

# スピリット・マイグレーション

Spirit Migration

2

へろー天気  
Hero Tenki



鋼の巨人が  
異世界魔宮ダンジョンで大暴れ!

憑依系青年コウ、  
次の身体は  
ハイスペッククロボ?

累計4万部突破! アルファポリス

憑依系主人公の異世界大冒険第2弾!

# **SPIRIT MIGRATION**

**- Arcs 3-5 -**

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# 【 ARC 3 】

# CHAPTER 14

## WITH GOOD COMPANY THE JOURNEY SEEMS SHORTER

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On the mountain road along the cliffs full with boulders, there is a slightly bigger spot on the road with Gaviik's party. They were taking a break while taking care of the injured and performing repairs on the carriage. Most of the injured were the escorts and the servants of the merchant nobles.

"Captain, there isn't enough medicine for the injured."

"I have healed those with the worst injuries, but my magic power is hitting rock bottom."

"What about the reserve medicine?"

"All the reserves have been depleted... according to Franch there aren't any herbs that can be used to make medicine in this area, we can only resupply when we reach a city..."

Gaviik sighed as he was scratching his head while hearing the report from his subordinates about how the situation is worse than he had expected. If they passed this mountain then it would only be half a day of traveling before they reach the next town, but taking in the facts that the servants' carriage had been destroyed, it means they would have to walk. Moreover, thinking about the injured, it would at least take a whole day before they got there.

Even so, compared to a normal road it's still faster. But the problem is that they could be attacked by a group of animals or bandits on the way.

"We can't really protect anything in this condition."

"If we handle this poorly there could be more injured or even deaths."

Gaviik nods solemnly to the vice-captain's words. At that moment, Dis, one of the magicians who was on lookout duty up on the carriage, gives his report with a puzzled

look.

“Umm, captain... that.”

“Hm?”

“What is it?”

When he looked towards the mountain road where Dis was pointing, bulging a little from behind a boulder, something possessing white body hair with a black horn on its wolf-like head could be seen. It was sending fleeting glances their way while glimpsing from behind the boulder.

Thinking it was another attack from mutated wolves he began to sense his surroundings in a hurry, but there didn't seem to be any presences like that around. Captain Gaviik gathered his subordinates of who he knew could kill the Hornbear.

“Rippa, get over here! Mandel assist Rippa, Karen back both of them up.”

“Oooh? What is what is it, is it an enemy?”

“Behind that boulder over there, those damn dogs may be hiding in the surrounding so be careful.”

“Ah, it's the Bear-chan that brawled a little while ago.”

The pale looking swordsman Rippa began rush over while drawing his sword, Mandel gave out precise advise about the target. Karen was going in her own pace like always. When the three of them get closer for the kill, the monster Hornbear ran away.

‘Did he come for reconnaissance or something’, is what they thought while tilting their heads, but when they looked behind the boulder he was hiding they found a mountain of medicine lined up.

“The heck is this?”

“Oh, there's a lot of medicine.”

“Don’t touch it Karen, Rippa be aware of the surroundings. Captain! Please send Franch over.”

The result of the Healer’s appraisal, they found out that out was just some normal medicine. Including magic water and medicine, there are about fifty of them. When they looked at it again, they saw a monster glancing their way while peeking from behind another boulder. Though it was suspicious beyond doubt, they couldn’t mistake that figure.

“..... I don’t get what’s happening but let’s pick it up.”

Thanks to the medicine that the monster seemingly left behind they could heal the rest of the injured and they could also recover the magicians’ magic power with the magic water, so they began to make preparations to leave. For now they made a simple cart from the spare carriage and materials. When they were finished they connected it to the carriage and loaded the luggage on it.

The nobles’ carriage, where the protecting target was in and Gaviik’s armored carriage, and together with the cart they were able to get everyone on it. They start moving out at a speed that was at least faster than walking. When they looked back they could see the Hornbear from just now following them from a set distance.

“What do we do about that?”

“For now just keep your guard up.”

Leaving behind the rocky area, the side of the road began to change to greenery when they had finally finished traversing the mountain road and reached the highway. At the entrance of the mountain road the party decided to take a break.

While they were making preparations to cook, they heard rustling sounds in the direction of the mountain road. The Hornbear from a while ago was jumping in and out of the trees and bushes. A bird that was perched on a nearby tree chirped and flew away scared.

“What’s there?”

“A flowing river if I’m not wrong. Since we need to cross over to the highway we need to go over the bridge.”

The skillful vice-captain Mandel showed his knowledge of topography. Gaviik, who doesn't understand what the Hornbear is trying to do, told everyone that they should keep their guard up, then he returned to checking how the carriages were doing.

Meanwhile, the Hornbear Kou who was nearby the resting place for the carriages was looking for food for the Hornbear while going through the bushes and trees.

Having obtained what is edible and what isn't from the Hornbear's mind, he looked for the 'meat' it preferred. After searching for a while, he found a flowing river. He got that this Hornbear's favorite food is fish.

[Can I get some fish?]

Just what should he do while he didn't possess any tools to get some fish. Kou tried to search through his memories about the techniques he learned from Elmel and the others about how to obtain food, but he only knew methods where he needed to possess some kind of tool. It's hard to find a tool that could be used by the rugged paws of a Hornbear.

[Hmm? This method... is it knowledge from another world?]

Since he had a memory with an unclear origin about 'the technique of bird catching fish' he decided to try it out. Walking along the river for awhile he looked around for a bulging boulder. When he found a boulder where fish seemed to gather, he pulled out a sturdy-looking hammer from his dimensional pocket.

[One two~tsu.]

Easily wielding a two-handed steel hammer with one paw he hit the boulder with the Hornbear's brute strength. With a resounding loud bang sound, cracks began to run through the boulder. In a moment the fish that were stunned by the shockwave flew up out of the water. Like that he safely secured his food by grabbing all of the fish.

"Yeah, should I just eat it raw?"

Answering to the Hornbear's will about how it quickly wants to eat, Kou loosened a little of his control and began to eat. I don't know if other monsters are the same, but it seems this one feels fear in regard with the desire to eat. The Hornbear was eating

in a daze while Kou felt it was giving an atrophied feeling.

After that, the Hornbear went to other places and used to same method to catch fish and filled its stomach, since it was satisfied with its feeling of fullness his conscious went back to being dormant.

[So it's a monster that just eats and sleeps...]

Not knowing if he could store the fish he tried, but it didn't seem to work. It seems like he can't put anything with a soul in his dimensional pocket.

Perishing and then having its soul depart, the fish that had died could now be put into the dimensional pocket. Since he didn't know if it would spoil, he would check it out from time to time, since Kou finished his resupplying he went back to see how the others were doing.

After going the way he came he made it to the entrance of the mountain road, it was just in time since the others were preparing to leave.

“Captain.”

“Yeah, he noticed. I wonder how long he plans to follow us.”

Captain Gaviik just shrugged when he saw the face of the Hornbear that was glancing at them from behind a boulder and decided that they should just move out for now. At that moment the young magician Dis came over with a troubled expression.

“Umm captain..... I can't seem to see Karen anywhere though.”

“Hm? Karen should have gone up on the carriage.”

When looking at Gaviik and the others carriage, on the guardrails Karen's quiver and bow could be seen, but not their owner.

Karen is a genius female archer, a young seventeen year old woman with a cat-like loveliness with a charming appearance and a glamorous body, but she was a troublesome girl who got compensated by being an idiot on the inside.

“Where the heck is she prowling around this time?”

At that time, while they were looking around, something had climbed up on a tree or something.

“Ei, I got yo~u!”

“Guee?” [Eh?]

“H- Hey Karen!”

“Dis, call Triton and the others!”

Karen could be seen hanging from the Hornbear’s neck, which was hiding behind a boulder. The Hornbear Kou stood up because he got surprised when he didn’t sense her coming close at all. Naturally, Gaviik drew his weapon in a hurry and rushed out. Mandel ordered Dis to call the healers and went after captain Gaviik.

“Karen! get away.”

“It’s m’kay captain~. This one’s tame y’know?”

Karen, who totally ignored captain Gaviik’s tension when he tried to intimidate the Hornbear with his beloved sword the magic sword ‘Kazekiri’, she told him that while nonchalantly hanging on the Hornbear’s neck which was at least twice her size. Gaviik’s head began to hurt from this, but he decided to consider Karen’s words.

Though it isn’t because she comes from the land of spiritualists and technique users Eioa, but unlike how she acts she has a very sharp sense when it comes to sensing someone’s true nature. It’s as if she could discern whether she could trust someone or not on instinct.

No matter what kind of deal you’d want to make with her, as long as you aren’t someone she trusts (doesn’t like) then it would never be possible and if you showed an opening you would just fall into a trap. In fact, at times when there are disputes between nations, Karen’s ‘instinct to see who she can trust’ has saved them many times.

To Karen, who began to climb on the Hornbear with her hands and feet, the Hornbear looked as if he was making sure she didn’t fall and supported her with his paw. Gaviik

who saw this began to seriously think 'Karen's discerning eyes can even work on monster?'

"Captain! what's happening?"

"Oh? The heck's that girl Karen doin now?"

"It's as you can see, it took a liking to Karen. Ref, I want to hear your opinion about this."

"... I'll go investigate it."

While directing his magic sword to the ground he began to ask the opinion of the gathered members. Just like Karen she's someone from Eioa, she has been entrusted with being the staff officer the attack specialist Refitia, and she was now preparing to use analysis type magic while stroking the top of her wand.

The wand she has is a special wand called the 'Hand of the flow' which lets her control the flow of magic power; it's a high class wand that helps with controlling all kinds of magic. Even though she specializes in attack type magic she is also able to use the basics of technique type magic and healing type magic. Though the quality may drop since she doesn't specialize in it, but Ref's analysis was able to find out that there is another existence within the Hornbear.

"... That Hornbear is strange; the body's conscious isn't on the surface."

"What does that mean?"

"... Another existence that possesses a strong force has dominated and controls its body."

"Another existence? Isn't it under the some kind of spell that makes it obedient or charms it?"

To captain Gaviik's question staff officer Ref relates the Hornbear's state to the existence that was in Barass' dungeon 'possession by an intelligent existence other than the collective conscious' which was made her think about the state of this Hornbear.

“Barass’s intelligent existence you say?”

“Possessing a monster.....”

Vice-captain Mandel and captain Gaviik involuntarily faced each other. They thought about a bitter memory which left them in red. The fake monster that was used to call customers to the town which they killed, the demon dog and the ‘intelligent existence’ which controlled it which was still a hard to believe story to them.

“Hm? I dun really get it, but it’s alright to think of it as an ally?”

“What! That’s a monster among monsters you know.”

“Well, it might be a monster, but it is liked by Karen and the staff officer says it’s intelligent so it must be, right?”

When Triton said that he couldn’t believe that a monster would ally itself with humans, Rippa who didn’t think about the hard stuff made a decision based on the facts. While they were doing things like that, Karen had climbed up the Hornbear Kou’s shoulder and began to wave at them, then she said something unbelievable.

“Hey hey, let’s take this one along, I’m gonna ride on him.”

“... It can be a ward against animals.”

“Yeah.”

What they gained from all this was that since this Hornbear was being obedient, letting Karen ride his shoulder which showed that it was likely that Ref’s hypothesis about how it was controlled by the ‘intelligent existence’ was correct, also, since it’s a powerful monster, small fry monsters wouldn’t come close which is a merit.

“There may be some that oppose this, but certainly at the moment the merits are good.”

When they arrive at the next town it would probably be past evening and be midnight. Even if it’s the highway, it’s dangerous to receive attacks from a herd of animals or a group of bandits. It’s good enough if the Hornbear just scared off the small animals in the surroundings.

“Are we going to take it along?”

“Ah, yeah, because it looks troublesome to take Karen off it and there’s also Ref’s analysis. Also, it’d be bad if we didn’t start moving out soon.”

The one who hired them and who they need to protect, lord Kizewashi asked what they were doing while talking in front of a monster.

Anyway, from what they’ve seen on the mountain road it’s highly likely that it would just follow them even if they left it behind. Then it would be better for them to keep it where they could see it so they could subdue it easier if they need to.

“But do you think that story about the demon dog that allied itself with the adventurers of Barass was actually real?”

“Who knows?”

If a fake monster was used as an attraction to get customers like that really exists, then it would’ve been better to tell this to a perverted scientist in the capital, Gaviik muttered this while thinking about the magic tool seller he usually frequented.

“Rippa and Daido sit in the front carriage. Dis, give Karen her bow and quiver. Ref, go up on the carriage. We’re moving out.”

Snappily giving out orders, captain Gaviik’s commands resound. In order to let Karen receive her bow, the Hornbear Kou that was sitting stood up. When he did, he was able to easily reach the roof of the carriage with his physique, seeing that, Dis shrieked and moved back.

“Kuma-chan, hello~.”

“Guuuu~uuu.” [hello.]

In no time he got dragged in their group and let a girl called Karen ride on his shoulder, the Hornbear Kou followed behind the rough-looking carriage in a really happy mood. At the time when he went to the training camp’s camping grounds with Elmel and the others, or the time when he was carried to the town while he was a snake, even when he was traveling with Alice and the others for two days he felt that something was

missing.

Looking at the adventurers' journeys, until now it was just being carried around in a vehicle, but this time he was firmly traveling about the planet's soil, though it may be borrowed, he could walk around and travel with his own feet.

[I'm sort of getting excited.]

The nobles' carriage and the cart attached to it, the armored carriage and adding up the Hornbear in the rear the group began to move out on the highway of the forest.

# CHAPTER 15

## AWKWARDNESS AND GRILLED FISH

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While the group had squeezed in two breaks while traversing the highway in the forest, they were able to reach the town almost on schedule around evening. The escort mission of Gaviik's party ends here.

"Ah, it's finally over. Let's drink some liquor!"

"The self-made alcohol in this kind of small town is usually good right."

Together with the rest of the party members they went into a tavern where they could get food. Within the bustling tavern a girl was busily running around taking orders, from time to time she would slap away the hands of some drunks that would go for her ass.

While his subordinates were relaxing, Gaviik, Mandel and Ref were busy splitting up their profit from this job, while they were working out fine details such as finding the next job procuring equipment and other such things. Since their pay got reduced for reimbursing the destroyed carriage, they were only left with a small amount.

Since they had used up all their medicine, their pay would be even less since they'd need to resupply on medicine. If they didn't have the medicine the Hornbear left behind then they would've been deep in red. Just where did that mountain of potions come from? That was the question they had—

"Captain! Vice-captain and strategist you're too stuffy, smile some more~!"

"This smell of wild plants, it's delicious! It seems like the spice of Nachtome has been used."

"Oh well..."

"Well, I guess it is fine to go along with them from time to time."

— Together with his subordinates in the tavern, they forgot all about the hardships on this mission.

While Gaviik's party was relaxing in the tavern, Kou was fishing in the lake close to the village while hiding in the forest.

It's impossible to make intricate things with the Hornbear's paws, but something simple like attaching a line and a hook to a pole he can, he's also able to easily get the items from his dimensional storage and put them together.

It shouldn't be that hard to catch something while fishing as a Hornbear.

[— Or so I thought, I guess it really is impossible in the end. It seems like the fish are scared and won't come close.]

He was able to use the fishing technique like he thought, but if the most important thing is missing, the fish coming closer, then there is nothing that can be done. He might be able to use it if he were to make a pose as if he were thinking about life. While he was thinking about jokes like that, he felt a human presence coming closer to him from the town.

[Someone is coming...?]

Putting away the fishing rod, Kou, who had hidden himself within the lush plants and trees, looked toward the small road that branches off from the highway.

“Kuma-chan, I wonder just where you are~.”

Karen was walking around the small road connected to the lake with meat shish in both her hands. It seems like she wanted to let the Hornbear eat some of the food too, so she came to give him some. While Karen was doing that, three thugs had followed her from town staying near her.

“Yo, beautiful.”

“Walkin' around on yer own in the woods middle in the night, you got a death wish?”

“Hm?”

If they knew that Karen was part of Gaviik's party, then they wouldn't even think of laying a hand on her. Why this happened; the three of them were deciding whether they should go to the tavern or play at the brothel, then they saw her walking around waving meat shish in both her hands and decided to target her.

Having a cheeky cat-like beautiful face, maybe she has had some alcohol since her face seemed glossy, she's filled up in all the right places and because she tried to hide that, the places seemed more tightened, which aroused them further.

When Karen tried to turn around, one of the three men threw his arms around her.

"Hi~yaaaaa"

"OOH! She got a nice body on her."

The man, who had grabbed Karen whose hands were occupied, went on and put his hand under her clothes, he groped her breasts which are plump and soft as he expected.

"Iya~aan, I'm not someone that does that kind of work you know? It's bad to do something like that!"

— And when she had said something airheaded their desire got further stimulated, making them even more raring to go. The moment when the three men tried to take Karen into one of the bushes, a giant shadow appeared from amongst the trees. A slightly dull white body appeared with a wolf's head and a black horn.

"Ah, Kuma-chan."

"Hi~i!"

"Ha, it's a Hornbear!"

"It's a monster! A monster appeared!"

To the appearance of a large monster that isn't supposed to appear near a town like this, the three thugs immediately ran for their lives without a second thought.

Sitting on a random boulder around the banks of the lake, the Hornbear Kou was

gnawing on the meat shish he got from Karen. He felt the Hornbear's conscious beginning to surface, but since he's alone with Karen there is no way he can let go of his control.

Kou can only feel hunger from the host's will; though he might not be able to faintly taste things, he knows that the act of 'eating' is needed to sustain life.

"Kuma-chan, just this much isn't enough right?"

"Gro~oowl."

The meat shishes Karen brought with her were the size of three adult male fists, one shish is enough to fill the stomach of an average adult male, but with the Hornbear's body it was only a snack so it wasn't nearly enough.

"Then, I'll go catch some fishes."

While humming Karen took out her assembly type portable bow and put it together, then she skillfully aimed her arrow toward the lake. 'Can you catch fish with a bow?' Is what Kou, who was watching over her thought. Then he confirmed that she was putting magic power into the arrow.

It's an archery technique that skilled archers use. The arrow Karen fired went through the water ignoring its resistance and leaving behind a small ripple and splash, she accurately hit a giant freshwater fish at the bottom of the lake. A few moments later, the layer of magic power the arrow left behind on its path burst and the water erupted.

This archery technique forms a layer of magic power around the arrow which nullifies physical resistance the arrow would get, it possesses the effect of being less effected by rain or wind. Just like Karen did, even if you fired it into the water it wouldn't be affected by the water's resistance for a while. Of course, being this proficient in it isn't something just anybody could do.

[So Karen was this good...]

"Kuma-chan, lend me a paw."

Karen who had tried to pull up the big fish with her string attached arrow, asked for help since the prey was too big. The big fish Karen caught was about 133 Pale long. In

units Kou knows it would be a giant fish of about two meters long.

Even with the Hornbear's brute strength it would be hard to lift the fish if he didn't put his waist into it and while he was picking the fish up, Karen had finished up the preparations for the fire by gathering twigs and leaves.

"Will it grill~ will it grill~, will the fish get grilled well~."

[Vu~arfu~arufu~a.]

Karen was singing while evenly spreading the fire with a stick. While Karen was singing happily, Kou was able to somehow sing along. When he did, Karen began to laugh happily. A while later, the smell of grilled fish was spreading around.

[Something like this is heartwarming and nice isn't it?]

Meanwhile, at the tavern in the city.

"I'm serious, without a mistake there was a Hornbear!"

"A big one like that, you can't meet one if you don't go deep into the mountains y'know."

Three drunken adventurers or mercenaries came into the tavern and made a fuss about how there's a Hornbear in the forest close by. In one corner of the bar members of Gaviik's party heard them talking about it, every one of them immediately thought about the Hornbear that followed them from the rocky mountain and was liked by Karen.

Just like Gaviik's party they were in a group of other adventurers or mercenaries, while Gaviik's group sent them a skeptical look they started to talk.

"Now that I think about it, Karen went to the forest didn't she."

"It seems like she went over to bring the Hornbear some food... could she have been seen?"

