiled like a beautiful flower blossoming.

“Let me explain for everyone! First would be the foundation structure...”

“Hey, wait you dummy, don't ignore me and proceed on your own.”

And of course, the one who stopped the lecture a second before it started was Ambrosius. The crowd who was led on before they knew it realised what was happening.

“Please listen to me, too, Your Majesty! It's fine, I prepared the briefing materials for everyone. Without missing any detail, let's go through this step by step...!!”

“How is it fine? I will listen to you later, keep those things quickly.”

Edgar and Dietrich silently kept the easel and papers deftly. Eru watched them with a sense of pity.

“Gaizka, you go back too.”

“...!! Ah, ahh, my sincere apologies... I lost my composure...”

“Ara, seems that the medicine was too strong. Forget it; listen carefully since you have regained your wits.”

Seeing Gaizka on his knees and about to bang his head on the floor, Ambrosius dismissed him nonchalantly.

“Pu, hehe, fufufu...”

It must be hard to hold it in. Ambrosius sighed as the sound of laughter broke out besides him, he turned towards the man besides him and said.

“Et tu, Olver?”

“My humble apologies. Ara, I was wondering what kind of child he would be, to think he would be so intriguing... and it is not every day you can see a talent that can make Your Majesty speechless.”

Ambrosius responded casually to Olver who lowered his head with a smile. The tension earlier was all gone, replaced by a warm atmosphere.

Ambrosius pulled himself together, cleared his throat and change the atmosphere in the room.

“You are right, going through the process step by step will be better. Speaking of which, this all started when Ernesti made a Silhouette Knight because of his hobby...”

Something out of place seemed to be mixed in, but wasn't elaborated on.

“Everyone already knows what happened next, which is the prototype theft incident. We don't know how the rats found out, but it is a pity the prototypes were stolen. Fortunately, the creator himself is fine, so I ordered the formation of the Silver Phoenix Knights. This Knight Order will develop Silhouette Knights for this kid and also act as his escorts.”

Hearing the rationale behind the raising of this Knight Order, everyone nodded their heads in comprehension, but thought about another question immediately.

“I understand, Your Majesty, but if it is a Knight Order, why not let him join NTR Lab? I think it would be fine to use the Silver Phoenix Knights purely as bodyguards.”

Ambrosius grunted in response to Olver's question which got straight to the heart of the matter. The luggage bag Edgar was holding had somehow ended up in Eru's arms, waiting anxiously for his turn to take the stage. Ambrosius stopped him with a look, and was hesitant on what to say.

“He is still a kid after all. I don't know how receptive you all would be... But right now, I wonder if dumping him into NTR was the better choice.”

When everyone heard this it sounded really convincing.

“After seeing the Silhouette Knights made by both sides, I feel that having two independent organisation isn’t too bad. The creation of this kid is a great stimulant for you all, right?”

The gaze of the King made the gloomy Gaizka back away.

“...Yes! It’s just as Your Majesty said...”

“That is part of it, there is another reason. The works of this kid is interesting... But it is not user friendly. Gaizka, how was the prototype before you all modified it?”

“Yes, well... with strong crystal tissue and revolutionary equipment, it was a powerful machine. However, eh... it is hard to control, drains mana and is a wild horse.”

When they heard this, Edgar and Dietrich nodded in agreement.

“I think so, too. That Tzendorg is probably piloted in some unorthodox method.”

“Not really, we only used ‘double pilot’.”

“... How is that normal? Eh, as you can see, Ernesti’s creation has many good points, but lacks maturity. It’s like a raw diamond. Without polishing it, you can’t see its true value. And NTR Lab is the best place to perform the polishing.”

Olver lured the snake out of the hole.

“Your Majesty, do you mean for us to ‘tweak’ their prototypes so it could be used by others?”

“To be honest, that’s the plan. I am counting on you, Olver.”

Including Olver, everyone lowered their heads. And so, the existence of the Silver Phoenix Knights was made known to the world, and the name Ernesti started spreading between the nobles of Fremira Kingdom from those in attendance.

This name had the following note attached: ‘Knight Commander of the Silver Phoenix Knights, Ernesti Echevarria has incredible research and development ability and incredibly loves Silhouette Knights.’

Shortly after the discussion ended—

“Ladies and gentlemen, now that you know more about them, next would be that Centaur Knight. We will be having a training match between the Silver Phoenix Knights and NTR Lab. Both sides please prepare yourself.”

The Silver Phoenix Knights walked towards the arena by Ambrosius’ orders, the conversation between Gaizka and Eru could be heard constantly as they walk along the corridor. As a veteran technician, Gaizka had a stronger thirst for unknown technology than anyone else. Meeting Eru who couldn’t stop talking about his interest, their dialogue naturally continued all the way to the workshop.

The audience was no longer as agitated as before as they discuss the upcoming clash of the machines made by both organizations, no different than a crowd watching a show.

In the calm atmosphere, Olver who remained in the VIP seats thought carefully about the future of NTR Lab. For the Lab, that scene earlier was as good as taking the important task of developing prototypes away from them. It seems to be a huge blow at first glance, but it was a good deal if they see it from another angle.

That uncontrollable child was responsible for the development of the prototypes, and was also a Knight Commander reporting directly to the King. In other words, the King plans to hold the reign himself. From what he just observed, the child was talented, but had a strong personality. Instead of keeping such a hot potato with him, it would be better to leave it to the King. And since his creation has a lot of issue to resolve, there will still be a chance for NTR Lab to shine and they will remain irreplaceable. That might be so, but when Olver thought about how to explain it to his subordinates, he couldn’t help feeling down.

Although Olver fell into deep thought, his sensitive ears didn’t miss the sound calling out to him. Lifting his head, he turned to the King seated beside him.

“Olver, I will be bringing him to ‘Home’ in the near future.”

As expected— Olver who suspected as much understood his intent behind this decision. He struggled to keep a straight face.

“Your Majesty has high expectations of this child.”

“He had done more than enough... And I made a promise— ‘present accomplishments great enough to be rewarded with the secret of Ether Reactors’. As a King, I can’t go back on my words.”

Olver closed his eyes and thought about what he should do. Ambrosius was definitely not pushing Olver to do his bidding. Or rather, his attitude seemed too cautious towards one of his vassals.

“... Since this is Your Majesty’s request, I will relay your wish to ‘Home’ with my role as a Watchmen. But the one to make the decision would be ‘Master’... This might be an order from Your Majesty, but I hope you can follow the ‘Law’.”

“Of course. But after seeing such an interesting fellow, Master will definitely not reject him.”

Olver responded with a warm smile. The two of them turned to face the teams spreading out on the arena to signify the end of their conversation.

“We will now begin the training match between NTR Lab and the Silver Phoenix Knights. To balance the both sides, the Silver Phoenix Knights will be deploying one fireteam of Knights (three machines) and one cavalry! NTR Lab would be sending out two fireteams of Knight (six machines)!!”

With cheers erupting in the background, Ambrosius announce the rules of the competition loudly. Inside the arena, Dietrich muttered unhappily, in contrast with the heated audience.

“Tzendorg is treated to be equivalent to three Knights, one cavalry to three infantry... Does this ratio apply to Silhouette Knights?”

“Who knows. The NTR Lab are using the enhanced version of our machines, and three of them... To be honest, the situation is bad.”

The Silver Phoenix Knight’s forces are Dietrich’s modified Guyale and Tellestarles piloted by Edgar and Eru— made by modifying Karrdaters. The

three machines might look different on the outside, but they were all basically the same Tellestarle models. In contrast, the Karrdators of the NTR Lab was a totally new design using Tellestarle as its foundation. Comparing the two, NTR Lab had better performance.

“How exciting! I wonder how well they tamed the wild Tellestarle? The controls seemed to be improved greatly... that’s right; I will ask them to let me try it later!”

“... Ahhh, you are acting carefree as always, it is making me envious.”

Seeing Eru’s off topic comment made Dietrich shook his head and sigh.

“Forget it, we also modified the machines ever since.”

The arms on Guyale was one size bigger, Edgar’s machine with its armour coat and Eru’s machine that had some mysterious equipment built in. Their machines were not the original Tellestarle either. With the top tier Option Works installed, their machines were also enhanced.

“Erm, what about us?”

“We need to take on three machines?”

The voices of the twins came from Tzendorg behind them. Tzendorg might be the strongest unit in the Silver Phoenix Knights, but it was also the most unstable element. This was the first time the twins were fighting, it was hard to know what to expect.

“Well... should we play it safe or...”

“About that, Edgar-senpai, Di-senpai, could you do something reckless?”

The two smiled fearlessly in their pilot seats as they listened to the instructions of their Knight Commander.

The horns echoed loudly through the training arena, and the gong announcing the start of the battle was sounded, which was followed by the cheers from the crowd.

“Let the battle begin—!!”

With this signal, the giant Knights charged with earth shattering steps.

The Silver Phoenix Knights made the first move. The three Knights started running with Tzendorg matching their speed behind. As for the NTR Lab—the Knight Order Alvanz piloting Karrdator Dash watched their adversary carefully. Their Captain Arnis sneered when he saw how the Silver Phoenix Knight moved.

“They plan to attack at the same time...? As expected. Lance wall formation, forward march.”

The two fireteams formed ranks, raised their shields and lances, and advanced slowly. This formation was obviously meant to counter the cavalry like Tzendorg, a common tactic against Demon Beasts that attack with powerful charges. The tip of the lances might be blunt, but its strong mighty thrust was enough to intimidate their foes.

The Silver Phoenix Knights accelerated closer and Tzendorg at the back of the formation broke off to the side and started sprinting, overtaking the three units in front.

“Fireteam two turn right, maintain Lance wall formation. Fireteam one, prepare to engage!!”

With Tzendorg charging, Alvanz split their group in two— one fireteam to engage Tzendorg with lances, and one fireteam that abandoned their lance to take on the other three Knights. Lances were effective against enemy charging in, but ineffective against Knights proficient in melee combat. The two fireteams of Alvanz commit to their assigned roles to take advantage in the strength of numbers.

The audience watching also thought it would be divided into a clash of infantry and an anti-cavalry battle— but the next second, one of the Silver Phoenix Knights made a strange move.

“Magi Jet Thrusters activate... deploying device, begin air compression...”

Suddenly, a strange noise that was definitely not cheering from the crowd erupted. The air gathered in a vortex, emitting a unique shrill noise, several times louder than the air intake valve of an Ether Reactor. The noise came from one of the Silver Phoenix Knights’ machine.

The machine with raw unpainted metallic body had additional equipment installed on the shoulders and waist. The movable armour parts moved to the back. Inside the layered armour, a valve slowly open, creating a vacuum inside which was completely covered with engravings.

When they saw this, confusion spread among the audience. Why shift the armour? Wouldn't it expose the vital parts? No one knew what the equipment making weird sound was used for. However, such suspicious movement naturally put Alvanz on guard.

“What... is that?”

“He is gathering air... A Silhouette Arms that fires air bullets? Probably a new type of weapon... I don't get it.”

“Tuva, Idola, be alert of anything that comes flying over. They are almost within range; we will counter them with the Silhouette Arms.”

The first fireteam that didn't equip spears activated the back weapons on their Karrdator Dash. The second fireteam with back weapons did the same. Tzendorg which was moving at a high speed was charging by itself, and will enter the Silhouette Arms' range soon.

A strange thing happened the moment before they clashed. The green Knight bent its knees and lowered its posture. The machine under its full control moved as it was commanded— Eru's will used the power of the strand crystal tissue without reservation. The machine took a step forward, and crimson flames shot out from it at the same instant. The additional equipment produced a long trail of fire, together with bright lights and the sound of an explosion, bestowed extraordinary force to the accelerating machine. The giant object five times larger than a man made of steel and crystal tissue shot out like a magic bullet with amazing speed.

The flame tail only appeared briefly, transforming into heat waves with the second step of the green Knight, blurring the space behind it. When it came off the second step, flames appeared again. And of course, the Knight was propelled with even more force.

“Zarks—!! Careful!! He is heading towards...!!”

While everyone was still panicking over this bizarre scene, the leader of first fireteam realised something. The speed of the green Knight was abnormal, surpassing even the leading Tzendorg as it closed in on Alvanz. That's right; he was going for the second fireteam with the spears.

“What.. what is with this fellow!?”

“Spears will be too slow! Shoot!!”

Facing the green Knight that was faster than a bullet, the second fireteam which were focusing on Tzendorg reacted late. Despite that, they fired their Silhouette Arms and engaged them. Despite the suddenness of the situation, the bullets were still aimed at the green Knight, displaying their exceptional skill.

Before the second fireteam leader could compose himself, a calm part of his mind was certain the enemy's effort would be futile. That abnormally fast attack was commendable, but he won't be able to dodge with that speed. His speed will lead to his own demise.

Regrettably, the performance of the green Knight exceeded his imagination. The pilot Eru has excellent physical ability and spent most of his time training for high speed combat, developing fast reflexes and calculation abilities, allowing the machine to react very quickly.

The additional equipment on the shoulder of the green Knight known as Magi Jet Thrusters, changed the direction it was facing and shot out a burst of light with the sound of an explosion. The machine shifted laterally as it continued its advance.

“Ahh?”

The movement of their foe stunned the second fireteam. The magic bullet that was already locked on target carried on their path, passing through the space beside the green Knight without even touching it.

“Wahhhhhh!?”

The white blade flashed by the moment the green Knight made it to the left flank of the second fireteam; the astonishing speed produced a power that could match the charge of a Duel level Demon Beast. Philia's

machine was saved by the shield held in its left hand, but the shield was sent flying, toppling Philia's machine which fell slowly to the ground.

“Philia! Shit, I will stop him, Yunf, you...”

“Zarks, that's not the only enemy, don't be rash.”

His comrade's words reminded Zarks of the enemy they were supposed to be dealing with. The Centaur Knight was hidden by the explosion created by the green Knight, and was right before them. Kicking up a dust storm, the charging cavalry came at them ferociously. The second fireteam disrupted by the attack of the green Knight couldn't maintain their formation— Zarks made this snap judgement and shouted: “Dodge!” and leapt out of the way. Yunf mimic his action unhesitatingly.

Tzendorg charged past the space they evaded from, bashing with its shield as it passed by. Yunf blocked with its shield to minimise the damage.

Using this chance, the green Knight attempted to slow its machine down. It planted its feet firmly down and changed the direction of the Magi Jet Thruster. Instead of an instant, it fired for a substantial amount of time, slowing down by shooting in the opposite direction. In the cloud of dust, the green Knight stopped moving in a centre of a heat wave. When it slowly turned its head back, what it saw was the second fireteam that was on the verge of defeat.

“Are, are you kidding me...?”

The pitiful state of the second fireteam and the green Knight that caused all this made the fighting spirit of first fireteam plummet. They attempt to reinforce them, but were stopped by Arnis.

“Calm down! The other Knights are approaching, if you go to the second fireteam now, our backs will be exposed!”

This reminded them of the other two 'infantry'. The attack from the green Knight had completely diverted their attention.

“We should advance right away. It's three on two here, we have to dispatch them fast! Zarks and the others won't be taken out that easily,

after taking that beating, they will strengthen their defense.”

He sounded a bit anxious, but the three Karrdator Dash started moving, closing the distance with the Silver Phoenix Knights in a blink of an eye.

“Idola, look out for that green one! Stop him if you hear that noise!!”

With Arnis and Tuva leading the way, the Knights fired their back weapons; the white machine of the Silver Phoenix Knights moved forth to intercept. When the barrage of bullets was about to hit it, the armour near the shoulders of the white Knight moved. The sub arms moved the armour plate to the front, forming a shield. The white Knight in total defense mode did not slow down as it deflected all the bullets.

“So that is not a normal machine either...”

“The green Knight is not moving, now is the chance. That strange armour might not be able to cover its entire body!”

The three Alvanz machines kept up the pressure with their barrage as they entered sword range. This time, the red machine came out of the white machine’s shadow— No shield, a heavily offense type machine. With its arm raised, it took a swing at Tuva. Tuva lifted his shield in anticipation of the blow and took a stance— but it didn’t expect something that flew out from its gauntlet with the sound of an explosion. Tuva’s machine couldn’t evade this sneak attack and got hit in the face by a piece of metal. The impact affected the eye crystal, distorting half of the holo monitor’s view.

“Just how many weird equipment do they have!!”

Using the chance while Tuva retreated, the red machine changed its target to Idola, forcing it back. Arnis engaged the white machine and put some distance between them.

“I... can’t take him down!”

Arnis gritted his teeth. Alvanz has the advantage in number, but the red and white machine built for offence and defense respectively were hard to handle. At this moment, the sound of air being sucked could be heard; the green Knight had started moving.

“This is dangerous... Idola, guard the back. Tuva, you good?”

“No problems with movement at all! I will make them pay... Let’s go!”

Alvanz renewed their attack. The red and white Knights prepared to fend off their assault.

Before the start of the battle.

On the brown training arena grounds, two opposing forces comprising of the latest models of Silhouette Knights observe each other relentlessly without a word.

In the middle of the Silver Phoenix Knight’s ground, Tzendorg which was a head taller than the other Silhouette Knights could be seen. From his wide field of vision, the appearance of the enemy Karrdator Dash was clearly shown. Their armour was much more polished than the Karrdator. The battle was about to commence.

Chid and Ady who were inside Tzendorg couldn’t sit still. They felt a different kind of tension from their fight in Silhouette Gear. Thinking back, they only fought with everything they had with no tactics in mind and without caring about the rules and etiquette. In contrast, they have the heavy responsibility of showcasing Tzendorg’s power in this mock battle. The difference between these two situations could not be explained so simply with words.

According to Edgar’s explanation, the enemy had six machines since Tzendorg was treated to be the equivalent to three machines. This meant they had to win their opponents elegantly. There was some distance between the audience seat and the training grounds, but the twins still felt the illusion of everyone on the field was focusing on them .

As the tension ran high, Eru continued to speak nonchalantly:

“I have a selfish request. Edgar-senpai, Di-senpai, could you do something reckless?”

How would Tzendorg’s battle be related to the two of them acting recklessly? But Eru had always been like this, saying things that didn’t make sense.

“Since you asked, you must have thought about something. Let’s hear it.”

“Very simple. First, we will split Tzendorg and us to probe their reaction. They might divide their forces as the tactics against Tellestarle and Tzendorg are totally different... They will probably react to what we do.”

The heads of the red and white machines nodded. All this was within their expectations, and the enemy will probably expect this.

“From our perspective, we let Tzendorg act alone in order to utilise its advantage in speed. But if it faces off against three machines as stipulated, Tzendorg will have a tough battle no matter how fast it is... so we should use a surprise attack and send one person to strike against the group facing Tzendorg.”

“I understand, so you are volunteering yourself?”

Edgar’s machine turned its head and Eru’s Tellestarle entered its view—on its shoulders and waist were movable Magi Jet Thrusters. The customised Magi Jet Thrusters were installed with multiple miniaturised thrusters, making output adjustment easier. The movable design realised the possibility of 360 degrees of mobility, an intimidating equipment. But on the contrary, the difficult controls were not on the level of ‘a burden on the pilot’. In fact, it had become a flawed product only Eru could pilot.

“Yes, I will fully utilise the mobility of this machine and disrupt the forces targeting Tzendorg before returning to the battle between Knights... I don’t really need to say this, but our forces in the Knights’ battle would be weakened significantly. I hope Edgar-senpai and Di-senpai could hang on until I return.”

Their opponent would definitely not be expecting such a forceful method. A surprise tactic only Eru, piloting the machine with Magi Thruster Jet could pull off to destroy the balance between the two sides. The difference in numbers were still great, this battle was too difficult.

“Alright, I will give it my all.”

“Since it is the Knight Commander’s orders...”

Edgar and Dietrich glanced at each other and agreed. The Karrdator

Dash prototype developed by the NTR Lab were not to be underestimated. Even though they agreed readily, the burden wasn't as simple as it looked.

“So this is what it means to lead the charge? So we just need to follow behind Eru?”

“Leave it to us! We will show them the speed of Tzen-chan!!”

Instead, the ones to relax were the twins. They witnessed the power of the Magi Jet Thrusters before, and couldn't stop smiling when they imagined the opponents being scared out of their wits.

“We are in a great condition; let's give them a huge surprise!”

“Eh, before you come back, I will hide behind Edgar. Please settle it before he goes down.”

“Di, you...”

Ady giggled and the atmosphere lightened. Chid and Ady's nervousness disappeared before they realised it. Eru had outrageous ideas as usual, but Edgar and Dietrich who could control him firmly were also here, there were no companions more reliable than them.

The white Tellestarle and Guyale formed ranks and gave each other a look. The two of them already realised the reason why Eru was forcing the attack. They were the senpais after all and veterans in battles. The Tellestarle piloted by Eru aside, part of their job was to help rookies get a first taste of victory. When they ended their meeting in high spirits, the horn signaling the start of the battle was sounded.

“Well then, let's go.”

The Centaur Knight in the middle neighed jokingly. With the sounding of the gong, the Silver Phoenix Knights charged together.

Right now, Ernesti was sighing on the pilot seat of the green Knight.

“Hmmm, I thought this might happen, but it really depleted the entire mana pool.”

Eru and his green partner followed the battle plan and conducted a high speed assault with the Magi Jet Thrusters. He successfully took down one

enemy unit and dealt a blow to their morale, but pushing it came at the expense of his mana.

“Accelerating was still fine, the problem was in braking. To avoid making the same mistake, I will need thrusters...”

Learning from the previous ‘Meteor incident’, Eru realised the danger of operating the Magi Jet Thrusters for prolonged periods of time. To make up for this flaw, he came up with the method of accelerating efficiently by sprinting and short burst from the thrusters. However, this only works for acceleration, braking would require brute force. And in this vast empty arena, there was nothing he could use to slow himself down. Firing the Magi Jet Thrusters in the opposite direction burns plenty of mana, adding further to the tremendous mana consumption of the Tellestarle. And the results were obvious, Eru’s machine which had depleted its mana moved lethargically.

“This is understandable, but the remaining mana is just twenty percent... I can’t use the same attack again.”

Eru went too deep and was far away from the main battlefield, it would take some time for him to rejoin the fray. The Magi Jet Thruster started sucking in air again, taking in air in a spiral. That unique noise spurred the tension on the grounds.

“I can’t run. If I don’t recover mana by walking, it will be dangerous to rejoin the battle.”

The green Knight made loud air sucking noises as it strode towards the battlefield.

The Captain of Alvanz— Arnis wielded the sword of his Karrdator Dash. Edgar’s white Tellestarle blocked with its shield and counterattacked during the gap after the block. The sharp thrust was parried by the sword pulled back by Arnis.

The two machines pulled away from each other, but Arnis didn’t attack with his back weapon. He knew the bullets will be deflected by Edgar’s machine which was equipped with Flexible Coat. And so, the two machines returned to the basics and fought with sword and shields. But

such a fight was spectacular as well, the battle remained intense.

The powerful strikes with occasional feints dazzled the audience. Every clash of the sword produces sparks, every bang of the shield shook the ground from its tremours. Arnis and Edgar were evenly matched in skill and courage as the attack of the sword became sharper and the counterattacks equally fierce. As the spectators watched with bated breaths, the battle became even more heated.

Dietrich couldn't spare the time to watch Edgar's battle. He had two Dashes in front of Guyale— Tuva and Idola blocking his way. Without shields, Guyale specialised in offense and was weak in defense. Taking this point into consideration, Alvanz send two machines to take down Guyale while Arnis was fending off the white Tellestarle.

A metal piece flew through the air with a low hum. Guyale used the lightning flail like a part of a chain-sickle, swinging it in circles. Since the mechanism of firing it from the gauntlet had been exposed, it won't work as a secret weapon anymore. Dietrich changed it into a wide range attack weapon. Seeing the steel piece coming from the side, Tuva backed away to dodge and attack with his back weapon from a distance. Guyale moved towards Idola to dodge, swiping at him with blades. Idola blocked with his shields, but took a blow from Guyale's back weapon Kamtha. The short Kamtha had terrible in long range, but was powerful in close quarters. Its magic bullet was like a long thin sword, lacking in impact but has a high accuracy.

Guyale raised both its sword as he charged the off balance Idola, but Tuva didn't let him get his way, firing magic bullets to block his path. Guyale gave up its pursuit, throwing his retracted lightning flail out in return. The fast flying metal piece grazed the side of Idola's head, hitting his back weapon.

The entire Alvanz team was fighting an unexpectedly tough battle. Aside from Tuva losing half his vision from the sneak attack and Idola needing to look out for the green Knight, the biggest miscalculation was underestimating Guyale's combat prowess. Kamtha, lightning flail and swords, Guyale used a variety of weapons to keep an advantageous

distance and attack accordingly. This special style of fighting made it tiring to handle.

The unique valve intake noise of the green Knight came from behind them. For some reasons, it didn't approach with high speed, keeping the team Alvanz on their toes, making them distracted. The vicious cycle made the audience think team Alvanz was losing. That's how impressive Eru's machine was.

“Ady, we are turning back to attack! Begin turning!”

“Understood—! Let's show them the skillful feet of Tzen-chan!”

Centaur Knight Tzendorg kicked up a dust on the training arena and galloped, the rhythmic sound it made echoed through the battlefield. After dispersing the Alvanz second fireteam, and renewed its attack. Eru won't be supporting it anymore. They also knew how much mana the Magi Jet Thrusters consumed.