Gaviik and Mandel were whispering with each other. Would it not be wise to send someone over to look after her, when the worried Triton suggested it, the voices of the three idiots which were still going on could be heard.

“Oh yeah, I get the feeling I didn’t see that girly when we ran away.”

“Didn’t she just get eaten?”

“Yeah, since it was a monster and all, well, it was an unforgettable feeling.”

Such a waste, really a waste, the three idiots lamented while laughing.

Bang, the chair fell to the ground and the seemingly taciturn warrior Daido leaves his seat while putting on his battle gloves and walked in a quick pace toward the tavern’s exit. Rippa who was drinking next to him said toward him.

“Hey hey, Daido where are you going?”

“Forest.”

“Hey wait a second!”

“I refuse.”

Even within the party he is more concerned than anybody else. —— Simply put, he loves her, but it seems like no matter how much time passes he just can’t bring himself to say it.

Hey, hey, while saying that, Rippa donned his beloved sword and followed after him. Dis, who was next to them looked at their back and then toward captain Gaviik and the others, then strategist Ref who was next to vice-captain Mandel stood up.

As if by an invisible something all the core members of Gaviik’s party stood up from their seat and went toward the tavern’s exit.

“Oh it seems like specialists are going to take care of it.”

Now we can feel at ease, the three idiots spouted such bullshit while seeing them off. The other mercenary and adventurer groups weren’t seeing them off but rather thinking whether a Hornbear really did appear, but none of them left their seat. They decided it would be better to wait for the Gaviik party’s return.

While such a commotion was happening at the bar, on the side of the lake a human and animal were leisurely spending their time while eating.

“Hmm, can’t eat another bite.”

“Vu~orfu-aru” [Seems like this one’s also satisfied.]

The giant fish was able to satisfy Karen and it also seemed to be enough for the Hornbear’s stomach. While watching the nocturnal birds eating the leftover flesh on the fish’s bones, Karen rounded herself up on Kou’s knee.

“Kuma- cha~n.....”

“Vu~arfu? Vu~orfu~oarfu~aru?” [Karen? You’ll catch a cold if you sleep here you know?]

The Hornbear’s fur is harder than you’d expect, but it seems like soft body hair was comfortable, since he could hear Karen sleeping after a short while.

[Oh my, seems she fell asleep.]

Of course there is no way he would just wait until the sun rises like this. Just what should I do now, while worrying about it Kou carefully lifted up Karen making sure he didn’t injure her, and then he walked towards the town while hoping that someone that from Gaviik’s party comes looking for her.

“Hey Daido wait a second already, if you go around with killing intent like that then even docile monsters would —”

Rippa, who normally doesn’t think about things too deeply and just does them simply, was now trying to calm the worried Daido but while he was soothing him, Daido suddenly stopped walking. Rippa then ended up colliding with his back from the leftover momentum.

“What the heck, don’t stop all of a sudden.”

“This smell.”

From the entrance to the forest they could smell grilled fish. Gaviik who went after the

two of them called out to them.

“Isn’t Karen just grilling some fish?”

“Captain.”

If I’m not mistaken a Hornbear also eats fish, the moment when the members had found this out and wanted to step deeper into the forest, a white figure appeared from within the forest and almost instinctively the members of Gaviik’s party had their guard up.

That figure was the Hornbear carrying Karen. He thought he had eaten Karen and got surprised for a moment but then he saw that she was just sleeping and became relieved. When the Hornbear holds out Karen with his long thick arms toward him, Daido carefully received her.

“Hey Daido you sure you won’t drop her?”

“... I won’t.”

[This person seems to be really on the edge, is he alright?]

The Hornbear slightly tilted his which causes his body to stiffen, though from the eyes of the others it looked as if he was concerned about Karen and Daido. Leaving behind potions, getting liked by humans, this Hornbear is totally different from the large monster they know off.

After Gaviik’s left out a sigh he looked at the Hornbear, when he did he unintentionally muttered a question that came to his mind.

“You, seriously just who are you?”

When he muttered it the Hornbear looked at Gaviik. Captain Gaviik then gave him a puzzled look. Vice-captain Mandel who was right next to him and strategist Ref both took a step back. Kou thought for a little, and then the spiritualist’s amulet the gem appeared on the Hornbear’s forehead.

“Wha! Y, You’re.....”

Amazing everyone, with a flutter a memo paper appeared on the Hornbear's chest with a self introduction written on it.

"Kou...? So, you're called Kou? The one that possessed that Demon dog."

"Gu~au" [That's right.]

Answering their question with a yes, the Hornbear Kou gave them Karen's portable bow and then returned toward the lake. Since it's the entrance of the forest road it stands out.

Turning around once, Kou waved his hand saying, see you again, and then his figure disappeared into the forest. Seeing off the figure of the Hornbear Kou amongst the trees, with an awkward feeling, Gaviik and the others return to town for now.

"No way, to think it would be the Demon dog from that time..."

"It's so sudden I can't believe it, or so I would like to say... but this paper, furthermore..."

"..... There's no mistake that that green stone was the spiritualist's amulet. It's probably the same one that we saw in Barass."

Lev, who had been in charge of the freezing trap, can say for certain that the wavelength she felt was the same from one from that time. Gaviik grandly sighed after he remembered how a female swordsman looked at him with eyes of condemnation at that time.

"Ha~aaaaaaaaaaa, how did it get to this."

"If that existence, 'Kou' is an existence as the rumors in the town said he is, then we might have earned ourselves some awkward infamy."

It would be better to lengthen their stay in the town of Barass the next time they stay there, strategist Ref also advised him that it would be better to have some good connections with the village chief and the adventurers association. Until they had reached the inn they stayed at before, the top members of Gaviik's party were all silent with a weird air around them.

"What could've happened to captain and the others? Did something happen to Karen-

san?”

“He was kind of making an awkward and difficult face wasn’t he?”

“Yeah...”

Dis and the others are young members or apprentices, the ones that took care of everything, the underlings. While sitting with each other in the corner of the tavern they were looking at each other with puzzled looks.

## CHAPTER 16

# THE REQUEST TO SUBJUGATE A GANG OF BANDITS

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Every branch of the adventurers' association is different in scale and has different features. The main point is that it exists in every town as a network of the town.

Because the escort job didn't pay that much in the end, Gaviik's party was looking for some random jobs they could do before moving on to the next town. The merchant noble that they escorted to this town had introduced them to a big job.

"Getting rid of a gang of bandits you say..."

"Yeah, well, it might not be what you guys specialize in, but it's not as if you're doing it alone."

A request to subjugate the bandit gang that has been going around settlements. Lately, bandits and such who have been chased out of places have finally started to form a gang. It has been discovered that their hideout is in the ruins of a shrine near this town. From the adventurers' association's information, they're a gang of nearly fifty bandits.

Those that will participate in this operation are the city guards as the center, hired mercenary groups and adventurer groups, though there are a number of solo mercenaries. Anyway, they're just a nameless bunch, that's why he eagerly welcomed Gaviik's party's participation since they possess the medal of 'War axe and Serpent'.

The same day, the members of Gaviik's party had gathered in a room from the inn they visited last night. They were talking about the job's details and their plan of action. Because fighting against other people is more dangerous than fighting monsters, it'll be necessary to assist the younger members who aren't used to it.

Especially this time, they can't take along the apprentices, since the gang of bandits they have to fight this time is reasonably large.

"It has been decided that we'll use the city guard's carriage to go to the location. Therefore the group of apprentices and the group that does the odd jobs will stay in

the town.”

“We’ll have Viido and Franch stay behind as leaders. I want all the others to participate, any questions?”

“Questiooon~, are we taking Kuma-chan along?”

At Karen’s question captain Gaviik and vice-captain Mandel looked at each other, for now they decided to separately talk about ‘Kou’ in the afternoon. Leaving aside its mentality, on the outside, the Hornbear is a genuine monster. They also can’t just leave him to hide in the forest near the town forever.

If they were to work together they would first have to prepare a good reason for bringing a monster along, it also has to do with the trust they have in their party.

After discussing the bandit gang subjugation request with the related parties, they checked everything, they inspected and did maintenance on their equipment, and bought what was necessary. Then the main members ate some food and went towards the forest.

There was a question whether the Hornbear Kou, which their party cautions over, will be taken along or not. Since they didn’t have any better ideas they decided to ask the person in question himself about it.

“V~oorf” [Alright]

Kou had shown them a simple acceptance of their request with some words written on a piece of paper. Getting such an easy answer, Gaviik’s party became exhausted. By the way, Karen was riding on the Hornbear Kou’s shoulder again.

In accordance to taking Kou along, they began to discuss about some kind of mark the Hornbear Kou would wear to show he wasn’t a normal monster. Kou suggested that he could use his trademark which is the gem on his forehead, but since it didn’t stand out because of his large body it was rejected.

In the end they decided that they would adorn him with a piece of horse-armor the horses of Gaviik’s party wear, in order to show his affiliation with them. The result, they got a Hornbear wearing armor which ended up having a strange appearance.

“Kuma-chan, isn’t it heavy?”

“Vu~oolf” [Nope, it’s okay.]

The one in question, Kou, became aware of the fact that he was part of a group after wearing the armor with Gaviik party’s crest. In other words, his tension began to rise. An unusual group was formed between monster hunters and a monster.

“Anyway, with this, one of the problems has been resolved.”

“Yeah... Ah, by the way Kou.”

“Vu~oolf?”

Just where did that amount of potions come from, Gaviik tried asking Kou about it after remembering it. Kou answered him by saying he picked them up in the dungeon. Because he now sees them as his comrades, Kou didn’t think about hiding anything. He told them about how he stored things he picked up in the dungeon in his interdimensional storage.

“Vuwoo~vuwoolf.” [I also have things like this.]

From his interdimensional storage, he takes out a big battle axe and a wide shield for warriors and shows them to him. Everyone from Gaviik’s party involuntarily stares at him. A monster nearly three meters in length armed with a battle axe and a wide shield. The only thing he made them, who are specialized in taking on monsters think, was ‘We aren’t going to fight this right?’ That was the kind of monster that had appeared before them.

Anyway, Gaviik, who had once again recognized Kou as that demon dog, said the one thing that had to be said as the representative of the party.

“Well, sorry for that.”

Kou wholeheartedly accepted captain Gaviik’s apology. From the beginning Kou didn’t think of himself as a victim because he was killed by adventurers who specialize in killing monsters, he had possessed one after all.

In order to inform the other adventurers of the Hornbear Kou’s participation in

exterminating the bandit group, the main party members from Gaviik's group went into town together with the Hornbear Kou. After they had met with some of the influential people in town and the noble merchant from a while ago, they made sure that the servants and others wouldn't speak a word of what happened on the mountain road.

At first the gatekeepers and the pedestrians were afraid. But because it looked rather more intelligent than feral, because of the armor he had equipped, people began to touch the Hornbear's fur. Because it was such a strange happening people eventually lost all wariness they had toward him.

It seems that Karen riding on the Hornbear Kou's shoulder helped lessen the wariness.

The other mercenary groups and adventurer parties were also alright with it, mostly because of Gaviik's 'battle-axe and serpent' party. On the surface, nobody fervently objected to the Hornbear Kou joining them on this job, but a group of three nomad mercenaries came over to annoy them.

"But it'd just be weird ya know! Last time we saw it, it wasn't wearin' no armor. In the first place why'd ya hide it in the forest?"

"Today you suddenly said 'actually our group had tamed it' that's what's bothering me ya know. I ain't ever heard of someone tamin' a Hornbear."

"It's a monster right? We dun' even know when it'll bare its fangs. Ya should at least put some chains 'round it."

Unlike the mutated ones, that have a part of their animal self remaining, monsters are beings that suddenly come into existence and because of that, they understand that they are impossible to control. In the first place, it is said that monsters don't get attached to humans.

It's too dangerous so we can't trust him, or so the three say. Certainly, 'why did they hide it in the forest until now' or 'just how did they tame an untamable monster', questions like those were still left. There was a minority that totally trusted them on this matter.

However, there was still the elite group of Gaviik's party. They know how to handle or dodge these kind of situations. Since they are specialized in killing monsters they

would also know a lot about biology of monsters. They know a method to tame monsters which hasn't been released to the public yet. But there is no way they would just give out such valuable information.

— Or that's how they're going to fool the world.

"Not having it immediately enter the town, or letting it stay in the forest, both of them are top secret so we can't tell you."

By giving a certain answer to any of their questions and using the trust the others have in them as high ranking medal holders, they can contain this. The three mercenaries are just small fry, so taking that into account, they have a hold on their weakness, so why not take advantage of that.

"By the way, one of our members went to feed the bear, but I heard that you guys tried to mess with her... Karen, there's no mistake it was these three right?"

"That's right~, Even though I said I didn't do that kind of work, those guys groped my boobs y'know~"

Karen visibly showed her anger by going 'punpun'. At that time, it was dark so they couldn't see well, but there's no mistaking it that Karen was the girl of that time. Knowing that, the three of them froze.

"And then, they tried to force me into the bushes, but then kuma-chan appeared and they ran away."

"....."

That night, after the Hornbear went outside, the bar became noisy with what had just happened. The three who were being bathed in the cold stares of those around them were uncomfortably silent.

The date of the mission.

After the evening had passed, the city's army's carriages left. The raid on the bandit gang's hideout is planned for midnight. The leader of every group was together in a single carriage heading toward the location. It was decided that Gaviik's party and the mercenary group would break through. The adventurers and the nomad mercenaries

would patrol outside.

“Still, it really is troublesome that we don’t know the exact number of enemies.”

“A number of mages have already tried to confirm it. Since the group is fairly large it would be good to think they would be about even with the city army.”

“Them having hostages just adds to the worries doesn’t it.”

“Well, according to the contract it’s something okay to ignore...”

Since it isn’t something that easy to do or so he says, the different captains thinking of their subordinates. It seems like there are a few who have been kidnapped from nearby settlements, even if they find them alive, they don’t have any obligation to save them. It had become a plan where they should focus on the extermination even if sacrifices did appear.

Be that as it may, even among those that specialize in killing, there aren’t that many among them that would mindlessly follow an order like that. This time those that have joined up for this mission have agreed to this plan after they had made sure there wouldn’t be any penalties afterwards.

The group of carriages of the city army with the punitive forces riding them in the night on the highway. Behind five carriages there was walking a giant figure.

It is the Hornbear Kou who was added to the line of carriages. In the carriage in front of him a spiritualist affiliated with the mercenaries was casting movement spells on him. Like that he was able to keep up with the carriages that were going relatively fast.

Even if accidents, like the carriage wheels getting stuck somewhere happened, with the Hornbear’s physical strength, they can easily get it out. Most of the participants of the punitive force were looking at the Hornbear Kou with vigilance, but when they were more than halfway to their goal he had already gained their trust.

[Oh my? someone’s there.]

The Hornbear’s own vision is only so-so at night, but Kou can see well even in a place like a dungeon where there isn’t any light.

Kou, who had found out about a number of presences a little further down the road, where the group was going to hide among the rocks, ran next to the carriage where Gaviik's party was. He sent a memo paper through the window informing them. From within the Carriage he could hear Karen's sweet voice saying 'Kuma-chan' but then someone reprimanded her by saying 'leave it for later'.

The group of carriages slowly lowered their speed. When Gaviik's group went to the first carriage which belonged to the commanding officer of the town's army, it seems like it was the reconnaissance team which returned.

Since they were close to the hideout, they would walk the rest of the way. While everyone was getting off the carriages, the commanding officer received the report from the reconnaissance team.

"Good work, what's the enemy doing?"

"There weren't any important moves in particular."

The remains of a temple's ruins was now the bandit gang's hideout. According to the reconnaissance team they didn't spot any of the enemy's patrols. It seems like a few days ago an armed group went inside, and since then it had become eerily silent.

—— What to do next. Gaviik's group and the mercenary group think it's a trap. Some of the nomad mercenaries were also thinking the same. However, the decision lies with the town's army. For now, they decided they would go towards the vicinity of the hideout and look around.

"Is that it..."

"Though I had heard of it, seeing it now, it really is a troublesome stronghold."

The temple ruins were completely carved into the cliff. According to old tales it is said that it was made from expanding an already existing cave in the cliff with magic. From the terrain it could be seen that it is a natural fortress. The only entrance is in the front, and the only way to get there is to find a gentle slope and slowly walk towards it.

"You didn't find a secret pass leading to the inside somewhere did you?"

"From what the old records say, a secret pass like that hasn't been confirmed. Though

the guys inside might have made one.”

These past few days the reconnaissance team haven't found an entrance like that. Since they can't stealthily close in from behind, they don't have any other choice but to go in from the front, but it does raise suspicion that there isn't a single bonfire or patroller around.

“Because they're hiding inside, isn't it something like that?”

“Yeah.”

For the commanding officer the objective of this force is to exterminate the bandits so even if there may be a trap they just have to break through it. Then a part bear suddenly decided to show his face making the group leaders look at him. Hiding his wry smile Gaviik asked if there was something wrong.

“What's wrong? Kou.”

“Vu~ooooorfu~”

While 'pretending' to answer him with gestures, he pulls out a memo paper in an angle only captain Gaviik can see it. Around the middle of the cliff, where the roof of the temple would be, Kou saw a lot of human forms there. About a dozen of them equipped with something like a bow.

“As expected it's an ambush ——”

And at that moment, 'hyuu hyuu' the sound of wind being cut was heard. Gaviik warned them of the ambush.

“Everyone hide! The arrows are coming!”

At the same time, all the members of the punitive force either hid behind rocks or readied their shields. Although the arrows were hitting the Hornbear Kou who obviously stood out, because of the strong fur and sturdy skin they didn't pierce deeply and just fell to the ground. For now, Kou just secretly picked them up and put them in his interdimensional pocket.

“They have a grasp on our movements don't they.”

“Damn, no other choice, everyone charge!”

“Hey, hey, you seriously wanna pierce through.”

The commanding officer splendidly gave out a reckless order. Those that are experienced know that if they were to retreat now, less blood would be spilled. Having been had by an enemy which you have little information on and even going into their territory is just suicidal. It’s just like jumping into a trap on your own.

“It’s dangerous if we stand still for too long! I propose that we retreat for now.”

“We agree with Gaviik’s group, if we try to rush in now it would only increase the number of victims.”

“The right to command lies with us, I will have you obey the contract here.”

Whether he was just being impatient or he’s just an idiot who loves to rush in, to the commanding officer who tells them that they should’ve been prepared for this and that he wouldn’t let them weasel out now, both Gaviik and the mercenary captain gave up thinking that this guy was the type who wouldn’t listen no matter what they said.

These kinds of things also happen in real life like when a superior gives you some annoying jobs.

In a corner of the plains dyed in the dark, he is in a way defending himself by putting both his paws over his head while arrows just keep hitting him? To that figure which just stood there calmly, captain Gaviik got an idea to overturn this situation.

“Kou!”

Vuoorfu~?”

In order to tell him the plan, Gaviik beckoned the Hornbear Kou over.

# CHAPTER 17

## THE BATTLE IN FRONT OF THE TEMPLE

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The plan was this: When the downpour of arrows lightens up, the Horned Bear Kou, who has the best defense out of everyone in the attack force, is to make his way up the hillside path that leads to the ruins of the shrine. He is to then scout any suspicious-looking places for any traps and ambushes that might be set up.

*TLN: "Horned Bear" was previously translated as "Hornbear"*

"Can you do it?"

"Vroar!" [Leave it to me!]

Equipped with a wide shield and a battleaxe that a human would normally need two hands to wield, Kou the Horned Bear made his way up the hillside path. Arrows continued to rain from the top of the ruins, but the Horned Bear took no damage even to the parts of its body that the armor did not cover, so Kou held the shield up above his head and continued up the path without a problem.

The stars in the sky and a little moonlight were the only sources of light in the area. No matter how big a target Kou was, the Horned Bear was not carrying a torch and difficult to make out in the darkness, so the aim of the archers was off. After a while, as if the enemy sensed that their arrows were useless, the downpour ceased.

As Kou climbed the pitch-black hillside road, he searched for the "suspicious places" that Gawiik had assigned him to find.

*TLN: "Gawiik" was previously named "Gaviik"*

[Ah, there's a trap here. Let's break it – Hyah!]