The horse part of Tzendorg has movable armour similar to Flexible Coat and its size was twice as big as a standard machine. In order to maintain mobility which was the most important element of cavalry, lightening the weight was crucial. To do so, the weight of the armour on Tzendorg was reduced. The movable armour that took its place efficiently raised the defence which was sacrificed. Such a thing was only possible for Tzendorg who has two pilots. Also, they discovered another important use of the movable armour besides defence, which was to act as a counterweight.

Ady pushed hard on the pedal displaying excellent controls, making Tzendorg maintain its speed while turning on the spot. The high speed and heavy weight created heavy centrifugal force, allowing the machine to make a wide turn. Chid tilted the upper torso and all the movable armour plates to pull against this force, successfully pulling off tight control over the center of gravity which looks really scary. Tzendorg displayed an agility that didn't match its cavalry appearance, pouncing towards Alvanz that was still pulling itself together.

Tzendorg charged in a straight line as it opened a part of the armour on its waist, revealing a large sub arm that looks like a mechanical jack.

Tzendorg placed the halberd in one of its arms onto the sub arm and secured it. This was a device called 'Lance rest', used to help the charge of cavalries. The secured halberd aimed at the second fireteam, and the distance to the enemy became closer in a blink of an eye.

Even though it was just one rider, the huge body larger than a Silhouette Knight gave it an imposing aura. It was different from a Duel level Demon Beast, with the determination of the pilot included. Facing such an attack, Zarks and Yunf of the second fireteam raised their lances and waited in their formation. Philia's machine was silent after being attacked by the green Knight at the beginning; maybe the pilot lost consciousness from the fall. They stared at the cavalry closing in and slowly pulled away to avoid implicating Philia who was down.

"Yunf, do you think our lances could stop that?"

"It would be difficult. Zarks, I have a proposal."

After a few short exchanges, they advanced a few steps and threw their lance away. The audience who thought the lances would be an important tool against the cavalry broke into an uproar over this unexpected move. After lightening their gear, they spread out immediately, making their intentions clear from a glance.

"Is one side bait? Or are they going for a pincer attack?"

"Something like that, aim for the right side!"

Tzendorg adjusted their trajectory and charged Yunf who was shifting to the right.

"Yunf... Sorry! I will not let this chance slip by!!"

Zarks who wasn't attacked fired his back weapon fervently with no regards to his remaining mana pool. The barrage of magic bullets howled, blocking Tzendorg's path, heading towards its defenseless flank— but it didn't work. Tzendorg cautiously raised the shield on its left arm to block the bullets pelting on it, the bullets that made it past the shield was blocked by the movable armour behind. It didn't even slow down and continued charging. Leaving normal Silhouette Knights aside, even a Duel

level Demon Beast will be fazed by an attack from the side. Zarks felt an emotion closed to fear before the unpredictable capability of his opponent.

On the other hand, Yunf wasn't surprised that he was targeted and execute his next move calmly. He shifted the machine backwards immediately to dodge the lance. The reaction speed and leg power of Karrdator Dash allowed Yunf to dodge a fatal blow with barely an inch to spare. Yunf, who jumped away laterally, didn't even waste time in getting up and deployed his back weapon. Since Tzendorg needs to turn around for the next attack, now is the best time to counterattack since Tzendorg was showing its back to him.

Suddenly, his sensitive ears heard some kind of explosive sound— the vague sound of an air bullet being fired in a confined space, which was followed by the noise of something flying through the air. Yunf who instinctively felt danger stopped his attack and pushed his machine further away— his movement couldn't be any faster, but it was still too late. He felt a sudden impact hit his machine.

After charging past Yunf, Tzendorg shot out something from its back. It was an equipment named Towing Wire. It was originally meant for cargo delivery and had the same structure as Anchor Wire— the capability to accelerate by activating air compression, and the movable anchor shape made from crystal tissue. The Towing Wire flew freely under Ady's control, snagging the legs of Yunf's machine.

The reeling mechanism behind Tzendorg retracted the cable at full speed, pulling it taut. It was meant for towing heavy cargo and was strong enough to pull Yunf's machine down, dragging him airborne as if he was sliding into a base while playing baseball. Tzendorg's terrifying power wasn't fazed by the weight of one Silhouette Knight, dragging the helpless Yunf's machine in a cloud of dust.

“Oh shit, I can't stand; it's too fast, but...”

The floored Yunf attempt to fight back. He activated his back weapon and tried to sit up. However, his effort was futile and only the sound of

crushed parts came from the machine. When he fell and got dragged along the ground, the impact seemed to cause the back weapon to malfunction.

“Is this the... end?”

Tzendorg made a sharp turn with Yunf in tow. The change in direction flung him out with centrifugal force. The Towing Wire released its tight hold on the machine’s leg, making Yunf roll further and further away before laying on the ground motionless.

“This is no joke...”

Zarks who couldn’t do anything as he watched his comrade fall resigned himself and smiled wryly. The opponent was well equipped and not just an ordinary cavalry, not something comparable to a Demon Beast. Against its gigantic body, a melee battle was hopeless. Despite knowing he had no chance of victory, Zarks didn’t back down and braced himself to fight until the end. Adjusting his stance, he raised his shield and sword, ready to fight head on.

It wasn’t clear what Tzendorg was planning as it stopped its charge and accepted Zark’s invitation to melee combat— Zarks’ Karrdator Dash finally fell after a hard fought battle some time later.

After a full powered clash, Arnis and Edgar pulled away in a hurry. The two machines made intense sounds of pulling in air through the intake valve, the heat from the churning engine raising the temperature of its armour. Both of them exhaled deeply, not sure how long they had been fighting. It was just a short while, but the concentrated series of events confused their perception of time.

Arnis stared at the white machine displayed on his Holo Monitor, complimenting it quietly. What an amazing opponent, his swordsmanship is top class even amongst Alvanz. It has been a long time since Arnis met an opponent he could not defeat after using his full strength. And of course, he wasn’t holding back at all in this fight.

Arnis wasn’t planning to use his full power in the beginning. The White Knight was obviously a defense oriented machine and would take a lot of

effort to take down. His plan was to stall him, but he couldn't help getting serious during their exchange.

This opponent was 'solid', and that wasn't just talking about the machine. Because it focused on defence, it was forced into a passive role. Being attacked continuously will build up heavy pressure that will overwhelm the pilot, but the white Knight was able to handle it and counterattack whenever he had the chance. Counters that could give Arnis goose bumps. From the performance of the white knight, the strong determination of the pilot was clear. With skills and mental tenacity, how could you not admire such a pilot? Even though he was panting heavily, Arnis couldn't help smiling happily.

“A superb knight, such a pity...”

“How strong, such a pity...”

Edgar adjusted his distance from the Karrdator Dash, knowing his face was getting more serious. He was evenly matched with the Karrdator Dash. Despite their intense exchange, only light damages were inflicted with nothing decisive. Edgar knew very clearly that his machine was installed with Flexible Coat in place of back weapons, and was lacking in offensive power. Even taking that into account, his opponent could still launch fierce attacks, a testament to his impressive skill. The pilot of Dash was good; each strike was heavy and left no gaps for counterattacks. If his Tellestarle didn't specialise in defence, Edgar doubted he could have held on for this long. He didn't have that confidence, and that only deepens his beliefs.

“... As expected of the new model, his machine moves much smoother.”

It was purely a matter of the functionality of the machines. Tellestarle had higher maximum strength output, but the controls are less precise; On the other hand, the Karrdator Dash focuses on controls and sacrificed part of its power. In a battle pushing both machines to its limit, a gap started to surface. The opponent wasn't someone he could overwhelm with brute force. Instead of controlling the machine, Edgar was avoiding the use of too much force, while the opponent didn't have to hold

anything back with its smooth movements. Edgar felt frustrated once again over his machine.

Another problem puts him at a disadvantage, which was the huge drain of mana by Tellestarle. Flexible Coat which drains mana made the situation even direr. Tellestarle had less than thirty percent of its mana left, and Edgar would definitely be the one to yield. He needed a chance to turn the situation around.

The two of them continued to fight. In a corner of Edgar's mind, he planned to propose to Eru to make a machine with tighter controls no matter the outcome. That's the only thing he won't back down on.

The red Knight took one step back, then another. Sorrowful sounds came from the crystal tissue operating the machine, which was being drowned out by the battlefield. The arm aimed at the enemy slumped down and it appeared to lose power.

“Okay, Guyale's stomach is empty, it can't move anymore.”

Dietrich said so light heartedly, but his facial expression was anything but that. While Edgar was squaring off against Arnis, he was dueling intensely with the other two machines of Alvanz. If the offensive orientated Guyale didn't attack, it wouldn't be able to fend off its enemy. The high mana consumption rate doomed it to exhaust its mana pool before Edgar does.

That might be so, but that doesn't mean he will succumb so obediently.

“How frustrating, it's too soon for me to take on two machines at the same time, I need to train more.”

Guyale's air intake valve seemed to be crying out that it was at its limits. Despite the Ether Reactor churning at maximum speed, it couldn't keep up with the mana consumption, and there was no telling whether Guyale could attack one last time. Dietrich couldn't see how he could turn this around.

In actual fact, the two members of Alvanz was feeling melancholic too. They were fighting two on one and couldn't take down the opponent

before he used up his mana. On top of that, the damage to Tuva and Idola were increasing all this while. The offensive capability of the red Knight was impressive, if it was a one on one fight— when they thought about that, their facial expression remained tense.

“... I will deal the final blow to this guy, Idola, support the captain.”

“Understood. He might be at his limit, but still be careful.”

“I know... I won't forget the damage to my machine that easily.”

Tuva walked towards Guyale slowly while Idola aimed for the white Tellestarle.

“Well, I can't do much, but I won't go down so easily.”

Dietrich decided how to use his remaining mana— fire his lightning flail and Kamtha to obstruct the Alvanz. Even though going down will put Edgar in a dangerous situation, he still decided to fight for more time. After stalling for time, he could bet on something else— gambling that their Commander will return to the fray.

A moment later, everyone started moving.

From the way Guyale was ignoring his movement, Tuva knew it was going to make a last ditch struggle; Idola deployed its back weapon, his finger on the trigger; Dietrich was about to move when he notice 'that' thing approaching from behind them— Everything seemed to be happening at the same time, followed by the sound of explosion from behind Alvanz, the sound they most feared and was on guard against, they were too focused on the white and red Knights and lapsed in their guard— lapsed against that opponent that required their total attention.

Idola who was tasked with guarding against him was shocked and turned towards the source of the sound on reflex. What appeared before his eyes was a green metallic light that filled the entire holo monitor. Before Idola could react, that thing already reached Idola's machine.

That thing was— the metallic green Tellestarle that was attacking with a flying knee attack.

Idola's head shattered with the sound of paper being crushed into a ball. In order to protect the important eye crystal of the Silhouette Knight, it was covered with a sturdy helmet. But the leg of the machine which has to support its entire weight could crush it easily, especially with the toughest part of the armour, the knee.

Eru who was waiting for his mana to recover closed in as much as he could and performed a devastating flying knee attack. The fierce kick from Eru made Idola, who probably lost for the first time, fly in the air spinning.

Everyone was shocked by the powerful attack from Eru. In that instance, time seemed to stop. Arnis used this chance to charge up to Edgar and forced an attack.

The strike was as fast as lightning. Edgar who was a step slow had no choice but to block with his sword as the two clashed intensely. Crystal tissue shrieked as the Dash and Tellestarle tried to overwhelm each other as they dug their feet into the ground, showing the power of these giants. The heat emitted by both sides seemed to be increasing the density of the air, blurring the scenery. Gradually, the white Tellestarle presses the Dash down; it has the advantage in maximum power output. The Dash was pushed back, its stance crumbling.

But that was the limit.

The power of the Tellestarle became weaker. Its powerful legs bent and the noise made by its crystal tissue became softer and weak. Dash kept its sword back. The white Tellestarle knelt to the ground with its sword pointing downwards and became still.

Guyale also lost its power.

Tuva who blocked Guyale until the very last moment started its assault. Guyale bet everything it had on a shot from its Kamtha, lightning flail and swords. The Kamtha knocked Tuva's shield loose, but it slid into the lightning flail's range without hesitation and almost knocked Guyale's sword away with a fierce blow. Guyale lost the power to resist, stumbled for a little before falling onto the ground.

Ambrosius who was watching this battle silently stood at this moment.

“The match is over! Sheath your swords!!”

The sound of gongs erupted immediately. It rised above the noise of the crowd and reached the Knights on the battlefield. Both sides who were about to duke it out with their remaining forces kept their weapons a second later, returning the arena to silence.

“It was a magnificent display from both sides, splendid! I have seen its strengths and weaknesses!! Wonderful indeed, both parties are worthy of praise!!”

The audience gave a warm ovation to the Knights that were still standing in the battlefield. Maybe their brain couldn't keep up with the signal to end, the Knights didn't cheer victoriously, just standing in place as if they had just woke up from a dream.

Maybe we are the ones who were saved— after confirming the situation, Arnis mumbled to himself in his heart. Both sides had two machines left in terms of numbers, but it would be reckless to face the green Knight and Tzendorg with the two Dashes they had. Arnis wasn't sure he could pull it off, and in the process of taking down two of the Silver Phoenix Knights, Alvanz lost four of theirs. Their losses were terrible, it was their complete loss. The audience must think so too. To obscure the result this way, there must be political elements at play, but Arnis wasn't interested.

Silhouette Knights standing by walked out of the workshop attached to the training arena, keeping the immobile machines one by one. The Karrdator Dash of Alvanz were in a terrible state. Arnis was worried about his comrades inside.

At this moment, the white Knight that fell silent before him moved slightly. It probably recovered enough mana after some time. It maintained its position of its sword on the ground and opened its chest armour slowly. Seeing the pilot exit the cockpit, Arnis got out as well.

Edgar and Arnis appeared before each other. They saluted each other at the same moment.

They didn't know what to say. Or rather, they had expressed everything through their swords in the fight earlier and had no need to exchange

words, they just want to see what the other party looked like— that’s what he thought, but Arnis still spoke:

“My side had the advantage this time. If there is another chance, I hope to spar with you using the same model of machines.”

Edgar was surprised, but shook his head.

“No, I don’t intend to use the machine as an excuse. There are other ways to fight and conserve mana, but I couldn’t do it because of your skills. It is impossible to stay on the defensive all the time... The reason for this defeat was my immaturity, and the results were clear to see.”

Arnis laugh as his opponent serious demeanour reminded him of someone from his distant past.

“Haha, relax. You will miss things if you only look at the things right in front of you.”

“... Thank you for your advice, but it is fine. My friends will watch my blind spots for me.”

That’s not what I mean. Arnis responded with an awkward expression and a wry smile in his heart.

“Am I responsible for the blind spots?”

Dietrich sat cross legged in the downed Guyale, grumbling reluctantly.

“Edgar’s blind spots? There’s too many to watch out for.”

At this moment, a shadow fell over Dietrich’s head with heavy footsteps. He turned and saw the metallic green Tellestarle and Tzendorg.

“Sorry I didn’t make it in time. It was too reckless I guess.”

“That’s right, but after this fight, I could see my weaknesses clearly.”

As the performance of Karrdator Dash and Tellestarle was about the same, it emphasised the weakness of Tellestarle. Dietrich crossed his arms and thought for a moment, and decided to share his views.

“Hey Ernesti, ignoring Tzendorg for now, Tellestarle is too crude. It couldn’t be helped since it is a prototype, but I think His Majesty will

prefer the Dash...”

“I feel the same way too. Hmm— to complete the mass production model, should we take a Dash with us or hand our equipment to the NTR Lab?”

Dietrich was worried that Eru might get depressed with the defects of Tellestarle, but felt annoyed by Eru’s nonchalant attitude.

“... Aren’t you frustrated?”

“Hmmm—? Tellestarle did lose, but that doesn’t matter since Dash is an improved model of Tellestarle. I am just impressed, even if it wasn’t made by me, but good things are simply good things. So that’s that, I will talk to His Majesty and try to get a couple of machines for research.”

“... Ahhh, erm, I see. Right, as expected of our Knight Commander. It is about time to revamp Edgar’s machine, right?”

Dietrich supported his chin with his palm and elbow on his knees, and was fine with anything.

“Well... the mass production model is reaching its final phase. Once it is finished, the Silhouette Knights within the nation would be recalled. That should be a good time to prepare machines for everyone.”

A wind filled with dust blew across the arena. Eru squint his eyes, then stood to survey everyone around him.

“It is about time for us to withdraw. Di-senpai, can you move?”

“Sure. The mana had recovered a little, walking should be fine.”

“We can drag you out by grabbing your legs.”

“No need. I managed to survive the fight; the machine will get damaged if you drag it.”

As they chattered, the Silver Phoenix Knights started to move

Inside the workshop of the arena, Gaizka Johannsson watched the Karrdator Dash being repaired and sighed. When he closed his eyes, he could see the battle earlier before him. The clash between the new models,

never seen before equipment and the pilots— all of them were so brilliant that he couldn't pull his eyes away. He didn't care about the result of the match; he just wanted to know the working theory behind the techniques used in the battle. The series of events surprised him, but he was happy to see them and was fine with that.

Before the meeting today, his heart was filled with unhappiness.

As a craftsman, he was proud of being a part of the National Technology Robotics Laboratory, but his passion was gradually grinded away in the never changing days. The development of Silhouette Knights was a project that took generations, the birth of a new model usually take centuries. Their effort will only bear fruit several generations down, and those who do witness that moment was extremely lucky. But what about those who can't?

At the start he became the top technician— the glorious position of workshop chief, when did he started throwing tantrums? It was because there was nothing that was worthy of his protection, when he realised that, he turned into someone who lusted over power. In the end, he couldn't stand the 'brat' leader of the NTR Lab becoming his boss.

Until something shocking happened.

The appearance of the new model that he thought would only show up every few centuries.

The sudden project lit his wish that was residing in the bottom of his heart— finish the new model and use that accomplishment to become the leader of the NTR Lab. Now he thought about it calmly, such thinking was shallow and hollow, proving how narrow his mind was to not understand this back then. But when he remembered the birth of Karrdator Dash, he didn't think that fervour was a waste.

On the stage where he presents the Karrdator Dash— 'He' showed up. Leading a Centaur Knight and laden with all sorts of accessories.

To be frank, even Karrdator Dash which Gaizka bet everything on was his idea. First was bafflement, then confusion, and finally chaos. 'His' word was the thing that broke him out of his confusion. That crazy genius

wasn't bound by common sense, acting as he pleased, focusing wholeheartedly in the development of Silhouette Knights. Gaizka who was chasing the sun realised what he was searching for was nothing but a mirage.

Closing his eyes silently, he stretched his stiff body, staring at his wrinkled hand. He had decades of training under his belt, but his hand had been engraved with the signs of old age.

Even if he holds a hammer, he would not be as strong as he used to be. But he has all the experience and knowledge he has accumulated so far, he could reach a higher level if he used them well. The existence of Karrdator Dash bore testament to this. Guiding his subordinate well and pass his skills down. That way, maybe they could reach a higher and distant goal.

Gaizka felt thankful for the first time— thankful for being the workshop chief of the NTR Lab.

“... Damn kid... It is too early for me to lose to you all...”

Spilling his thoughts unconsciously, he spoke with a tone different from before.

Chapter 23: Graduation Day



C.E. 1280, Spring.

The bell situated at the centre of Laihiala Pilot Academy rung out, the clear sound echoing within the campus before it dissipated into the clear blue skies.

That wasn't the short bell announcing the beginning and ending of lessons; the long and steady ringing meant that this was a special day. Today, the campus will be holding a graduation ceremony.

Students wearing badges signifying their 'graduation' could be seen on campus everywhere.

Their ages and faculties were all different. This didn't apply only to Laihiala Pilot Academy, Fremmevira Kingdom on the whole was very

liberal in terms of graduation; there were plenty of graduates who didn't complete all their classes.

The ceremony did not differentiate between Elementary, Middle or High School, everyone who was leaving the campus received a grand farewell on this day.

Among them was a group of Laihiala Middle School graduates.

Their treatment was slightly different from the other graduates. According to the custom of this world, those who are fifteen years of age are treated as adults. The third year students of Middle school are fifteen this year, so their graduation had the same significance as a coming of age ceremony.

“A lot of things happened, and our circumstances became weird in a lot of ways, but we still graduated successfully.”

“To think that the school is still willing to issue us graduation certificates after all the willful things we had done.”

“It felt as though they are asking us to get lost--”

“I don't have any recollection of studying seriously midway through my school life.”

There was a very prominent group among the middle school graduates: A short boy in the middle, a Dwarf youth, flanked by two tall twins made them a quartet with uneven height-- Ernesti, Batson, Chid and Ady, the childhood playmates army, or the Silver Phoenix Knight Commander and his merry friends. They will be adults this year.

It was understandable why they had complicated feelings as they were about to graduate.

Thinking back, they did as they pleased in school to the point of absurdity, they didn't fit the part of being good model students. Attending classes that were far from being related was just the beginning; they even started creating new models suddenly and used the machines on campus without permission. In the end, they even took over an entire faculty, a high school on top of that. Such examples were more than they could

count.

They were the most infamous problem children since the founding of the school.

“Indeed, letting me lead a Knight Order at this age is already a special case, and we started teaching how to use Silhouette Gear mid-way...”

They might be problem children, but the results they produced were impeccable.

The biggest accomplishment was probably the invention of the industrial work machine Silhouette Gears, and pushing its implementation. The influence of Silhouette Gears was wide and involved many industries. Thanks to this, there was a revolution in the education content not just in Laihiala Pilot Academy, but kingdom wide.

And so, the ‘inventors’ from the Silver Phoenix Knights received plenty of invitations to be instructors from all over the nation, making the group wonder whether they were students or teachers.

Due to their special circumstances, graduation became the compromising way of dealing with this troublesome group they couldn’t handle.

The graduation ceremony proceeded without incident, which was followed by the current students sending the graduates out of the school gates to end the ceremony.

From tomorrow onwards, the graduates will go on their separate ways and move on with their lives.

Some of them looked back on their lives at school, others felt uneasy about the future. They brought their own emotions and walked towards the main gate. At this time, heavy footsteps came from somewhere.

Without needing to search for the source of the noise, the group of Silhouette Knights appeared a short distance away. The procedure that was not part of the ceremony confused all those who were present.

In the face of the crowd, the Silhouette Knight Squad spread out, lining

on both sides of the road leading to the main gate.

The Knights straightened their backs and formed up beautifully, facing each other with smooth movements. Immediately after that, all the Knights drew the swords on their waist.

With the sword in their right hand and sheath in their left, they raised their swords high and crossed it with the Knight on the opposite side, before withdrawing it before their face. All the machines stopped with the position of praying with their swords, creating a path with the swords of the Silhouette Knights.

A Silhouette Knight nearby spoke to the graduates who were at a loss:

“Congratulations on your graduation, my juniors. We will be leaving this place in the near future too, but allow us to send you off with a grand farewell.”

The scene before them was as majestic as a gallery of statues. The procedure that didn't exist in the past years made the graduates blush in joy, and they went through the path made by the giant Knights. This year's graduation ceremony would surely leave a deep impression in the hearts of many people.

And of course, the pilots of these Silhouette Knights were the members of the Silver Phoenix Knights.

Their special course of action was because of the person walking slowly at the end of the line of graduates-- The Knight Commander with a face full of smiles, humming cheerfully as he walked slowly ahead. Ady had a similar expression, holding Eru's hand as she walked beside him. Chid and Batson who were not far behind puffed their chest high as they grinned.

Thus ends their six turbulent years of campus life.

After passing through the campus main gate, Eru turned his head. The vast campus ground of the Pilot Academy spread before his eyes. He said loudly with complicated feelings:

“Laihiala Pilot Academy, I have been in your care all these while! Well then... Silver Phoenix Knights, move out!”

The members moved quickly after receiving their Commander's order.

The Silhouette Knights began moving at the same time, and were followed by carriages. The rest of the members were seated inside, along with all sorts of tools. These luggages were all the Silver Phoenix Knights had, and would follow them to their new base.

With the graduation of their Knight Commander, the Silver Phoenix Knights officially moved away from Laihiala Pilot Academy and began operation as an independent entity. They will use the newly constructed 'Olvecius fort' near Laihiala Academy City as their base, and work actively around the nation.

This day, they started their journey in both ways.

These were the peaks that separated the western nations from Fremmevira Kingdom, the Aubigne Mountain Range.

The two sides of the continents were linked by the road known as the 'East West Highway', built along the mountains that were easier to traverse. The highway was built perfectly, but due to the treacherous terrain, it took a lot of effort to travel on it.

A convoy of carriages was moving along the East West Highway.

The convoy was escorted by a sizeable number of Silhouette Knights. They were not merchants and hadn't brought much cargo with them. They only brought items necessary for travel. In the middle of the pack was a carriage larger than the others.

It had a simple design, but was built sturdily, making the high status of the passenger obvious.

The convoy advanced cautiously ahead, but when they passed over the tallest peak, a rough voice bellowed out from the large carriage to stop the drivers.

"Hey, stop the carriage!!"

The flag to signal the stopping of the convoy was waved and the carriages stopped one after another. The escorting Silhouette Knights

assumed their defensive positions to protect the entire convoy. It was an impulsive action, but the movement of all the personnel was perfect, making it clear that such an action had probably happened several times before.

The carriage shook as the passenger alighted.

He was wearing a well tailored suit that did not stinge on the usage of high quality clothes. Regrettably, the man was too well built. He was almost two metres in height with a solid body, the embodiment of wildness and ruggedness. The tidy and refreshing clothes didn't match the man's powerful aura. Bystanders might even think that the atmosphere was weird.

But the man himself wasn't concerned with this at all.

He took a deep breath, and exhaled slowly as if he was tasting the air in his lungs carefully. His solid muscles expanded with his lungs, the clean white shirt made sounds as it was stretched tight. Sad to say, the clothes tailored for him was as fragile as a candle in the wind in the face of his powerful muscles.

“The air here is great! The air in the great Aubigne Mountains are so refreshing. Staying in that tiny castle was so constraining.”

The mountain breeze blew his unkempt hair. His blonde hair with a touch of red fluttered like the mane of a lion.

“Yes, Your Highness. This fellow is also saying its condition is better than usual.”

The Silhouette Knight escort behind him imitated his actions and took a deep breath, and the revving of the Ether Reactor became louder.

“Haha, I told you so! Ohhh! Look, the home I missed so much!”

The entire mountain was covered in greenery with the colours of the city standing out in between. The capital Känkänen and the royal castle-- Shreiber was right there. Further into the distance, the small image of Laihiala Academy City could be seen.

“Oh, beautiful Fremmevira. Well then, Your Highness, since it is right before us, let us make haste into Känkänen.”

“Don’t be so petty, I have been holed up in that small boring place all this time! If I don’t stretch my body here, I won’t be able to do so when I go inside the city.”

He was just starting to stretch his limbs when his chest button flew out with a pop. It sounded just like the scream of the royal tailor that made his shirt.

“Ara, this expensive shirt is so fragile. It is a gift from someone, but I still don’t understand the fashion of Gajdos.”

After uttering his complains, the second son of Fremmevira Kingdom’s first prince, Riothamus, ‘Emrys Geijer Fremmevira’ got onto the carriage once again.

Arc 6: Forest City Crisis

Chapter 24: The Inheritor of the Lion



She was deep in slumber. It could be called sleeping, meditation, or deep thinking. This was the way her race becomes one with the Great Stream.

She journeyed in her slumber. Her body seemed to be extending endlessly across the vast lands, spreading her body out wide. Unlike blood circulation, the stream flowing across the lands whispers to her. She, her kinsmen and ancestors become one and kept on extending out further.

The infinitely overlapping consciousness was attracted by something. A foreign object was disturbing her sleep and a part of her that had been detached from the Great Stream felt out of place. Her intuition told her

that this thing could not be allowed to exist.

She awoke the next second. Despite having experienced the longest amount of time among her kinsmen, she still required a long time to become one with the Great Stream. Awakening from her slumber was not what she had planned, but there was no hesitation. She had to dispose of that foreign object disrupting her slumber.

“What is the matter, Elder? It isn’t time for you to wake yet.”

She only moved her eyes and saw her young kinsmen. She had white skin, soft blond hair and a slender body. The most prominent feature was her knife-like ears. This was a common feature among her kinsmen.

“...Something is obstructing the ‘journey’.”

She locked eyes with the other party but her body didn’t move as she spoke. Her body couldn’t move, and didn’t need to move. This body of hers would be summoned by her ancestors one day and didn’t mean anything to her.

“The squirming evil intentions are descending upon the forest, it has to be removed.”

“... I understand. We will meet them in battle with our riders.”

The kinsmen did not inquire further and went away.

She did not sleep. If the foreign objects were not disposed of, there was no real meaning to her slumber. She has no reason to sleep once again.

She waited, waited for the moment her prophecy became true. No matter how much time passed, it was just a blink of the eye to her.

This was the prologue to the crisis that loomed over the forest and the ‘home’.

That place bore traces similar to the trampling of a battle field.

Tattered pieces that were humanoid in appearance were dumped everywhere. A wrinkled palm reached towards the sky, the eyes within the helmet were already devoid of life. The rusty armour had lost its shine, its brownish red colour blending with the plains.

This wreckage were originally Silhouette Knights. Some were old, but many of them were new. Piles of wreckage faithfully displayed the past, present and future of this place.

This was the 1st R&D workshop within the fort Dufare, home to the headquarters of the National Technology Robotics Laboratory.

“... Ugh, we have to tidy this place up.”

Workshop chief Gaizka sighed as he watched the vast amount of space taken up by the wreckage— these were the results of previous experiments. The major project of developing the new model and revolution in technology led to a series of failures, creating mountains of scrapped parts. The accumulated wreckage was double the norm and an eye sore. Gaizka made up his mind to clear away these junk when production of the new models begins nationwide.

Gaizka walked out of the dark workshop as he was pondering about this mess. The moment he moved outside, the bright sunlight blinded him. As his eyes adjusted to the light, his smile deepens.

There were rows of giants kneeling down with their chest armour open, exposing the cockpit inside.

They were not Karrdator or Karrdator Dash. These were the crystallisation of the efforts made by the craftsmen of NTR Lab all this while. It was the newest mass production model, Karrdetolle.

Using the latest Karrdator Dash as its base, it was upgraded with the Option Works proposed by the Silver Phoenix Knights. The biggest difference was the optimisation of the Capacity Frame— these improved the capacity armour’s mana pool storage by leaps and bounds. With that, the problem inherent in Tellestarle— insufficient mana supply had been resolved. Karrdetolle was the perfected cutting edge technology of the new models.

The machines only had a simple layer of protective paint, keeping its original metallic property, with a plain and low profile like the Silhouette Knights manufactured by the Fremmevira Kingdom. In contrast, the outer skeleton that focused on defensive capability and ease in manufacturing

had a clean aesthetic.

Karrdetolle had completed its operation test and was ready to be mass produced. The nobles inside the kingdom had also received notice and had begun hiring craftsmen and conducting training courses. Hence forth, the Silhouette Knights within the nation would be replaced by these new models. NTR Lab's most pressing task had ended for now.

Gaizka stretched his neck and shoulders that were stiff from fatigue, and sighed as he thought of his old bones that weren't working as well as he wanted. He and the 1st R&D workshop charges under him had been researching fervently, pushing himself recklessly for a long period of time. It was about time for a vacation. Gaizka thought up the schedule to take leave as he walked towards the director's office.

The King Ambrosius and his family, the royalties of the Fremmevira Kingdom, basically lived inside the Royal Castle Shreiber. From the end of the audience hall, after passing complicated passage and several rooms, one could reach their private chambers.

The inner part of Castle Shreiber was known as the 'Inner City'. The deeper it was, the higher the altitude, with the tallest tower situated in the centre of the castle. This place was modified from Fortress Shreiber and that tower was built after the renovation. Hence, the first priority during the construction of Shreiber was toughness, but it was still too shabby as the residence of royalties.

Due to its history, this zone had few windows. With the lack of natural light, there was no choice but to burn expensive animal oil regardless of night or day. The fine furniture that did not seem too elegant gave off a sturdy atmosphere under the gentle light.

"I have sent a messenger to Kuscheperca for Martina, asking Emrys to return."

There were two men in the room. One was King Ambrosius; the other was younger than Ambrosius, slender in build and bearing a striking resemblance to the King.

"Eh, I have not seen him for a long while too. When did he set off for

Kuscheperca?”

“About three years ago.”

“... I see, that was before I met with ‘that’. It hasn’t been long since, but it feels like ages ago.”

Ambrosius lowered his gaze and focused on the cup of wine in his hand, the liquid shaking within it.

“... But Your Majesty, I think it is still too early.”

“Don’t address me as Your Majesty, Rio, there are no outsiders here.”

“I understand... Father.”

The eldest son of Ambrosius; first in the line of succession to the throne ‘Riothamus Haarus Fremmevira’ exhaled, relaxing the corner of his eyes that were tense.

“Eh, I feel that the timing is just right. NTR Lab has sent in the report of the new model they developed with the Silver Phoenix Knights. After Emrys returns, the news will probably have spread across the nation. Everyone will be able to see that the moment to embark onto a new era is upon us.”

Riothamus wanted to refute, but closed his mouth immediately. This was because of Ambrosius’ expression that seemed to be harbouring some schemes and the way he was enjoying himself. Experience told him that whenever his father made such a face, no one would be able to stop him. On top of that, what Ambrosius said had a point. In the face of revolutionary change, there was a need to settle things.

“There is one task left. No, it is more like a promise.”

“Silver Phoenix Knights... it’s regarding that boy, correct? Will it be fine? Sending him there, even if there is no problem with the ‘law’, those people are still hard to please.”

Even though they bore a resemblance, the air about the two of them were very different. Ambrosius’ son did not take after Ambrosius’ most prominent strong willed personality.

“Fufu, really, you worry too much.”

“It is an important matter after all. Father, you are taking it too lightly.”

It wasn't clear what he thought was interesting; Ambrosius had to stifle his urge to laugh aloud as Riothamus tried to restrain his sigh.

“Be more relaxed, Rio. If you keep mulling over things, you will suffer a lot in the future.”

“Father, you are acting too recklessly!”

In the depths of the Royal Castle, father and son who seemed to get along and not get along at the same time conversed for quite a while in private.

Several days later, a man with a huge build appeared in the corridor of Castle Shreiber.

“My country feels the best! My restrained life until yesterday was just like a dream!”

That man was ‘Emrys Geijer Fremmevira’, fourth in line in succession to the throne. He stretched his body widely, using his body language to express his sense of liberation before walking forth with cheerful strides.

What he was wearing right now was tough demon beast leather that was hard to work on, equipment of the highest grade— ‘Black Beast Armour’. A fine cape rested on his shoulders and a sword that focused on practicality hung from his waist. This armour was tailored especially for his huge built. It was expensive, but as a member of the Royal family, it was still too crude. It suited him because of the impression he gave others.

Anyway, he seemed to be in a great mood.

He was studying abroad not too long ago and was forced to wear fashionable clothes that restricted his movement. Those top class materials didn't suit his bulky body and wasn't to his liking at all. As a royalty, he preferred styles that were ‘tough and practical’ or ‘easy to move in’, which was a pity. This armour specially made for him showed to the greatest degree his preference for ease of movement, toughness and

durability.

Wearing attire he was familiar with, he walked in the royal castle with high spirits, opening a door with a bright smile. Inside the room— the audience hall was the members of the royal family with Ambrosius at the head, and the nobles such as Duke Dixgard. He opened his mouth in a smile, looking at everyone that was gathered.

“Yo, Dad! Grandpa! Long time no see, I am puaahh!”

Before he could finish, Ambrosius threw his royal seal at his head, which almost knocked Emrys out.

In front of Emrys who was nursing his head while yelling, Ambrosius hugged his head in resignation.

“This stupid grandson... He still does not know proper manners, what did he learn in his studies abroad!?”

“My sincere apologies, Your Majesty, I had been reminding him...”

Riothamus was really embarrassed. His eldest son Uther was mature and acted in a manner befitting of a royalty, but that was not so for his second son. It's not clear who he takes after, rather than easy going, he was closer to being brash in nature. In a final bid to change his behaviour, Emrys was sent to study abroad.

"Martina is not one to skimp on education... Even she couldn't rein him in?"

Ambrosius mumbled, thinking about his daughter that married to the Kuscheperca Kingdom. Martina was Riothamus's sister, and Emrys' aunt. She married into the Kuscheperca Kingdom, which bound the two Kingdoms on friendly terms.

Riothamus was sent to his aunt after becoming an adult at fifteen, but that scene earlier clearly showed the ineffectiveness of his overseas stint.

"Eh, I don't know who your personality resembles."

"He resembles you, Your Majesty."

Ambrosius wasn't expecting anyone to interrupt, and saw the usual

expressionless Knut before him.

"He resembles Your Majesty."

Ambrosius averted his eyes, pretending not to hear anything.

Shortly later, Emrys got up nonchalantly.

"Emrys, did you behave like this in Kuscheperca too?"

"Ah— No, not to that extent. I err... I am also aware of watching the time and place. I was just too excited when I saw everyone after such a long time..."

Seeing how badly Emrys was stuttering, the suspicious gazes from everyone focused on him, but the man himself wasn't fazed and puffed out his chest. It seldom happens, but Ambrosius waved the white flag this time.

"... I will ask you the details later. Alright, the reason I gathered everyone today..."

Ambrosius cleared his throat, sweeping away the relaxed atmosphere due to the appearance of a problem child.

"It has been thirty six years since I ascended the throne. It is about time for me to step down, the next Regent will be my son here— Riothamus."

Everyone listened attentively. This wasn't an abrupt speech by Ambrosius, and the people gathered thought that this might happen.

The position of the monarch of the Fremmevira Kingdom was hereditary, usually passed down to the eldest son. The eldest son is the first in line of succession; the other siblings were next in line of succession regardless of gender. However, in the event that the reigning king has grandchildren, the children of the eldest son will be next in the line of succession instead.

The most common reason of abdication was the wish for a strong leader during the chaotic formative years of the Kingdom; according to tradition, the King will abdicate when he reached an advanced age. Ambrosius was sixty years old, a very elderly man in this world. It was no surprise for him

to raise the topic of abdication.

However, everyone knew Ambrosius was still in great shape. Even though their mind could accept it, they still feel anxious about it. It was a testament of how much he was beloved by his people.

Riothamus came forth, breaking the silence. He stood straight up, and bowed before the man who was his father, as well as the King for the last time. After Riothamus ascends the throne, he can't lower his head, even if it was to his own father. At this moment, he completed his bow with his utmost respect.

"I bow before you, Your Majesty.... No, my father."

"Hmm, be always cautious after taking the throne, and strive for the best. Alright, we will deal with the official ceremony later, I hope everyone can support this country together with my son, I beseech to all of you."

Ambrosius surveyed all those present, and the nobles all kneeled and bow in response.

C.E. 1280, summer.

News of 'The Lion King' Ambrosius abdicating and the ascension of Riothamus to the throne had spread throughout the Kingdom. The people praised the accomplishment of the old King, and held high expectations of their next regent. Shortly after, the newest mass produced Silhouette Knight models were also pushed into service nationwide.

A new monarch and knights— the Fremmevira Kingdom was entering a period of major changes since its founding. Everyone looked forward to the peaceful and prosperous development of the kingdom.

A month after the coronation of the new king. At this point of time, the activities celebrating the coronation had ended, and the kingdom returned to its normal peaceful days.

By traveling a short distance to the east from Laihiala Academy City on the 'Fremmevira Highway', a fortress was situated in a normal forest. This was where the Olvecius Fortress was located.

Normally speaking, this place had no strategic value as a base, but it was a very important fortress for the Kingdom.

The reason doesn't lie with the location, but the Knight Order stationed there— the Silver Phoenix Knights.

The frightening thing was that it wasn't a stretch to say this fortress existed for the sake of Knight Commander Eru. Such a weird location was chosen because of its distance from Eru's hometown after all.

As for the situation inside Olvecius Fortress, it was filled with several of the new mass produced Karrdetolle parked casually around the place. Except for the direct manufacturer— NTR Lab, no other Knight Orders has this many Karrdetolle. NTR Lab gave priority to the Silver Phoenix Knights not only because they were involved in the development process, but also as an investment in Eru.

A dwarf youth was running through the hangar filled with the forest of Karrdetolle. He was looking around, searching for something. When he discovered the short youth buried in papers, he yelled:

“Oh, found you, silver boy. Aldele's tuning is almost done. Also, Gyalinda. Say something to that dumbass Di; he has broken it so many times already!”

Eru who was sketching designs nonstop responded to the voice of the chief craftsman— Boss, lifted his head and said:

“No, Di-senpai just can't handle the Magic thrust jet well yet, I heard him falling hard just now... But he seems to be getting better, can you forgive him?”

“It's all because of your weird ideas. Come on, just one dumbass flying with the Magic thrust jet is already a handful.”

The boss scratched his head with a sigh, and turned around. Eru followed his gaze to the side. Before them were two Silhouette Knights that differed in colour and shape from the mass produced models.

“I admit that he is working hard. But it won't be nice if words of the Squad Captain's machine falling all over the place got out.”

Squad captain machines— On one side was the white knight Aldelecumber, the personal machine of 1st Squad Captain Edgar C. Blanche. With the newest Karrdetolle as its base, its appearance had been modified to be similar to Earlecumber. Minor adjustments had been made to accommodate the pilot, but the contents were mostly the same. Karrdetolle already had powerful performance and smooth controls, which fulfilled the needs of Edgar just fine.

On the other side was the personal machine of 2nd Squad Captain Dietrich Cunitz— the red knight Guyalinda. This machine also used Karrdetolle as its base, and had been modified with the request of the pilot, so much so that it was unrecognisable.

Shields and Flexible coat weren't even built in, a completely offense orientated load out. Magic thrust jet was installed despite the fact that it would limit the machine's performance. It was considered a fashionable machine, with some flaws and difficult controls, but that part was just how Dietrich likes it.

The Squad Leaders who had contrasting personalities projected their style onto their squad. The result is the 1st squad focused on defence while the 2nd squad specialised on offence. The core of the Silver Phoenix Knights comprises of these two squads with strong characters.

“Oh, one more thing. The guys in ‘the third’ are wailing again.”

“I thought I already assigned Chid and Ady to them?”

After the Silver Phoenix Knights shifted to Olvecius Fort and achieved independence as a Knight Order, their biggest change was the addition of the 3rd squad.

The characteristics of the 3rd squad were totally different from the other two squads. The reason lies in the Silhouette Knights they used. With a body larger than normal Silhouette Knights, an alien that combines man and horse— what they piloted was the pride of the Silver Phoenix Knights, the centaur knight Tzendrinble.

Using prototype number one Tzendorg as the mold, Tzendrinble changed the control system to single pilot mode, a mass produced model

after all sorts of adjustments. It was still an expensive machine powered by two Ether Reactors, and the numbers produced were limited, not as widespread as Karrdetolle. Most of the machines in service were used by the Silver Phoenix Knights.

“Well, see for yourself.”

The Boss pointed to the side of Tzendorg’s large foot. Knights from the 3rd Squad were gathered there, discussing about something.

“Like I said, I know what you mean by using the flexible coat while moving, but can you be more specific about the method?”

“Eh, the machine will tilt when you turn right? At that moment, you exert force with a ‘bang!’ like this, then pull back with a ‘cock!’”

“Ady-chan, I already said— a thousand times, this is totally— not an explanation! Stop using sounds like ‘bang’ and ‘cock’ to explain!”

“Woo, help me Eru—!!”

Aside from its expensive cost and weird appearance, another reason why Tzendrinble wasn’t popular was that its shape differed too much from the basic models, making control difficult. Leaving the Tzendorg with its double pilot system aside, the improved Tzendrinble was still being worked on right now to simplify the control system. Special Magius engines were used, and the design was being adjusted to be more similar to riding a horse. Some of the movements were automated by using earlier control scripts, implementing an advanced concept seamlessly in. However, the results were shown clearly. The third squad spent the most time training, but they still lack proficiency.

“... Go help her, especially the 3rd Squad Captain.”

As the twins, who were filling as trainer were bad in coaching, it made matters worse. The problem lies in them explaining by only sharing their experience, unlike Eru who taught through theory.

“This is training for the two ‘Commander’s aide’— passing the things I taught accurately to others.”

“Like I told you, the one who will suffer are not those two.”

Helvi who was appointed as the Captain of the 3rd Squad had a hard time interpreting the explanations of the twins. It would be simpler if she could have sought out the answer herself, but despite her abundant piloting experience, the Centaur Knight was not something she could tame in such a short time.

“Hmm— Alright, I will think of something when I finish the design I am working on...”

Seeing Eru engrossed in his plans with no intention to leave, the Boss let out a deep sigh.

After seeing the Boss going back to his maintenance work, Eru held a bundle of designs and headed towards the depths of the fortress. Passing through the cluster of Silhouette Knights, he reached a maintenance platform at the end of the workshop with a machine sitting on it. Even for the Silver Phoenix Knights who were used to abnormality, the machine sitting on the chair like maintenance platform was a very strange existence.

It had a normal humanoid appearance. As it was being modified, its outer skeleton had been torn off. People who had a basic understanding of Silhouette Knights would be able to immediately tell that something was wrong. The weird swell on its back and the metal pipes hanging from its exposed body made it look larger than a standard Silhouette Knight. Most of the metal pipes were linked to its back, accentuating the weirdness of its upper body.

The machine had almost no external equipment, only the two shoulders and waist were armoured. Those were not normal armour, but special equipment installed with block crystal tissue and engraftment— Magi Jet Thrusters.

“This had gone through a lot of modification... it is almost at its limit.”

No one would be able to tell that this entity that seemed to be filled with ‘metallic organs’ was originally a normal Karrdator.

It all began in the magic thrust jet experiment conducted a few years ago. This Karrdator which was chosen as the test subject was seriously damaged after the experiment failed. After repairs, it was put through grueling experiments as the test subject of the Magi Jet Thrusters. At one point, its operation was failing and it was overhauled into a Tellestarle. By the way, this machine was used by Eru during the fight at the Centaur Knight's presentation.

Everybody came to a consensus over time and saw this machine as Eru's personal item. It took on the role of being installed with the things Eru came up with to test them out. When the member saw him installing strange parts one after another onto it, they dubbed the machine 'Eru's Toybox'.

Even though Toybox was no stranger to modification, it still had a limit.

"There is a clash in the parts that we installed, resulting in additional burden on the machine, that's why we underestimated the mana consumption... We did add in another ether reactor, but we can't see the improvement."

The swell in the back of Toybox was made to accommodate an additional ether reactor.

Magi Jet Thrusters consumed a lot of mana. When using such equipment, increasing the mana supply became one of the issues they will need to face. They already had the expertise in using multiple ether reactors when they built Tzendorg, and they thought it would be fine to use this method, but the results were discouraging. This method worked on Tzendorg because it had large and ample space to work with. A standard sized machine was too cramped to fit in two ether reactors.

The toybox could be activated with the external equipment, but the mana supply was too unstable, and couldn't produce the level of mana they expected. The design was unbalanced and hard to control. Leaving the mana consumption issue aside, it was even worse than a Tellestarle.

"Designing it from scratch would be better indeed."

Eru placed several design plans on the floor, and compared it to the

actual thing before him. It was obvious that using the current designs won't be sufficient. With multiple power supplies and activating the magi jet thrusters without compromising power supply— to achieve this goal, he needed to consolidate all the technology and knowledge to complete a brand new design.

“Yes, this... will be my personal machine.”

Eru opened his eyes wide because of what he murmured. What flashed across his mind was an existence he lost once. A relic from a far away world he won't be able to get no matter how much he craved for it.

“... If that is the case, making something that ‘couldn't be assembled’ will be fine too...”

"Eru, E— ru!"

The distracted Eru heard the energetic cry. Pulling himself together, he turned his head and saw Ady jogging over.

“Ady... Did you skip out on work and run here?”

“Eh. No, no I didn't! I am working properly... Ah! I am here to tell you that there is a guest.”

Ady's eyes were unfocused, but Eru didn't press her any further and headed towards the conference room. Most of Fort Olvecius was taken up by Silhouette Knight Facilities, only a bare minimum of facilities were reserved for other uses. Something luxurious like an audience room to receive guests didn't exist from the very beginning, and the conference room was used instead.

When Eru entered the conference room, he saw a trooper waiting for him. He had a message with him, and after exchanging the standard greeting with Eru, he said:

“Knight Commander Echevarria sir, the royal capital has issued a summoning order for you.”

The Royal Capital Känkänen was bustling with people. The loud sound of a bell rang in the crowded main street. It came from a cavalry with a

bell advancing through the street. When they heard this noise, the crowd scattered to the side of the roads. This was a messenger troop announcing the imminent arrival of a Silhouette Knight into the Royal Capital.

To accommodate the ten metres tall giant weapon, a spacious path was needed— such as this main street. This road was also open for the citizens to use, so it was a standard procedure for someone to announce the arrival of Silhouette Knights into the castle. Using the main street also served the purpose of displaying the might of the Silhouette Knights to the people.

Shortly after the horseman messenger went by, the half man half horse Silhouette Knight Tzendorg appeared. The Royal Capital citizens who were scared witless in the beginning had gotten used to it completely. The equipment had been taken off since it was entering the royal capital, but the gigantic body larger than the standard Silhouette Knight still left a deep impression on the citizens.

Tzendorg moved through the main street majestically and reached Castle Schriber. It was ushered to the newly erected hangar to park Centaur Knights shortly after. The moment the machine went into standby mode, the pilot inside showed up. They were Eru and Ady.

“We reached the Castle—!”

“Yes, thank you Ady. I can operate a Tzendrinble, so you didn’t need to come along.”

“No, this Tzen-chan is mine, I will only lend it out, even if it is you, Eru!”

“That’s what you say, but you just want to skip the training of the 3rd Squad right?”

“No, no such thing... Right?”

Eru smiled wryly at Ady who won’t meet his eyes.

“This will be the only exception, please work hard tomorrow.”

After hearing that, Ady pounced over happily. Eru walked into the Castle while dragging her.

“Knight Commander of the Silver Phoenix Knights is here with haste

after receiving the summon.”

“Commander Aide Ady Olter reporting.”