A trap designed to restrain the target was hidden ingeniously beneath the grass; Kou destroyed it with his battleaxe. He continued up the path, using his weapon to destroy the traps in places where the dirt bulged unnaturally or where the grass was strangely woven.

He occasionally stepped on and triggered a trap, but they were traps designed for

human targets; they had little to no effect on the Horned Bear.

From afar, only a gray silhouette moving around the hillside path was visible, occasionally stopping to do something. The bandit group had no idea that their traps were being disarmed.

With the attack force waiting behind him at the bottom of the hill, Kou continued to climb the hill. Suddenly, he ran into an invisible wall.

[Huh? What's this...?]

He turned around and observed his surroundings, but he didn't see anything particularly out of the ordinary. Other than the countless traps that were on the path behind him, this place seemed like a normal, open grassy area. About twenty metres ahead, the ruins were visible, buried in the cliffs. There was no light and not a single person to be seen. But for some reason, he could not go any further.

[Ah, could this be a Barrier?]

He emerged his head from the Horned Bear's body and extended it through the Barrier. Just a moment ago there was not a single light or person to be seen, but through the Barrier he now saw a wooden barricade in front of the ruins, lined with torches and countless silhouettes of bandits were lying in wait behind it.

A bandit ambush that was invisible from outside the Barrier. Feeling it would be dangerous to go any further, he decided to fall back and report the situation to everyone else.



The large shadow that had been climbing side to side up the hillside path suddenly turned back and retreated. Seeing this, the bandits hidden behind the Barrier whispered among themselves, wondering if their ambush had been seen through.

“Wasn't that a Horned Bear?”

“There's no way a Horned Bear would be equipped with weapons and armor.”

“No, it could a new kind of summoned beast.”

The Magician leading the bandits warned them that there might be a Sorcerer among the enemy using magic tools to deal with the bandits. A Sorcerer that freely uses Golems and summoned beasts would be supporting the enemy while they make their move in the open area. It was likely that they were a very capable opponent.

“It seems the attack force they sent this time isn’t just the town militia...”

“This might be a good opportunity for us to start making some money in this area.”

While the bandits were having this conversation...



Having received Kou’s scouting information that there is a magical Barrier with an ambush set up behind it, the attack force immediately opened a strategy meeting. Both the town militia’s commanding officer and Gawiik’s group decided against a reckless frontal attack.

“Seeing as the Barrier conceals the whole area around the ruins, they undoubtedly have quite a skilled Spiritualist with them.”

“I’m sure their plan is a surprise attack while we’re defenseless in front of the Barrier.”

“And the purpose of the traps on the path was to break our formation and cause confusion when we retreat from their attack.”

“It’s pretty scary to think what would have happened if we’d tried to attack into that.”

In any case, the first thing that needed to be done was removing that Barrier. It would have been possible for a Magician or Sorcerer to interfere with the magical power that is being put into the Barrier to destroy it, unless the Barrier was ridiculously powerful. However, it went without saying that breaking the Barrier this way would require more power than the amount needed to maintain it.

A Spiritualist would be able to destroy the Barrier by directly countering it, rather than interfering with its magical power. Using this method, only an equal amount of magical power would be needed.

“The problem is, we don’t have a Spiritualist in our attack force...”

“If we match our Sorcerers against their Magician, we should be able to destroy the Barrier, but it’s too dangerous.”

If they moved to destroy the Barrier, it was certain that the enemy would move to attack them. However, they would not know when, where from or how the enemy would attack, so sending the Sorcerers in alone was out of the question. But that did not mean it would be any safer to send them in with an escort.

There was the option of going forward in a defensive formation with the entire group and then protecting him while he destroys the Barrier, but their movements were being watched as well, so the enemy might see this and take the chance to wipe out the whole group in one move.

The enemy was invisible behind the barrier so if they attacked from there, avoiding the attacks would be mostly impossible. Even if the enemy were to do something like roll a huge boulder down the hill as they marched up, they would take heavy casualties.

“Well, even if they don’t do a large-scale attack like that, it’d be simple for them to pick us off while we’re trying to cover our Sorcerers.”

If the attack force had a few more people, it would have been possible for them to accept that there would be some casualties, and spread out to secure the area. However, they had too few Sorcerers capable of dealing with the Barrier and they could not risk losing them.

“Now then, what shall we do?”

Captain Gawiik and Vice-Captain Mandel deliberated on the task at hand. The leader of the group of adventurers suggested that it might be better to fall back for now and come back with more people, and the chiefs of the various mercenary groups voiced their agreement with this suggestion. However, the town militia’s commanding officer insisted on carrying out the mission.

“If we let them go here, they might escape!”

“Even if you say that, if it’s impossible it’s impossible, so we don’t have a choice.”

“And doing something about that impossibility is your job, isn’t it?!”

“It’s too dangerous...”

As the discussion entered a stalemate, the staff officer of Gawiik’s group, Lef, proposed a confirmed method of breaking the Barrier that required only a few reliable men. As the method proposed was not a normal method, each group other than Gawiik’s group left their seats to discuss it among themselves.



“So, this method you were talking about is Kou’s Amulet?”

“... Yes. If we use the power of his Amulet, it is possible for a single person to break the Barrier easily alone.”

The method proposed by Lef was to use her mystic staff, “The Flowing Hand”, to channel magical power tuned for Barrier-breaking into the Spiritualist’s Amulet, then imbuing that energy into a suitable weapon and using that weapon to cut through the Barrier.

“But doesn’t that mean we have to take you right next to the Barrier?”

“Couldn’t we imbue that magical power into a bow and pierce the Barrier from afar with arrows?”

Karen, a fairly skilled magic-user herself, suggested a possible safe way to do it, but Lef shook her head.

“You need to have control over the magical power to tune it for Barrier-breaking. It’s impossible to do with arrows.”

“Hmm...”

“If only Kou could use magic...”

“Vroar?”

*TLN: This last sound is made by Kou*

Kou, who had been watching over the meeting of the group members seated in a circle, suddenly raised his head. There are Monsters known to use magic-like powers, but it is unheard of for a Horned Bear to use such powers.

But judging from the discussion, Kou figured that all the problems would be solved if he could just use Lef's staff, so he tried asking.

"Controlling magical power, how do you do it?"

"... You have to perceive the waveform of the magical power, channel it to the end of the staff, feel its strengths and weaknesses, and adjust the width of its waveform."

Lef provided a detailed answer to the question written on Kou's paper. What an honest man, thought the group members as they smiled wryly. Even if he understood how to use the staff, Kou would have to be somehow incredibly skilled at manipulating the magical power to be able to gather magical power to a specific point, tune it to have special properties and then imbue it into another object.

"... To be able to imbue magical power, you at least need to be able to use Light magic."

While saying that, Lef demonstrated by producing a small ball of light in her hand. This was a basic skill that any magic-user should be able to do. Imitating her, Kou extended his paw. Karen stood close to his side and advised him, [You gather it with your heart~]

The power of the Gods that fills the air. Breathing this source of creation that exists in all things into your body, and focusing it, passing it through your soul, visualizing spiritual signposts and purifying it – Lef's explanation of how to manipulate magical power was too complicated, and Kou did not really understand it. However, Kou could purify magical power.

[Ah, if I do that it gathers up. So that means if I do this to that, it becomes this shape...]

A bright light illuminated the surroundings as a powerful ball of light appeared in the palm of the Horned Bear's large paw. The members of Gawiik's group were astonished, but quickly looked around cautiously. The nearby mercenary groups and group of adventurers were looking curiously to see what was happening.

“Ugh! Get rid of the light, you’ll give away our position to the enemy!”

“Vroar.”[My bad.]

They were far enough from the ruins that no arrows came flying at them again, but the light was probably bright enough for the bandits to see.

“You can use magic?”

“Vroar –”

Kou produced a note saying “I only just remembered”, then explained that he had just imitated her to try and manipulate the magical power. Hearing that Kou can purify magical power, Lef suggested it might be possible for him to tune the magical power for Barrier-breaking and imbue it into a weapon.

“Hmm. Can you do it, Kou?”

“Vroar, vroar.”[I’ll give it a try.]

Borrowing Lef’s mystic staff, “The Flowing Hand”, Kou stored magical power tuned for Barrier-breaking in the Spiritualist’s Amulet, adjusted the waveforms and imbued the power throughout his battleaxe. He had previously seen Karen imbuing magic into her arrows that time at the lake, so he used that as a reference.

“Vroaroar –”[I’m done –]

“Lef, how is it?”

“... It’s perfect.”

Normally, for a Magician to imbue a weapon with magic, he must picture the magical power clearly in his head to control it to wrap around the weapon. Producing an imbue where the magical power is wrapped completely around the weapon without leaving any gaps is difficult even for skilled Magicians. However, Kou, who can directly see and control magical power, had produced a perfect imbue.



With a way to break the Barrier, the attack force made its plans with Gawiik's group at the center. The town militia's commanding officer even temporarily handed leadership over to Gawiik to make this plan succeed.

And so the Horned Bear Kou stood in front of the Barrier once more, now using the staff's power to imbue the battleaxe with Barrier-breaking magical power.

"Oi look, it's the same one from before. "

"That's definitely a Horned Bear, ain't it?"

"It definitely *looks* like a Horned Bear, but it's wearing armor and it's got a staff and battleaxe. The hell's up with that?"

"So it is a summoned beast after all, and that bright light earlier must have been to resummon it."

Summoned beasts used by Sorcerers are powerful, but the time they are summoned for is limited. The Magician leading the bandits assumed that when the bear retreated earlier, it was because its summoning time was running out and it needed to report its scouting information before then. He told the bandits that the bear had simply been resummoned so it could continue its scouting.

The bandits were confident in the Barrier protecting them, and idly discussed this "strange summoned beast". Meanwhile, on the other side of the Barrier, the Horned Bear raised its battleaxe.

"Vrooooooar!" [Here we go -!]

Kou raised the battleaxe imbued with Barrier-breaking magical power and, with a single swing, cut through the Barrier. Like a landscape reflected on water's surface being cut and torn, the false image of the silent, empty ruins rippled and faded to reveal the truth.

The barricade extended around the entrance, lined with torches. Behind it, there were at least thirty bandits lying in wait.

“What?! The Barrier’s been broken!”

“This is bad – Hurry and go tell the boss!”

“Damn it! Aim for that summoned beast! Kill it before their main force arrives!”

While the bandits were in confusion from the breaking of the Barrier, the Magician gave the order to attack. Even the tough body of the Horned Bear would not have withstood arrows and magical attacks at such short range, so Kou slowly retreated while blocking the attacks with his shield, and used the light magic that he had learned earlier.

This magic is normally used for ordinary things like putting a small light inside a lamp for light, but it is also possible to create a larger source of light by not regulating its intensity.

[Take this –]

Kou threw a blindingly bright ball of light into the sky, then it started drifting slowly back down, lighting up the area and acting as a flare signal for the rest of the attack force. Gawiik’s group began to pick off the bandits, who were now visible even from the bottom of the hill.

“Karen!”

“Yes sir~!”

At Captain Gawiik’s command, Karen raised her bow and aimed at the bandits’ leader, the Magician. She imbued magical power into her arrow and fired. The arrow imbued using archery-style magic easily penetrated straight through the barricade to find its target, burying itself in the Magician’s body. Leaving wooden splinters from the barricade in its wake, the arrow hit the Magician’s body with such force that his body was bent over and sent flying.

Having lost their leader, the bandits’ attacks became disorganized. Their archers changed targets erratically between the town militia, the mercenary groups coming up the hill and the Horned Bear, and they were flanked by the group of adventurers who were firing arrows from a different direction. Their defenses were falling apart.

[Here's one more!]

Before the first ball of light illuminating the area fell to the ground, Kou threw another one into the air. With a constant light source revealing their positions, even the bandits' archers who had hidden on the roof had no choice but to take cover from the arrows being fired from below.

Meanwhile, a group of lone mercenaries came from yet another direction and leapt over the barricade. The three mercenaries, who had been arguing with each other until just before they left, were suddenly well coordinated in their attacks, cutting through and scattering the bandits.

And matching their movements were the town militia and other mercenary groups, who made their way up the hill to join the battle. The bandits began to run for their lives.

"The bandits are escaping into the ruins!"

"Watch out for traps at the entrance! Don't rush in carelessly!"

The remaining bandits who were too slow to escape tried to surrender, but before they could get the chance, the ground in front of the ruins was stained with their blood. The town militia's technician dismantled the barricade to open the area up, and the attack force began their preparations to infiltrate the ruins.



"Good job, Kou!"

"Kuma-chan, you were awesome!"

*TLN: Kuma is bear and I refuse to write "Bear-chan"*

"You're quite something, aren't ya?"

"Vroarr~"[Tehehe~]

Having been in command of the operation, Gawiik's group arrived at the top of the hill a little later than the others. Kou, happy to be praised and acknowledged by everyone, felt a little embarrassed. He returned the mystic staff to Lef, planning to have her teach

him new magic later.

A momentary break was declared. The various groups stopped to talk, though they had to do so while stepping over the corpses over the bandits on this blood-stained battlefield. From here they needed to storm the ruins, suppressing the bandits who had fled, and capture or kill their leader.

Gawiik's group was planning to storm the ruins with the various mercenary groups and town militia soldiers that were gathered at the entrance, but a short distance away, the group of adventurers were discussing something loudly.

“What’s wrong? Is there a problem?”

“Ah, you guys should come see this too.”

The adventurers that Gawiik had called out to pointed him towards the entrance to the ruins. It was a tunnel with a narrow entrance that could only fit three adults side-by-side, but there was something built there about five meters into the passage.

The wooden gate that was originally there had long since rotten away, replaced by a gate of steel bars arranged in a lattice that covered the whole passage. And behind that gate was the problem.

“... Hostages, huh.”

“Probably, no, definitely.”

“The Adventurers' Association knew these guys had hostages, and still put out a contract like this?”

“These bandits are a group that’s been gathered from all over the place, so they might have taken the hostages from elsewhere.”

The captains of the infiltration squads gathered at the entrance frowned at the sight of the hostages behind the gate. After they had stood at the entrance for too long, an arrow came flying out from the other side, so they retreated quickly after taking a quick peek down the tunnel. They saw four hostages being held there.

The hostages were young women whose clothes had been torn off, and the bandits

had chained them to the gate as if they were nothing more than signs hanging from a wall. The figure of a very young little girl could also be seen among them. The bandits were using their bodies as shields, hiding behind them with bows at the ready, so they could not approach carelessly. Rescuing them would be difficult, as they had to think twice before attacking.

In such a situation, even the town militia's commanding officer, who did not have a single care for the hostages' lives, could not give the order to just go in and attack. However –

“But if we just trap them in here, there's no difference.”

It was a choice between suffering a slow death trapped in chains, or get caught up in the attack and killed quickly. If there was no way to save them either way, would it not be better for them if they were put to rest quickly? The town militia's commanding officer told himself this to justify their sacrifice.

But at that moment, arrows came whistling out from the tunnel and everyone's attention was drawn to the passage. Kou was standing at the entrance of the tunnel, and the arrows that were flying from inside were aimed at him – some hit, burying themselves in his arms and shoulders, while others missed, clattering at his feet or flying past him.



Kou, who could see clearly even in the dark, saw the figures of the girls imprisoned behind the bars. He saw that patches of their skin were discoloured red-black and purple from bruises. Their limp bodies were covered in cuts and scratches, and their cheeks and lips were swollen. Trails of blood ran from their broken noses onto the backs of their necks and over their chests.

The girls looked about the same age as Alice and Nina, but the symbol of their femininity, their breasts, had been pierced at the tips and bells had been attached to the piercings. The chains attached to the collars they were wearing were being pulled from behind the bars, causing them cry out in pain.

Taunting the Horned Bear standing in front of them, the bandits pulled on the chains and jeered at him. Standing in the rain of countless arrows, Kou felt a hazy feeling in his chest begin to surface.

As if resonating with that feeling, the Horned Bear's consciousness that had been suppressed by Kou resurfaced.

[That... That has to be a very evil thing.]

This feeling was that of "anger" and "hatred".

"Kuma-chan?"

Karen, who had sensed a change in Kou's presence, called out to him.

"GROAAAAAAAAR!"

"Ku-Kuma-chan! NO!"

Deaf to Karen's attempts to stop him, Kou charged straight into the tunnel and firmly grasped each side of the steel gate that the hostages were chained to. Seeing a terrifying monster closing in on them with its fangs bared, the hostages quickly lost their minds.

Seeing the Horned Bear Kou charge in, the members of the attack force felt strangely relieved. Nobody wanted to be the first to go in and cause the death of the hostages. But if the Horned Bear were to go in and break both the gate and the hostages, it would be easier for them.

The bandits had provoked the summoned beast, and since the beast would not care about the hostages, they prepared to counterattack with their spears and swords.

"Damn, you monster!"

"Stab him, stab him! Kill him before he breaks the gate!"

"At this range, arrows should work on him too!"

Even the Horned Bear's body could not withstand the direct attacks at this close distance. Being stabbed repeatedly by spears through the gate targeting the openings in his armor, Kou pulled at the gate with all of his might.

“GROOOOOAAAAAR!”

“Uwah, this is over..”

“The gate is broken!”

“Run!”

Expecting the remaining attack force to come down the tunnel now that the gate was broken, the bandits started to retreat deeper into the temple. Deciding that the swords and spears that had pierced him through the gate were in the way, Kou tore them out, then with one final step, he pulled the gate loose. With that, he moved the hostages to safety, together with the whole gate.

“Yes, we can storm in now! Let’s get those bandits!”

With the entrance open, the town militia’s commanding officer led the infiltration team into the ruins. Kou, who had used the last of his strength to carry the steel gate back to the tunnel entrance, gently set it down on the ground.

“Vr.. Var..” [Hurry, you need to treat these people!]

As Trissun started to treat the former prisoners, a Priest from one of the mercenary groups came to offer help. Daido and Mandel removed the chains that tied them to the gate, and the adventurers provided sheets for them to cover their bodies.

While the prisoners were being treated, the Horned Bear Kou lay peacefully on the ground, losing strength from having lost too much blood.

“KUMA-CHAN!”



The Horned Bear’s wounds were so deep that even Trissun, the most skilled Healer out of anyone there, could not do anything about them. The Priest of the mercenary group had more potent healing power than Trissun, but this power did not work when used on Monsters.

The Horned Bear, a Monster that had fought for Gawiik’s group. But everyone had

grown some affection for it. It seemed that the allies that he had fought up to this far with, the mercenary groups, the adventurers and the lone mercenaries, all felt sorrow at the apparent death of Kou the Horned Bear.

Suddenly there was a call for support from the town militia that had stormed the ruins, so Gawiik's group went to join them, thinking of having a funeral for Kou later. Telling Karen it would be alright for her to be by Kou's side, the rest of the members left the two of them alone.

Karen gently stroked the Horned Bear's fur as she sat by his side. And then, a bird flew down. Kou thanked the bird for following him all the way from Curacall. As the Horned Bear drew its last breath, Kou transferred himself to the messenger bird.

*TLN: Curacall was previously named Kurakaru*

As Kou separated himself from the Horned Bear's spirit, he told it, "I'm sorry I put you through all this."

The spirit replied, "It was fun while it lasted," before returning to its resting place.

Soon after that, the bandits' base was secured.

# CHAPTER 18

## JOURNEY TO THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL

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At daybreak, in front of the temple ruins.

The attack force was making preparations to leave, and the town militia soldiers escorting the captured bandits guided the carriages along the plains at the bottom of the hill through the morning fog. On a hill some distance away from this busy scene, at the side of the temple ruins, Gawiik's group was conducting a funeral for the Horned Bear.

Everyone in the group understood that Kou was an immortal existence, and Kou was currently possessing the messenger bird. Therefore, this funeral, which would normally only be conducted following the passing of a companion, was for the Horned Bear itself.

The young soldiers from the town militia watching this scene on the hill with inquisitive eyes talked among themselves, half-grumbling.

"But you know, is it even normal to have a funeral service for an service animal?"

"Maybe if you get to a high enough class to bear the "Battleaxe and Serpent" medal, you start feeling like you're different from normal people?"