The two of them came to a place other than the audience hall after entering the castle. This was because the one who summoned for them was not the reigning king, but the retired Regent Ambrosius.

“Yes, well met, Ernesti, Adeltrud, please relax.”

A shadow loomed over them after they sat down. Looking up, they saw a tall man standing straight with his arms folded. His well built muscles and burly build was intimidating, while his messy hair gave the impression of a lion.

Eru felt that this man had some resemblance to Ambrosius who was seated behind.

“... So you are the Silver Phoenix Knight Commander, Ernesti Echevarria. I heard about you, but you are really small!”

“You are right, Your Highness Emrys.”

The second Prince of Fremmevira Kingdom, Emrys Geijer Fremmevira smiled cheerfully with his tanned face when he spoke. For the petite Eru, meeting Emrys in the eye wasn't just a simple task of lifting his head, and needed to bend his upper body backwards. Ambrosius who couldn't stand for this said with a wry smile:

“Emrys, you sit over there, it's hard to talk like this.”

The retired King had three children, two sons and a daughter. When his eldest son Riothamus took the throne, his sons, Ambrosius' grandsons, became the next in line of succession. This meant that Riothamus' second son was second in line to the throne. Despite his high status, he only returned to the kingdom about a month ago.

“I heard that Your Highness was still studying abroad at Kuscheperca, welcome back.”

“My dad is ascending the throne, so I had to return.”

Eru also heard the news of Emrys' return. Because of the various things

that required their attention during the coronation, they didn't have a chance to meet. This was their first official meeting.

“To think a new Silhouette Knight was made during the short period while I was away! And that new model, Karrdetolle!? Awesome? I tried it out; it is smooth and powerful, as expected of our nation's Knight!”

“Yes, of course! That is the work of my Silver Phoenix Knights!”

“I thought so, great job!”

Emrys agreed with the happy Eru, and then suddenly slapped his own knee.

“Speaking of which, there is that horse thing! Looks interesting. Lend it to me next time, I want to take it for a spin.”

“Ehhh? Erm— sigh— Tzen-chan is hard to operate, or rather, it is a bit difficult to loan it out, well...”

“If I get on it, there will be a way to make it move, it's just something like a horse, just having the spirit will be enough!”

“Hmmm...”

“It is different from horses and can't be driven by spirit alone.”

For some reason, Ambrosius was also participating in the conversation enthusiastically. His eyes weren't those of a gentle supporter, it was closer to observing how Eru handles the intimidating Emrys. The evidence was that Ambrosius relaxed his expression happily and looked amused. Eru glanced sideways at Ambrosius as he casually handled Emrys. Meanwhile, Ady was worried about Tzendorg being taken away. Emrys maintained his energetic attitude and became excited.

“Let's discuss that later, I heard that I was summoned because of something urgent.”

Eru felt it was about time and ended the conversation. If he allowed Emrys to go on, it will probably take all day.

“Oh, right, I asked for you to come here to make a Silhouette Knight for me.”

Ambrosius cut to the chase, which made Eru asked baffled:

“Your Excellency, don’t you already have the outstanding machine ‘Raids of Valor’?”

“That’s different; it’s the King’s machine. I passed it on to Riothamus when I abdicated, and can’t take it out as I please. I want a new one, and it seems like a good idea to commission it to you.”

“Retirement life is boring” – Ambrosius muttered softly. Eru almost asked him how he planned to make retirement life more exciting, but he managed to restrain himself.

“I understand, in that case, allow me to do what I can.”

“Can you make one for me, too! Just making it for grandpa is unfair.”

“Hmmm, how about it, Ernesti? Can you prepare two machines?”

“By your orders, just one or two machines isn’t a problem. Well, what kind of machine would you like? I will try my best to satisfy both of your needs.”

Ambrosius wanted to speak when he heard that, but Emrys was faster. He stood strongly and kicked the chair away.

“Okay, the most important thing is ‘power’.”

He announced loudly. Eru took out a small notebook, pen and ink from the pouch on his waist. This set of stationery was prepared by him for ease of taking notes. As he wrote, Emrys listed out the requirements.

“The next important thing is ‘power’.”

Eru nodded with a serious face and continued making notes.

“The final important thing, is also power.”

Eru only wrote the words ‘Muscle Head’ on his paper, and asked after toying with his notes:

“Okay, I understand what you mean. Ah, what about the design’s appearance?”

“Erm... Something very powerful... Well, something like grandpa’s ‘lion’,

something amazing!!”

Eru outlined the words with a doodle design, then circled it again, making it look strong and powerful.

“I will leave the details to you; just don’t go overboard, the rest is up to you.”

“By your orders, I will prepare machines suitable for Your Excellency and Your Highness.”

The requirements were too amazing, even Ady who was listening by the side almost said: “What kind of requests are these?” Despite that, Eru was still smiling happily.

About a month after this conversation happened, a Tzendrinble pulling a wagon came to the Royal Capital. On the wagon were two giant figures covered by cloth, the personal machines prepared for Ambrosius and Emrys.

When he heard the news of their arrival, Emrys rushed there at full speed, even Ambrosius couldn’t help following with curiosity. They were not the only audience, the guards in Shreiber Castle also came to watch, looking at the cargo with curious eyes.

When the cloth on the wagon was taken off before the watchful eyes, two Silhouette Knights were revealed, reflecting light brilliantly under the sun.

“This is really... Ernesti, you are being playful again.”

Ambrosius suppressed his laughter. Just as he said, the designs of the two Silhouette Knights were very exaggerated.

– One of them looked like a lion. The chest armour and torso formed the face of a lion, with the armour styled like its mane with twists and bends. It was golden in colour and very prominent.

– The other had the appearance of a tiger. The torso mimics the face of a tiger, although the other parts were rather plain, but the silver body with black stripes around it made it just as prominent as the golden machine.

Eru ignored the crowd that was stunned by the striking appearance of the Silhouette Knights, opening his hands in an exaggerated manner happily as he explained:

“What do you think, Your Excellency and Your Highness Emrys. They are the ‘Gordesleo’ and ‘Silver Tiger’. As requested by Your Highness, both of them possess immense power, excellent performance and great defensive capability.”

Emrys had been standing as still as a statue with his mouth open all this while. Ambrosius stroked his beard slowly and asked:

“Oh, power is what my dumb grandson wanted, but what about defence? Why did you focus on that?”

“That was my idea... Your safety is the most important thing above all.”

“I see, that’s true. The Royal knights have enhanced defence capabilities too, something that a general will worry about.”

Ambrosius nodded with satisfaction. After some time, Emrys finally came to his senses. He raised his muscular arms and roared at the two beast machines:

“Woah, totally awesome!! Hahaha, well done, Silver Commander! I like this!”

Emrys who was as ecstatic as a child pointed at one of the machines with a smile. At the same time, Ambrosius who was comparing the two knights pointed to one of them too.

“Grandpa, I want the Gordesleo.”

“Well then Emrys, I will take this Gordesleo...”

Both of them stopped at the same time and looked at each other. A tense silence was cycling around them.

“Grandpa... Think about your age, such an elegant machine doesn’t suit you.”

“What nonsense is this, Emrys? You lack experience boy, it’s too early to ride the lion and roar for you. I am the one known as the ‘Lion King’, this

machine is like it's tailor made for me.”

Invisible sparks broke out between the two as neither side gave in, their aura shaking the air. The guards around them didn't know what to expect if they really got it on, and didn't think anyone could calm them down.

“Right, Grandpa, how about a training exercise? I will let you see the results of my studies.”

“Oh? You want to take it by force? You've got guts! To the arena, men, get me my sword!”

Before the people around could stop them, the two dashed for the training arena. Only the shocked Eru and guards were left behind.

“I heard His Highness resembles His Excellency Ambrosius... But that is too uncanny.”

That thought was obviously shared by everyone present.

Moments later, the scene shifted to the training arena used by the guards, situated near the Royal Castle.

Hot air blew across the brownish ground as two Karrdator faced off against each other with different weapons in hand.

“You asked for a sword, so why is there a Silhouette Knight...?”

The ones piloting the machines were naturally Ambrosius and Emrys. News of the retired King and Prince having a training spar spread in the castle in no time, and something went wrong somewhere, so the soldiers prepared the Silhouette Knights. Their efficient actions surprised even Eru.

“Grandpa... Sorry, but I won't hold back.”

“Stop the bullshit. I keep asking you to work hard, but you just won't change your ways and live as you please... Let me correct that myself! Grit your teeth!”

“Your Excellency— I think your objective is totally wrong—”

Eru's retort didn't reach the two men filled with fighting spirit.

Silhouette Knights might be machines, but they expressed the will of the pilot quite clearly. Even without seeing them inside the cockpit, it was easy to imagine their gleeful faces and eagerness to fight from the churn of the engines. When the churning reached its peak, a loud horn sounded through the arena. The two machines charged towards each other at this signal to begin.

In one corner was a young lion that was still growing, the other corner was an old skillful lion which was slightly past its prime. The way they fought was on two extreme ends.

Emrys used his speed and power as a weapon and went in head on; Ambrosius dodged with his skill and counters, not taking a single step back. The steps of the giants shook the earth, making deafening sounds whenever their giant weapons clashed. Neither side sought to conserve energy, giving all they have got.

Both might be lions, but they were not the same. The fight started out even, but gradually turned in favour of Ambrosius. Ambrosius wielded a spear taller than the Silhouette Knight, with a blunt tip used for training. It was said that in a man to man fight, you need to have three times the skill to win against a spear with a sword. This theory was projected onto the Silhouette Knights. From the footwork, arm movement and quick adjustment of the spear holding position, Ambrosius nimbly controlled the distance between them, toying with Emrys who was using a sword.

Emrys wanted to close the gap and charged, but was fended off with a swing of the spear. While Emrys was unbalanced, the spear stabbed at him without hesitation. Emrys twisted the machine, deflecting the strike with the thicker armour, but Ambrosius used the reactionary force to pull away, sealing Emrys' chance of counterattack. After twirling the spear around, Ambrosius attacked with a barrage of spear thrust once again. In the face of the barrage, Emrys had no choice but to take the defensive.

“As expected of grandpa! You’ve still got it in you!”

“This is the quality a King should have.”

“Eh, I don’t think so.”

They might not be able to hear what Eru said in the distance, but Eru still couldn't help retorting.

“However, the retired King really has a way with the spear, is he really sixty years old?”

“When the retired king held the post of general, how should I put this... He liked to lead from the front. I heard he mixed with the troopers and fought with a spear... Since he is still fighting fit at this age, it is hard to imagine how he was like back then.”

“Wasn't he a general peerless in battle?”

Aside from Eru, there were many guards among the audience. They cheered the intense fight that was ongoing right now. Even though military might was valued in this 'nation of knights', there wasn't a need for the royalties to display their prowess. But the two of them were better than most knights, especially Ambrosius who was the renowned general 'Lion King'. It was incredible for him to be this good despite his age.

And his grandson who inherited his bloodline turned his endless power into speed as he challenged the living legend. When the troops saw their masters fighting so mightily, their respect for them grew even more.

The guards might be impressed, but the fight was still intense. Emrys lost the initiative and couldn't attack as he pleased. He wasn't weak, just that his weapon matches poorly and the difference in experience was too vast.

“Your movements aren't bad, but you are too naive. You can't even touch me.”

“Aren't you getting out of breath, grandpa! Are you losing to your age?”

“Enough with your nonsense! Watch! An opening at your feet!!”

Ambrosius shot with his back weapon calmly. The training bullets weren't powerful, but the strike to Emrys feet still pushed him back. Taking this chance, Ambrosius pursued and thrust with his spear.

“You won't get me so easily!”

Emrys instinctively knew he couldn't avoid this and made a shocking move. He used his unbalanced posture to charge with his shoulders, going forward. The tip of the spear brushed against the armour, producing sparks. Emrys stepped into the spears attack range while grabbing the spear he just dodged with his arm pit. Since the spear play was powerful, Emrys just needed to make it stop.

“How's that!?”

“You got guts...!”

Emrys who entered sword attack range had the advantage— he wasn't the only one to think that. However, as if he was overturning the judgement of everyone, Ambrosius released the spear immediately. The liberated retired king took another step forward, shortening the distance beyond sword range. Emrys who was countered was shocked and didn't know how to react.

Ambrosius lowered his stance and swept Emrys legs. As he was grabbing the spear, Emrys' movement was limited and he lost his balance.

“... I told you, your feet have an opening.”

Ambrosius grabbed his spear back as Emrys fell, and attacked with another hail of spear thrusts. Emrys rolled to evade, shooting his back weapon recklessly. Ambrosius calmly deflected the attacks. Emrys pulled away and got up slowly. The battle returned to the situation when it started.

“... This is bad, you are good grandpa, that was exhilarating.”

Emrys was covered with scratches on his armour, and some parts were even dented after he rolled. His back weapon was still useable, but the zeroing was off after his fall. His crystal tissue wasn't damaged, which was really lucky. Even though he looked a bit beat up, Emrys' machine was still functional. After Emrys confirmed the power coming from his joystick, he laughed out loud and said:

“Great, this is a good machine; I can still have some fun with it...”

He had detracted from his original objective, but he didn't lose his spirit,

and was even more fired up. Ambrosius could feel the fighting intent spilling forth from the machine, and smiled viciously in his pilot seat.

“Hmm, his will power is commendable, but it will be meaningless if there are no results.”

When he heard these words coming from the loudspeaker, Emrys did all he could to suppress his wildly beating heart. He shouldn't be reacting to his grandfather's taunt. If he didn't find a way to deal with Ambrosius' spear, he won't be able to win. The opponent wasn't just strong in ranged attack; he could also defend any attack within spear range. Wasn't there any opening? Any good way to go about it? Emrys kept thinking during the fight, and finally made up his mind.

“... Ah— forget it, stop thinking! The answer can't be found just by thinking, it is within the sword!”

He decided to find the answer through action; that was Emrys' way of doing things. He charged ahead without regard for anything, not aware of Ambrosius' wry smile for acting just as expected. In the eyes of the bystanders, he was just making the same mistake, everyone was certain that Ambrosius' amazing spear work will fend off Emrys.

But reality overturned everyone's expectation.

Ambrosius thrust with his spear, engaging the advancing Emrys. They were out of sword range, so only the spear could reach. However, Emrys didn't plan to take a beating obediently.

Lifting his sword with both hands, he swung, filling the arena with the loud sound of impact along with sparks. He was still out of sword range, but Emrys was aiming for the 'spear'— Ambrosius' weapon.

The sword knocked the spear aside, and Emrys slid into its range of attack. Ambrosius reacted splendidly, spinning the polearm with unbelievable speed and attacking with the tail end of the spear. Emrys kept advancing as he parried the spear again, single minded in his will to move forth.

If the strong point of spears was range, then it was dexterity for swords.

Swordsman could make small and minute movements to deal quick and heavy attacks. Emrys charged with his unbelievable stubbornness, not thinking about anything else. In the face of this relentless attack, even Ambrosius was being suppressed.

“Waaarrggghh!”

“Huh!?”

At this point, Emrys' weapon wasn't the sword, but the machine itself. His heavy blow was blocked head on by Ambrosius— Emrys who was slashing down with both hands clashed with Ambrosius who blocked with the body of the spear.

The ether reactor from both machines revved into higher gears, the sound of air intake was blasted out. Crystal tissues flexed as it converted the mana into power, striving to push the opponent down.

When both pilots were operating the same type of Silhouette Knights, the deciding factor would be the 'spirit of the pilots'. If one were to lose in terms of spirit, he would be pushed back and lose the match. In the end, this was the dumb but simple way they decided the match. Both parties focused their power on one spot, trying to overpower the other as the ground became depressed by the feet of the giants.

“Wooaarrggghh!”

Emrys roared as he took a step forward with all his might. An enormous amount of power was pushed onto the point their weapons met, and that explosive moment when the energy was released—

The spear flew into the air.

The result of their contest was Ambrosius losing in terms of strength. Emrys placed his sword on the throat of the unarmed Ambrosius, ending the fight.

“Hmmm, great fight, you have trained well.”

“... Grandpa, did you hold back just now?”

Emrys wasn't questioning it, and was sure about it. Because he fought

with Ambrosius directly, so he knew that he wasn't an opponent he could defeat so easily. It was natural for Emrys to think that Ambrosius held back.

“Dumbass, why would I need to hold back against you... To think that my old bones can't beat you down anymore. Forget it, you win, take that machine with you.”

After saying his piece, Ambrosius turned and left. His majestic figure showed no sign of unhappiness, not like a defeated person at all. Emrys silently bowed deeply to that back while the guards in the arena stood at attention and saluted.

Ambrosius stretched his stiff body after leaving the arena, and alighted from the Karrdator.

“Ara, it had been so long since I last competed, my shoulders are stiff. My skills had rusted; I need to train a little. That dumb grandchild didn't even hold back against an old man, where did he get that inflexible nature from?”

“Definitely from you, Your Excellency.”

“Even you are saying that... Ernesti, I gave up on the Gordesleo, but the Silver Tiger is good too right?”

“Don't need to worry. To be honest, both are the same except their appearance.”

“Then I'm fine with it.” Ambrosius laughed after saying that, and it was a rare sight seeing Eru sigh behind him.

“Ohhh...”

After finishing the match, Emrys came to the symbol of victory— the Gordesleo. It had the appearance of a beast, combining elegance, power and might in its design, showing great taste and uniqueness. The heavy armour focusing on defence gave it a heavy weight regality to it.

“Great, this is awesome...”

Also, the Gordesleo wasn't just a Silhouette Knight to Emrys; it was a

prize proving his powers which he won from his grandfather. When he thought about that, Emrys' fatigue was gone and he was filled with energy.

“I won this from grandfather, so I can't let him lose face; I have to work harder...”

Did the retired King think this far? Win or lose, he planned to let His Highness learn something.

Eru thought as he watched Emrys who was trembling with emotions. Their interactions might be short, but Eru felt that Emrys was too straightforward. He was crass in his speech, but Emrys' respect for Ambrosius could be felt from his actions. If someone like that was to win a machine from Ambrosius--

The pride of His Highness will make him perform even better... That's how it is. I don't know if he planned it that way, but I am happy since they like it.

Eru nodded and left quietly. There was some unexpected incident, but he accomplished his goal of delivering the personal machines. After that, Emrys will visit Olvecius Fort from time to time with his Gordesleo, but that was another story.

Chapter 25: Premonition of Crisis



In the southwest of the Fremmevira Kingdom, at the foot of the Aubigne Mountain Range, there was an extraordinary forest.

The locals called the forest the 'Giant Tree Garden'.

It got its name because of the large amount of giant trees 'colossal' averaging one hundred metres in height.

The giant trees shot straight into the sky, the abundance of leaves blocking out the sun, which made the forest dim even during the day.

To support its massive trunk, the colossal had the tendency to occupy a large area with its roots. Thick and tough roots grabbed the hardened soil of the forest ground, coupled with the sparse sunlight, most vegetation couldn't survive here. In this forest, survival was impossible without the

permission of the 'colossal'.

“Nothing strange... Really, the forest is peaceful today, too.”

Inside the Giant Tree Garden was a Fireteam of Karrdator (three knights) surveying the area as they patrolled. The colossal couldn't grow in a tight area because of the space taken up by its roots, so the space between trees was large enough for Silhouette Knights to pass through easily. The place might be dark, but it didn't feel enclosed.

“Don't be so frustrated, peace is a good thing.”

The team stopped and watched their surroundings. But no matter how wide they opened their eyes, they couldn't spot any movements. Only the massive trunk of the trees stood erect like tombstones. The air was still in the bare forest, giving it an atmosphere of stagnancy and decay.

“How long do we need to patrol like this?”

The team started moving again. The roots of the colossal were not affected by the weight of the Silhouette Knights at all, the force behind each step spread across the ground through the roots like ripples.

“This was what Master whose sleep was disturbed said. It might not be now, but something will happen sooner or later, that's why we Alvanz have to perform guard duties like other units.”

Sound of bitter laughter could be heard from the Karrdator's loudspeaker.

Leading the team was Zarks, who shrugged after saying that to his fellow member of Alvans, Tuva.

The patrols had been going on for quite a while now. It was natural for them to complain after seeing the same old dull scenery every day. That was why he didn't restrain Tuva.

“That might be so, but they don't really need to activate us, the guardians of the 'Althusser Ravine Gate'...”

“Halt, something ahead, one o' clock.”

Having kept quiet the whole time, the third person— Yunf cut off Tuva

with a calm voice.

“Oh... let’s stop the chit chat. I will take the front, Tuva take the side, and Yunf will have our back.”

Zarks tensed and dash ahead after giving the orders, with Tuva and Yunf following behind. The team was cautious of their surroundings, reaching the abnormality spotted by Yunf in no time.

“These are... boulders? No... From the roots? A mimic?”

The large bulge from the ground looked like a boulder that could be found anywhere, but it wasn’t normal to find them on top of the roots. However, it was easy to identify it if one was to think of it as a creature the size of a Silhouette Knight’s hug and mimics boulders.

“Oh, it’s a shell? This is definitely a ‘shell beast race’. I don’t see any other shell beast around, did this one get lost from its hive?”

Zarks identified the creature immediately, but frowned when he thought about the features of such beasts.

The food chain of the forest made up of the special tree colossal was unique, too. As described earlier, colossals did not allow other vegetation to grow, and wasn’t suitable for consumption by animals as it was too hard. Only a small number of special insects could survive in this forest. In contrast, shell beasts were carnivorous, and it was unnatural for just one of such type of herd beast to show up in an environment with sparse food supply.

“What should we do? Zarks, if it was just one that got lost, is it fine to leave it alone?”

Zarks only mumbled a vague reply after hearing Tuva’s suggestion.

“... Zarks, the other side.”

When he noticed, Yunf who was guarding the rear had already walked in front of them, pointing with his arm. Following the direction of the arm, Zarks and Tuva were dumbfounded by what they saw— there were more than one shell beast. Figures of similar boulders could be seen everywhere.

“Impossible... Such astonishing numbers. This is bad, they didn’t get lost! Are they a group, or...”

A clicking sound could be heard from somewhere, like the groan of hard shells rubbing against each other. One of it had awakened, and as if a trigger was pulled, a second woke, followed by a third and so on.

Needless to say, the sound came from the shell that looked like boulders around them.

“These fellows are scouts just like us! Retreat, Tuva, Yunf, their main force nearby must be close!”

The boulder like shell rose up slowly, revealing skinny legs which dragged the shell covered body forward.

“Jackpot... Yunf! We have to alert Althusser Ravine Gate no matter what! So they are a shell beast swarm? If this continues...”

The squirming shell beasts turned their eyes to watch the Alvanz. Making clicking sounds, they push the branches aside and close in on the Silhouette Knights.

“Giant Tree Garden will become a playground for them... And they will invade the Forest City!!”

The Alvanz team had already started sprinting without considering a fight, reporting the abnormality was the top priority. A large number of demon beasts began to screech, loud enough to cover the noisy footsteps of the Karrdator.

The serene forest turned chaotic in a blink of an eye.

C.E. 2180.

As the season shifts to autumn, the scorching sunlight became gentle and the weather turned colder. However, the summer left behind a dangerous parting gift.

– One day, a rider came to the Royal Capital Känkänen.

When the report arrived, the King Riothamus and the nobles were having their periodic conference.

The agenda of the conference was about the activities of the demon beast in the various territories, the budget, as well as combat forces of each noble's land. The distribution of the limited numbers of the new machine models made the discussion even more heated.

A messenger soldier barged into the relatively peaceful conference. For emergency messages above a certain level of urgency, soldiers were allowed to not stand on ceremony.

Seeing how panicked the messenger was, Riothamus had an ominous feeling and frowned— After seeing the message handed to him by the messenger, his expression stiffened. The first line 'Top Secret level 1' was reflected in his eyes. Top secret referred to highly classified matters when a problem occurred within the nation. Only the most urgent and dangerous situation were classified as level 1, so this was definitely not good news.

This wasn't an exception either, the message mentioned about danger approaching the Forest City. Reading on, Riothamus forgot to maintain his composure, standing up after kicking his chair aside.

"This is really... the worst news."

Riothamus who excused himself from the conference invited his father— Ambrosius over. The message contained highly classified information; he couldn't just discuss it with anyone.

After hearing a brief account from his son, Ambrosius said this immediately. After dismissing everyone else except for his father, Riothamus hugged his head.

"The report stated that the threat came from shell beast type. It had made contact with part of the garrisoned knights; the problem is their scale..."

"Their numbers were stupendously large, right? The reason why shell beast swarm appears... 'Hive splitting' right."

Ambrosius appeared calm, but he couldn't conceal his disgust. Shell beasts were a special type of demon beast. There were many demon beasts

which live together in groups, but the scale of the hive beast swarm was abnormally large. Aside from that, their society was similar to ants and bees, which was common knowledge.

At the centre of the group, well guarded by hordes of soldier class beasts, there was a 'queen shell beast' that was responsible for reproduction.

The queen would get replaced periodically every several centuries, only one queen will usually emerge during this replacement. However, there were times when two or more queens emerged, which led to the phenomenon of 'hive splitting'. The queen that couldn't wrest control of the majority will migrate, and search for a new nest.

"The problem is that we don't understand the true scale of it, so we can't gauge the necessary forces required."

For the threat level of shell beasts, one soldier class is equivalent to just a duel level demon beast, but the difficulty was in handling a large group of them. The difficulty changes according to the numbers, and could even reach battalion level, equivalent to a behemoth.

Normally, forces won't be dispatched recklessly without knowledge of the scale, but the Forest City made them hesitant to stand idly by.

That place was strategically important because of a certain reason, a place that was not made public because of secrecy. The guardian knights Alvanz was even stationed there to defend the place. But they might not be able to handle the crisis this time.

"That might be so, but we have to act. Even if it goes against their 'law', we have to send an army to purge the beasts. Most importantly, we have to avoid the inhabitants from being wiped out."

Since they didn't know the scale of the enemy forces, they had to deploy a powerful army and disregard information control. Should they choose secrecy or safety? Facing the first major challenge after taking the throne, Riothamus tried to make this difficult decision.

Seeing his son deep in thought, Ambrosius also pondered their options.

What they need was 'forces that could limit the spread of information,

powerful, and ready to be deployed immediately'. Was there such a convenient existence? Searching through the experience he had while reigning as King, Ambrosius couldn't find a clear answer.

They were stuck in this situation, but needed to act fast. As the heavy atmosphere hung over the room, someone barged in suddenly.

"Sorry for intruding! I heard that grandpa came to the Royal Castle..."

It was the second Prince Emrys. Seeing how carefree and ignorant he was, the King and former Regent lost their drive and sighed at the same time:

"Now is not the time for greetings, something terrible is happening..."

"Sorry, eh, I was thinking about a training match with grandpa using the Gordesleo..."

That instant, Ambrosius turned sharply to Emrys. The word Gordesleo reminded him of something, and inspiration struck—

"... Yes, isn't there a Knight Order just right for the job? A small group of elite, experienced in large group battle against a battalion level demon beast. If we delegate it to them, we won't need to worry about secrecy."

When he heard the former regent's words, Riothamus came to the same conclusion. Fremmevira Kingdom was full of talents, but there was only one Knight Order that fits this exemplary bill. Seeing a ray of hope, he slowly uttered that name.

... Silver Phoenix Knights!!"

"Ah? We are asking the Silver Commander to make something again?"

Only Emrys didn't know what was going on as he looked at his father and grandfather in confusion.

On that day when the terrible news reached the Royal Capital, an unexpected visitor came to the base of the Silver Phoenix Knight, Fort Olvacius.

As the sun sets in the west and moments before the darkness shrouds the land, a Silhouette Knight charged into the fort with incredible speed.

Everyone in the hangar was surprised to see the Silhouette Knight 'Silver Tiger' that was emitting a dim glow. It was obvious who this Silver Tiger was given to.

Eru couldn't conceal his surprise when he rushed over after hearing the news to meet Ambrosius who was alighting from the Silver Tiger. Even though the former Regent was a free man after abdicating the throne, it was still a huge thing for him to visit personally.

"Your Excellency!? I didn't know you were visiting, what is the matter?"

Ambrosius did not answer Eru, but surveyed the fort as he listened to the Order members gathering at the hangar. When most of the people were present, he spoke:

"Ernesti, no, Silver Phoenix Knights! I hereby announce the decree by His Majesty, listen well!"

Ambrosius shouted loudly with a stern expression. He did not show such regal aura even for the Casadesus Incident, making the tense Order members straighten their posture as they listened.

"I will make it clear, the things I am about to tell you are not permitted to be disclosed, understand? Getting to the point, shell beasts... A large number of demon beasts have shown up. I can't give you the details, but they are heading towards an important base right now, we have to defend the place no matter what. However, we are already one step too late. To make up for it, we need speed as fast as the wind and power as mighty as a tsunami! Silver Phoenix Knights. Now is your chance to deploy the Centaur Knight, the pride of your Order!!"

After his speech, Ambrosius walked to Eru's side as if he was trying to be discreet, and said in a volume only Eru can hear:

"... The place being attacked is known as the Forest City, where the Ether Reactor in our nation is produced."

Eru's eye opened wide.

The former Regent nodded in response to Eru's trembling gaze. Compared to the fact that he had just learned 'the top secret of this

nation', Eru was more concerned and angry about the demon beast army advancing on the vital base that produces robots. For him who devoted everything he had to his hobby, it struck a landmine in his heart. He immediately used a tensed voice even his childhood friend had never heard before to issue orders:

“Silver Phoenix Knights, prepare for the entire order to move out! Rider mode two, red one load out, roll out when you are ready! Main objective is to secure the target area and exterminate the demon beasts!!”

After a moment of silence, everyone started moving as instructed. From the visit of the former regent, the urgency displayed by their Commander and the content of their orders, they had the premonition that this will be a terrible battle.

Rider mode two, red one load out— this refers to using Tzendrinble and the wagon for the fastest movement speed, and heavy fire equipment to fight demon beast at the battalion level or above. Concisely speaking, it was a formation for fighting a behemoth in mind.

The Silver Phoenix Knights usually had a casual atmosphere, but they were also veterans who had been through danger multiple times.

Their movements were fast and firm, and in no time, the roar of all sorts of engines came from the hangar.

“Connecting the wagon—! Back, back, back, good! Move forward—!”

Tzendrinble from the third squad was the main force that was readied. Under the guidance of the craftsmen, the Tzendrinble in the hangar was connected to the wagons. Craftsmen in Motor Rad ran all over the place to do the fine installation works.

While the wagon was being readied, the first and second squads were equipped with their 'option works' of choice. They put on the equipment developed by themselves with pride, and the Kardetolle with red one load out showed themselves.

The Motor Rads performed task such as moving parts and installation, taking over the task that would usually require Silhouette Knights or

human power to complete. Using it in such a manner was what the developer—the Knight Commander of the Silver Phoenix Knights was great at.

Within the noisy hangar, Eru walked towards the Boss who was giving out orders loudly. The Silver Phoenix Knights would be deploying their maximum force, and the Boss intended to do his best.

“Boss! I will deploy in Toybox, please ask Chid and Ady to prepare ‘rider mode three’!!”

This was out of the Boss’ expectations. He stopped his movement and was stunned.

“You want to use rider mode three with Toybox? That is a prototype which can barely walk, are you insane? I don’t need to tell you this, but I have no idea how long they could last in a real fight.”

“I know it has its issues, but to draw out the potential of Toybox, I will need the load out for mode three. If it can move, it can easily slaughter hundreds of demon beasts.”

Eru answered the Boss steadily. He was doubtful, but the Boss couldn’t stop Eru. They had known each other for years, and he realised that Eru was raging with anger under that smile of his.

“I get it! Hey, set up the brat’s horse with mode three! Huh!? Don’t ask so much, just do it! They will figure it out themselves!!”

As they conversed with resignation, they continued the preparations with amazing speed.

Silhouette Knights from the second squad boarded the wagons of the third squad that was ready. Every Tzendrinble could ferry two Kardetolle with maximum load out, craftsmen in Motor Rad chained the Kardetolle in standby position onto the wagon to secure it.

Maybe they were affected by the hot bloodedness of their Commander, but everyone moved faster than their usual training. After a quarter of a watch (thirty minutes), a grand cavalry army appeared before Ambrosius. This was a powerful force made up of the three squads of the Silver

Phoenix Knights.

“Woah, I did hold high expectations... But this was beyond what I imagined.”

The formation of the Silver Phoenix Knights that exceeded what the former Regent imagined and surprised him. Even though they were the only unit that used Tzendrinble, how did they come up with such a method? Forcefully pushing the query aside, Ambrosius got on to the Silver Tiger.

A large wagon pulled by two Tzendrinble came over, with a Karrdator that was put together messily on top. That was Eru's Toybox.

“The entire Order of the Silver Phoenix Knights is ready to deploy. Please give the word, Your Excellency.”

In front of such an astonishing display of force, Ambrosius took some time to suppress his smile, and jumped onto the wagon with his Silver Tiger. He drew his sword and raised it high.

“Well done! Listen well everyone! This battle will decide the fate of our nation, I have high expectation of all of you! We are going southwest, move out!!”

The sound of the hooves banged against the earth, and all the Tzendrinble moved together as one. Under the guidance of the former regent, the Silver Phoenix Knights advanced bravely towards the southwest of the Fremmevira Kingdom.

Behind them was the Boss, Batson and the other craftsmen left behind at the fort. They stood together to cheer and send off this army that left in a grandiose fashion.

Click, click— the wave of cold hard noise echoing through the forest was too numerous. In the end, they merged as one, producing an endless ripple of echoes.

The usually lifeless cemetery like giant tree garden was full of shell beasts.

The Alvanz knights killed one after another, the stream of soldier shell beasts seemed endless. Frankly speaking, they looked like giant hermit crabs. With six walking appendages and two fore leg, its body was covered in exoskeleton and a large shell on its back. The exoskeleton on it was tough, and edged weapon used on them will turn dull immediately, that's why the Alvanz used warhammers to smash them along with their shell. Despite that, defeating one wasted a lot of effort, coupled with the enemies' amazing numbers, it was a dangerous situation.

“Hah! There is no end to this!”

“Tuva, move your hands if you have the effort to spare, complaining won't help.”

“I know that, but this is dragging on too long!”

Zarks fought bravely, as they try to keep the last line of defense, Althusser Ravine Gate from being surrounded by demon beasts. They took the initiative to attack as defending the fortress was their primary mission, so they can't retreat so easily. The situation was dire, and the worst part was the scale being larger than what they imagined, as they attempt to hold back the flood futilely.

“Everyone, this is hard and troublesome! If I knew this would happen, I would have asked for the new models from NTR Lab. The power of the Dash would make this easier!!”

“Stop thinking about such useless things!”

Zarks' team remembered the prototype machines they piloted. If they had those powerful machines it would be easier for them to handle.

The Althusser Ravine Gate wasn't issued with the new mass produced models— as the number of Karrdetolle was limited, even strategic strongholds had limited access to these new models.

“Anyway, just focus on taking down the enemy in front of you!”

Alvanz struggled in this intense battle of attrition. However, contrary to their firm determination, they were gradually pushed to the edge of defeat. Furthermore, a greater threat struck them without mercy.

A shriek was mixed in with the countless footsteps and clashes of hammers. Before the knights realised something was wrong, another shriek rose again. Zark's Karrdator was knocked down out of the blue. Not only did he lose his balance, he also lost part of his armour.

"What... Ranged attack!? From where? Zark, you alright!?"

"My shoulder was hit! No... Problem, I'm good. Luckily it hit my armour, the armour is gone now, but my arm still works!"

That attack obviously didn't come from the soldier shell beasts, if they could do that, there was no reason for them to hold back. Tuva and Yunf lifted their shields to protect Zarks, wary of something that was attacking from afar. The next second, Yunf yelled as he pointed with his hammer.

"Look, far back in the centre! There's one that is skinny!"

They followed Yunf's direction and strained their eyes. On the other side of the disgusting number of shell beast swarm, there was a strange shell beast. Its claws were very long, and to balance itself against its long forelegs, the shell on its back also extended backwards, giving it a long and skinny appearance. It was easy to tell its true identity.

"Oh no... That's a sniping shell beast."

Giving no regards to Zarks and the others, the sniping shell beast assumed its attack position. This foreleg act like a barrel, with a thorn bullet made by its body loaded in. Channeling some of the air in its lungs to its foreleg, the beast proceeded to activate the air compression spell. The ability to use magic was the reason why it was known as demon beasts. The compressed air expanded explosively in the inside of the foreleg, shooting out the thorn bullet with the high pressure.

The thorn bullets shot out with a crisp sound of explosion. In the dim environment of the giant tree garden, it was impossible to see and dodge the high speed of the thorn bullet. A Karrdator that didn't belong to Zark's team was hit and fell. That wasn't the only sniping shell beasts as more emerged from the forest, attacking sporadically from a range, crumbling the defense line of the Alvanz.

“Shit! This is bad.”

The defense line that was barely holding against the soldier shell beasts was falling apart from the powerful range shots of the sniping shell beasts. Alvanz did not have time to plug the gaps that was filled by the soldier shell beasts, and had to retreat.

If they can't block the attack of the sniping beasts, they might be pushed all the way back to the ravine gate. They had to hang on.

Despite his worries, Zark continued searching for a way out.

The colossal trees were spread too far apart, it would be hard to use them as a shield, and there were nowhere to hide in the forest. At this instant, Zark's Karrdator stepped on something hard, which was the carcass of a shell beast. Inspiration struck and he shouted on reflex:

“Make a barrier... Pile up the dead shell beasts! We can block the range attack of the sniping shell beast that way! If it is just the soldiers, we can hold them!!”

When they heard this, the Alvanz around him acted immediately. Grabbing the carcass by their feet, they bashed the shell beasts pouncing onto them and pile the carcass directly on top. The knights dodged the sporadic thorn bullets as they slowly built a wall. There was no shortage of materials as the ground was filled with carcass everywhere, covering the entire ground.

Shortly after, a wall of carcass was piled high before the Alvanz. The sniper shell beasts made crisp sound as they fired, but was deflected by the pile of bodies. The barrier performed as intended, the hardness of the shell beast saved the Alvanz this time.

Alvanz avoided the threat of the ranged attack and could finally focus on the soldier shell beasts that were climbing over the wall. Zarks felt satisfaction from his effort as he listened to the sound of the thorn bullets hitting onto the exoskeletons. Without the support of range covering fire, the soldiers had nothing to be afraid of. Their situation turned from being dire to having room to spare.

At this moment—

“Is that... an earthquake? No, it can't be, what is happening?”

A certain heavy and shaking footsteps could be heard from the colossal tree. It didn't belong to the soldier shell beasts or the sniping shell beast, but something larger and more solid. The sound coming from the other side of the barrier made Zark forget about what he felt just now and click his tongue. They blocked the ranged attack, but also obscured their view of the surroundings, too.

In the meanwhile, the tremour grew closer— Alvanz took a stance and the wall before them exploded. The carcass of the shell beasts were torn into pieces, falling on top of the Alvanz like buckshot. There shouldn't be any shell beasts that could use explosion spell, so what could that be? When the dust cleared away, the answer stood before them.

“This is... ‘drill shell beast’!?”

What appeared before them was a shell beast that was incredibly huge, several times that of a soldier shell beast, even taller than a Silhouette Knight. Compared to other demon beasts, its legs and torso were exceptionally stout, and its shell thicker and harder. However, the exoskeleton on its abdomen was smaller. It was practically a moving boulder.

The drill shell beast wiggled the mandibles by its mouth, making shrill noises to intimidate the Alvanz. Zark felt a chill on his back as that pair of protruding eyes stared right at him.

An ominous shaking hit the forest once more, washing over them like a tsunami. Without even looking, they could tell that there were dozens of drill shell beast coming towards them, as if they were pushing aside the soldier shell beasts. The moment they reach Alvanz would probably be the moment Alvanz dies.

“Is retreating to the Ravine Gate our only choice? How long can the walls hold off the drill shell beast? The City Forest is right behind the Fort.”

Zark moaned. The 'Althusser Ravine Gate' was the last line of defense for the Forest City, they had to avoid endangering it. But they were running out of options and had to take that route.

"... The scale of the swarm is too big. Since sniping shell beast and even drill shell beast are here, this is not a 'hive split'. Is a matured 'queen shell beast' migrating!?"

For shell beast, the weaker queen shell beast would be the one splitting off from the original site, since the stronger one would natural dominate the hive. The swarm of a new queen shell beast were limited, and usually consists of just the soldier shell beasts.

However, the swarm invading the giant tree garden wasn't just abnormally large in scale, and even comprise of multiple types. Could this be a migration instead of 'hive splitting'? The only thing they were sure of was that the Alvanz and the Forest City was on the brink of defeat.

Alvanz fell back towards the Ravine Gate in despair as the drill shell beasts methodically destroyed the barrier they erected. The attack from sniping shell beasts rained down on them and the screams of the Alvanz echoed in the battlefield.

"Run! We have to reach the Ravine Gate no matter what!"

'Althusser Ravine Gate was built outside the giant tree garden with its back to the mountain, as if it was an extension of the ravine of mount Aubigne. Most of the space was taken up by the city walls, a fort that focused solely on defense. In order to protect the strategic location in the Fremmevira Kingdom— the forest city, the walls was tougher than that of the Royal Capital.

The Alvanz who fell back from the giant tree garden ran into the city one after another. Outside the walls, Zark's team who volunteered to be the rearguard fought off the drill shell demon beasts that pursued them relentlessly. The shell beast was powerful in its charges, and was unexpectedly quick on its feet. If they ignored it, the team would definitely be hit by it.

Using the Silhouette Arms culverin, they aimed at the feet of the drill

shell beast in order to slow it down. Their shots at its exoskeleton would be deflected, so they focused on disrupting its vision.

“How’s the status of withdrawal!? Is it done!?”

Even though it flinched because of the columns of fire, the drill shell beast did not slow down, closing in gradually. Zark’s team was at their limit. Before they knew it, their allies had fallen back into the Ravine Gate and they were the only ones left. If they hide behind the walls, they will have a brief respite from the threat. The Ravine Gate was wide open, waiting for them to go in.

“Yunf, Tuva, we will retreat just like this! Hurry... But we can’t let these fellows in.”

Zark and his team were planning to put some distance between them and the shell beast and escape, but the surge of enemies didn’t allow them to do so. Zark saw the other two machines retreating slowly from the corner of his eyes while he continued slowing the shell beast, blocking its way.

“Zark! Enough, fall back!”

“It would be disastrous to retreat any further; the gate won’t be able to close in time.”

If Zark went into the gate, the shell beasts will flood in like an avalanche before the gate could close, so he couldn’t run anymore. A single machine couldn’t buy much time either, so he steeled himself.

With the drill shell beast right before him, Zark threw away his Silhouette Arms and took up his war hammer. The sound of shell beasts crawling gradually filled the surroundings.

“If I can take one of its legs, it will buy some time for us...”

He mustered his diminishing fighting spirit and advanced. He could feel the tremour from the ground and groans like thunder some distance away. Focusing on one of the legs, he tried to give his most powerful blow.

As the Silhouette Knight and shell beast was about to clash, Zark saw

something strange from behind the swarm. Unlike the shell beast he had been battling, something bright in colour was fluttering in the wind. He didn't understand the situation, and squinted his eyes to see.

That was a flag, there was no mistake. The sword and leaf that represents the vegetation, along with a shield. The flag of the Fremmevira Kingdom, with the emblem of a silver phoenix holding a sword with its wings spread. It was impossible for demon beasts to hoist a flag, so it belongs to...

There was only one answer—

Zark regained his composure in no time and acted quickly. Dodging the strike from the drill shell beast that would have taken him out, he turned around and ran. The footsteps of the drill shell beast followed him towards the gate. The variety of noise increased at this moment, something that was like horse hooves. And it was giant horses that were extremely heavy.

Alvanz saw this scene from the Althusser Ravine Gate, too. Something charged through the shell beast swarm, dispersing them, it looked like a wagon being pulled by two horses. But the horses pulling the wagon were too queer. The place where the horse's head should be had the upper torso of a man, a half man half horse monster. Wielding giant lances, they trampled over the soldier shell beasts like wooden shreds.

The mysterious creature charged relentlessly at an amazing speed, kicking the minions aside, and reached the frontlines of the shell beasts in no time. It gave a heavy blow to the flank of the drill shell beast closing in on Zark. The drill shell beast slowed down because of this unexpected blow, giving the wagon the chance to move to the front.

After pulling away by inches, Zark charged into the Ravine Gate and closed it immediately. Zark turned his head and saw from the gap of the closing gate what the situation outside was— the Centaur Knight between the Fort and the shell beast, as well as the giant wagon it was towing.

He knew the identity of the reinforcements; he had faced them in battle before. Remembering the scene back then, he sighed in relief and

muttered:

“... I see, you guys are here. That’s a relief.”

The intense sound of air intake shrieked in response to his mumbles. One of the Order of Knights serving the Fremmevira Kingdom, the Silver Phoenix Knights finally reached the battlefield.

“Haha! Seems like we came just at the right time!”

On the stationary wagon, the Silhouette Knight on top prepared to launch. The steel wires were taken off one by one, the Knight that was free from its bounds stood up. The bright golden armour and the chest plate designed in the shape of a lion— the second Prince’s personal machine ‘Gordesleo’. When he heard there will be a major battle, he couldn’t stop his urge and came along.

Emrys turned to the drill shell beast before it and picked up the great sword in the wagon. He was fearless before the gigantic demon beast, or rather; he seemed to be enjoying himself.

“Great, that big fellow there, I will use you to test Gordesleo’s sword, a great honour for you!”

The drill shell beast didn’t understand what he meant, but still pounced on Gordesleo. The enormous boulder like body charged at the puny knight before it with the intent to crush everything in its path. Gordesleo did not dodge and met the attack head on. Flexing the crystal tissue within its entire body, Gordesleo swung its great heavy sword. Both parties clashed and it turned into a battle of strength. The vague sound of something shattering sounded out, and the foreleg of the drill shell beast flew into the air. As requested by its pilot, Gordesleo became the personification of the pursuit of strength. This included the pilot himself.

“Haha! Excellent, let me show you... Roar, Gordesleo! Eat my ‘Blast Howling’!!”

Emrys pulled the trigger on the joystick, which opened the shoulder armour on the Gordesleo, revealing the internal engraving. The Silhouette Arms on the back also deployed, and both of these started churning. This

was a giant magic that combines multiple Silhouette arms, the special Silhouette arms of the Gordesleo— Blast Howling. This overed spell belonged to the air control type.

The air around Gordesleo started gathering and spinning around it, the high density refracted the light and twisted its appearance. Gathered and compressed air was released in the pointed direction, becoming a shockwave. The powerful wind was just like the roar of the king of beasts, shooting accurately at the drill shell beast before it.

The single minded concept of pursuing strength could be seen in Gordesleo. Sacrificing flexibility, the roar of the beast king that raised the power to the maximum shattered the drill shell beast's exoskeleton easily. The appendages of the demon beast that was supported by tough muscles were twisted and torn in impossible angles, spraying its body fluids everywhere. The power of the shockwave blew the demon beast that was much larger than a Silhouette Knight into the air, killing it instantly.

“Fufu, haha— this is awesome, awesome! This power is radical!!”

“I am glad that you are satisfied, Your Highness. Putting that aside, there are a few drill shell beasts left, can you take care of them majestically?”

Emrys who took out the giant beast in one shot laughed heartily. Behind him, Eru's Toybox stood up slowly.

“Fuhaha, leave it to me! My Gordesleo and I will... What the hell, why did my mana reserves drop so much!?”

“Eh, that's the price of power. Or rather, it was obvious that such a powerful attack drains plenty of mana.”

“... Forget it. Let's see how many I can take out first! Another drill shell beast!? Haha, wait for me!”

Emrys kicked the soldier shell beasts out of his way with his Gordesleo and charged into the forest.

“Ho, I didn't expect to reach here so fast, that was an eye opener. I was hesitant because of the price of the Centaur Knights before, but maybe we should have built more.”

Mode three pulled by two horses was similar to the prototype wagons, and could ferry up to three Silhouette Knights; Toybox, Gordesleo, and Ambrosius' Silver Tiger. Ambrosius mumbled something totally unrelated to the battle and turned to the gate behind him.

“Ernesti, I will make it clear first. I will leave the demon beasts to you, make as much ruckus as you like. That should be what you want, too, right?”

“By your command, thank you for your concern... We will head out and take out those damned demon beasts.”

After letting the Silver Tiger alight, Tzendrinble mode three moved forth once more. Seeing it trampling over the soldier shell beasts and disappearing into the centre of the swarm, Ambrosius smiled wryly.

“It seemed that he will really wipe the demon beasts out. That is not a problem, but...”

Ambrosius stared at the fortress that was at a loss because of the intervention of the Silver Phoenix Knights, and ordered it to open its gates.

The fierce wagon ferrying the Knight Commander, former Regent and a prince headed for the gate, while the rest of the Knights— The Tzendrinble squad charged deep into the giant tree garden.

“Wow, they are everywhere!”

Seeing the shell beasts that flooded the forest, captain of the 3rd Squad Helvi frowned. They heard that they will be facing a huge amount of demon beasts, but seeing it for real still made her feel disgusted.

“Forget it, let's get to work! All units prepare to stop and separate in front of the swarm!”

The Tzendrinble squad followed their squad leader's instructions and split towards either side, leaving space for it to brake to avoid colliding with each other. The connection parts on the horses started churning, separating from the wagon. The shrill sound of metal on metal friction erupted along with sparks, braking as it verged on the edge of flipping over. The Centaur Knights left the wagon that braked in a cloud of dust

and moved off.

Once the ten wagons were parked properly, loud noises could be heard from the still cargo. With the sound of ether reactor churning and air intake pumping, the noise became louder. The mana was sent to all parts of the machine. The steel knights began to awaken.

In the dark giant tree garden, a bright armour of pure white emerged. Its crystal tissue started flexing, giving rise to a chorus of high and low pitched sounds. Personal machine of the 1st Squad Captain Edgar— the white knight unbuckle the wire securing it and stood up.

“First Squad move towards the fort and widen the frontlines. Di, I will leave the work of opening the road there to you.”

The 1st Squad gathered to Edgar.

Maintaining its original metallic green with a giant white cross painted on it, these Karrdetolle belonged to the 1st Squad.

“Yeah, alright. Second squad split into fireteams and take a charging formation, clear the road to the fort. We will deal a crushing blow to them later!”