"Jeez... Here we are having to make preparations to leave so early in the morning, it must be nice being in one of the elite groups, getting to rest -"

One of the attack force groups overheard their conversation by chance, and reprimanded them.

"Oi you guys, which group are you from?"

"You lot who didn't even spill any blood on the battlefield shouldn't talk like you know anything."

Being berated by the three hard-faced mercenaries who still had wet bloodstains on

their leather armor, the young soldiers timidly returned to their work.



The attack force was welcomed back to the town with applause from the people. More than half of the hostages who were thought to be lost had been safely rescued, so all of the mercenary groups, adventurers and lone mercenaries who participated in the attack received favorable evaluations from the Adventurers' Association.

There was an air of regret about the death of Horned Bear from Gawiik's group, but the response to the death of the service animal was not quite as sad as if a person had died.

Gawiik's group collected their reward and made preparations to head to their next job. The members who had been on standby packed the luggage into the equipment carriage and worried about the quieter-than-usual atmosphere in the group.

"Feels like there's something's missing on the back of the carriage..."

"Since Karen-san's not in a good mood, the mood's a bit gloomy, isn't it?"

While the lower-ranked members were discussing the mood and carrying on with their duties, the higher-ranked members of Gawiik's group were resting in their inn rooms or gathering information over drinks at the bar.

The town militia's commanding officer approached the bar where Gawiik and Mandel were drinking.

"Man, thanks to you gentlemen, our mission turned out pretty well, so let me thank you again."

"Sure."

The bandit leaders had prepared an emergency escape path through a dried up water well deeper in the ruins. But because the attack force had been able to storm the ruins quickly, they had been able to capture them before they escaped. The battle at the entrance gate had been a stalling tactic to buy time for the bandit leaders to get away.

It seemed that the bandits at the gate had not been told this, and were just used as

disposable pawns.

He had been informed that if he showed good results in this operation, he would be considered for the imperial capital's army, which was why he had been so adamant on continuing the mission. In high spirits, he told them that his achievement of suppressing the bandit threat had been acknowledged, so he was heading towards the imperial capital city soon.

“The imperial capital city, huh... We were thinking about showing our faces there soon, too.”

“Oh! If that's the case, won't you escort me there? Let's travel together!”

Gawiik thought,[Well, why not?]and accepted the request of the now-former commanding officer of the town's militia. Since the client was from the military, it would be easier than escorting a normal civilian.

In the royal capital, there was a magical technician who dealt in various magical tools, a regular customer of Gawiik's group. Famous for causing a stir with his curious inventions, he was widely known as the[Abnormal Professor], but his ability was unquestionable. Gawiik had been thinking of introducing him to Kou.



With the preparations for departure complete, Gawiik's equipment carriage left the town, followed by three regular carriages. The former commanding officer was riding in one of the regular carriages. The four carriages headed towards the town of Curacall. The plan was to stockpile a large amount of food and water supplies there before beginning the long journey on the highway to the imperial capital city.

“Pii-chan~”

“Pii!”

*TLN: "Pii-chan" appears to be Karen's nickname for the bird*

Karen rubbed her cheeks against the soft feathers of the messenger bird. She was still feeling a little depressed, but she had regained some of her vigor thanks to Kou's comforting.

He would sit on her shoulders and tickle her cheeks and neck with his wings, or walk around on top of her when she was lying down, as if he were giving her some kind of animal therapy.

Half a day after they left the down, they crossed a river and stopped for a break. Carriages who had come from the direction of Curacall were also stopped at the riverside; it seemed like a perfect place for travelers to rest.

The travellers who had come along with Gawiik's escort party because they were heading to the imperial capital city themselves were now discussing rumors about the capital. There was one that there were exceptional individuals being gathered at the castle.

"Is there going to be a war soon or something?"

"I haven't heard anything like that."

"Isn't it some problem linked to the succession to the throne?"

"Ah, you're talking about how two of the three princes are having quite an dispute about it."

The travellers talked about how the king currently ruling over Grandahl was still young and very dependable, so the situation seemed fine for now. In the imperial capital, where the army was stationed, people would have been hesitant to discuss the princes' dispute over the crown, but this was a riverside with no government officials nearby.



Gawiik overheard these rumors and discussed them with Lef, Mandel and the others over their meal. They compared these rumors to their own intel, evaluated their authenticity and tried to uncover any hidden truths.

"The gathering of exceptional individuals is probably the First Prince's doing."

"I can't imagine that prince to be wanting a dispute over the crown."

".. The one who's disputing it would be the Second Prince."

The First Prince liked adventuring, and did things like gather parties to search dungeons, fight monsters, and from time to time he would hide his social status to accept requests from the Adventurers' Association.

He had already attained the “Twin Swords and Beast” medal, ranked fourth out of the seven ranks, one rank below Gawiik’s group, so he was quite skilled.

“Maybe he’s planning to challenge another dungeon or something.”

“That prince’s group members are replaced pretty often, aren’t they?”

The First Prince used money to gather exceptional individuals and form an adventurer group to challenge high-difficulty dungeons and increase his fame as an adventurer. But most of them participated only because they were hired, and many left the group after making some money.

The fact that their leader was the First Prince, who also had to carry out his public duties, meant that their activities were scheduled irregularly. It seemed that this factor also made it difficult for members to stay in his group.

“... We need to be wary of his member recruitment.”

“He’s got his eyes on us too, hasn’t he...”

There was no risk of the higher-ranked members of Gawiik’s being recruited, but the same could not be said for the apprentices and lower-ranked members with potential. If the First Prince of Grandahl were to directly say to them [Come on an adventure with me!], it would not be unusual for them to join him without any hesitation.

“Hahaha, no doubt about that.”



Leaving the riverbank behind them, the carriages under the escort of Gawiik’s group set off along the highway. By the time they reached the town of Curacall, the sun had already set and night’s dark curtain had fallen. From here, they planned to move together with an army unit that routinely made trips between here and the imperial capital city.

The former commanding officer that was being escorted would be moved to the military unit's carriage, and it seemed there were others like him who were heading to the imperial city because they had been admitted to the imperial army for their achievements.



“We’ll be leaving the day after tomorrow. We need to prepare for the long journey to the capital, so get ready to work starting from tomorrow.”

“That’s all, dismissed!”

Captain Gawiik briefly announced the plans, and Vice-Captain Mandel’s dismissal left the members at ease. Some went to their inn rooms, others left to go shopping and some began to clean the carriages; everyone freely went about doing their own things.

[It’s already late, so maybe I’ll give Alice a visit tomorrow~]

The messenger bird was perched on Karen’s head, accompanying her on while she was shopping. Meanwhile, he wrote a letter to give to Alice inside the other dimension. He wrote about the things he had seen and experienced while accompanying Gawiik’s group, and it ended up being quite a long letter.

[Maybe I should write a diary and show it to her, too?]

Kou thought that if he wrote about the events on his journey at the various places he intended to visit, it would actually turn out to be quite an interesting book to read. He added stockpiling a large amount of paper and ink to his plans.



The next day. Lef accompanied Kou who said he wanted to go shopping, and bought him some fine-quality paper and ink from a shop that sold goods for nobles. The members of Gawiik’s group showed surprise at the fact that Kou was holding money, but it made sense for him to have money, since he had picked up a lot of items during his time in the dungeon.

The money that Kou had was mainly in coins known as “Guild Currency”, and there

was a lot of this currency circulating in Grandahl, where the Adventurers' Association has a strong influence. He also had some money in “Imperial Currency”, which had slightly lower value than Guild Currency, and it was the predominantly used currency in the neighbouring country of Na'Hatome.

Incidentally, Karen had been the first to volunteer to accompany Kou with his shopping. Questioning her ability to negotiate prices and choose appropriate goods, everyone opposed the idea. So staff officer Lef was accompanying him instead, and Karen was sulking in her bed in her room at the inn.



[I'll have to make it up to Karen later. Hey, that's... Alice?]

In the early afternoon, Kou flew from the town streets towards the Doretoss mansion and spotted Alice and her friends having tea in the gardens. Fausta was with them too. Happy to see Alice properly enjoying the company of her friends as she had done before he met her, he flew down near the tea table.

“Oh? It's a tori-san.”

*TLN: Tori = bird*

“It appears to be a messenger bird.”

“However, it does not appear to be holding a letter, does it?”

*TLN: These ladies are speaking with posh/rich people language*

Kou, the messenger bird, landed on Alice's shoulder. Fausta, who was sitting on a chair being petted by the other ladies, wagged his tail as if to say [Long time no see!] Kou rubbed his feathered head against Alice's cheek and tickled her with his wings, surprising her. This was not the expected behaviour of a normal messenger bird. Alice tentatively spoke his name to confirm her suspicions.

“... Kou?”

“Pyii~” [It's me~]

Kou produced a note behind his wing to say “long time no see,” and Alice's expression turned to that of joy.

“It's my friend!”

“Oh my! To have a messenger bird as a friend, how wonderful!”

“It seems that Alice is well-loved by animals.”

Kou entertained the ladies by pecking at snacks and jumping from shoulder to shoulder. Alice did not ask what the others were thinking about, and it seemed they were on good terms.



Before long, their tea party finished and Alice returned to her room after seeing her friends off. She opened the window to welcome Kou inside. Fausta was playing with a cloth ball on the bed.

“I thought you were surely planning to return to the town of Barasse, so I was wondering what had happened when I received your letter.”

The letter that Kou had left with the messenger bird when he possessed the Horned Bear in the rocky mountains had only read[I might wander the world for a little while.]Kou summarized everything that had happened after he left the mansion - or rather, he had written a diary to show her the day before.

“These are letters from a person called Elmerl.”

“Pyiririri?”[From Elmerl?]

*TLN: Elmerl was previously named Elmel in earlier translations*

They had been conversing about Kou through letters back and forth. The daughter of a high-class noble family and an instructor at a training school, two people who had nothing in common. The first two letters or so were written very politely, but from the third letter onwards it looked like a normal conversation between a girl and her older sister.

Kou was relieved to hear about how Elmerl was doing, and that things were going well with Richello, Gashe and the others.

“Hey Kou, why don’t you write a letter to her too?”

“Pyuii~”[Yeah, I’ve thought about that too.]

They decided to have Kou’s letter sent together with Alice’s letter at the Adventurers’ Association branch.

“I have to to back to the group now.”

“I see... The next time you’re in this town, come and visit me, alright?”

“Of course. I don’t know what form I’ll have next time, though.”

It was simple for Kou to visit her like this when he was in a harmless creature, but it would cause a huge problem if he were to try to approach the mansion in some[unmistakably dangerous creature.]

“Ufufu, you’re right, the gardener would gather everyone together to stop you!”

Alice agreed while laughing.



Leaving his letter to Elmerl and the others with her, he left the Diretoss mansion behind and headed back to the inn where Gawiik’s group was staying. The inn worker looked up in surprise to see a bird suddenly fly into the room through the window.

The members of Gawiik’s group gathered in the dining hall explained to him,[That’s our messenger bird.]

“Pii-chan, welcome back.”

“Pi~”

The one who called out to him was Karen, but it seemed she was still sulking. He hopped along the table and landed on Karen’s lap and produced the snacks that Alice had given him - high-class shortbread biscuits that was popular even with the noble girls.

An elegant sweetness and fragrance that melted smoothly in the mouth. Karen, whose heart also melted. Daido had a dangerous look in his eyes.

“Pii-chaa~n, I love you!”

“Pyui~”

“..”

“Oi, Daido, are you still awake?”

Reaper started poking Daido, who appeared to have overheated from seeing Karen’s heart-melted expression. Dis, the sensible one, brought over some water to pour on him. Kou left the lively dining hall and headed towards staff officer Lef’s room. When he had gone shopping with her this morning, he had asked her to teach him the basics of magic.

“Pyuriri-”[I’m here~]

“.. Enter.”

Lef welcomed him with a single word, and Kou entered the room to study magic for the night.

# 【 ARC 4 】

# CHAPTER 19

## THE CAPITAL OF MAGICAL CIVILIZATION

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In a familiar restaurant near the Barasse branch of the Adventurers' Association, Elmerl, Richello and Gashe were talking about the letter that had arrived from the town of Curacall a few days ago.

“A letter from Kou, you said?”

“Yeah, it seems he’s learned read and write a lot better at the noble house I told you about.”

“Eh, that’s pretty amazing, huh.”

The letter was written with proper grammar, though his handwriting was not quite perfect yet. Elmerl and the others had already known about how he had helped the ruler of Curacall and left on a journey afterwards from her letter conversations with Alice.

It seemed that he was now on the way to the imperial capital city. Elmerl voiced her relief at the news that Kou was doing well.

“Considering that, you have quite a difficult expression.”

“Mmm, that’s because -”

In the letter, Kou had written that he was traveling with Gawiik’s group, and Elmerl had mixed feelings about that.

“Gawiik’s group, the one that tried to take his amulet?”

“Yeah, that one.”

“Hmm, that doesn’t sound like something Kou’d do, but at the same time, it seems just like Kou to do that...”

Elmerl could not deny that Gashe was right; it was just like Kou to do that. It said in the letter that Kou had become a member of Gawiik's group, and it seemed that his personality and behavior had not changed since the times he spent in Barasse's dungeon. So she accepted that that was just how Kou was.

"Judging from the date on the letter, they should probably be at the imperial capital right about now, I guess."

"The imperial capital, huh. It's a big city, but even Kou would be considered unusual there."



Six days after Gawiik's group and the army unit they were traveling with departed from Curacall, they arrived safely in the imperial capital after a fine journey.

The city of Tortoluse was a large collection of buildings built on a flat area that is surrounded on all sides by steep, rocky mountains. The fortified city's huge outer walls had been built as if they were a continuation of the surrounding mountains, forming an impenetrable defense. Within these walls, a civilization of highly advanced magical technology thrived.

The group of army carriages passed easily through the triple security checks at the front gate of the city and headed straight towards the army headquarters. But Gawiik's carriage and the civilian carriages were held back as the people and contents of the carriage had to be inspected before they were allowed to enter the city.

Gawiik's name was well-known here, so they were given favorable treatment during the inspection compared to the inspection of civilians or other adventurers, but it still took some time. Kou, who passed the inspection as the group's messenger bird, flew into the upper area of the city to get a view of Tortoluse from above.

[Uwah, that's amazing... There's so many tall buildings. I wonder if that huge one is a castle?]

Whether every building was a castle itself, or the buildings were all part of a single royal palace, large mansions extended from the center of the castle-shaped buildings, and they were all connected. The buildings at of this castle were surrounded by large walls and a moat, forming a clear boundary between the castle and the surrounding

town.

Even the buildings outside the castle were large compared to the buildings in Barasse and Curacall.

[Something's flying there... I get the feeling I've seen that before. But I think I've seen it in another world...]

Above the imperial capital city, there were several reptiles with large wings - flying dragons - with people riding on their backs. There were also things that look like vehicles, tied to the ground but floating in the air. From Kou's memories, the name "blimp" came to his mind.

[It feels like a really advanced city.]

Kou saw that Gawiik's group had finished their inspection and were entering the city, so he descended and perched on the lantern by the carriage driver.

The group stopped the carriages at a warehouse to store them. The staff officer's group were sent to find an inn to stay in, while Vice-Captain's group headed to the road where the central branch of the Adventurers' Association was to collect the reward for their mission. Captain Gawiik and the remaining members were looking after the carriages.

"After we confirm which inn we're staying in, Kou, tomorrow I want to introduce someone to - no, I want to introduce you to someone, you don't mind, right?"

"Sure, is it the Abnormal Professor you mentioned before?"

"Yeah, it's that Abnormal Professor. Don't actually call him that when you meet him though, alright?"

He was known as the Abnormal Professor, even among the Magicians of various institutions who spent all their days doing nothing but research on new magical technology. But the Professor himself did not agree with this nickname, and Gawiik laughed as he told him that it would be troublesome if they were to anger him by using it.

Incidentally, the difference between a Magician and a Mage, from the official

standpoint of the nation and its organizations, was whether one was a specialist who teaches apprentices or students. The swordswoman Elmerl taught swordsmanship to adventurers at a training school, but if she were to take apprentices as a specialist under this system, she would be considered a sword-master.

*TLN: There are two different terms in Japanese, and both are pronounced exactly the same with a subtle difference in the last kanji only. One is "Magician", and one is "Mage", and both are used here, where "Mage" would be the kind that is a specialist with apprentices.*

In the second sentence, it's explaining that if Elmerl were a specialist with apprentices, her title would change in the same way (with that same, subtle change in kanji).

This is my best attempt at an explanation, but this paragraph just doesn't translate well into English because it is just explaining a subtle kanji difference.

"I wonder if Sarta-chan is doing well -"

Karen was hanging her legs out from on top the carriage and heard the conversation about the Abnormal Professor. She thought of her friend, who was working as the Professor's assistant.



Vice-Captain Mandel, after collecting their reward from the central branch of the Adventurers' Association, checked the large notice board. He looked through the free job request forms and announcements, looking for good work and any updates on the current state of affairs.

"Vice-Captain, there's this one here!"

"Hmm? Ah, it's already that time of year."

Reaper normally just dragged his feet behind the Vice-Captain like he was bored whenever they came to the Adventurers' Association. So for him to be pointing out the notice was unusual, but Mandel looked at it. It had the seal of the royal family, and read "Gather, warriors! You are the next heroes!"

“It's a fighting tournament! There's even a prize of fifty gold Guild coins, wow!”

Ignoring Reaper, who was excitedly telling him that they should participate, Mandel thought about the travelers' rumors that the First Prince is gathering talented people. There were big and small fighting tournaments held periodically in the arena of the imperial capital city, but every year around this time, a large tournament sponsored by the royal family was held.

“It's risky to join such a big tournament, so we'll need to consult with the captain before deciding to join.”

“Yeah! Make sure you do a good job persuading him Daido, you wanna participate too, right?”

“I am interested, yes.”

One of his subordinates was a battle-junkie, one step short of being downright bloodthirsty, and the other was quiet and overbearing. Mandel shrugged his shoulders at them as he walked, leaving the Adventurers' Association behind him.



In a large inn mainly used by large groups of customers, in the middle of the street. In the section that Gawiik's group had paid for, the group members gathered in the dining hall to discuss their future plans. Everyone was relaxed comfortably on the soft carpet on the floor.

There was also a large sofa that could have seated many people, they had gotten used to a lifestyle of sleeping outdoors, so sitting on the floor was more comfortable for them.

“Captain, you and Karen are going to go see Professor Andagi tomorrow, aren't you?”

“Yeah, to introduce Kou to him.”

Gawiik answered while bringing snacks and a drink to his mouth. He looked at messenger bird Kou, who was massaging Karen's back with his bird feet while she lay on her stomach.

“Captain, Reaper wants to enter the fighting tournament... What should we do?”

“The prize for winning is fifty gold coins. Fifty! Let’s all enter, Captain!”

“That’s too reckless. But fifty coins, huh...”

“Groups of fighters from other regions are also gathered in the imperial capital. There are probably a lot of them with their eyes on this tournament.”

The prize money was tempting, but it depended on the participating members, and there was the possibility of them getting injured unnecessarily. If they were going to participate, they needed to gather information on the other competitors first.

There would be no problem in entering if both the opponents’ strengths and their own strength was unknown. But a relatively well-known group like Gawiik’s strongest members and battle tactics would be analyzed by their opponents.

Reaper and Daido had the role of being the close-distance fighters of Gawiik’s group while Lef and Karen attacked from a distance, and Dis and Trissun would support them. Mandel and Viido acted as their defense. This battle formation would already be known to other groups.

Trying to defeat well-prepared opponents with only sheer strength and no plan would be ill-advised.

“Well, let’s make it up as we go!”

“Eh, you have to let me participate!”

“I want to enter, too.”

“Oh alright, alright, I’ll add preparing for the tournament to tomorrow’s plans.”

After that was decided, the relaxed, quiet group meeting finished and night fell on the city.

In the Magicians' organization district, under the jurisdiction of the Tortoluse government. There were all sorts of magical research facilities lined up here, and many Magicians spent their days performing experiments and research. In a plaza away from the other research buildings, there was one research building standing by itself, shining bright red in the morning sunlight.