On the other side, a bright red armour appeared.

That was the personal machine of the 2nd Squad Captain Dietrich— a crimson knight. The 2nd Squad Karrdetolle that followed him was painted with a large scarlet cross. They held swords, spears, great swords, war hammers, halberds, staffs and Silhouette Arms, all of them offensive weapons. This was why they were known as the ‘gangbusters squad’ in the Silver Phoenix Knight.

The one leading the way was the Captain himself. Their machines were strengthened; even their swords were wider and heavier. The strengthened offensive machine swung its sword and easily sliced the soldiers through shell and sinew. The 2nd Squad behind him widened the path created by their Captain, paving a way made of demon beast carcasses through the forest.

The 1st Squad went through the passage where the enemy numbers

dropped drastically, successfully taking the only road to the Ravine Gate in no time.

“Next will be the real fight! Don’t let your guard down and wipe out the demon beasts. Maintain the defensive formation and advance, push them back to the forest!”

The 1st Squad responded to Edgar’s command loudly. For them, defence wasn’t just protecting their own safety. Similar to how Edgar bashed the demon beasts with his shield, the tactic of pushing the frontlines ahead straight on was a form of offense that came from powerful defence.

Silver Phoenix Knights which had the powerful new models might not match Alvanz in numbers, but they displayed overwhelming combat prowess. The demon beast swarm finally realised their adversaries were too much for them to handle. The shell beasts used their unique communication method to summon the drill shell beasts, roping them in to expel the enemy. When he saw the giant demon beast coming at them, Edgar slightly raised his eyebrows on his stern face.

Before he could do anything, someone already acted.

“Hmm, it is impressive... Well, not as tough as the behemoth. Leave these types to me.”

After Dietrich said what he wanted, Guyalinda started running.

The shoulder and waist part of the machine started to deploy, opening up the back. The sound of air intake started revving, and a ring of explosive fire appeared behind Guyalinda. It turned into a heat wave in an instant, accelerating the machine drastically.

Guyalinda was installed with Magi Jet Thrusters. It might be a simplified version of the original; it would be just as useful if used adequately.

The movement of the shell beasts couldn't keep up, and Guyalinda reached the drill shell beast before it could speed up. When Guyalinda rush by the shell beast, it shot the lightning frail embedded in its gauntlet at the beast's head. The accelerated metal piece was more powerful than its size suggests, smashing right into the protruding eyes, crashing the

eyeballs and shell as it pierced into the beast's body.

"Here's the tip."

Right after this, the in-built Silhouette Arms in Gyalinda's gauntlet groaned. Tactical level electricity coursed right into the shell beast through the wire. Even the tough giant beast couldn't withstand the direct hit to its head. After spasming for a while, it collapsed.

"How undramatic..."

As Gyalinda was trying to end it coolly, Aldelecumber pushed him aside and stood before him with flexible coat deployed. Thorn bullet was deflected by the coat the next second away from the knights. Aldelecumber's cold stare pierced the stunned Gyalinda,

"Don't be careless, Di. We might have the upper hand, but the enemy isn't weak."

"Alright, alright, yes. you have a point. Phew, I'm saved!"

While the two were conversing, the shadows squirming in the shadows, sniping shell beasts renewed their attack; the thorn bullets came flying with a crisp explosive sound. Di knocked the bullets away with his swords, but was stopped by Edgar when he was about to charge the demon beast.

"Leave that to me, that's my area of expertise."

It was Aldelecumber's turn to assault. The flexible coat on its shoulder moved as it ran. The barrage of thorn bullets changed its trajectory after making sparks on the angled armour.



The sniping shell beast had powerful ranged attacks, but was weaker in other aspects. Their strange body shape made their movement slow, ill fitted for melee combat. These types of demon beasts requires soldier to guard it in order to maximise its power.

However, Aldelecumber who thought nothing of its prided range attack was its natural nemesis. Despite its limited intellect, the sniping shell beast realised the approaching danger and fired multiple times, but none of it hit.

Maybe it was to protect the sniping shell beast, or maybe they just want to repel the enemy, the soldier shell beast formed a wall before Aldelecumber. Edgar operated the flexible coat silently. The improved version of the moveable armour flexible coat had Silhouette Arms on the inside of the armour surrounding the machine.

As he opened the armour, Edgar targeted the demon beast and fired consecutive magic shots with the guidance of the aiming system. The fiery bullet flew with an orange burning tail behind it, landing accurately onto the soldier's body before exploding under as dictated by its script. The blaze from the fiery bullet blew the abdomen along with its exoskeleton into shreds.

In the face of the unstoppable Aldelecumber, the sniping shell beast stopped its resistance and prepared to escape. But unfortunately, Edgar won't let it flee.

Adelecumber closed its distance to the slow sniping shell beast and raised the small kite shaped shield on its left arm. This shield might be small, but its edge was much sharper, similar to arrow heads. Using the momentum of his sprint and the flexibility of his crystal tissue, the focused heavy strike pierced the sniping shell beast. The shield which was tougher than a sword structurally stabbed into its head, the impact shaking the entire body of the demon beast. With the sound of a shattering bang, the sniping shell beast collapsed in a heap and died.

"Squad, advance! We will meet some resistance, but nothing we can't handle."

"Roger. Second Squad! Surround the drill shell beasts; take them out one at a time!"

Even the powerful drill shell beast couldn't faze them; the only advantage the shell beast swarm had left was numbers. The soldier shell beasts flooded their enemy in an attempt to overwhelm them, but someone intercepted them with a heavy blow, as if they were waiting for this. It was the 3rd Squad made up of Tzendrinbles.

While the 1st and 2nd Squads were displaying their prowess, the third squad had been charging around the forest in formation. The orderly ranks of the Centaur Knights charged at the same time, leaving a trail of destruction behind, massacring the enemy one sidedly.

The charge of the Tzendrinble was unparalleled, but their strongest point was in their mobility. The Centaur Knights moved around the

battlefield freely, the more they ran, the more carcasses they left behind. The enemy was disrupted by the charge and unable to use their numerical advantage, which sealed off all their means of attack they had.

The appearance of the Silver Phoenix Knights made the situation for the shell beast swarm dire.

The tide of the battle turned drastically hence forth.

Chapter 26: Queen of the shell beast



After dropping off the former Regent and Prince at the Ravine Gate, the twin's Tzendorg pulled the wagon containing Toybox that was piloted by Eru into the depths of the giant tree garden courageously.

They met resistance from the shell beasts along the way, but defeated these forces with the powerful attacks of Tzendorg. Despite that, the number of enemies flooding them kept increasing. The strong adversary with amazing strength made them wary.

“It doesn't look good! There are still more behind!”

“What should we do, Eru? It will be terrible if they surround us, should we seek another route or turn back?”

No matter how powerful Tzendorg was, it was still just one machine.

They will be surrounded and crushed by their foes if this went on. In contrast to the hesitant twins, Eru was decisively in his judgement to forge ahead— He came up with a plan.

“Maintain current course, deploy the equipment of mode three. Make a pin point charge with support from magic shots.”

“I have been waiting for this!”

“Under— stood—!!”

This wagon known as mode three wasn't just a giant transportation device, it could also display the power of the cavalry to the fullest, a prototype equipment used purely for battle.

Tzendorg was connected to the wagon behind which was loaded with all sorts of equipment. The two pilots busied themselves with their control stick and buttons, doing the necessary preparations.

“We are going, Eru! Releasing secure belts... Battle transformation, begin—!!”

The moment they gave the command, the back half of the wagon broke away. Eru sat on the remaining front half grabbing a connector with Toybox. Toybox supplied mana and script to the wagon, moving the armour around it.

Most of the wagon was made up from auxiliary arm and flexible coat. The sub arms lifted the armour as instructed and changed its deployment, concentrating on the seated Toybox. At the same time, numerous equipment kept within the armour was revealed. Huge foldable blades jutted out on either side with a dim glow, while two Silhouette Arms were erected to Toybox's sides.

“Battle transformation complete... Presenting the mode three equipment ‘chariot’!!”

It looked totally different from a huge wagon. The armour covering all angles, beast slaying sword for melee and the Silhouette Arms ‘Culverin’ jutting out intimidatingly, it was truly a chariot.

Tzendorg expelled gas really loudly and increased the speed of its charge, dragging the heavy chariot in a gallop.

'Culverin' showed its fangs to the shell beasts, it was meant to be mounted on a chariot, a powerful Silhouette Arms not meant to be wielded by hand.

The magic shots that glowed bright red flew towards the shell beasts blocking the chariot's path. Piercing the shell with ease, the 'Culverin' sent many of the demon beasts to a fiery death. Mana supply of the 'Culverin' didn't come from Tzendorg. Instead, it tapped into Toybox's mana pool. Toybox was flawed as a Silhouette Knight, but it had plenty of mana to spare because of its multiple ether reactors.

Toybox relied on the mobility of Tzendorg to move while using most of its mana to attack. It was named a chariot, but its use exceeded that with its turret on a moving platform and was closer to a tank.

The chariot charged at top speed towards the wall of shell beasts that was decreasing due to the barrage from 'Culverin'. Enemies right in its path were struck down by the lance of Tzendorg, while the adversaries around them were slain by the beast slaying swords. Instead of an edged weapon, the beast slaying sword looks closer to a blunt weapon. With the inertia of the chariot, the thick metal blades could cut through the shells of the beasts.

The further the chariot advanced, the bigger the body count of the shell beasts was. They forged ahead through unstoppable courage and strength.

As the chariot took out the shell beasts in its path, it headed deep into the forest.

The giant tree garden was a boring place. All you could see was endless gigantic trees. This numbed their sense of time and position. Ady was the one to tire of this boring sight first.

"Nah Eru, where are we going?"

"Well, why do you think the shell beasts attacked us?"

She tilted her head in response to Eru's question, and Chid answered in

her stead.

“Ah, because they are ‘splitting hive’, so they are leaving their original swarm.”

“That is correct. From the structure of the shell beast society, there must be a queen at the centre of the swarm. Hive splitting occurs because of the birth of a new queen, so we have to take out the queen to stop this ‘invasion’. I heard the queen shell beast is a tough nut to crack, that’s why we will deal with her with our mode three.”

“I see. Great, the bigger the opponent, the more exciting it is!”

The trio chatted casually, but Tzendorg didn’t slow down as it sped through the forest. No enemy showed up to stop them, and they pressed on with a speed normal Silhouette Knights couldn’t match, allowing them to break through the sturdy barrier of the soldier shell beasts.

The weird thing happened suddenly. A shrill sound of crushing shook the atmosphere. The scene before their eyes stunned them— colossal trees that were as tough as normal demon beasts were crushed mercilessly, falling along with its broken branches.

“... Jackpot?”

Even Silhouette Knights would find it tough to snap colossal trees, and was impossible for humans to achieve. To meet something that could pulverise the giant trees... There were not many answers that would fit.

In the dust cloud that was sky high, they could see a giant, dense shadow. Its head was about the same as the colossal trees around it, so Eru and the rest thought it was the trunk of a tree. However, they quickly realised that thing moved, and was actually the leg of a demon beast.

“Eru! A super huge one came out!”

“Yup, that is probably the queen shell beast... It is bigger than I imagined.”

Even Eru couldn’t hide his worry. The demon beast emerging from the dust cloud was much more massive than they imagined. Surprisingly, the

top of the body could touch the leaves of the colossal trees, with the legs as thick as the colossal trees responsible for most of its height. No wonder they were mistaken.

From afar, its body structure consisting of six walking appendages and two claws were similar to the other shell beasts. Its torso that was covered in exoskeleton bent like a shrimp. The most prominent thing was the part hanging below its abdomen, which wasn't protected by shell like normal shell beasts. It was several times larger than its torso.

The scientific name was 'incubator shell', the organ that produced eggs for shell beasts. Eggs produced by the queen would hatch inside its body, and the hatchling's infancy would be spent inside the incubator shell, only leaving when it was matured. Apart from being the only one capable of reproducing, it was also the nest itself, the embodiment of the swarm.

I see, so the gigantic legs is for supporting that massive belly, Eru thought nonchalantly.

However, there was no way that they would know that a queen splitting hives would not had grown an incubator shell yet, since it hinders movement and was an obvious weak point. A queen that functions as a nest migrating— that was an abnormality for the behaviour of shell beasts. The main reason was that the swarm had grown far beyond normal standards.

“The problem isn't the size, but the toughness. Let's try attacking.”

In the face of the humongous demon beast, their fighting spirit continued to burn brightly. The chariot charged towards the feet of the queen shell beast. Maybe it didn't notice or didn't care, the queen continued its slow pace that send tremour through the ground. The heavy incubator shell was a heavy burden and the queen couldn't go any faster.

“Let's stop its movement, go for the legs!”

Toybox aimed the Culverin on the chariot and fired directly at the demon beasts legs. The queen seemed to notice them and stopped. Using this chance, the chariot advanced, shearing at a leg with the demon slaying sword as they passed by— but the attack was ineffective, knocking

the chariot into the air because of the reactionary force instead.

“Ohh! Hyaa!?”

The heavy chariot went airborne because of the collision and started spinning. The twins in the pilot seat widened their eyes helplessly. Both chariot and pilots would take heavy damage if this continued.

Immediately after this, a bright flame shot out from the airborne chariot. It was Eru who activated Toybox’s magi jet thrusters. The powerful propelling force countered the spinning momentum, restoring their balance. After this close save, the chariot which was about to flip over, landed safely. The group was silent for a long while as the chariot kept going as if nothing was wrong.

“... Let’s not attack the legs.”

“Yeah, agreed.”

The trio broke out in cold sweat and decided to pull away from the queen. Although the chariot avoided the fate of being destroyed, the demon slaying sword had a crack because of the impact earlier. If they did it again, it will definitely snap.

“It must be tough since it could support such a massive body. Destroying it with brute force should be impossible.”

“What should we do, Eru? Even mode three was knocked back, this is very bad.”

“Eh, let’s attack the weak spot head on.”

The chariot turned back after making a large detour, charging the queen shell beast once more. The queen finally noticed the small object running around it and adopted an intimidating pose against them. It stomped on them when it saw the chariot making a beeline for it.

“Turn—!”

Tzendorg made a sharp turn, tilting the body dangerously to dodge the stomp. With a burst from Toybox, the chariot following behind also adjusted its direction of movement.

Next, Eru fired the Culverin in rapid succession after the queen stopped momentarily. He didn't aim for the leg, but the large weak spot, the incubating shell. His shots were fired haphazardly, but he couldn't miss such a prominent target. Crimson magic bullets flew into the abdomen hanging below it, bursting into hellish flames as dictated by its script. A bright blossom of explosion appeared on the stomach of the queen.

The relaxed shell beast queen lost its balance for the first time and shrieked in pain. The powerful 'Culverin' roasted the inside of the incubator shell. Flames burst out from the queen's abdomen and it fell onto the ground.

"Oh, that was unexpectedly easy."

"Eru, why didn't we do that instead of charging from the very start?"

No one answered Ady's comment.

"Anyway, let's go back since we had settled this..."

Chid relaxed and said after the unexpected battle outcome, but was overshadowed by a terrifying scream from behind. Although the shell beast queen stopped momentarily after its incubator shell was burned, it didn't die.

Blowing huge amounts of foam from its mouth, it searched its surrounding with its focused protruding eyes. Finally, the queen found its hated enemy and was coloured with rage.

The shell beast queen stood with the sound of muscle tissue ripping. It came from the abdomen connected to the incubator shell. It grew louder as its movement became bigger before finally breaking off the incubator shell with a loud snap.

The incubator shell was an important organ for the queen, but losing it doesn't lead to death; as long as its main body survives, it could be regenerated. However, it would take a rather long time, which was a critical blow towards the survival of the swarm.

"Oh, her majesty is angry, let's get away for now."

Before Eru even finished, the twins was already pushing Tzendorg to escape. When it saw what they were doing, the shell beast queen also started moving. Without the burden of the incubator shell, the queen moved with astonishing speed, as if all its slow movement before was a lie. Its massive strides allowed it to move even faster than the chariot. Catching up in no time, it used its legs to stomp mightily.

“Oh, no.”

The powerful legs struck like an explosion, falling onto the path they were heading in, cracking the ground and the roots as it shook the ground. If they crash into it head on, they would be done for. The twins changed direction with Tzendorg in a hurry. Toybox’s magi jet thrusters roared and their unified effort completed the impossible tight turn.

Swerving left and right, they kept changing their direction of advance, displaying a nimbleness a heavy cart wouldn’t be capable of. They avoided each and every one of the queen’s stomping feet.

The queen was relentless in each pursuit, stomping all over the place in order to crush the chariot. It seemed inevitable for them to be pulverised, but despite being forced to the brink, they managed to evade their death.

“We made it through!”

“Head straight for the forest!!”

The chariot slid in between the giant trees while the shell beast queen was hindered by its massive body. Using this chance, they bought more time and distance in order to discuss their strategy against the wrath of the queen.

“Shit, it is fast and hard, mode three can’t take her out, what should we do!?”

“Yeah, being tough and hard is fine, but it is fast, too.”

The sound of the shell beast queen rampaging and breaking colossal trees could be heard from behind. It had no intention of giving up, and was filled with the resolve to chase them wherever they might go.

“Sigh, this is bad, right, Eru? Wouldn’t it be dangerous if we run around with the shell beast queen in tow?”

If the Silver Phoenix Knights had to face the shell beast queen which was capable of snapping colossal trees, it would be a hard fight. Even if the Silver Phoenix Knights could handle it, they need to watch out for Alvanz behind them, too. Just imagining bringing the thing along behind them gave them the chills.

“... True. Alright, change of plans. Please continue to circle around the forest and attract its attention. If it stops, do what you can to attack it.”

“Roger! And, you?”

“I.. Will seek an audience with her majesty.”

Eru released the securing harness as he spoke. By opening up the armour of the chariot, Toybox would be able to move independently. He, then, detached the Culverin on the chariot, and held onto it with the sub arms on the back of Toybox. By using both of the sub arms, Eru finally managed to secure the heavy lance onto his machine.

At this moment, Tzendorg dodged into the shades of the colossal trees. The moment the queen’s gaze was covered by the giant trees, Eru’s Toybox leapt off the chariot. He observed the shell beast queen from the shadows, and saw that the queen was only tracking the prominent chariot, not realising he had alighted.

“Alright, the main event will be coming up...”

Eru activated the magi jet thrusters on Toybox’s waist and shoulders and kept the crystal eye onto the trunk of the colossal tree. Sounds of explosion erupted. Toybox started accelerating and jumped onto the trunk, using the propelling force to run straight up the tree. He was planning to use the magi jet thrusters to aid the Silhouette Knight in climbing a tree. Eru’s action was crazy as usual.

Eru forced the heavy machine made from steel and crystal tissue up the trunk with incredible speed. However, the magi jet thrusters output dropped suddenly midway, and the unbalanced Toybox twisted its

movement direction drastically.

“This is nothing!”

Eru kicked off the trunk, pushing off towards a branch nearby and grabbed on. The thinner branch started cracking and falling, which softened Toybox’s landing. He was lucky that the colossal tree could withstand the weight of a Silhouette Knight. If anything went wrong, he might have fallen to the ground directly.

“I don’t feel safe using huge amount of mana. If I knew this would happen, I would have prepared some anchor wire... I will review it after going back.”

Eru started grumbling. The failure of the magi jet thrusters was due to the structural flaw of Toybox, leading to the unstable control over the ether reactors. Short burst was fine, but operation over a long period was unstable like hugging a time bomb. All he could do was to deal with it one step at a time. Eru rested the machine a bit, and started climbing the tree once the output was stable. He didn’t run up the trunk directly, but jumped from branch to branch.

The shell beast queen was right in front of him. Its protruding eyes turned when it saw the giant figure leaping from tree to tree. Considering the machine as just an obstacle in its path, the queen wasn’t fazed by it and kicked at the giant tree with its destructive leg. Toybox lost its balance when its foothold was destroyed.

“Well done! Since I already reach this point—!!”

The roots cracked as the colossal tree fell slowly. Eru stabilised the machine with the jet thrust and charged full speed ahead, gaining height quickly when the tree was tilting sideways.

Turning the head of the machine, the holo monitor projected the image of the queen leaving after it was satisfied with the destruction it wrought. Toybox focused on its target and kicked off the colossal tree, taking off with the magi jet thrusters at maximum burst.

Not expecting this move, the queen reacted a tad slower. Toybox which

leapt off with explosive speed landed nicely on the back of the shell beast queen. Turning its head which was much smaller than its body, the queen glared at the unwelcomed guest on its body.

“Ara, greetings, your majesty. Pardon me, but for a mere demon beast to attack my Silhouette Knights... You better say your prayers.”

As Eru made his joke-like speech, he struck first before the shell beast queen could do anything, aiming for the giant beast’s head. Normal means wouldn’t work against gigantic demon beast protected by tough shells. The only way was to focus the attack on the weak points. The head was the obvious weak point common to all living beings, the bigger the body, the easier for aim for it.

The shell beast queen didn’t allow Eru free reign. A pair of massive claws attacked the foreign object on its back. Toybox burst its magi jet thrusters sporadically to evade the fierce attacks and then closed the distance to the head while prepping the ‘Culverin’ on its back.

He was just a step away from the head. At this moment, Eru suddenly turned the magi jet thrusters around and braked sharply. The powerful pressure from changing directions made the entire machine creaked. He stopped because something flashed before his eyes.

They weren’t claws, but something extending out from the head of the shell beast queen. Those were sharp blades that send food to the queen’s mouth, mandibles. Using its muscles like a spring, the mandible was strong enough to cut steel. The proof was the slash on the chest armour of Toybox.

“You are really talented! If I had known, I would have brought more equipment!”

The mandible attacked the retreating Toybox again. In the face of the impregnable double layer of defence, Eru couldn’t do anything. Adding the unstable foothold on top, he couldn’t get near freely.

With something foreign on its body that wouldn’t go away, the queen started losing its patience. It probably understood the attack from its claw wasn’t working, so it changed its approach. Suddenly, a tremour could be

felt from under Toybox. It was the shell beast queen lowering its stance and shaking its body violently. With its huge size, its violent movement was earth shaking, Eru who was on top of it felt the movement to be greater than a leaf in a tornado, it took everything he had to not get shaken off.

“Wait, this is terrible!”

The violently shaking body of the shell beast queen became a weapon. Eru adjusted the dampers and magi jet thrusters to balance himself as he jump around to avoid being hit. This will exhaust the mana pool of Toybox really fast, so Eru searched for a chance to counterattack, but the situation seemed dire.

What gave the chance to the desperate Eru wasn't the shell beast queen or Eru himself. Crimson bullets came from the forest, hitting the leg and torso of the shell beast queen and bursting into flames. It didn't suffer heavy damage as it was protected by the shell, the impact still made the gigantic beast lost its balance and restraining its movements

“Eru, are you okay!? We are here to help!”

The one shooting the bullets was Tzendorg which had turned back. It ran around the shell beast queen a large distance away as they fired the ‘Culverin’ left on the chariot. The shell beast queen shrieked when it saw the despicable chariot that destroyed its incubator shell. It had low intelligence, but the queen remembered what its enemy looked like.

“That's right, aim for us! I will dodge all your attacks!”

After getting the queen's attention, Tzendorg escaped into the forest. Ignoring the small object on its back, the shell beast queen changed its target and pursued the chariot.

Using this golden opportunity, Eru sneaked ahead with Toybox. The defence of the mandible made it hard for him to attack the head. If that was the case, he just needed to change the target to the joints of the legs. He still remembered the ‘theory of destroying giant weapons’.

Toybox transferred the ‘Culverin’ secured by the sub arms to his hands

and aimed for the joint connecting the legs. The two ether reactor on Toybox churned angrily at full speed, channeling powerful mana into the Silhouette Arms. The magic bullet fired from an extremely close distance pierced the joint with flaming heat. With the protection of strengthening magic, a single shot won't have much effect. Eru shot twice more and hid after seeing their explosion. The next second, a column of fire erupted from the base of the shell beast queen.

The queen squirmed its body as it shrieked. No matter how tough the shells were, it couldn't cover the joints as that would prevent movement. Even the colossal beast couldn't take the powerful shots of the 'Culverin'.

Eru struggled to balance on the suffering beast and attack the leg besides it. The magic shot erupted into explosion again and the queen spasm with each blow, but its movement was growing weaker. The legs on just one side was attacked, causing its colossal body to tilt.

"Don't be shy, here, have one more."

Eru shot at the tilting shell beast queen from the side, the impact finally pushing the queen off balance. Once the joints supporting the legs were burned, it couldn't fight against the pull of gravity. The colossal beast fell into a cloud of dust silently.

Toybox stayed on its back until the last moment before jumping into the air. Eru attempted to slow his descent with his magi jet thrusters, but his earlier reckless action made the output unstable, making it impossible to slow down.

"Toybox, just hang on! Let me see your spirit!"

Eru pushed the remaining mana into the side propeller, forcefully changing the direction of his drop. Tzendorg that was pulling the chariot rushed to the spot under him.

"Leave catching Eru to me—!"

Toybox aimed for the chariot and fell into it. During the moment of impact, the flexible coat and sub arms took the place of shock absorbers, barely catching onto Toybox. A sharp cracking sound could be heard from

all over Toybox. Part of its inner skeleton and muscle tissue broke, but Eru didn't care and focused on the chariot. He activated the flexible coat and beast slaying sword, ready for battle.

“Give it the final blow! Ady, Chid, turn back!”

The two of them gave reliable acknowledgements. Tzendorg galloped at top speed with the chariot in tow.

When the dust cleared, the shell beast queen was still on the ground. Its legs were broken and it couldn't move. Being large and standing tall worked against it as it suffered severe injuries crashing into the ground. Despite its condition, the queen was still struggling. Blood dripped out from its mouth as it moved its legs in an attempt to move.

Sounds of horse hooves rose. In order to deal the final blow to the shell beast queen, the chariot charged at full speed. The queen had no way of defending itself. Its mandibles broke during the fall; it could still move its claw, but its attack range was limited. Its other legs wouldn't help much.

“Checkmate.”

Eru dodged its last ditch kick and the chariot charged past the shell beast queen's head with its remaining beast slayer sword. The heavy steel plate powered by the insane speed of the chariot crashed into the head shell that was already crumbling from its fall, smashing it apart. The head of the queen splitted and its contents sprayed out. The queen exhaled for the final time.

“Yay! We really did it this time, Eru!”

“Yes, thank you for the hard work, you two. Well then, let's meet up with the others.”

“Roger!”

The trio didn't have time to be emotional after taking down the shell beast queen and hurried back to Althusser Ravine Gate.

With the Knight Commander's return, the Silver Phoenix Knights became even more powerful. After losing their queen, the shell beast

swarm lost control and their only advantage in numbers were lost with the return of Alvanz. The battle that followed was a one sided affair.

After a week, the shell beast swarm was completely eradicated.

Chapter 27: Forest City



Because of the exemplary performance of the Silver Phoenix Knights, the Forest City was relieved from its biggest crisis ever.

After finishing off the shell beasts completely, the giant tree garden was still in a state of chaos. This was because most of the Alvanz had been tasked to clear the carcass scattered around the giant tree gardens, even though the high alert status had been dismissed.

From the scale of the attack, the amount of damage they suffered was light and Althusser Ravine Gate wasn't affected at all. On the other hand, Alvanz lost quite a lot of men and equipment, and would be troubled by the need to rebuild it.

As for the Silver Phoenix Knights, they were as good as new, just slight

damage from the reckless charges of the chariot. They were stationed in Althusser for now and assisted with the rebuilding works. A side note was that the 3rd Squad of Tzendrinble was the most prominent in the Fort. Possessing transport capacity and speed far exceeding those of normal wagons, they became a powerful transport team. They were also travelling to and fro busily with carts full of resources today.

Compared to them, the 1st and 2nd Squad performing guard duty had an easier time. While they were performing their rounds, someone visited the Silver Phoenix Knights.

“We are in your debt. If not for you, I can’t imagine what would have happened to us, we would probably be wiped out.”

The visitor was a member of the Alvanz, Arnis.

“You are too kind; this is part of our duty too.”

Edgar felt bad when he saw Arnis lowering his head. Edgar bore a lot of respect for Arnis after the experience of losing to him in the simulated battle some time ago.

“No matter what the reason, the fact is that we are saved. We knew each other, so I wanted to say thanks personally.”

“... Yes, if you insist.”

Seeing Edgar being stiff as usual, Arnis fought to suppress his wry smile. He knew such attitude was inappropriate when conversing with your benefactor.

“By the way, your Knight looks great.”

Arnis looked at Aldelecumber by their side as if to shift the focus. It might look as plain as Earlecumber, but it had fantastic fighting capabilities, taking out dozens of shell beast swarms led by drill shell beasts. Edgar reacted honestly with joy when he heard the praise for his machine.

“Thank you, Aldelecumber is a partner I am proud of.”

“I thought so. Seeing how active it was, even we want to get the new

models. Your entire Order is outfitted with the new models, right? It has quite the impact.”

Arnis thought back of the scene back then. Even after discounting the Tzendrinbles, the performance of the two squads of Karrdatolle could only be described as astounding. It was not a stretch to say that they did the job of several times of the old model... No, ten times would be more accurate. Since such an incident happened, it was natural for Yanis to import the new models to strengthen the Alvanz.

“I think it is only a matter of time before the new Silhouette Knights are implemented throughout the nation. Since this is an important strategic base, you should have the priority of getting the improved machines.”

“You are right; I’m looking forward to it.

Arnis seemed very happy when he heard Edgar’s reply and smiled a little childishly.

Several days later, a carriage arrived at Althusser Ravine Gate with an unexpected guest– the director of NTR Lab, Olver Blomdahl. NTR Lab might be an important organisation within the nation, but it was hard to imagine how it might be related to this secret city. He came before Ambrosius the moment he alighted.

“Sorry for the wait, Your Excellency... First of all, thank you for saving our ‘home’! Please accept my heartfelt gratitude.”

“Yeah, I had been waiting. Don’t mention it, this place is important to us, too, and we only followed what the ‘law’ dictated.”

Olver nodded and looked at Eru who was with Ambrosius.

“So he...?”

“Yes, there is no better chance than this.”

Eru who didn’t know what they were talking about shift his gaze between the two of them. Ambrosius smiled mischievously and told him: “Eh, Ernesti, I made a promise with you some time ago, right?”

Eru nodded. The promise could only be referring to one thing.

“I promised to tell you the secret of the reactor if you made the best Silhouette Knight. The performance of the Silver Phoenix Knight, and the Knight and Chariot that defeated the shell beast queen. I am pleased by the knights you have made. Hence, I decided to fulfill my promise.”

Eru’s expression shone as he listened. According to the promise, Eru will have the chance to learn ‘how to construct an ether reactor’. Ether reactor was akin to the heart of the Silhouette Knight, an organ that converts the endless supply of ether in the air into mana. With it, Silhouette Knights ruled over other creatures as the strongest weapon. That was the last piece Eru didn’t know and was searching for in his pursuit of building Silhouette Knights.

“... Is, is it really okay?”

“Fufu, this is the second heavyweight demon beast you bested, that alone is more than enough merit. Even though I abdicated the throne, I have to reward you for your accomplishments as the former regent. The reigning King agrees, too, so just accepted it.”

Since it reached this point, there was nothing to stop Eru. Changing his attitude, Eru walked towards Tzendorg intending to leave right away. Ambrosius stopped him in a hurry.

“Hey, I will definitely bring you there, so don’t rush. No combat forces are allowed beyond the Ravine Gates, so we can’t ride Tzendorg there. We have to follow the ‘law’ only those permitted by the ‘Watchman’ can enter.”

“Watchman...? So I have to meet him? Who might that be?”

Ambrosius pointed to his side where the ever smiling Olver was standing. He came before Eru and bowed respectfully.

“Please follow me, Sir Silver Phoenix Knight Commander. Allow me to show you to ‘Home’, my hometown.”

The gate deep in the depths of Althusser Ravine Gate opened with a dull sound, revealing a road leading further in, away from the giant tree garden. At the end of this road was the place that manufactured the ether

reactors and where its secret lies. For Eru, it was a path towards paradise.

After finishing their preparations, the former regent Ambrosius boarded the carriage alongside Eru and Olver, and set off through the gate. After they left, the gate closed once again, barring entry for anyone else.

Surrounding the Althusser Ravine Gate was scenes of barren mountains.

Eru's group travelled up between the mountains on a carriage which was covered by a thin fog, obscuring their view. The paved road continued all the way ahead so they didn't worry about losing their way. Shortly after, the mist dissipated and their surroundings cleared up.

After advancing a little while more, the mountain peaks were getting even closer. After going over that mountain, Eru was speechless after watching the view from the carriage window.

At the foot of the mountain was an open ground on gentle slopes covered by greenery. Some distance away from the forest was an undulating mountain range which extends to Eru's left and right as well. In simple terms, this was a basin covered by mountains on all sides, a natural haven formed by mount Aubigne. The only road that could access it easily was protected by a fort. As expected of one of the few important bases in the nation, its defence was as sturdy as gold.

There was something other than a basin in the forest. What attracted Eru's attention was the giant city that was fused with the forest.

In the centre of the basin was a tall tower, and the city seemed to radiate out with it as the centre. The buildings did not displace the trees, but built into them as if they were merging into the forest. What laid before him was a strange and unique architectural styles, completely different from what he saw in Laihiala and Jantunen. The culture here was obviously different from the Fremmevira Kingdom.

"... That is the place we are going, Alfheim, the Forest City."

The epic scene combining manmade structures with nature mesmerised Eru, he only came to his senses after hearing Ambrosius speak.

"Alfheim... So that is the place Ether Reactors are made, and where its

secret lies! I knew the manufacturing place is classified, just like the production method... Hufufu, I have finally reached this stage...”

Eru pressed his entire body onto the glass of the window, watching every single thing on the street closely. He won't learn anything by staring at them, but he couldn't help restraining his sense of joy.

“Those who live in the Forest City are descendents of hermits, the race of magic and technology, Elves.”

Olver continued the topic as he undid the cloth covering his head, letting down the blonde hair hidden within and revealing his sharp, narrow ears. His ears that were about the length of a palm were a clear sign he was from a different race.

“Elves... Erm, is Mr Olver an Elf?”

“Correct, I might be a Watchman, living outside of home and is responsible as the liaison person between you ‘humans’ and ‘home’, but I am also an Elf.”

When Eru heard that, he became doubtful and asked with his head tilted:

“By the way, I had never met other Elves before. Could it be that few Elves live on the outside?”

Olver nodded with his usual smile.

“As most of the Elves lived in homes similar to this Alfheim, people like me who travels outside won't reveal ourselves easily. To us, those who leave home voluntarily are strange.”

“... Is it to hide the Ether Reactor production method?”

That was the part Eru was interested in. To be frank, his curiosity towards the Elves was more like the extension of his interest for the Ether Reactor. Eru who asked suddenly while leaning forward surprised Olver a little, making Ambrosius who couldn't help smiling say:

“Fufu, don't be so anxious. Olver's situation is different; he doesn't like to show off too much due to some reasons. Other than that, we have our

own considerations; that's why the Elves' existence disappeared from history.”

Eru was sitting seiza style in his seat, ready to listen. His attitude was prompting ‘tell me more about Ether Reactors’.

“Haha, to be frank, I don't know much about the production process of Ether Reactors, either.”

Olver was taken aback by how passionate Eru was and reminded him in a hurry.

“I would love to explain, but those who are watchmen wouldn't know about the production of Ether Reactors.”

This much was obvious, they won't share classified secrets with people who were leaving ‘home’.

“Is that so... but someone will tell me after I get there, right? I am... really looking forward to it.”

“I apologise for saying this despite your anticipation... I cannot guarantee that you can learn the production method of Ether Reactors.”

Olver hesitated and said after making up his mind:

“Think about it, what it means for the Elves who are the only ones capable of producing Ether Reactors. It is not just about keeping it a secret... It is something only an Elf can do.”

“It's fine.”

Eru replied immediately with sparkling eyes.

“After listening to all of it, researching and understanding everything, I will attempt it. If it doesn't work, I will look for another way, and it doesn't work, I will give up. I will start with the stage of listening to everything.”

No matter how intelligent Olver was, he had no choice but to give up on his persuasion.

“Eh, that will do. Oh, right, there is some time before we arrive, so allow me to introduce the Elves to relief your boredom. Ernesti, how old do you

think I am?”

“...? About twenty five, less than thirty.”

Eru looked at Olver’s pointy ears and answered bafflingly. Olver smiled deviously in reply.

“You guessed wrong. The correct answer; I am eighty seven.”

When Eru heard that Olver claimed to be older than Ambrosius, Eru showed a complicated expression. On one side was a man with white hair and wrinkles looking his age; on the other was a young man with smooth skin and a head of blonde hair. Looking at them side by side, it was hard to imagine that Olver was older.

However, Olver wasn’t joking. The young appearance that didn’t match his actual age, the Elf race that hides themselves— from these clues, Eru found the answer.

“Could it be... Elves have a longer lifespan than us?”

It was Olver’s turn to widen his narrow eyes, showing a rare expression of surprise.

“That’s how it is... You thought about that so quickly, I thought you will think I am joking. That’s right; we Elves have a far longer lifespan than you humans, and live on average until five hundred years old. Even when we get older, our appearance doesn’t change, I will still look this way a few hundred years later.”

Eru appeared calm on the outside, but felt surprised within. Normal humans live to an average of seventy years. Living until eighty was shocking in this world. It was about the same for Dwarves, they were just humans that had stronger muscular built.

What if a race that lives seven times as long mixed in with them? Their ever young appearance will spark unnecessary friction with the other races, and the Elves might even be the ones losing. The face Eru showed seemed to be expressing that he understood why the City Forest was built in such an inaccessible place.

“That’s why you all live in secrecy...”

Eru frowned a little with his head slightly bowed, but Olver simply shook his head casually.

“Hmm? Oh, it’s not like that. Elves live in secrecy because we don’t want to be bothered.”

When Eru who was in seiza heard Olver said that, he tilted his head and crossed his arms. Hoping he misheard earlier, Eru asked again:

“... Eh, I beg your pardon, what did you say Elves were like again?”

“We don’t want to be bothered.”

The serious atmosphere so far was broken by this sentence.

“That might sound a bit wrong. Elves are actually a meaningful race, but because of our long lifespan, our mentality tends to change. The first hundred years of our lives is about the same as normal humans.”

Olver nodded while pointing at himself. Indeed, he looked no different from normal humans.

“However, things become different after that. Elves that lived to two, three hundred years will lose their vigour and interest in their surroundings, spending their times in meditation and slumber, gradually they don’t want to be bothered. Elves who are at the end of their lifespan are said to be just like trees.”

This was beyond Eru’s imagination. The race that was in control of the secret he craved had a very unique lifestyle.

While they chatted, their carriage was about to arrive at the hidden haven— Alfheim.

From the Athusser Ravine Gate to the Forest City was a road paved along the mountain paths.

Starting from small streams, it congregated and formed rapids, flowing alongside the mountain path to form rivers. Both roads and rivers extend into the centre of the basin area, and then into the city.

Including the road the carriage was traveling on, the streets in the city was paved with stones.

The rivers flowing in splitted along narrow water paths, spreading throughout the city. It was filled with thick vegetation which was just a bit taller than Silhouette Knights, unlike the huge colossal trees. Not only were there a lot of branches on the trees, the trunk was also bent in a weird way. Their erratic appearance gave those watching it a sense of unease.

The layout of buildings that could be seen from in between the forest was very unique, as if the architecture was built to lean on the twisted trees. Or rather, half of the structure was fused with the tree, which was part of the house. Some of it was built really close together; others had the trees growing right through the roof. The material used was unique; some vegetation was grown to serve as the base support structure, and was reinforced with timber, stone and cement.

“This city coexists with the forest.”

The building was built around the trees; this was the reflection of the mentality of the Elves, a representation of their unique culture.

Shortly after, the carriage reached the centre of the city. An exceptionally special building was here, unique even amongst the forest that was one with the city.

“This is the heart of Alfheim, ‘Forest Sanctuary’.”

Forest Sanctuary was a tower of pure white ivory, prominent in the Forest City that was filled with the colours of nature. Its surface was curved gently without any clear patterns, with a spiral shape becoming apparent from the mid section and forming a pointed tip at the top, which was similar to some type of shell. The base was wide, supported by clusters of pillars and beams; it even had strange windows and corridors within.

Is this a part of a giant shell beast, as large as the queen shell beast?

As Eru fell into his happy imaginations about unknown creatures, he

saw the door opening for the waiting carriage and remembered this was a building used by people.

A slender figure came out of the building with the sound of clothes fluttering. Olver was dressed just like humans, but the Elves living in the forest followed their original culture. They mainly cover themselves with light green clothes, clasping them with accessories which looked similar to flowers and trees.

The Elf who came before the group bowed in a way unique to the Elves, and led them into the Forest Sanctuary.

“Welcome, former Regent and Sir Olver. This way please... Elder is expecting you.”

Ambrosius nodded after alighting from the carriage and led Eru and Olver in with confident strides.

The inside of the Sanctuary also used timber that was as white as the outside. Perhaps it was the excellent design that made use of natural lightning; it wasn't dark despite the lack of artificial illumination.

Rainbows form in some places due to the angle of refraction, splashing the wall with faint myriad of colours. Eru turned his head around, watching the place curiously. Such smooth surfaces didn't seem to be manmade, maybe they did build this out of the shell of some giant demon beast. He continued walking while thinking about such idle matters.

The centre of the Sanctuary wasn't partitioned by ceilings, and it was possible to see the tip of the tower when he looked up.

When the group reached the hall in the centre, Eru was reminded of the term 'Altar' or 'Throne'. The reason was the person sitting in the chair shaped platform found in the centre.

“It has been a long time, elder Quitterie. When we met previously, it was right after my coronation, it has been thirty years since we last met.”

Ambrosius addressed the person sitting on the marble chair. Behind him, Olver knelt on one knee, overlapping his hands on his head and bowed. After performing this unique greeting, he left.

Elder Quitterie Kirjarinta— at first glance, the one sitting on the throne was a young girl. To describe her in a word... would be 'white'. Her skin was as pale as the walls of the Sanctuary, even her hair was translucent. When Eru saw the silver pupils when she opened her eyes, he felt that it was out of place. Such colour was not something humans should have.

She was wearing a colourful Elven dress that mimics the colours of nature, and covered it with several layers of white clothes and sashes. It made her look as ethereal as the snow falling on the greenery.

“It hadn't been long Ambrosius, you are just old.”

Her voice was as pleasing as music, but sound queer to the ones listening. Lacking emotions in her tone, her voice was flat and lacked warmth.

If Olver's explanation was correct, the elderly Elves wasn't interested in their surroundings. And losing interest in others meant their feelings were getting blander. Compared to her voice, the rustling of the leaves in the wind had more emotions.

“What kind of greeting is this? Eh, that's how humans like me are.”

For long lived races like Elves, what was important wasn't youth, but the accumulated age. It was the same for Elder who was at the top of her people, and it was impossible to tell from her appearance how long she had lived.

“Well then, I will tell you about the situation outside. We had exterminated the shell beast swarm invading the giant tree garden some days ago; they will not harm this Forest City.”

“... That so. I don't sense any uproar and hostility, thank you for your assistance.”

They went straight onto the topic after a simple greeting. According to the agreement between Elves and humans, the two races were equal, so talk progressed speedily with minimal ceremony.

“Yes, since this was the agreement dictated by 'law', you don't need to worry. There is another personal matter. You might have heard from

Olver, but one of my people wants to learn about Ether Reactors.”

Quitterie listened without any reaction and mumbled:

“So you want to ask this, too.”

“Me, too? That’s right; I am probably not the first to ask...”

“The King of the humans had all asked at least once, and had brought different people each time. The best craftsmen, knights and scholars. All of them ended in failure and you all still had not learned your lesson. No, times are always changing, so this was expected.”

Since she took up the position of Elder, she had seen six Kings of the humans. For her, this had become a routine.

“Huh, so it is that hard. However, the one I brought this time is different. An extraordinary talent, a child that will accomplish great things in the future.”

“... You say it is a child?”

Throughout the dialogue, Quitterie’s face remained unmoved. By the aesthetics of humans, her face was very beautiful. However, such a face still made others uncomfortable when she displayed no expressions. Relative to her, Olver’s face was much more expressive.

“No matter how talented one was, humans won’t have enough time. No matter how hard you practice, you can’t reach our realm. Those who came in the past were the cream of the crop amongst the humans, but it was futile in the end. I can’t understand why you let such a young one challenge this.”

“Hey, don’t be so stingy, he might surprise you, alright?”

“Ambrosius, former Regent of the humans. In accordance of the law, we will give great consideration to your view, but we reserve the right to reject nonsensical requests. While we are grateful for your help earlier, these are two different matters. I have no intention of playing along if it will be a waste of effort.”

“I see, it seems that I didn’t explain myself clearly enough. Of course, we

don't want to make a wasted trip, either. This child had extraordinary abilities amongst the humans, since he can operate a Silhouette Knight without a Magius Engine, that's how proficient his magic is... Do you still think this is a waste of effort?"

Quitterie's face was still calm, but she only replied after a short while.

"This child... Is this true?"

"Why would I lie to you? He had accomplished amazing feats because of his ability. And the one who took down the boss of the demon beast during the battle of the great tree garden is him."

Ambrosius call forth Eru who was besides him and pushed him towards Quitterie. Eru felt uneasy as the unfocused eyes of Quitterie stared at him. Finally, after a long silence, she made her decision.

"In pursuant to the 'law', I will believe you, Ambrosius. Thank you, child, for protecting the great meditation and this home. Challenge it then. Since you have the ability, you have a better chance than the humans who came before you. Humans are fascinating, to accomplish so much at such a tender age... Attendant."

"Here."

An Elf reacted to the soft summons Quitterie made and present himself with haste.

"Bring them inside. One of them wishes to learn about Ether Reactors, teach him until he is satisfied."

The Elven man lowered his head in a unique way, then led Eru and Ambrosius into the depths of the Forest Sanctuary. Eru who realised that Quitterie had acknowledged him followed behind excitedly. When Ambrosius walked passed Quitterie, he looked at her profile.

"Thank you, Elder. Although it might looked like I am cashing in on a favour."

Quitterie didn't look at him when she answered. No matter how beautiful her features were, her unmoving face felt creepy.

“Meditation time is important to us, and there is value in protecting it. We merely paid the appropriate price in return.”

Ambrosius nodded and disappeared into the depths of the building.

After he left, Quitterie who was left alone closed her eyes, returning to her meditation. Her conscious once again slipped into the clear torrents and gradually spread out.

The group walked silently along the corridors that were sparkling.

Leading the way was an Elven man. The passage seemed to be endless. Eru who was feeling bored looked up at Ambrosius and asked:

“By the way, Elder mentioned the term ‘law’, what was that about?”

“Hmm? Simply put, that is the way we humans and Elves communicate. It encompasses the trade agreement between us.”

“It seems very important, but is explained casually.”

“From what I know, the Elves made the goal of seeking a higher existence their sacred duty. Olver also said that young elves accumulate experience through activities, but as they grew older, the time they spent in meditation becomes longer. For elders, it won’t be strange to spend an entire day on meditation. After they reached such an age, their view of time is very different.”

Eru thought back about the conversation with Quitterie. She didn’t look at the person she was speaking to, and don’t move much at all. She lived in a different realm from humans.

“But they are living beings, too, they will die if they don’t eat. Normally, they either hunt or farm to sustain themselves... Which led to the ‘law’.”

As the topic got to the main point, the ominous feeling in Eru’s heart became stronger.

“Ether Reactors. They provide us with parts human are unable to produce, and we provide food and security. That is the content of the agreement.”

“The Elves really have no intention of leaving their hidden home...”

“Not all Elves, Olver and some others are rather active. Well, they will become like that after they become Elders.”

Races that had long lifespan were different from humans in many ways, it would be hard to live together. Right now, their relationship had a very good balance, that's how Eru felt.

The Elven man led them into a room deep within the Forest Sanctuary. It was the same white scenery everywhere, which made Eru and Ambrosius give up on tracking where they were. This place was illuminated with warm light just like the main hall; the barren room only had a few tables and chairs.

“By the Elder's orders, I will teach you the knowledge related to Ether Reactors.”

The man said with a stiff attitude. He didn't have the inhuman atmosphere of Quitterie, and is probably over a century old, retaining enough emotions to converse with humans.

“Eh, I am just here to accompany him, please speak directly with Ernesti here.”

Shifting his gaze, the man looked at the petite boy who was leaning forward with anticipation after sitting down. Seeing Eru leaning the top half of his body onto the table, the Elven man seemed troubled.

“Erm, what would you like to know?”

“Everything, please start from the beginning. Please tell me everything about Ether Reactors.”

Being taken aback after Eru finally got on top of the table, the man decided to simply execute his duties and not think too much about it.

“I understand. Well, then, I will give a brief introduction from the point of invention...”

And so, he explained in detail. What is an Ether Reactor? How did the structure that converts ether to mana come about?

“The truth is, what is known as Ether Reactor, is the heart of living

creatures. The creatures in this world possess mana, there are no exceptions. Even creatures without catalyst and couldn't use magic possessed the ability to generate mana. Other than this, we know that this conversion happens in the heart. Ether that entered the body together with air will be diverted to the heart. It is converted to mana there. At the core of the conversion is the catalyst crystal in our hearts."

"... Catalyst crystal? Isn't catalyst crystal used to convert mana into magic?"

Eru's question was right on point. Humans could only perform magic with tools embedded with catalyst crystal. When casting spells, the mana will be converted back to ether and released into the air. In other words, the function of the catalyst crystal was opposite of the Ether Reactor.

"You are right, but the conversion isn't strictly one way. Under certain conditions, it can convert ether into mana. To reverse the function of the catalyst crystal, two things are required."

First was the maintenance of blood circulation. Something within the blood reacts with the catalyst crystal, turning ether into mana. Second would be the script, brain of the living beings— a unique script will be activated by the brain on an instinctual level. It was said that the ancient Elf sage who discovered this secret made the first Ether Reactor.

"According to the stories, the first Ether Reactor was a large silverware covered in emblem grafts, and was filled with the fresh blood of animals."

He succeeded in generating mana, but the equipment was a failure.