It had a unique appearance, with gears on the walls and roof and countless pipes that might have been chimneys stretching out above. It was incredibly conspicuous when compared to the other nearby research facilities, and the sign hanging on the entrance read [Andagi's Magical Weapons Development Site.]

"This place hasn't really changed, has it. I think it's even more chaotic than before."

"It's an interesting house, isn't it?"

"Pyui pyui~" [It looks amazing from the outside.]

Gawiik, Karen and Kou who was on top of Karen's head had come to this facility. They looked up at the building that appeared as if it were some odd combination of unorthodox art. Meanwhile, a young woman wearing a white lab coat and carrying a wooden bucket appeared from the entrance.

"Haah, it's really no good to use the water supply equipment that the professor made rather than regular equipment... Huh?"

"Sarta-chan, good morning!"

"Karen-chan! And Gawiik-san, too!"

"Hey, is the professor here?"

She was an apprentice magical craftsman belonging to a magical research group, but she willingly worked as Professor Andagi's assistant, and that fact alone made her a relatively respect-worthy person.

The standard of living in the imperial capital was quite developed compared to that of other cities due to the advancement of magical technology. Waterways and sewers were maintained in every part of the city, and products such as water service

equipment and magical cooking tools were being sold.

Even lighting devices operated on magic, and the use of fuels like firewood or oil was rare.

When they were shown their way inside the facility, what they saw was close to what they expected.

It was not so messy that they could not find space on the floor to walk. But like long, narrow pieces of contemporary art, numerous pipes were entangled across the tops of the research desks lined up in a row. Faintly sparkling crystal balls rested on stands nearby.

Next to those were plants with poisonous-looking patterns with blooming flowers, and on top of the table on the other side, there were a lot of research flasks filled with liquids of various colors, bubbling away.

On the ceiling were countless ventilation fans, spinning noisily. It seemed that if these stopped spinning, it would be a disaster. Kou looked upon the sight of this completely disorganized, chaotic research room in amazement.

Sarta called out to the Professor, who was in one of the inner rooms.

“Professor~? Gawiik-san have come to see you~”

“Oh?”

The voice that answered was a little hoarse. The man who poked his head out from the far room was of such an age that he could not take offense to being called an old man, dressed in a white lab coat. This man was Professor Andagi, magical craftsman of the magical weapons development department of the government’s magical research organization.

“Oh! It’s been a long time, kid -”

“It’s good to see you.”

“You look like you’re doing well, Professor~”

“Your breasts are nice as usual, Karen, did they get bigger again? Kuwakakakaka!”

Professor Andagi cackled as he reached his rough, bony hand towards Karen’s chest, but his assistant, Sarta, slapped it away. It was just the same as the last time they had come here, and Gawiik laughed as he shrugged and thought, “he’s still fine and healthy.”



“Oh, an intelligent being separate from the collective consciousness, you say?”

“Pyuriri~”[Hello~]

The atmosphere was more serious now, and the messenger bird Kou sat on a table with Professor Andagi, his assistant Sarta, Gawiik and Karen surrounding him.

“In your thoughts, what exactly do you think you might be?”

“I don’t really know.”

“Hmm, perhaps you were an adventurer in your past life... You have no trouble possessing demonic beasts, correct?”

“That’s right, I didn’t feel any big differences between the creatures called demonic beasts and regular animals.”

“I see...”

“Did you figure something out?”

“No idea.”

“.. Is that right...”

Gawiik had expected that this might be the case, but he dropped his shoulders with disappointment as he nodded his head seriously. Saying that Kou needed to be researched in depth, the Professor expressed his interest in Kou’s ability.

Researching his ability to possess and control any animal or demonic beast as well as

his ability to store objects in another dimension could lead to the greatest discovery or invention of the era.

“As far as he’s told me, there seems to be no limit on the capacity of his storage, this method of storing things in another dimension... I would certainly like to know how it works.”

“Well, he himself doesn’t really seem to understand it either.”

“Yeah, I’m only aware that I can do it, but I don’t know how it works.”

“I see. Hmm, we’ll look into that when we have the chance, but for now... Sarta.”

“Yes, Professor.”

“That thing that’s sealed in the warehouse... Do you think we can use it?”

“Eh, that thing, huh? I wonder... Indeed, if he can possess any demonic beast, then it might be possible for that, too.”

Sarta considered Professor Andagi’s serious question, then answered with a nod. The Professor answered her with a nod of his own, and a suspicious smile crept onto his face. Knowing he was planning something again, Gawiik interjected.

“Professor, let me just tell you, Kou is one of our members. I’ve introduced him to you, but I have no intention of letting you use him for some weird experiment, alright?”

“It’s not weird! My research experiments are noble, unique experiments that get results that no other methods would achieve!”

“Don’t call your own experiments noble... It’s embarrassing.”

“Rather than it being unique, you’re the unique one... In the wrong way.”

The professor’s only reaction to the comments from his old friend and his assistant was to get more excited. Karen laughed while stuffing her face with tea cakes. This was a scene that was just like the old times in this research facility.

[They get along well, don’t they?]

## CHAPTER 20

# THE ABNORMAL PROFESSOR'S MAGICAL SOLDIER

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Professor Andagi was part of the magical weapons research and development department, but he never worked in the normal research facilities. Instead, he spent all his time holed up here, in this special laboratory built solely for his use. He called his creations unique, but they always went wrong somewhere, causing problems by going berserk or exploding. His ideas, concepts and the technical ability he possessed were incredible, but many of his inventions were completely useless.

But the emperor had taken a liking to the professor, so he allowed the professor to conduct research as he liked.

“Hey Professor, you’re friends with the king, right?”

“Hmm, well, he was a prince back then. In the era of the previous king, he often came to visit my research room.”

“Yeah, people have always said that the kings of this country are a bit odd.”

“The story about the barrier strongbox is famous, isn’t it?”

*TLN: The barrier strongbox is referring to the safe from which Kou stole incriminating documents in chapter 12. It was previously translated as "barrier vault". Credit to ArKain for noticing this.*

Looking towards the storehouse at the back of the laboratory, Kou spotted suits of armor lined up on both sides of the passageway. The suits of armor had the strong glow of magical energy in each piece of the armor, and they were connected to each other by single threads of magic. As Kou flew from one helmet to another, following the threads of magic, the professor gave him a warning.

“Those are experimental products that I thought I could use to replace the city’s guards. Don’t poke them too much, alright?”

The professor had recently been absorbed in the development of new magical weapons that could be used as servants. Not living summoned beasts, but artificial

ones with both magical technology and fighting power. It was common to carry around catalysts for summoning, so that one could conveniently summon familiars wherever he or she wished, but it came at the cost of the summoned beast having a limited operation time.

The professor's experiments involved combining the Golem technique, the original method of summoning beasts, and the methods used to tame animals to have them do one's bidding. As a result, he created a new technique.

He developed magical soldiers with the flexibility of summoned beasts and the stability of tamed animals. The suits of armor lined up in the corridor were the result of his research.

"The command system is unstable, so they go berserk."

"Pyuii~"[I see~]

"I'd like to point out that you shouldn't leave such dangerous things lined up like that."

"There's no such thing as a safe summoned beast, anyway. Kuwakakakaka!"

Incidentally, the three times that the magical soldiers had gone out of control, the Knights' Order of the army had to step in to suppress them. Even so, the King was delighted to see their power.

"Anyway, what are you planning on having Kou do?"

"Oh it's nothing, just a small present."

Gawiik held in his urge to point out that one would not call something given as part of an agreement a present. As they reached the storage room in the back, Sarta held up a pendant over the door like a key. The semi-transparent film-like barrier in front of the door disappeared. It seemed to be the same mechanism as the barrier strongbox.

Behind the door was what appeared to be an impressive-looking suit of armor stored inside a coffin-like container, buried in magical sealing equipment.

"This is... Another one of your magical soldiers, isn't it?"

“Yes, but this fellow has different hair color from the others. How about it, Kou, can you see the hole that you mentioned earlier?”

“I can see it. Is this armor some kind of living creature?”

“I suppose it is a kind of artificial life form. Well, the other magical soldiers are artificial life forms too, using the mechanism of summoned beasts as their base. But this one has been constructed from flesh.”

To maintain a summoned beast’s form and ability to understand orders, a magical catalyst would be used to grant it an artificial personality that governs the beast’s mind. A significant amount of magical energy would be used to create this beast.

The experimental magical soldiers that the professor had created used suits of armor in place of the body that is normally maintained through magic, and to animate the armor, he used magical vessels that provided a constant supply of magical energy, so that there was almost no limit on the time that the soldier could be used.

Though the soldiers’ operation time was lengthened by this method, various problems within the summoned beast formula had surfaced. The magical soldiers that had gone berserk were given armor bodies instead of bodies made from magic, and could not sense that the armor was a part of themselves. Whenever they tried to move a part of their body, there was an overflow of magic and they went out of control.

Even simple movements such as moving an arm or taking a step were done with enough force to kill a person. The suits of armor had collapsed, unable to endure such movements.

What he tried making next was to construct a small part of the body through magic, enough to allow the soldiers to sense their own bodies. But within a day or two, the artificial personalities of the soldiers began to break down and enter an identity crisis.

Most of the soldiers’ personalities disappeared after they broke down, but some felt an urge to destroy things and went out of control, and this was one of the occasions where the Knights’ Order had to step in.

He tried making adjustments like simplifying the artificial personalities or limiting their thoughts, but such methods would require the soldiers’ masters to be a high level magic-user that could delicately fine-tune these factors, so it would not be practical to

use in real battle situations.

The professor changed his way of thinking, and went back to the original Golem technique. He developed a Golem that could only understand the most fundamental, basic commands, but in exchange, it had a powerful body. The Golem sealed here in this back storage room was the composite Golem that he produced.

“I used the flesh and blood of various Monsters as materials to build this one. It can gather magical power on its own, without needing a magical vessel to supply it.”

In other words, this was a living suit of armor that acted as its own magical vessel to maintain its body.

“Theoretically, it can operate semi-permanently.”

“So you did something crazy again... I’m surprised you got the approval to do it.”

“Technically, it’s not approved.”

“ ... ”

Gawiik had nothing to say in response to this, and the professor explained the problems with this composite Golem. This problem was less of a problem and more of a fatal flaw. Golems were originally designed in a way that they cannot process complex commands. All of the composite Golem’s consciousness was constantly in use by the active processes of its artificial life, such as repairing and maintaining its own body. As a result, it was unable to process any further external commands.

A normal Golem used around 60% of its consciousness for the maintenance of its body, and the remaining 40% could be used for things like following orders. But the unorthodox body of the composite golem required close to 90% of its consciousness to maintain, leaving it unable to do anything else.

“Huh? So doesn’t that make it a suit of armor that just lives, but does nothing else?”

“Hmm, you’re exactly right. It’s just like an expensive, living doll that could be hiding a wonderful amount of power.”

He had also thought of embedding an artificial personality into the Golem using a

catalyst, but the potential power of this Golem would not be on the level of a mere magical soldier, and it would be far too much of a problem if it were to go berserk. He had decided to keep the Golem sealed until he had stable control over it.

“I see, so by having Kou be the one moving the Golem, you could safely test its abilities.”

“Indeed! So, how about it, Kou? If you help out in my experiment, I wouldn’t mind giving you this composite body, you know?”

“Pyuripyuriri~”[I’ll give it a try~]

During this long, difficult conversation, Karen had been rocking back and forth, dozing off. The messenger bird Kou hopped off her head and landed on the shoulder of the sealed composite body, and attempted to possess it.

“Sarta, turn off the sealing equipment.”

“Yes, Professor!”

The composite body had been in a seated position with its back rigid and straight. As the restrictions on its movement disappeared, its shoulders dropped and its back curled forward. In the next moment, it suddenly raised its head and stood up.

“Oh! It moved!”

“It seems he managed to possess it, doesn’t it?”

“Wow!”

[It feels like I’m really used to it already... Maybe it’s because this thing had no will of its own to begin with?]

With a body nearly two meters tall, buried in sealing equipment, the composite body seemed too big for the small storage room. Standing in a hunched posture, Kou tried raising his arms lightly and testing the movement of his fingers.

“Still, that was easier than I thought. It isn’t spitting out smoke or launching any magical shockwave attacks.”

“It’s your own creation, Professor..”

“No, no, I meant that Kou’s possession is something of a foreign interference, so I imagined there might be some side effects or such.”

“Well, Kou isn’t some parasite...”

But Kou’s possession did not cause such large changes, as could be seen in the messenger bird. In any case, Professor Andagi’s unapproved product, this composite Golem that had been sealed away for so long because of its various problems, was finally able to see the light of day thanks to Kou.

“Would you mind doing some experiments with movement for today?”

Andagi’s magical weapons development facility was in a plaza separate from the other magical research facilities.

This plaza and research laboratory was built solely for the professor’s use. This was partially due to the special treatment that Professor Andagi received from the emperor, but mainly as a step to avoid collateral damage to the other research facilities from his inventions.

The gears on the walls turned and the bell attached to the roof of the facility rang out, signaling that Professor Andagi was beginning a weapons test, and the nearby research facility that faced the plaza immediately put up their magical defenses. This was measure to prevent their walls from being destroyed each time a weapons test was run.

The research Magicians of the nearby facility that was now covered in a faint defensive barrier peered out into the plaza through the windows. Standing next to Professor Andagi and his assistant Sarta, they saw a man who looked like an adventurer, and a glamorous woman with a messenger bird perched on her shoulder, who also looked to be an adventurer. They asked each other,[Who are they?]

“That looks like a Golem to me... Is it a magical soldier?”

“He made a new one? I wonder if he managed to solve the control problems of the artificial personality.”

“No, if I’m not mistaken, he said he was planning to make a Golem with a focus on maneuverability.”

The Magicians worried about whether the Golem would run out of control again, barging into the other research facilities. Perhaps thinking the same, the Knights’ Order were on standby at the entrance to the plaza after hearing that a new magical soldier experiment was about to happen.

“Kuwakakakaka! They’ve noticed that it’s looking promising this time!”

“It just looks like they’re being cautious.”

“Ufufu, it’s almost always like this, anyway.”

“You’re pretty popular, aren’t you, Professor?”

Kou, inside the composite body, had been carried outside on a cart, along with all of the sealing equipment. As he made sure that all of the pipes that had connected the body to the sealing equipment were detached, he slowly set his feet on the ground and stood up. Compared to the times he had possessed the demon dog or the horned bear, he had a much more profound control over his body.

“How does it feel?”

“I’m already really used to it.”

“Mhmm, then would you kindly start trying to walk around?”

“Then I’ll just walk around in a circle around the plaza, alright?”

The suit of armor that looked heavy on first glance had surprisingly light footsteps. Kou walked from the front of the laboratory to the end of the plaza, and from there, he gradually increased his speed to a half-jog.

Unlike summoned beasts, which had some degree of basic intelligence, Golems were designed to only obey simple commands. It was normal for them to have clumsy movements and slow reactions, and even the longest-operating of the Professor’s experimental magical soldiers had not demonstrated such smooth movements.

It seemed that the professor's intention of creating a golem focused on maneuverability was true, and as they saw this new Golem magical soldier increasing its speed to that of a running horse, the research Magicians praised it.

"Wow, it's fast, it's fast!"

"Hmm... That large built and that speed are definitely dangerous."

"Its balance of its movement is quite satisfactory."

"It looks like he's moving it as if it were his own body."

Karen was jumping up and down in the air while clapping, and next to him, Gawiik was trying to judge how strong the composite body would be in a battle. As Professor Andagi checked to see that there were no problems with the operation of each individual part of the composite body, Sarta analyzed the extent of the control of Kou's possession, judging from the smoothness of his movements.

The testing of the composite Golem's movements under Kou's possession was a success.

As Kou ran around the plaza, he had a strange feeling about this body that he could move so easily as if it really were his own.

[Hmm, something's strange... What could it be?]

After running a lap around the plaza, he looked left towards the professor's lab where Karen and the others were. Straight ahead of him was the entrance to the road that led to the other research facilities. As Kou saw the members of the Knights' Order waiting there, one of them removed a piece of his own armor that was not attached properly, and reattached it. Suddenly, Kou thought of it.

[Ah! Could it be -]

Bracing his legs and coming to a sudden halt, Kou half-extended his spirit form out from the composite body, wanting to test out what he had just thought of.

As expected after seeing Kou's composite body suddenly stop moving, Professor Andagi and Sarta began to rush over to see if something had gone wrong. Gawiik and Karen followed behind them. The research Magicians from the research facility and the members of the Knights' Order were on guard, fearing that it might go berserk, after all.

"What's wrong, is there some kind of problem -"

As the professor called out to him, the huge body of the composite Golem suddenly vanished in front of his eyes. Professor Andagi and Sarta suddenly stopped running. Gawiik quickly looked around, checking their surroundings, while Karen stared blankly at the space Kou's composite body had been standing with her head tilted sideways.

The messenger bird that had been perched on Karen's shoulder let out a "pyui~" as it flew out and landed on the spot that the composite body had disappeared. It spread its wings again, and this time it flew close to the research facility. As it raised its wings and flew higher into the air, the golem reappeared with a loud thunk as it landed on the ground.

"W-what?"

"Teleport...? No, is it spatial movement...?"

"No, that's not it. I think probably... Kou and that messenger bird brought it here."

"Ooh~ Pii-chan, that's amazing!"

When Kou had entered the composite body, unlike when he possessed animals or Monsters, he did not get the feeling that he was manipulating the body according to his will. Instead, he felt like he was simply wearing a costume, and moving around as he wished.

Rather than possessing the body, it felt like he was wearing the body like clothes. Though the composite golem was an artificial life form, it was a suit of armor without a soul. Therefore, he realized that he should be able to store it like any other tool in his other dimension.

[Wow, this will be convenient to store and carry around with me.]

Kou thought nothing of it other than [That was a great idea.] But the research Magicians from the research facility and the members of the Knights' Order who were watching the professor's experiment could only assume that it was some kind of spatial movement. They were dumbfounded at the Golem's teleportation through space and time.

# CHAPTER 21

## THE PROFESSOR'S GIFT

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The armor worn by the members of the Knights' Order of the Grandahl's army had anti-magic properties applied to it and also boosted the wearer's physical ability slightly. Their weapons were also enchanted with various effects to fit the user's fighting style. They were equipped very well, even compared to other countries. They have repelled invasions throughout history from the neighboring country of Na'Hatome, a country that took pride in its military strength.

As the sun set, a giant cast a long shadow over a single platoon of the Knights' Order in the imperial capital city Tortoluse's magical research facility district. The armored giant was pulsating like a living creature. Next to it was an old man with a questionable air about him, grinning broadly. He swung the back of his lab coat around like a cape as he held his hand up.

"Now, show them your power!" (Andagi)

"Voooooh~" (Kou)

A deep growl came from the vocal cords of the armored giant and magical power gathered in its gauntlet-like hands. The growing mass of magical power flowed in a certain way and it began to weave its magical effect. Kou then aimed in the direction of the Knights' Order platoon and released it.

The entire area was engulfed in an instantaneous flash of light, bathing the Knights' Order platoon as well as the nearby Gawiik, Karen and Sarta, restoring all of their stamina.

"Wow, that's really amazing."

"I don't feel tired anymore!"

"The way it focused its magical power can only be described as splendid."

As he heard the knights' voices of approval of this restoration magic, Professor Andagi

shouted, his hands shaking.

“WROOOOONG! I was imagining something shinier with a BOOM, do you know what I mean?!” (Andagi)

“Ugoh?”

Sarta tried her best to calm the shouting professor. The armored giant Kou tilted his head and produced letters of light across his chest, asking[What’s the matter?]

The professor had suggested that producing messages on paper every time Kou wanted to communicate might be bothersome, so Sarta had taught Kou a decorative magic which allowed him to produce letters of light in the air.

Incidentally, when Kou did this in just his spirit form letters of light simply appeared suspended in mid-air.

The restoration magic was something that Lef had taught him. It was a different, more basic magic than healing magic, being insufficient to repair injuries. However, he had weaved the spell’s formula well and it was reasonably effective.

They had finished the movement tests during the day and Kou had explained the mysterious teleportation of the composite body was him storing it in his other dimension. Upon hearing this explanation, the professor decided to find out the requirements for what could and could not be stored, saying that it would be help in finding out how the exactly this other dimension worked. They found that Kou was unable to store a living fish in the other dimension.

During this, the professor learned that Kou could use magic in a special way and taught him the decorative magic to smooth communications. Since the Knights’ Order was here, Kou had decided to test his magic ability from the possessed composite body, so he included them in the experiment.

And this led to a conflict in the professor.

“You don’t know what romance is, to not know even a single magical attack!” (Andagi)

“But it’d be bad to attack the Knights’ Order.” (Gawiik)

“It’s not a problem, these knights’ armor has anti-magic enchantments and whatnot, it would be okay to blow them around a little bit.” (Andagi)

Kou had confirmed the great power hidden in the composite body, so he was a little troubled by the professor’s complaints. Gawiik asked the professor what he was planning to do if Kou turned out to be dangerous, having given him such a powerful body so easily.

“Hmm? If Karen-chan is holding him, there is no way that he could be dangerous. Kuwakakakaka!” (Andagi)

The professor said that and laughed. Knowing that the professor knew his team members well, Gawiik also relaxed.

“Well, it is fine. Kou, from today, that body is yours.” (Andagi)

“Voruru~”“Thanks!”

“Anyhow, I shall make sure to go through the procedure to register you with the Adventurers' Association. If I use my name, it will be done immediately.” (Andagi)

“Eh, register Kou?” (Gawiik)

Gawiik’s eyes opened wide in surprise. Even Sarta, who was used to the professor’s flexible, creative way of thinking, voiced her concerns. She could not understand why he was thinking to register Kou, an existence surrounded by incomprehensible mysteries, as an adventurer.

“He has come all this way with a firm sense of self. He is even aware that he was originally a human. Aren’t you?” (Andagi)

They did not know what exactly Kou really was, but decided that it would be convenient for him to have an identity other than just his name,[Kou.]The professor fabricated a background for Kou to register him. According to this background, Kou was originally an adventurer who had lost his own real body while exploring a dungeon and had his consciousness transferred to this composite body.

“Now you can go and be an adventurer, or achieve things as a mercenary, and let the name of the magical technician Andagi roar out across the world!” (Andagi)

“Vovoooh~” “Me, an adventurer?”

Seeing the professor and his companions in discussion, the Knights' Order members realized that the experiments were over and began to leave.

Meanwhile, Kou and Gawiik exchanged looks as they heard the professor's unexpected suggestion. If Kou was registered at the Adventurers' Association with this composite body, he would have a distinct body as his own identity and would have his own place in this world.

Karen walked in front of Kou, looked up at him and asked.

“Are you okay with that?” (Karen)

She spoke in her usual tone of voice, but her words were serious. Everyone had a questioning look on their faces as Karen asked this question, but Kou could read the intention in her words and understood the meaning of her question. Shining letters appeared across the composition body's chest.

“Yeah, I've been borrowing bodies up until now, and this body is one that's been given to me, but it's definitely... my body.”

“Okay, then I'll call you Kou-chan from now on, alright?” (Karen)

Despite all of the affection that Karen had displayed towards Kou, she had never actually called him “Kou” a single time. This was a kind of rule that Karen had decided herself after a lot of thought.

Both his name and new body were things that were given to him, but they were not borrowed. So as Kou received a body that represented his own identity, she called him “Kou” for the first time.

“If something goes wrong with the body, you should come back here to get it examined. And I'll be having you help with my experiments while you're in the imperial capital!” (Andagi)



A few days since they had arrived in the imperial capital city.

Gawiik's group had begun preparations for the upcoming fighting tournament, deciding on which members to use and working hard to gather information.

While Kou's adventurer registration procedure was being processed, he was helping with the professor's magical weapon research and development experiments and exploring the dungeon in the imperial capital city. The dungeon in the city was a huge underground ruin, used in the army's training exercises, and required permission to enter it.

Various experimental animals had been released into the dungeon, so the monsters that appeared in it were different from those of dungeons in other cities. Because there were fewer belongings left by dead adventurers compared to other dungeons that could be used freely the amount of money or items that could be obtained by exploring this dungeon was limited.

The most common objective of exploring the earlier floors was to gather raw materials, such as the secretions that the experimental animals scattered around and the magical plants that grew in the dungeon's environment. These were useful ingredients to make potions.

The dungeon exploration permit they had obtained through the professor only allowed them to explore the first and second floors. Kou was happy to finally be able to do his own adventuring activities. Karen, Lef and Franche took turns to pair up with him each day and he enjoyed hunting and gathering materials while exploring the dungeon.

"You got it, Kou? We're looking for Earth Pulse Grass that glows blue. The red stuff is impure, so leave it."

"Vovooh~" "I've got it."

Today, he came to an underground lake with Franche to gather a grass that grew around it. The earth pulse grass was a magical plant that absorbed the dungeon's magical power that could purify magical water.

From the outside, Franche the medicine specialist and Kou the composite golem seemed to make an unstable pair. In most situations, using medicine during battle required getting some distance from the enemy first.

Franche was not suited to fighting. With Kou in charge of attacking at the front while Franche took the role of healing from the back, getting some distance from the enemy would put Kou right next to Franche, exposing him to danger.

However, Kou could in fact both heal and attack, so they had an unusual arrangement of roles where Franche commanded Kou, who protected him like a bodyguard.

“It seems you have a convenient storage method, so you don’t need a bag. As we harvest the grass I’ll bundle it up and hand it to you.” (Franche)

“Vovoooooh~” “That makes sense~”

As they gathered the grass, they lightly tied it into bundles, put it in a pouch and covered it with flowers soaked in magical water.

The requests that Kou had first accepted after becoming an adventurer were mostly to do with gathering materials. This kind of exploration that he was doing with Franche could one day be done by Kou alone and he could be more useful.



The main road of the imperial capital city where the central branch of the Adventurers' Association was located had a high class armor store and a cheap restaurant. The higher-ranked members of Gawiik’s group were gathered in a bar on the same road to discuss the upcoming preliminary round of the fighting tournament. Kou had possessed a cat from the town and was sitting on Karen’s lap.

“Kou, do you want to participate in the tournament too?” (Gawiik)

“Meow?” (Kou the cat)

Kou’s official registration as an adventurer was complete, so Gawiik suggested that he participate as one of his group’s members. As he had only been registered yesterday, his empty record of achievements did not meet the requirements to enter the tournament as an individual. But it was possible for him to participate in the group

battles.

“Daido and I are going to be fighting in the individual matches, but the captain, vice-captain, staff officer and Karen will be fighting in the group battles.” (Reaper)

“Dis is still inexperienced, and Viido is not suited for it.” (Gawiik)

The battles were for groups with three to six members. Dis was still just a candidate to be a higher-ranked member and still lacked the ability to fight in a large tournament like this. The rules of the tournament favored attackers, so Viido’s specialized defensive style was not suited for this fight.

“Summoned beasts are allowed, and it would be reassuring to have you there.” (Gawiik)

“Meow, meow!” “Sounds interesting!”

“Kou-chan, you’re participating?” (Karen)

“Meow~” “I want to give it a try.”

The town cat wrapped its tail around Karen’s neck as she rubbed its soft, chubby neck while Kou expressed his desire to participate in the tournament. He did not particularly enjoy fighting, but he enjoyed doing things with his companions and it would be interesting to compete for something, so Kou was excited.

“Right, so the members participating in the group battle are me, Mandel, Lef, Karen and Kou.” (Gawiik)

Deciding to practise teamwork and battle formations and come up with battle tactics to make the best use of Kou’s abilities starting tomorrow, they adjourned the meeting. Everyone was free to return to their rooms or continue drinking after they left their seats. Suddenly, Gawiik turned his head back, as if remembering something.

“Oh yeah, Kou, the professor said that he wanted to do the next experiment at night.” (Gawiik)

“Meow-myaa? Meow meow-myaa meooow-myaa~” “Is that right? Okay, I’ll head to the professor’s place at night.”

“Aaah~ Town-cat-Kou is so cuuute!” (Karen)

“Migya~” (Kou)

The meowing cat was too cute for Karen to resist and she hugged it tightly. Kou could not breathe as he was squeezed tightly against her voluptuous chest.

## CHAPTER 22

# LOST BUTTERFLY

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A slightly gaudy atmosphere hung in the private parlor; the room was lined with luxurious furniture and had a less-than-modest feel. A gorgeous lady and an old man in a white robe were facing each other in here. The lady twirled a long smoking pipe, dropping the ashes to the ashtray as she spoke.

“I have to decline; I cannot allow my girls to do such dangerous things.” (Lady)

“No no, there will be almost no danger in this. It’s just that it is still not clear whether it will function or not.” (Andagi)

The professor produced cylindrical stacks of golden Guild coins onto the table, saying “I’m willing to pay this much, so will you please recommend someone.” There were three stacks of ten gold coins each: enough to build a house with a garden in the lower area of the Capital city.

“No matter how much money you stack up, we-” (Lady)

“I’ll do it!”

The lady’s attitude did not change even when faced with such sums of money and she tried to turn the old man away. From behind, the servant girl who was preparing the tea raised her voice.

“Saya, what are you saying...!” (Lady)

“Ooh, you will do it?” (Andagi)

“Hold it, you can’t just go ahead and do the talking! I will not let this girl do it.” (Lady)

“Please! I really need the money!” (Saya)



An armored giant walked down the street coming from the magical research facilities. It was a common sight these days, so the guards nearby just thought [Ah, there's another experiment today] while watching him and nobody challenged him. It was strange for him to be visiting at night, but he was not a suspicious person so nobody paid him any attention.

Before long, the giant was in the plaza in front of the road, entering the laboratory that was more like a chaotic collection of pipes and gears.

“Vovooh-Uvooh” “Professor, I’m here-”

“Ah, Kou. The professor is out somewhere right now, so just wait a bit, okay?” (Sarta)

They were to do an experiment with the composite body’s spare functions and apparently the professor had gone to the experiment site to negotiate. After they had waited for a while a carriage approached the plaza in front of the laboratory; an extravagant, black-lined carriage. The professor leaned out of the carriage window and called out.

“Oh, you are already here, Kou. I know it’s sudden but we are leaving for the city. Sarta is also ready, I presume?” (Andagi)

“Yes, Professor.” (Sarta)

Sarta came out with a big bag. She sat herself beside the professor inside the carriage and it began moving forward slowly.

“It might attract attention, but this is a perfect experiment to test your ability to keep up with this carriage at night. Could you follow the carriage, for publicity’s sake?”

“Voooh” “Okay~”

Kou ran alongside the carriage, making sure to stay a little behind the cart so as to not to scare the horses. The sounds of the horseshoes and carriage wheels on the pavement were accompanied by the Golem’s footsteps.

Before long, they passed through the gate to the government district and got down at

a neighborhood near the castle. Even at night, there were plenty of people in the imperial capital's main road. They continued down the road, attracting some attention to themselves.

They arrived at a large building far down another street of the main road. Looking up, they could see a lot of windows covered by heavy curtains and light was visible from behind them. It was surrounded with an atmosphere that was too extravagant to be just another inn near the main road.

At the front of the building stood a large, half-open door of red-purple color. A lady wearing an expensive, revealing yellow dress was standing by the wall, calling out seductively to the men passing down the street. The sign above the door read [House of Butterflies.]

“Voooh?” “What is this place?”

“It’s a brothel. Well, we probably can’t enter through the front door, so let’s just go by the back door. This way.” (Andagi)

Professor Andagi stepped out of the carriage, followed by his assistant Sarta. They started walking to the back of the building with Kou following them. The [House of Butterflies] was a place in Grandahl that would be found in any developed city. It was a legally managed brothel half-run by the government.

The girls working here were called “Butterfly Ladies”. Those attracting customers from the entrance of the House were the lower class girls, called “Yellow Butterflies”.

“Today’s experiment is to test whether the reproduction function of the composite body is working properly.” (Andagi)

“Now that Kou has a physical body, we can observe whether he is able to feel sexual desire.” (Sarta)

“Voooh...” [Sexual desire...]

“Well, even if we call it an organ, it is actually just a tube that has been attached. It has no function other than excretion.” (Andagi)

As it was an artificial body made of special materials, it seemed that the composite

body was equipped with all kinds of functions in order to allow various experiments. Whenever he was asked why he added genital organs to golems or summoned beasts, the professor always retorted [Because it is needed.]

“There are a lot of ways to use it, even for an artificial life-form.”

“Well, normally there wouldn’t be anyone who’d want to test it with a Golem that was made for fighting.”

“Voooh~” “I see

Kou understood the Professor and Sarta’s thoughts; they would be able to obtain information regarding summoned beasts outside their use in battle. Research and development regarding female summoned beasts were going quite well, but the study of male summoned beasts was not so popular. It was just like the professor to try to make advances in an unpopular field.

When they arrived at the back of the building, there was an entrance large enough to fit a carriage through. There stood a mature lady in a simple-cut shining silver dress with a long pipe in her hand, blowing smoke from her mouth. She was the mistress of the house who managed all the “Butterfly Ladies.” Everyone knew her as Madame Salina.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. Has the room been prepared?”

“\*Whistles\* Is that him? The living Golem you mentioned?”

“The body might be a composite Golem, but there is a respectable human inside. His name is Kou.”

“Hmm... A bit big, isn’t he...”

Even her calm behavior was seductive; Salina observed Kou through a sidelong glance. She threw questions like [Is it really alright?] and [If something were to happen, will you take responsibility?] at the professor while blowing out smoke from her mouth.

“Haah, seriously... That girl, no matter how good the pay is, she shouldn’t have accepted that kind of work.”

Salina murmuring discontentedly with a puff of smoke. Kou seemed frozen in place, and she beckoned him over with a finger as she walked towards the center of the building, her backless dress exposing her captivating skin.

“Alright, let us go, Kou.” (Andagi)

“First, we need to clean your body.” (Salina)

“Voooh” “Okay.”



A corner of the storehouse had already been partitioned off to be used as a laboratory. There, a girl in “Tea Butterfly” outfit was nervously waiting for the Magical Technician Professor Andagi and the experimental Golem to arrive. The Tea Butterfly outfit showed that she was still in training and not yet allowed to take any customers.

The reason the girl had accepted becoming the test subject in the composite body’s sexual intercourse experiment was the sheer size of the reward. If she got that sum of money offered by the professor, she could leave the House of Butterflies and even buy herself a house in the lower part of the city.

Combined with the amount she had saved until now, there would be plenty of money to live a modest life in this world.

“Salina-san has done a lot for me, but in the end I want a normal life... Okay! I have to work hard!”

The girl had been clenching both of her fists to keep her confidence, but they loosened as the Giant golem entered the room.

“... I-it will be alright, right...?”

Following the professor into the makeshift laboratory and seeing the girl sitting on the pedestal that was there in place of a bed, Kou had a feeling of unease. Her facial features were shallow, clearly different from those of the people of Grandahl. Her appearance was racially different, but they were somehow familiar to him.

“This is the girl who has agreed to assist us with this experiment, she’s an apprentice

Butterfly... Eh, what was your name?"

"It's Sayaka. Everyone calls me Saya."

"Vovooh... Voh?" "Good evening.....Hmm?"

The black-haired girl stood up from the pedestal as she greeted them. Kou felt there was something familiar about the girl's name, too; like some kind of déjà vu. "What could it be?" thought Kou, tilting his head. The professor then instructed him to climb onto the pedestal and began preparations for the experiment.

Though it was an experiment, they had to observe and measure the flow of magic power in the composite body before the actual act. The measurements would later would be used in the development of future summoned beasts.

"Saya? Your face seems pale. If you've changed your mind, we can stop here." (Salina)

"No, I'm alright." (Saya)

Madame Salina raised her voice in concern, but Sayaka gave her a firm smile.

The temporary laboratory was lined with devices for measuring magical power connected to the composite body by several tubes. Other than Professor Andagi and Sarta, there were Healers employed by the House of Butterflies standing by just in case, and Salina had a duty to watch as mistress of the house.

Sayaka would have to do this deed with a Golem under the watch of the two researchers, the Healers and her manager. She was embarrassed and finally felt some hesitation. But if she let this chance slip away, she would one day enter the lifestyle of a "Butterfly Lady", having to take customers.

For now, Madame Salina's kindness allowed her to do normal servants' work, and sometimes keep the stupid prince company when he came to visit. But one day she would be promoted to a Yellow Butterfly and have to stand at the front of the building with the other ladies to draw customers in.

"Eei, what's the use in feeling depressed about it now? Fight\*!"

*TLN\*: A common phrase used by Japanese people to pump themselves/each other up*

Sayaka whispered to herself words that people in this country would not understand, words that likely did not even originate in this world. The Golem connected to the machines by pipes responded to her words.

“Vooh, uvovooh?” “Just now, what did you say?”

“Eh?”

The Golem groaned as questions appeared in shining letters appear around its chest. There were letters floating there earlier, too, when they were exchanging greetings. Sayaka understood that he was trying to talk to her, but Sayaka was poor at reading and writing these letters. She tilted her head, unable to understand the meaning of the words.

“Err... Well that’s a bit of a problem... I can’t really understand the writing of this place...”

She turned to the Professor and the others near the wall for help, but the next line of letters made her freeze.

“Japanese?! That’s hiragana... No way, you know Japanese?”

“As I thought, you can understand these characters.”

It was not that Kou was merely picking up on the emotions in Sayaka’s words; he could understand the meaning of the words directly. Even he himself was confused when he realized this.

Rather than having understood the meaning of words in an unknown language, the words of a language that he should not understand had been mixed in with words that he did know. So he questioned the meaning of her whispers without thinking.

Though he was still uncertain, he tried speaking to her with letters from another world that he was quite sure she would understand and she responded clearly.

Those words were apparently called Japanese.

“Hmm, what exactly is the meaning of this?” (Andagi)

Seeing the experimental subject and Kou having a conversation in a language he does not understand and letters he has never seen before, Professor Andagi turned and scratched his head. Sarta turned to Madame Salina for an explanation, but Salina just shrugged.

“Is she a Sorcerer or a Priest?”

“I don’t really understand, but I’m sure she’s not anything like that. I don’t know the meaning of those words either, I sometimes hear her whispering to herself in that language.”

Now that they had confirmed that it was not some magical language used to gain control over Golems or summoned beasts, the professor prompted Sarta to call out to Kou. Sayaka, who had been enthusiastically chatting Kou, returned to her normal self and looked down, as if embarrassed. Kou exchanged a surprising piece of information regarding this girl.

“A visitor from another world, you say?” (Andagi)

“Yeah. It’s complicated and hard to explain, so I haven’t said anything about it before. But I think I was once in the same place.”



Sayaka had arrived in this world around a year ago. She was involved in a plane crash in her original world and the next thing she knew, she was in this world. She woke up in the imperial capital’s dungeon, was chased by monsters and then rescued by the Knights’ Order members who were training there.

The unarmed girl in unfamiliar clothing was not in possession of a permit to enter the dungeon nor any documents to indicate who she was. She could not understand their words and an investigation ensued. She was deemed to not be a threat to Grandahl and categorized as a victim. She was then kindly accepted as a citizen of the imperial capital.

Of course, she had no relatives in this world and she possessed neither the strength nor knowledge to be an adventurer. Even her communication was in broken speech at best so she was unable to find a decent job. With no other options, she came to the House of Butterflies, where any girl could work as long as she was young and healthy

and started her career as a Butterfly Lady.

Since she had been unable to properly explain that she had come from another world, it was thought that perhaps she had been sent here from some distant country that was as advanced in magical technology as Grandahl in some transfer accident.

“Hmm, this is all very interesting. Kou, it is troublesome for you to have to translate back and forth, so would you please write it down and hand it to me later? The experiment will be canceled for now.”

The Professor instructed Kou to continue his chat with Sayaka and keep questioning her, and then began discussing something with Madame Salina. Kou had also brought up the possibility that he himself might also have come from the same world as Sayaka. The conversation became livelier as they discussed the possibility that there could be more people from the other world.