The reason was simple; blood that was outside the body lost their vitality shortly after. It goes without saying that the need to constantly change the blood made the design impractical. After that, the ancient sage kept researching through trial and error for the liquid that could replace blood.

"In the end, he focused on the field that is known as 'alchemy' in modern terms. He tested the reaction of all sorts of potions with the catalyst crystal for a period of time that even Elves consider to be long."

The Elf was relentless in his research, which yielded results after years

of research. Elixir— an artificial blood created through alchemy.

“There are also the necessary scripts engraved onto the container, which are known as ‘song’. And the name of the script is called ‘Life Song’.”

The very first script that is part of the instinct of living beings, ‘Life Song’, is maintained by emblem grafting it onto the container. However, this led to another problem, which was the enormous size of the script.

If ‘Life Song’ was made directly into emblem grafts, it would require a spectacular amount of silver plates, bigger than a Silhouette Knight. To compress it to be smaller than a human as it was right now required a completely different method.

“And so, we used the top quality metal that was created by the influence of ether to graft it. Which is the reason why only we Elves can create Ether Reactors.”

“That is a metal correct? Why is that the reason only Elves can create Ether Reactor?”

“It will be faster to show you. Please wait a moment.”

After saying that, the Elven man exited the room, and returned with a block of metal shortly after. From just one look, Eru could tell this metal was different from any metals he had seen before. It had a silvery glister, and the surprising thing was the faint rainbow colour lights glimmering on it. The colour changes constantly, displaying an array of lights. It was definitely harbouring some sort of mysterious powers.

“Mithril... When I was doing my research, I found out the material needed was Elven ore.”

Eru muttered as he thought back on the Ether Reactor explanation he saw in the past.

“Elven ore? Ahh, that was the alias used for the masses. Mithril is rare, only found in places with dense amount of Ether. Its biggest feature was its incredible hardness and extreme malleability, so hard that the race claiming to be master of craftsmanship will throw away their hammer in surrender.”

Eru was a bit troubled as he studied the metal block before him carefully. He couldn't tell what this piece of metal that could frustrate the dwarves had to do with the Elves.

The Elven man reached his hand out suddenly and everyone focused on it— there wasn't anything strange about it; just that it was a little pale for a man. A faint light engulfed his arm out of the blue as he activated some magic. He grabbed the Mithril and it deformed as easily as clay.

“... Didn't you say it was extremely hard?”

“You can't shape it by hammering it, but it will react to a certain spell because of its long exposure to Ether.”

“...! Could it be, the reason why you say only Elves could do it..”

Eru looked at his hand covered in a faint light. Looking at the arm as a whole, something strange could be seen— the man wasn't holding a wand, but was using magic.

The man nodded slowly when he saw the change in Eru's expression.

“As you have realised now, we Elves have catalyst crystal inside our body, allowing us to perform magic to shape the Mithril. That is the technique we can use that humans and dwarves can't use. Pardon me for being blunt, but humans don't have the ability to wield several magics at the same time to handle Mithril. We have great mastery over magic.”

The Elves used special magic when shaping Mithril, developing the skills to engrave the scripts compactly and minimising the equipment needed to graft 'Life Song'. It was far beyond what could be achieved by engraving on Silver plates.

Ambrosius who was listening quietly couldn't help moaning when he heard that. In that case, the other races won't be able to imitate them, and he understood why the Elves refused to make this information public. Their confidence stemmed from the difference in biological structure.

“And that is how we create Ether Reactors. Are you satisfied with this explanation?”

Catalyst crystal, Elixir, Mithril. The components of the Ether Reactor had all been revealed. Eru pondered about how to solve all these problems, and was driven by his interest to ask:

“How is the power of the Ether Reactor determined? What I mean is, what do we need to change in order to increase the power output?”

“It is mainly affected by the size of the catalyst crystal and the Ether conversion efficiency. Actually, we all know that the larger the demon beast, the bigger the crystal in its heart. Another thing is that if the crystal catalyst is obtained from within the demon beast, it will improve efficiency. However, the crystal catalyst within a creature’s body will be slightly mutated and hard to use.”

The answer was simpler than before, which disappointed Eru.

“It’s such a simple way to improve quality, but you all never use it?”

“Well... processing it is difficult after all.”

Most of the Ether Reactors are made from crystal catalyst dug from the mines. It is easy to obtain, stable in quality and easy to process. In contrast, just the heart of one duel level demon beast would be enough to create an Ether Reactor. The power throughput is higher, but the quality wasn’t stable. Just installing it to churn the engine meant complicated adjustment had to be made to utilise the characteristics of each catalyst. Since the highest and lowest output varies widely, there was a need to install a stabilising component.

Simply put, it was a lot of effort to make just one Ether Reactor. For a nation, it was better to have more Ether Reactors. Compared to powerful engines based on an unstable supply of materials, a country would focus more on one with components that could be harvested steadily. This was simple logic.

The unfortunate thing was that for the robot nerd who finally made his way into the hidden city of the Elves, such obvious logic didn’t mean anything. Eru looked back at Ambrosius sharply.

“In summary, if we used the catalyst crystal found in a big enough

demon beast, a powerful Ether Reactor can be made! Your Excellency, sorry for being so sudden, but I have the perfect choice for this!!”

“What a coincidence, me too. Eh, you want to know what we did with the heart? Of course we are still keeping it. The best choice you have in mind...”

“Ernesti, it is true that we can create an amazing Ether Reactor with that, but the process of creating it would be filled with difficulties. Do you still want to take up the challenge?”

Ambrosius had never shown such a stern expression to Eru before, but he gave up shortly after and relented. That’s right, it was pointless to ask. Normal people won’t even want to challenge it, and would have given up if the only thing driving them was passion.

If they still sought out more at this stage, they would be an incorrigible maniac.

“Alright, that was something you defeated in the first place, so do what you will with it... take the heart of the behemoth with you.”

And Eru’s answer was obvious.

Night engulfed the Forest City slowly. When Ambrosius and Olver stepped out of the hidden city, the sun had completely set, covering the forest in darkness. The carriage illuminated by lamps drove slowly towards the Ravine Gate.

“Your Excellency, is it really fine to leave Ernesti behind?”

“He already said that he won’t go back before he learns how to make Ether Reactors. I can’t do anything with him lying face down on the table and refusing to leave. I might be a retiree, but I can’t keep staying with him.”

And so, Eru stayed behind to learn the crucial Life Song, but found that it wasn’t easy. It was larger than the script that controls Silhouette Knights, and could be said to be the largest magic script in history. Just the amount of papers needed to copy Life Song was stupendous, no matter how amazing Eru was; he would need time to learn them all. That’s why

Ambrosius decided to leave him behind.

“Don’t worry, his accommodation and means of going back had been arranged, he will come back when he is satisfied. Before that, there are some things we need to prepare.”

Ambrosius didn’t doubt that Eru can learn how to make Ether Reactors completely. Since that is the case, he will definitely get started making one when he comes back. Ambrosius had to make preparations for that moment.

“The future seem hazardous and unpredictable, don’t you think it is exciting?”

“... I think that is scary, just what is driving that boy to go so far?”

Ambrosius folded his arms and answered with his chest puffed out:

“I am too afraid to ask as well.”

When they returned to Althusser Ravine Gate, there was an unexpected commotion.

“If Eru is not going back, I will wait here, too!”

“Your Excellency, he is our Knight Commander, please grant us leave to wait for his return.”

Eru didn’t come back with Ambrosius. After hearing the entire story (the part about the Ether Reactor was covered up), the members of the Silver Phoenix Knights expressed their wish to stay behind. As they couldn’t go any further into the Forest City, they had to wait inside the fort.

“Alright, do as you please... Everyone, I will leave that interesting person in your hands.”

The Silver Phoenix Knight was already a group that shared a common destiny. Ambrosius didn’t blame them and granted them permission before heading back to the capital with Emrys and the others to tie up the loose ends.

When Eru finally learned all the knowledge of the Elves and returned after satisfying his curiosity, a month had already passed.

Chapter 28: Descent of the Fierce God (Kishin)



The sun had just risen and the air was just warming up when a Tzendrinble galloped along the Fremmevira Highway, heading towards the base of the Silver Phoenix Knights— Olvecius Fort. The body that emulated a horse ran with powerful strides, reaching its destination in no time.

A Tzendrinble entered the hangar occupied with rows of Kardatolle and other Tzendrinble with practiced movement. After waving at the craftsmen and Knights scrambling around its feet, it moved to the side and adopted a resting position.

A boy and a girl leapt off the pilot seats, they were the twins Chid and Ady. They reside in their home in Laihiala Academy City, and used the

Tzendrinble as their transport vehicle. That might be the personal machine assigned to them, but seeing how no one seemed to mind them using the equipment of the Knight Order as their personal transportation, the Silver Phoenix Knights was rather lax in discipline.

Chid and Ady peered into the workshop attached to the hangar, finding it filled with sounds of hammers and yells as usual. As the work continued, the twins found the Boss and ran over.

“Boss— Morning! Is Eru at the same place?”

“Morning—”

“Oh, the boy is at the usual place, doing god knows what.”

The boss pointed to a corner of the workshop. When she heard that, Ady looked as if she expected that answer and sighed with her arms folded.

“Really, Eru keeps staying here and refusing to go home. His mum said that she is lonely because she doesn't see him much! Say something to him, too, Boss!”

“Sorry, but I don't want to do that. Just bear with it until he is done with that.”

The Boss answered frankly with his arms folded, but the content was cold. Ady shift her focus to what the Boss was referring to.

It was a Silhouette Knight that was being developed. As it was being built from scratch, signs of careful processing and repeated testing could be seen everywhere, with a large group of craftsmen working on it. The entire Silver Phoenix Knights were mobilised for this single machine.

The structure of the machine was unique as well. Just by looking at the inner skeleton, the shape was different than normal, and thick metal pipes crawled all over the body. There was a large empty space in the abdomen, seemingly reserved for some large component.

“Eh, that's true; it's the new model everybody is looking forward to. Eru isn't someone who will stop because someone asked him to anyway.”

Chid muttered in resignation, only Ady was adamant on lecturing Eru

directly as she ran towards the corner of the workshop.

The Boss watched her go, and returned to his work, yelling at others.

“Hey, Bart boy! Come here! If you connect this pipe to that one, it will be smoother...”

“I know this is important Boss, but you had already changed it ten times!”

Today, Olvecius Fort was filled with screams of joy, too.

In a corner of Olvecius Fort’s workshop, there was a strange room. It was partitioned with simple wooden boards and looked to be haphazard in its erection.

It was spacious, with a shelf full of books flushed against the wall, filled with textbooks about Silhouette Knights, craftsmen and literature related to Silhouette Knights. In the centre was a giant worktable. It was used to draw designs or make adjustments to components, with plenty of smudges and cuts on it.

Outside the room was the sign ‘Knight Commander Office (Temp)’.

Normally, the leader of a Knight Order won’t be assigned to such a makeshift office. It might sound strange, but the sequence of event happened the other way around. It was the Knight Commander who hogged a corner of the workshop to himself, and brought loads of documents in, making a ‘nest’ for himself. In the end, everyone decided to make a room for him.

The Knight Commander Office (Temp) which had such a retarded history was occupied with its owner, Eru, who was hard at work as usual. What was different was the fact that there was another person inside with him.

“... That concludes the report this time. Also, I happened to heard something. In the west, the countries there seemed rather tense, one of the countries is probably going to start something big.”

Slender and tall with a balanced figure. She was a member of the Blue

Hawk Knights— Nora. She read the periodic report loudly with a calm attitude. The Knight Commander leaned against the worktable and listened quietly. When he heard the last part, he narrowed his eyes.

“Is this related to the thieves? I am confused, why didn’t they make any other move after that?”

“My apologies, these are just unconfirmed rumours. I thought that I should inform you.”

“I understand. Eh, no matter what, it means I still have time, right? As for that rumour, if the tension gets higher, please report to me.”

“By your command. Well then, allow me to take my leave.”

Nora bowed, turned and left the room. Eru watch her leave, and stared into space thinking about something. But he returned to his work shortly after.

Ady came before the Knight Commander Office (Temp), but didn’t go in straight away. She stopped to take deep breaths and tidied her hair and attire. She let her hair grow out some years ago, and it was already covering her back. Her hair was wavy by nature, and tangled on her way here. She tried straightening her hair in frustration, but gave up after understanding it won’t help. Pulling herself together, she pumped herself her and was about to enter the office.

And she met Nora who was exiting the office face to face. Meeting an unexpected person in an unexpected place made Ady stiffened after taking a step forward. Nora studied her without expression for a moment and leaned close as if to hug her, whispering into her ears:

“It’s fine, don’t worry, I won’t make a move on Sir Ernesti.”

[INSERT IMAGE]

After leaving this soft whisper with Ady, who stood frozen in place, Nora walked away coolly. Ady finally came to her senses after a long while, and entered the Commander Office (Temp) with a smile as brilliant as the sun.

After entering, the first thing she saw was a two and a half metre giant armour painted blue. That was Eru's personal Silhouette Gear, Motor Beat.

The funny thing was that the bulky motor beat was cramping itself on the work desk, performing precision movements. The machine had five fingers, but the ability of the bulky body to make such accurate movements showed its powerful potential.

As for Eru who was operating it, he wasn't inside Motor Beat, but seated on a chair focusing on the fingertips of the machine. He held the end of silver nerves on his hands, which was connected to Motor Beat. Sending commands through the silver nerves, Eru was operating Motor Beat from the outside.

The reason he was performing such an interesting technique was because of the object Motor Beat was working on.

Mithril. In order to shape this special metal, it was necessary to work using magic just like the Elves. And of course, no matter how talented Eru was, he was just a human and couldn't use the technique of the Elves. This however, referred to him not using tools.

The hands on the Silhouette Gear were made from crystal tissue, which was a type of catalyst crystal capable of performing magic. In other words, Eru was able to emulate the Elves by using Silhouette Gears. That was the reason why Eru was staring at the giant armour while working on the metal, requiring great precision.

Ady was already used to such a bizarre scene. She pounced on Eru and hugged him without hesitation.

"Fufufu, Eru! You are working hard today, too! Aunt Tina wants you to come home every now and then!"

"Offft... Ady, I can't see if you hug me from the front. I see, mum, she... It's almost done; I will go back after that."

Ady pulled a chair to sit beside him, while Eru continued working as if nothing happened.

He had a serious expression. Even for Eru, dealing with 'Life Song' while

working on the Mithril with Silhouette Gear wasn't easy. He had to maintain a processing speed close to his limit, concentrating intensely and intentionally slowing down in order to handle the load. This meant he couldn't work too long on it, and could only progress little by little every day. This job might be frustrating and dull, but Eru enjoyed anything that was related to robots.

“This is an Ether Reactor, right?”

Ady looked at the metal being shaped by the Silhouette Gear in amazement. The fact that Eru was fabricating an Ether Reactor by himself was a secret within the Silver Phoenix Knights. The only ones who know are the twins, squad leaders and the Boss. As for the other members, they only thought that the Commander was doing something weird again, although they were not wrong about that.

“Yes, this is mine, made by my own hands, a machine core that belongs to me.”

Eru did not stop his hands as he muttered dreamily. Using a battalion level demon beast heart to make an Ether Reactor— with this, it was possible to achieve Eru's dream. Designs for the frame had already been drafted; the Boss and the others were already working on it. Right now, they should be working in the workshop, too.

“Hmm— Eru who is enjoying himself is so cute~”

As for Ady, she was hugging Eru as usual; she almost couldn't stop herself from rubbing her cheeks against his. Eru won't move during his work, and allowed Ady to do as she pleased. Since the day he started working on the Ether Reactor, this scene had become a routine. After enjoying the touch of Eru, she suddenly had a great idea.

“That's right, Nah Eru, after you finish this, let's go fight a battle. I will bring Tzen-chan and the chariot out!”

“Good idea. I will need to give it a test right after completing it, I will ask His Majesty for the location of the nest of troublesome demon beasts.”

What an earth shattering invitation to a date. It was hard to imagine

that this was the conversation between a young boy and girl, just that the subject themselves were getting excited with the idea and no one was around to retort. By the way, Chid was busy repairing Tzendorg right now.

The only one to who heard this dialogue was Motor Beat, but it just kept working on the Reactor in silence.

Another year has passed; it is now the C.E. 281.

Half a year had passed since shell beasts attacked the hidden 'home' of the Elves. Also, since this incident was highly classified, it doesn't have an official name attached to it like the other incidents. Only the few related personnel referred to it quietly as the shell beast catastrophe.

It was spring in the Fremmevira Kingdom. Lush vegetation grew in the wild and the branches of the trees flourished energetically.

During such a comfortable season, Olvecius Fort was covered in intense heat. Angry roars of instruction arose now and then as the craftsmen busied themselves even more than usual. Something was about to happen.

The heat came from a Silhouette Knight situated in the depths of the workshop.

Covered everywhere by canvas, it was impossible to see the machine. But from the swell of the canvas, it was clear that its shape was rather unique. It was given a lot of room to avoid being hit; even the repair platform had been modified for it. The effort that had been put into this machine was obvious.

“Alright, lower it slowly, slowly, adjust the aim! Great, begin installation!”

The booming voice of the boss could almost shatter the glass in the workshop. A component that was lifted by the chains of a crane was being lowered slowly onto the machine. The back of the machine had a huge swell, making it look queer. When the component was placed inside the opening in the back, the craftsmen near the machine's shoulders rushed in to begin their work, connecting metal pipes from it to the machine.

“Are the air intake valves done!? Good, start basic engine rev! Hey,

connect that Silver nerve, hurry up! Mana output is about to go live!!”

The machine component had the shape of a giant egg— that was the Ether Reactor Eru worked so hard on. It rose up high on the back of the machine; its size was larger than normal Reactors.

Just like Toybox, this machine had multiple Ether Reactors, one in its abdomen, the other on its back. After reviewing causes of past failures, the machine was built from scratch with the installation of two Ether Reactors in mind. It had a weird appearance, but was successful in overcoming the conflicts in structural designs they faced previously.

Shortly after, the sharp noise of the air intake valve screeched in the workshop, far louder than normal Silhouette Knights. That was how amazing a machine installed with an extra large Ether Reactor was— it raised the power output, alongside the screams of the air intake, it became a deafening chorus. All the craftsmen covered their ears in pain.

Suddenly, the noise that was pressuring their eardrums stopped, and was replaced by the clear soothing sound from the machine’s loudhailer:

“Beginning confirmation of the mana supply from main reactor ‘Heart of the King’. Lowering output to minimum, entering dormant state. Switching main Reactor to ‘Crown of the Queen’. Standing up with normal power output.”

That voice belonged to Eru; he was seated inside the cockpit of the machine.

Two Ether Reactors were installed, one large Reactor made from the heart belonging to the battalion level demon beast behemoth, the other midsized reactor made from the heart of the company level demon beast shell beast queen. Both were made with all the care and effort by Eru, a one of a kind masterpiece in this world.

After receiving the overwhelming mana supply from the Reactor made from the heart of demon beast, the machine awakened. The crystal tissues all over its body started contracting, making music like a wind instrument orchestra.

The first to move was the arms, the four that was connected to the back of the machine where the large Reactor was. Aside from the normal set of limbs, this machine had four additional arms, a monstrosity with a total of six arms. Releasing the chains that were supporting the machine, the astonishingly long arms extended out. Looking carefully, it had five slim fingers as sharp as blades.

Next, the canvas covering the machine slipped off, revealing its true form.

Not only were the arms different, the appearance of the machine itself was also extraordinary. Installing multiple layers of heavy armour was common on other machines, but there was many more on this machine. On top it, there were many designs and components that were never seen before, accentuating its uniqueness.

All the members of the Silver Phoenix Knights stared with bated breath, watching the machine standing up. Among them was Ady who was studying the entire body along with the rest, she suddenly focused on one particular spot. On the head of this strange Silhouette Knight was—

“The face of a man?”

The machine mimicked the face of a human, wearing a mask with growling teeth and intimidating expression.

Normally, the head of the Silhouette Knight was an accessory used to gain vision; a component used to place and protect the eye crystal. Hence, defence was its priority, so it was covered in face armour. Even if there were aesthetic designs, it would only be done to the face armour. The machine was wearing a human mask that didn't appeared to have the function of armour, and had a helmet on top. The uncanny human face left a frightening impression on Ady.

Eru smiled in the cockpit, or rather, he was laughing, laughing nonstop. His laughter was unending, there wasn't anything funny; he simply felt overwhelming joy. He had been seeking this for sixteen years, a machine made by him, belonging only to him was right here.

Luckily, he turned off the loudhailer in time, or else his laughter would

have been heard outside. He had been like this since just now, rubbing his cheek and using his hands to touch the places around the cockpit, or staring at the holo monitor happily.

The machine might look strange from the outside, but it was even more bizarre on the inside. Eru's pilot seat was in the middle, with control stick on both sides. Besides the stick was a mysterious device with orderly buttons on it, like a piano. Of course, Eru had no intention of playing music in the Silhouette Knight. This device was known as a keyboard, an input device that enters commands into computers, just like its counterpart from earth.

Apart from the four additional arms, a bunch of special devices were fixed all over the machine. To control them, normal control accessories weren't enough, so Eru implemented something he was familiar with from his past life. Not just that, there were multiple mini Magius Engine inside the cockpit, serving as support to collate the huge amount of equipments. With the keyboard and the pilot's direct control, Eru could finally move this machine that was a coalition of many strange equipments, becoming a flawed machine that couldn't be controlled by anyone but Eru.

“Happy birthday, my robot, my partner, my—”

The queer appearance of the machine wasn't without reason. It exists just for Eru anyway. Be it its function or appearance, it was a reflection of his passion.

That was why Eru carved his 'origin' into this machine. In other words, the spirit that came from another world, the dreams it couldn't fulfilled was accomplished in such a manner, there was no other answer than this.

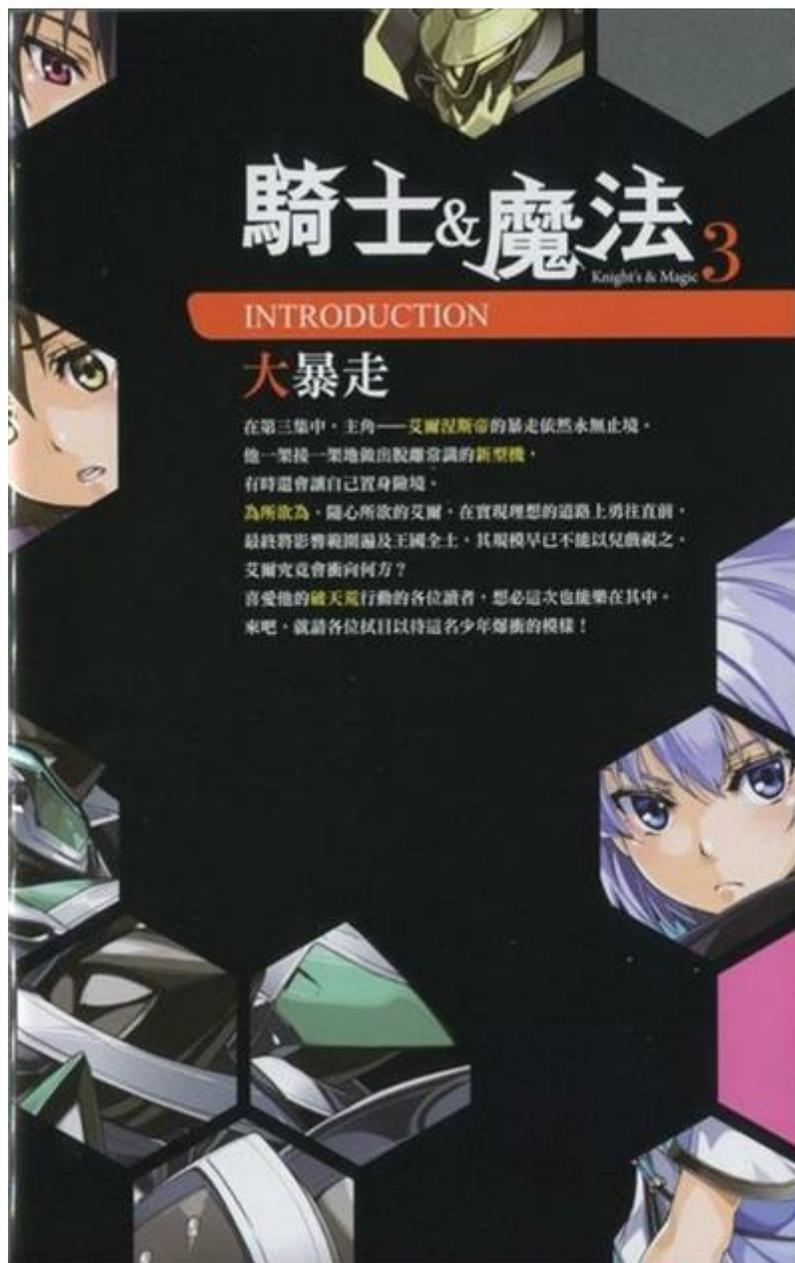
This machine was known as a Silhouette Knight in this world. However, from how it looks, it should definitely be called an 'armoured samurai'.

“— Ikaruga!”

With a face of an Oni and six arms, the fierce god had descended onto this world.

Surpassing logic and consequences, the representation of power and

carnage was shown this very moment.



Credits

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