“Haven’t you ever been outside the imperial capital, Sayaka?”

“No, it’s dangerous outside the city, isn’t it? I don’t really have the characteristics of an adventurer, so I’m too scared to leave.”

“I see~”

“If there really are other people like us out there, I want to meet them... Maybe we could figure out a way to get back.”

Kou could travel the world as an adventurer, looking for others like them. But for Sayaka, who was little more than a normal citizen, that kind of journey would be too harsh. While the two of them were discussing this on top of the pedestal, the professor was asking Madame Saline for details about Saya’s circumstances.

“Oh, that prince.”

“Saya never seemed to be interested, but that only made the Prince more interested in her.”

While Sayaka was being held for investigation in a Knights’ Order facility, a certain adventure-loving prince held interest in this mysterious beautiful girl found in the dungeon. The First Prince Layos visited her from time to time. He offered her a

mansion room to stay in for the meantime, in the royal palace district near the castle.

After the investigations and examinations were finished, Sayaka had to leave the mansion near the castle and Sayaka entered the House of Butterflies. Even then he often visited her.

While she was staying in the mansion she became the subject of malicious attacks from the jealous noblewomen, so she was not particularly grateful towards the prince. However, she did not realize that her cold attitude only captivated the prince further.

Madame Salina was aware that Prince Layos was interested in Sayaka, so she only assigned her servants' work and the task of keeping the prince company. Of course, it was not to encourage a relationship between Sayaka and the prince. It was merely a measure to ensure that the First Prince had only good memories of this establishment.

“The existence of a spirit world and movement between worlds... The storage in another dimension. We might be able to find clues about other dimensions.” (Andagi)

“What you just said, you were serious, right? You'll take care of her properly?” (Salina)

“No need to worry. I may not look like it, but I managed to properly raise an adopted child or two in the past.” (Andagi)

With his usual laugh of “Kuwakakakaka!” the professor put his signature on the document prepared by Madame Salina, with his assistant Sarta and the Healers employed by the House of Butterflies as witnesses.

It was a written pledge to take responsibility for the well-being of the “apprentice Butterfly Lady Sayaka”. It was not an adoption, but with that the professor became responsible for Sayaka's well-being. This document also confirmed that Sayaka would be put under the professor's custody.

“Now then Miss Sayaka. I have now accepted responsibility for you, so from tomorrow you should live in my laboratory.” (Andagi)

“What?! When was that decided...?” (Saya)

“The professor is a nice person~”

Talking about her home world made her sentimental and the news of her being taken in by the professor was a complete shock for her. But it was something that Madame Salina had approved, and she could not disobey. This was part of the contract she had signed when she first came to the House of Butterflies. If someone offered to take her in, the manager would weigh the pros and cons and make the final decision.

“Well, to think that we found such an interesting experimental subject in the most unlikely of places, kuwakakakaka!” (Andagi)

“I-I’m not going to be dissected or anything, right...?”

“It’ll be alright... Probably.”

“You’re supposed to say “definitely” -”

Through Kou, it was discovered that Sayaka was from another world and the professor became responsible for her and she was able to leave the House of Butterflies. From now on, she would be helping at the professor’s lab, become an experimental subject and find a way back to her original world.

The professor had a rather ominous appearance, so Sayaka was slightly nervous around him. But she went around organizing her belongings and saying her farewells to the people who had been taking care of her in the House of Butterflies. Kou gave a summary of his conversation with Sayaka to Sarta, then they called it a day and everyone was dismissed.

[Now then, everyone will still be gathered together so I should go and show my face. Since I am a member of the group now, after all.]

Leaving the House of Butterflies behind him, he found a random cat in an alleyway to possess. He stored the composite body away and headed for the bar where Gawiik’s group had gathered. The preliminary round of the fighting tournament was drawing near, so every night they were discussing their plans and analyzing information. Since Kou was participating in the group battle, he was also offering his own opinions on how to coordinate with the other members.

“Kou-chan, you pervert~”

“Eh, why~?”

Kou explained that today's experiment had been canceled and that he had met a certain girl at the House of Butterflies. But for some reason, he ended up being poked by Karen's finger.

# 【 ARC 5 】

# CHAPTER 23

## THE DAY BEFORE THE PRELIMINARY ROUND OF THE TOURNAMENT

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Professor Andagi continued to make preparations for experiments with a new Golem. In the lab, the girl who was the newly added assistant and experimental subject was passing the time chatting with the other experimental subject, the composite Golem Kou.

“And then, apparently, that person is like a princess.”

“Eh, there’s a lot of different people, aren’t there -”

Sayaka was now living and working in the lab and when Kou came for experiments, they usually passed the time they spent waiting by talking to each other. According to the professor, if Kou kept having normal conversations with someone from the same world as him, more of his memories of the other world might return, so he encouraged them to talk to each other.

As Sayaka was talking about the people she had met and her experiences since coming to this world the bell rang, announcing the arrival of a visitor. The laboratory had a ridiculously over-the-top exterior, but its entrance was simple, with a bell that rang when the door opened and closed.

The door became noisy if opened and closed too frequently. With a knock, the door was quickly opened and the person who entered was a young man with masculine features that still contained the innocence of a young boy, wearing resplendent clothes with exquisite embroidery.

“To think that you were taken in by the professor... Do you find withered old men to be more suiting to your tastes?”

That was the first thing he said as he saw Sayaka.

“That was decided before I had a say in it, please don’t make it sound like I have a fetish for old men.” (Saya)

“I’m still active and lively!” (Andagi)

Sayaka replied as if this were nothing out of the ordinary while the professor, who was adjusting a measuring instrument, voiced his objections to those words. It was the First Prince, the child of the king of Grandahl Leozeos and the queen Elishuone.

Ignoring the professor’s protests, Layos looked at the composite Golem facing Sayaka as if evaluating it.

“So this is the rumored new Golem, is it true that there’s a human inside?” (Layos)

“Hello~”

“I see, it communicates by writing words. How interesting.” (Layos)

“Apparently he’s from the same place as Saya-chan.” (Sarta)

Sarta gives this explanation about Kou inside the composite Golem while preparing tea for the prince. Because Sayaka had agreed to be the test subject for the sexual intercourse experiment, the existence of another world with a different culture had been confirmed in addition to other valuable information.

“Sexual intercourse experiment...?” (Layos)

“Yes, this composite Golem is equipped with genitalia, so yesterday there was an experiment -” (Sarta)

“What, you did it with this thing?!” (Layos)

Layos froze with his lips on the cup of tea that Sarta had given him as he heard her words, then he unconsciously approached Sayaka.

“Not “this thing”, it’s Kou-chan. The experiment was canceled, so I didn’t do it.”

Sayaka’s face was slightly red as she said this and Layos had an expression of relief as if to say,[I see.]

Kou and Sayaka include Prince Layos in their conversation and they continue to

discuss the recent topics of conversation in the imperial capital. Layos weighed up the value of Sayaka leaving the House of Butterflies and being taken in by the professor. In the end a place to work was a place to work, but one day she would have had to take other men as customers - When he thought about that, it was not the same.

“Oh yeah, Kou-chan, when you’re not here for experiments, what do you do?” (Saya)

“I’m training with everyone in Gawiik’s group.”

“What was his reply just now?” (Layos)

As Sayaka translated Kou’s foreign writing, Layos had a perceptive expression on his face.

“Hooh, so you’re entering the fighting tournament, too?” (Layos)

Layos seemed interested in the fact that Kou was entering the fighting tournament with Gawiik’s group. If Kou was a usable... Golem, then he definitely wanted to bring him into his own group. He began to think if there was a way to obtain both Sayaka and Kou.

[Rozeth would be able to come up with a good idea.]

Layos thought of his wise younger brother, who was misunderstood by many in the royal palace. Kou, who was normally able to read the intentions hidden in someone’s words and read people’s hearts, could not sense Prince Layos’s ill intent and malice and thought that he seemed like a good person.

He felt that the prince’s feelings for Sayaka were not merely those of[interest], but[I want to be with her always]and knew that he was serious.

On one hand, Sayaka did not want to be glared at by the noblewomen based on the prince’s whim and did not think that he truly loved her. On the other hand, Layos was aware that Sayaka did not trust her own feelings, or perhaps she had just not realized how serious he is.

Sayaka viewed Layos with wary eyes, while Layos viewed her with affection.

“Kou, we’ll commence the experiment now.” (Andagi)

“Vooh~”“Okay~”

Today’s experiment was to test Kou’s balance on a thin wooden plank, but that alone would be too simple for the composite Golem. Therefore, he would be carrying out this experiment using only one leg to move. This was to test movements that would be impossible for a normal Golem.

Waving his hand at Sayaka to say “see you later,” Kou lumbered towards the experiment site at the front of the laboratory.

“... Mmm... Hey, Kou-chan is still...” (Saya)

“He doesn’t have eyes on the back of his head.” (Layos)

Looking back with just his spirit form, Kou saw Layos kissing Sayaka’s lips. However, this was something that had started even before she had entered the House of Butterflies. Ignoring Sayaka’s whispered protests, Layos covered her lips with his own.

From this exchange, Kou could see that Sayaka’s feelings were an indifferent [Yeah, yeah, if you want my lips you can have them] while Layos’s heart was screaming, [Please let my feelings reach her!] Their feelings are passing straight by each other, thought Kou.

[Maybe I should tell them... But...]

Kou had learned from the incident with Alice that it was better to not carelessly tell people each other’s feelings and was wary about doing such things. Even Daido’s feelings towards Karen were obvious to everyone in the squad, but everyone was pretending not to notice.

Glancing back at the heated kiss that the two of them were sharing, Kou continued towards his one-legged experiment.



With the composite Golem’s loud footsteps echoing in the plaza, Kou went to participate in the training with Gawiik’s group in the afternoon. On the other side of the city’s outer walls at the foot of the rocky mountains that surrounded the city, they

practised battle formations and combined attacks where nobody would see them.

“Eh, so you met Prince Layos.”

“Well, he’s a friendly prince.”

“He kissed the back of my hand once, you know?”

“.. Me too.”

Everyone was discussing the fact that the prince was likely also fighting in the group battles. Prince Layos’s group had been performing their training inside the castle, so they were unable to obtain information on them. There was no mistake that he had gathered a group of first-rate fighters, so they were likely to be their most formidable opponent.

Their battle formation was that Captain Gawiik and Vice-Captain Mandel would form the advance guard while Lef and Karen took the rear, and Kou would be positioned in the middle to provide assistance on both sides.

The center of the formation was originally supposed to be taken by Gawiik so he could act as their commander, but Kou was not experienced enough in group battles to take up the role of the advance guard. He had experienced it once in the time he was using the Horned Bear, but his ability was still unknown. For the convenience of the other members, this was the formation that they had decided on.

However, the presence of the huge composite Golem behind the squad’s top two fighters would be quite intimidating. In addition, there would be an offensive caster and an archer aiming at them from the back, so this formation was optimal for forming a wall to defend them. They would be able to apply quite a lot of pressure to their opponents.

“Are we going to have Kou using magic from the beginning?”

“This depends on our opponents, too, but I’d like to keep it as a trump card if possible.”  
(Gawiik)

“.. I have a suggestion.” (Lef)

Lef suggested a change to Kou's role. If they attached an insect to Kou's body, he could store the body in the other dimension and use the insect to move around the battlefield freely. If used properly, this ability could be a greater trump card than the Golem casting a few spells.

"Hmm. We can't use it too often, but it seems like it could be effective."

Kou was unique and this was a strategy that could be used only by him. Gawiik added it to his battle strategy as a limited surprise tactic, so that they would not be overly reliant on it. The rules of the tournament favored going on the offensive, so they would be going with a battle style where Kou would be in the center and Gawiik and Mandel would attack with the backup of Lef and Karen.

"Alright, we'll go with this formation and test it a few times, then we'll focus on matching our individual movements." (Gawiik)

"... Affirmative." (Lef)

"Yeah!"

"Vooh~""Yeah~"

After training with the group until dusk, they decided to return to the inn. Kou found a rhinoceros beetle in a clump of bushes and possessed it, storing the composite Golem in the other dimension. He then attached himself to Lef's hood.

Because they needed to keep as much information hidden as they could, they did not want Kou's composite body to be seen with the group if possible.

"Kou-cha~an, why not a cat~?" (Karen)

"If I find one nearby, okay?"

The stray cats in the city did not always allow him to possess them easily. Dogs and cats could see Kou's spirit form. Unless his target had its guard down or had enough interest in him to come close enough for him to possess him, they usually ran away.

Karen had been looking forward to her daily cat hugs, but now she murmured a disappointed[I see.]



The day before the preliminary round of the tournament.

The tournament's chart where the names of unknown fighters, famous adventurer groups and accomplished mercenary bands gathered from all over the land had been written. The pairings for the preliminary round had been posted on the notice board at the front of the arena and the participants could decide to proceed with the match or drop from the tournament after checking who their opponents were.

The pairings had to be rewritten each time someone decided to drop out, so there had been fourteen versions today before the pairings had finally been confirmed. The posting of the pairings could be called the preliminary round before the preliminary round.

From this point, the entry fees needed to be paid and dropping from the tournament would not be allowed. The rules stated that deliberately killing your opponents would not be allowed. If lucky, defeated participants would get away with mere injuries.

Of course, some injuries could be beyond recovery for an adventurer, but these injuries were uncommon for the most part as the participants' reputations with both their fellow fighters and with society as a whole were at stake.

Captain Gawiik and Vice-Captain Mandel stood in front of the notice board.

"Our opponents are the "Crimson Wolf mercenary group", huh." (Gawiik)

"They're a traditional, middle-class mercenary group. Well, it shouldn't be too hard." (Mandel)

As they checked the pairings on the notice board for any famous groups they saw the name of the adventurer group led by Prince Layos, the "Golden Sword Dragons". The origin of the name was probably their goal, the legendary title: the "Golden Sword and Dragon" medal.

They also took note of the other groups they needed be careful about before returning to the inn.

"There was one troublesome group, wasn't there."

“Yeah, the Varow group... That’s not a group I’d want to face.”

The Varow group that Gawiik’s group was cautious was a fighting group with the same “Battleaxe and Serpent” medal. However, while Gawiik’s group specialized in dealing with Monsters, the Varow group specialized in fighting human enemies such as bandit groups.

Unlike mercenaries, who accepted jobs from the Adventurers’ Association, the Varow group found and exterminated bandits independently. Instead of receiving a reward or payment, they simply took the treasure that the bandits had stolen as their own, so they had a bad reputation.

They had no reputation given by the Adventurers’ Association and were judged solely on the work they had done slaughtering bandits when they received their “Battleaxe and Serpent” medal. In that regard, they had higher fighting strength than Gawiik’s group and were an exceptionally formidable opponent.

“Well, the prince’s group is almost on the level of cheating as well. It’d be great if they just matched against each other.” (Gawiik)

“Hahaha, you’re right about that!” (Mandel)



Around the time Gawiik and Mandel left for the arena, Kou visited Professor Andagi’s laboratory as usual to tell him that he would be participating in the tournament tomorrow as a member of Gawiik’s group, so he would not be able to help with his experiments for a while. Everyone at the lab were already aware of this, so they offered him words of encouragement.

“Do your job properly so you can spread my fame. Here, I’ll give you a gift.” (Andagi)

Kou was invited into the experimental room in the back of the laboratory.

“Vovoh?” “What’s this?”

“It’s a magical weapon built based on Miss Saya’s description of her world. You should take it with you.” (Andagi)

“Only you, with that composite body, could use it anyway.” (Sarta)

The magical weapon that the professor had created based on the information of the other world. Holding its box-like body, it felt somewhat familiar to Kou. As if he had some memory of holding it before. It had a long belt attached, and this was wrapped around the shoulder while the weapon hung near his waist. It was quite heavy.

“The magical vessels in the main body produces flame projectiles which are fired forwards from the tubes, but its recoil is very powerful.” (Andagi)

At first, it had been a single tube firing the flame projectiles one at a time, but the flame projectiles fired from the narrow tube were not very powerful. It was far from the powerful non-magical weapon from her own world that Sayaka had described. It could not even really be called a weapon.

Not giving up, the professor started to work on improving the magical vessel, his area of expertise. Using the small amount of knowledge Sayaka had, he turned his attention towards the idea of using an explosion inside the weapon to increase its power. By causing small explosions inside the magical vessel, he was able to increase the velocity of the flame projectiles and the prototype internal-combustion weapon was born.

However, as a result of increasing the power of each individual projectile, the explosion that happened inside the weapon when it was fired became too powerful for the weapon to withstand. Once the durability of the weapon was improved to contain the internal explosions, it became too heavy for a person to carry.

In this form it was simply a smaller version of large siege-type magical weapons that already existed. The professor, saying it lacked impact and was not interesting enough, asked Sayaka whether there were any good ideas among the projectile weapons from the other world -

“Yeah, now that you mention it, the monsters used it in that zombie movie... Umm...”

- Sayaka got an idea from a famous game that had been turned into a film. Thanks to this idea, the weapon now had multiple internal-combustion magical vessels and multiple tubes. It was now a magical weapon capable of shooting multiple flame projectiles in quick succession.

Now it had enough power and impact, but the final product now was left with the problem of its huge recoil.

“We only performed some experiments by attaching it to a pedestal in the back room, but I can guarantee its quality. You should try firing it before you go.” (Andagi)

“It’s really hard to aim, so you can’t shoot it near your allies, okay?” (Sarta)

“Vooh~”“Okay~”

This was a present from the professor that Gawiik’s group did not know about. Their training was finished yesterday, so he would have to use his own judgment on when to use it.

[That’s right, I’ll keep it as as my own trump card, as Gawiik and the others said.]

Deciding to do that, he stored the magical internal-combustion weapon into the other dimension.

## CHAPTER 24

# THE BATTLE WITH CRIMSON WOLVES

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There were many different categories of medals awarded by the Adventurers' Association, ranging from those awarded to beginners to those awarded to the experienced. The "Sword and Wild Beast" medals were awarded to groups and individuals as proof that they were experienced adventurers. The Crimson Wolves were a middle-class mercenary group that held the "Sword and Wild Beast" medal.

"Our opponents are Gawiik's group; our chances of winning are slim if we fight them directly."

"I heard that their two strongest fighters are going for the individual matches, so their captain and vice-captain are probably going to act as their advance guard."

Having been matched against Gawiik's group in the preliminary round of the tournament, they were now making last minute adjustments and finalizations to their strategy in the waiting room of the arena. The chief and staff officer of the Crimson Wolves had lined up pebbles on the surface of a table to represent their members and the enemy, visualizing everyone's movements.

"At that point, we'll use this tactic."

"It's a tactic we can only use once, but if it goes well, we should be able to take one of them down with the initial surprise attack."

"After that, we'll either press our numbers advantage on the side that's not being covered or decide the match with another swift attack."

"It's about time, let's go."

Putting all their hopes on a strategy that was more like a desperate gamble, the members of the Crimson Wolves participating in the group battle headed for the fighting stage, leaving the waiting room behind them.

In this fighting tournament sponsored by the royal family, well-known fighters would be crossing swords right from the preliminary round. In addition to the citizens of the imperial capital, many people came from neighbouring towns and villages to spectate.

In large tournaments like these, unknown fighters would be making a name for themselves by proving their worth, and it was even valuable for groups that were recruiting new members to find excellent individuals here.

“Voooh voh~”“There’s so many people~”

“There’ll be even more people in the main event, so you’d better get used to it now, okay?”

The arena a bowl-shaped area dug into the ground with four entrances. Two of the opposing entrances were connected to the underground waiting rooms. The other two were not for the competitors, but were large passages used by beasts and carriages to enter the arena. The passage used by beasts led to their cages in the back, while the one used by carriages was connected to the outside of the arena.

The length and width of the fighting area, covered in hard earth and sand, was two hundred Ruuka. Converting that into units that Kou was familiar with, it was 90,000 square meters.

*TLN: Assuming the ring is circular, its diameter is about 340 meters. For comparison, a football pitch’s length is 90-120 meters. The arena is pretty big.*

The two groups of competitors appeared from the entrances and the arena’s announcer raised his voice to announce the commencement of the preliminary round.

“AND NOW -! THE ROYALLY SPONSORED TORTOLUSE GRAND TOURNAMENT’S -! PRELIMINARY ROUND WILL BEGIN!”

A loud cheer came from the audience as Gawiik’s group and the Crimson Wolves took their positions.

Gawiik’s group members spread out into a formation with the composite Golem Kou in the center, Gawiik and Mandel as the advance guard and Lef and Karen in the rear.

The Crimson Wolves facing them were in a tightly-grouped formation with four people in the front and two just behind them. The initial distance between the two groups was sixty-six Ruuka; roughly a hundred meters.

“That thing that Gawiik’s group is using, is it a summoned beast?”

“No, apparently it’s a new kind of Golem.”

“I heard that it’s got the personality of a human who was once an adventurer.”

“He’s on the association’s list of adventurers; it seems that abnormal magical technology professor is involved.”

Among the spectators who had come to watch the tournament from the very first battle of the preliminary round, there were quite a few who were knowledgeable about the two groups. They even had some knowledge about the composite Golem that had been seen in the city recently.

Adventurer groups and mercenary bands had come to watch as well as scout their opposition. They were paying close attention to this unusual Golem who had been registered as an adventurer by the Adventurers’ Association as a member of Gawiik’s group.

After a while, the start of the match was signaled. The ones who made the first move were the Crimson Wolves. They were all dressed in light armor, holding a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. With the four members in the front forming a horizontal line and the two behind them following closely, they all began running in together.

“It seems they are aiming to perform a swift attack.” (Lef)

“Lef, aim your ranged magic where they’re grouped up. Karen, aim at their sides to make sure they can’t spread out. Kou, you’re on standby.” (Gawiik)

The two members at the front moved together to open up a line of sight for the members at the back, using ranged attacks to determine their enemy’s movement. They were still out of Lef’s magic’s attack range, so she waited while gathering magical energy. Karen raised her bow and took her aim.

The arrows used in this match were fitted with special cylindrical arrowheads with

small bumps at the tips, making the attacks with the arrows non-lethal blows.

The length of the bumps at the tips was one Pail, approximately only one and a half centimeters. Even if the target was not wearing armor, it would only cause minor injury.

Karen's arrows whistled as they flew near the sides of the sides of the Crimson Wolves' four-man advance guard, restricting their movement. On Kou's other side, Lef raised her staff and began weaving her magical power together.

"Alright, we're sticking with the plan! We can ignore the Golem, aim for that Magician!"

The Crimson Wolves had been running at a light pace up until this point, but as they confirmed that the enemy Magician was beginning to cast magic, they broke into a full-speed charge. They took caution against the archer's arrows as they broke their formation and spread out, giving the illusion that each individual would be moving alone.

The reason they had grouped up initially was to bait out an area attack. Then they spread out with perfect timing to cause hesitation in casting an area magic attack, which would now be inefficient.

Then they engaged Gawiik's advance guard in two groups of three, at such a close distance that the Magician's area magic would hit her allies even if she did cast it. Now they were waiting for the Golem to move to back them up.

Facing the Crimson Wolves' surprise attack tactic, Gawiik and Mandel stood back to back as they fully focused on defending themselves. Karen and Lef's ability to provide backup for them was limited by their location, the types of attacks at their disposal and line of sight. An area magical attack with reduced power would be ineffective.

"Kou-chan, I'll leave it to you!" (Karen)

"Voooh!"

So as not to block Karen's line of sight, Kou began running to back up Gawiik and Mandel from Lef's side. As Kou was choosing between the battleaxe and the hammer in his dimensional storage, the Crimson Wolves saw that Kou had begun to move and began to execute the next part of their strategy.

“Now! Go!”

The Crimson Wolves' leader who had been engaged in battle with Gawiik gave an order. The other two members who had been engaging Gawiik with him turned around with their shields raised and charged towards Karen. In a real battle, such small shields would be little more than cardboard against Karen's arrows, but these light shields could easily block the arrows that had to be used in this match.

With the shields and armor covering their bodies and jumping to avoid the arrows aimed at their legs, they continued charging forward. Kou stopped in his tracks, seeing the two members of the Crimson Wolves aiming for Karen. As he changed direction to intercept them -

“Good, next!”

Two more members of the Crimson Wolves who had been engaging in battle with Mandel turned towards Lef in the other direction. The captain and vice-captain of the Crimson Wolves were left engaging Gawiik and Mandel two-on-two. Making sure to restrict their movement, they moved slowly around towards the center of Gawiik's group's formation.

The Crimson Wolves just needed to buy time and prevent Gawiik's advance guard to provide backup for their rear members, so they had no need to engage in earnest. Even though they were less skilled, they could just step back and keep preventing them from moving. While they were doing this, the other four members were attacking the rear members.

The archer and magician would not be able to put up a fight in close combat once the distance was closed. Even though they were facing a group of higher rank, this fact would not change. Once the rear members were defeated, they would have an overwhelming advantage of six against three even with the Golem included. If they steadily pressed their numbers advantage from that point, victory was assured.

Everything had gone according to plan for the Crimson Wolves.

“Voh, voh? Vooh voh...” “H-huh? Where should I...”

Kou was heading to intercept the attack on Karen, but his feet stopped again as he saw

the two members heading straight for Lef. If he went to stop them, he would not make it in time to intercept the ones attacking Karen. But if he went to intercept the ones attacking Karen, Lef would be defenseless.

As the Crimson Wolves charged towards their targets, they took a backwards glance at Kou, who was panicking and unable to decide on who to prioritize. Even if it had a human's personality, a Golem is a Golem, they thought as they turned the caution they had for the Golem towards the Magician.

“Kou-chan, take care of Lef-chan!”

Karen gave the order as if to say that she would take care of herself. Kou turned to face the mercenaries that were trying to slip through towards the back, but he no longer had the time to produce his weapon and attack. Desperately trying to stop their movements, he quickly tried to trip them over with his leg.

However, in his desperation to do something quickly, the movement his body produced was not quite what he had imagined. His leg came out before he could squat to lower it.

“Vuah~”[Ah.]

“Guah!”

“Wha -?!”

Whether this was fortunate or unfortunate, his timing and aim was correct. His movement became a horizontal kick with his left leg that sent one of the mercenaries flying. He rolled two or three times before he stopped moving, apparently unconscious.

The other mercenary took a defensive stance without thinking, but in this situation running straight through would have been more correct than standing still.

Deciding that it would be faster to hit him directly rather than use a weapon, Kou used the leg that had kicked the other mercenary to step closer to him and raised his left arm above him.

The crowd erupted in cheers.

The mercenary took a punch that scooped him off the ground from underneath and flew high into the air.

It was more like he had been hooked by the Golem's fist and thrown upwards than punched. The mercenary hit the ground below and stopped moving. However, to the crowd, it appeared to be a powerful uppercut. Concerned murmurs came from the crowd, such as [Wouldn't that have crushed his face?]

"What exactly is that Golem?"

"Its movements are ridiculously fast. It's just like a human, isn't it?"

By some fluke, he had somehow stopped the enemies attacking Lef. Now Kou ran towards Karen to back her up.

Lef had been gathering magical power to attempt to protect herself from the mercenaries that had tried to attack her, but now she turned it towards the mercenaries attacking Karen and backed Kou up in his interception. Karen, with the skill to aim her arrows accurately at her attackers' legs, had managed to slow down their advances enough. Now Kou jumped out in front of her to form a defensive wall.

Normally, Golems' movements were supposed to be much more sluggish. The audience and scouting groups were dumbfounded at the incredible force of Kou's movements as he sprinted forwards at full speed.

Though the Golem's mobility was relatively well-known in the imperial capital due to the professor's experiments, they had never imagined that a Golem could dash like this.

"Nice one, Kou, keep it up!" (Gawiik)

Gawiik called out to Kou as he engaged in fierce battle with the Crimson Wolves' captain. Though his movement was still restricted, he was constantly forcing him backwards.

As Gawiik encouraged him, Kou thought, [If I make them think that I'm just a close-quarters combat fighter, we'll have an advantage in our future matches] and tried to think of a way to do so. What came to mind was a fighting stance from his memories

from the other world.

Holding his fists close to his chest, he began stepping around lightly, though the noises his feet made were still loud. The golem's movements were heavy, but he had gotten used to jumping up and down in the one-legged experiment earlier and was now executing this practised movement.

If he showed this fighting style to Sayaka, she would call it [boxing.]

“Voh voh~” [Shu-shu!]

*TLN: “Shu-shu” is the sound effect of boxers' punching*

He tried to throw out light jabs, but with the composite Golem's arms, the sounds of his high-speed punches were more like “buon-buon.” If these punches landed, they would be devastating. The mercenaries who had come so close to Karen in their plan to attack the rear were stopped completely in their tracks.

“Uoh, that Golem, it can even attack like a warrior?!”

“That's why its movements are so fast.”

“If you tried to make a regular Golem do those kind of movements it would destroy itself. I'm surprised its body is holding together.”

“Just what the hell is it made of?”

Those among the audience who were knowledgeable about summoned beasts and Golems were in admiration of the composite Golem's quality that it was showing through its movements. They were also beginning to discuss the possibility of new Golems like this becoming commonplace, replacing the use of summoned beasts which had problems with the price of the catalysts required and their limited duration.

In any case, the plan to attack the enemies at the back had failed and the morale of the remaining Crimson Wolves had been dampened as they rebuilt their formation. But with the solid combined attacks of Gawiik and Mandel backed up by the support of Lef and Karen, they were pushed into a more and more disadvantageous position.

In addition, their movement was thrown off by the heavy pressure given off from the unusually fast Golem, whose footsteps sounded as if it was ready to jump into them at

any time.

Although this was simply the sound of Kou's poor attempts at boxing footwork, they were unaware of this and thought that he was making feints to pressure them.

"Kuh... A surprise tactic doesn't work against such a powerful group, after all."

"Now that it's come to this, it's just a matter of how we can show our abilities and leave an impression before we're defeated."

Showing how well they could handle opponents of higher rank than themselves would affect their future work, as well. In order to not reveal their hand, Gawiik's group slowly and steadily pressured the Crimson Wolves, using only their superior individual skill without any flashy moves - and before long, the last one was defeated.

Among the crowd's cheers, the announcer declared the result of the match.

"And that's it! The winners are Gawiik's group!"

Gawiik's group had safely passed through the preliminary round by defeating the Crimson Wolves.

"Voh vaah~" "We won~"

# CHAPTER 25

## THE BATTLE AGAINST VAROW GROUP (1)

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The tournament matches happened every other day. Kou, who had fought with the Crimson Wolves yesterday, was having his parts inspected at Professor Andagi's laboratory to check for any abnormalities in the composite Golem's functions.

"I can't really move the way I want to yet, so I was a bit nervous."

"Really? I think you did a good job though, Kou-chan." (Sayaka)

Apparently Sayaka had been watching the match. She was now keeping Kou company with conversation while he was being inspected. It seemed that she had become completely accustomed to the work she was doing in the laboratory.

The bell that signaled a guest's arrival rang and Layos entered. Sayaka hurried off to prepare some tea.

"Kou's being inspected, huh?" (Layos)

"Vooh~" "Hello~"

It seemed that Layos had also watched yesterday's match. He brought up the topic of Gawiik's group, who still seemed to not have shown their real ability yet, and their newest member: Kou.

"It seemed that you still aren't used to fighting. Doesn't it place a considerable burden on the body if you make those kinds of movements?" (Layos)

"We're doing this inspection just in case, but I think it's okay."

"That composite body is specially-made, so those kinds of movements won't cause any problems. Kuwakakakaka!" (Andagi)

The professor said that confidently while he checked the Golem for any signs of wear. Currently the composite body was in satisfactory, normal condition with no defects to

be found.

The professor laughed loudly for some reason as he told Kou to keep showing the Golem's power in the next match. Meanwhile, Layos began to share the information that he had obtained just recently.

“Apparently the opponent for Gawiik's group in the main event has been changed to the Varow group.” (Layos)

“What? Was their opponent not supposed to be some adventurer group from the west?” (Andagi)

“This morning when we all gathered together, they were saying that it was good that we weren't matched against the Varow group, you know?”

“That group paid a fine and withdrew. It was apparently accepted, since it happened before the main event.” (Layos)

Apparently they had had a dispute with the Varow group and caused a fight in the bar, during which some of their own members were injured. The Varow group were made to pay half of the fine and they had settled with that.

One of the groups eliminated in the preliminary round was chosen randomly to advance to the main event and the matches were quickly rearranged. The new addition to the main event was then paired with the group that the Varow group was originally supposed to face, while Gawiik's group was chosen as the opponents for Varow group that shared the same rank of medal.

This was apparently decided so that Gawiik's group would not be paired against a group that was of clearly lower rank, in order to be more fair to the other groups. While this would be good for the spectators, it was a real problem for Gawiik's group.

“If we both win and advance to the next round, you'll be facing us next.” (Layos)

Layos said this phrase in a way that seemed to contain some kind of hidden meaning as if to see Kou's reaction. However, Kou was simply anxious to get back to discuss the changes in their strategy with everyone.

“Kou-chan doesn't seem to be listening, does he?” (Sayaka)

“...” (Layos)

Having said that, Sayaka brought the tea over and set it down on the table. It appeared that Kou did not have any fierce ambition, sense of competition or fighting spirit.

Layos felt this as he observed Kou, the composite Golem. He laid down on the sofa and rested his head on Sayaka’s knees.

“Hey, I still have work to do -” (Sayaka)

“You’re always working, aren’t you?” (Layos)

Thinking that Sayaka seemed a little moody, Layos took her hand and pressed his lips against it.



Just as Kou arrived at the inn that Gawiik’s group was staying in to relay the information he had learned from Prince Layos, a messenger from the organizers of the tournament also arrived to deliver the same information. An emergency meeting was called to discuss a strategy against the Varow group. They included Reaper and Daido, both of which had passed the preliminary round of the individual matches.

“They didn’t reveal their hand in the preliminary round match, either.”

They knew that the Varow group would be using various special equipment similar to Gawiik’s enchanted sword, “Wind Cutter” and Lef’s mystic staff, “The Flowing Hand”. Though, Gawiik’s group had the hidden trump card that was Kou. They would have to wait and see how their opponents had prepared, but they could not lose focus even for a moment.

“We’ll probably have to go all-out.”

“Kou, you have to decide on the timing yourself and think about which weapons to use.”

The fact that they could use magic had already been exposed, so they needed to make use of the things that their opponents were not aware of.

Kou had not yet shown his ability to produce weapons out of nowhere in public, let alone in a match. They would use his unarmed appearance to their advantage.

“Well, the first thing about the Varow group’s organization is that their captain Varow is a warrior, but he uses a special bow as his main weapon.”

The bow was a self-loading mechanical bow made in Na’Hatome, designed for firing consecutive attacks. It was used to mark targets to attack in battle as well as providing backup for their close-quarter warriors.

“That mechanical bow’s rate of fire is no joke, so we need to watch out for it.”

“That thing’s gotta be super-heavy, right?” (Karen)

The next enemy to be discussed was the vice-captain, a female swordsman. They knew that she wielded an enchanted sword that released shockwaves. Blocking her swing with one’s own sword would result in taking damage from the resulting shockwave, so it was of utmost importance to avoid a direct engagement with her.

“It seems using the captain’s “Wind Cutter” to oppose it would be safest.”

“Yeah.”

It seemed that the advance guard of the Varow’s group was formed by that female swordsman and a heavy warrior with a shield. The rest of them were high-ranked members of the group - another warrior, a Magician and a girl in black clothes that was apparently a Sorcerer. With the information they had confirmed, they knew that they had to be careful of Captain Varow’s mechanical bow and the female swordsman’s enchanted sword.

“They’re specialized in fighting other humans, aren’t they?”

“Well in that case, having Kou with us is one of our strengths, isn’t it?”

“Vooh?”“Me?”

He was capable of things that no normal human was capable of. Their opponent was a group that had little experience in fighting non-human opponents, so that would

become a weakness they could take advantage of.

They decided on a formation similar to the one they used when exploring dungeons where the members would be moderately spread out but not too far apart. Kou would form a wall to cover Lef and Karen, making sure they would not be targeted.

“We’ll have to think of everything else as we fight.”



The next day.

A particularly anticipated match of this tournament. The arena was full of spectators who had come to see the matches between these famous fighting groups. The match between the Varow group and Gawiik’s group would be in the afternoon. The Golden Sword Dragons led by Prince Layos would be fighting in their match before noon, so the huge crowd was present in the morning.

Prince Layos’s match ended as soon as it started. In a way, it was impossible to tell what he had up his sleeve.

All of his members had equipment with special properties and used their powers right at the beginning of the match, overwhelming their opponents before they could do anything.

Even the mercenary bands and adventurer groups who were watching the match could not think of an effective countermeasure to their power.

“They really are aiming for the legendary title, huh?”

“Honestly, even if we defeat Gawiik’s group, I don’t feel like we’d be able to win against the prince’s group.”

Prince Layos’s group returned to the waiting room under the cheers of the audience. The Varow group’s vice-captain, Stua, was watching from one part of the audience. With her was Karvan, the heavy warrior who was the protector of the Varow group. The two of them were sharing their thoughts on the match.

They began to leave to head back to the inn they were staying at to prepare for the

afternoon's match. The rest of the matches were not particularly worth watching.

“So you'll be the one to engage Captain Gawiik after all, Vice-Captain?” (Karvan)

“Yeah, they'll probably try to make that to happen as well.” (Stua)

If they had figured out that Gawiik's enchanted sword “Wind Cutter” was the only weapon that could directly engage Stua's enchanted sword “Crumbling Wave Breaker”, they had no reason to do anything unusual. Looking at it another way, the only way to deal with “Wind Cutter” was to use the “Crumbling Wave Breaker” to face it. It was fine to have a fair competition of strength.

“What are the chances they'll push onto us with that magical soldier?” (Karvan)

“None. It's an interesting Golem, but that's definitely going to act as a wall for their rear members.” (Stua)

Stua knew that it did not have the ability to put up a challenge against truly strong opponents. It was obviously durable, flexible and had high speed, but now that they knew about its speed, there were countless ways to deal with it.

In her opinion, humans that could adapt to their situation were more difficult to face.

“Apparently their vice-captain is a good all-round warrior, you know?” (Stua)

“Fu, I won't let them lay even one finger on you or the captain.” (Karvan)

Karvan, the shield for the Varow group, responded with a confident reply to Stua's small joke.

The audience seats of the arena were completely full in the afternoon. The nobles' seats that had been empty until yesterday were now filled with noblemen and noblewomen and the announcer's voice rang out loudly.

“AND NOW -! THE AFTERNOON MATCH OF THE MAIN EVENT OF THE ROYALLY-SPONSORED GREAT TORTOLUSE FIGHTING TOURNAMENT -! BETWEEN GAWIIK'S GROUP AND THE VAROW GROUP -! IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!”

Loud cheers rose from the audience as the two groups entered the stadium. As they

took up their battle formations the audience's interest was focused in Gawiik's group's composite Golem and the Varow group's mechanical bow. In the nobles' seats, Prince Layos was sitting with Sayaka, who he had dragged there.

"Ah, it's Kou-chan. He stands out because he's so big... I wonder if they'll focus on him."

"Kou shouldn't be fighting in the front; he'll probably be protecting their rear members."

As Layos predicted, Kou stood not far from the archer Karen and the Magician Lef, acting as their wall. At the front, Gawiik and Mandel stood the same distance apart. They were taking a vertical formation against their opponents.

The female swordsman Stua and the heavy warrior Karvan were at the front row of the Varow's group formation, while Varow himself was standing in the middle with his mechanical bow. In the same row, off to the side, were the warrior and Magician with the Sorcerer at the back.

Soon, the start of the match was signaled and the battle began.

Both groups faced each other, trying to see if the other would make the initial charge. In this deadlock situation, Varow fired the first arrow.

It was a first-class, top-quality product among the mechanical repeater-bows from Na'Hatome. The standard arrow capacity was thirty arrows, but it had been expanded to hold fifty. It repeatedly loaded arrows into the bowstring and fired them at rates that were impossible for normal bows.

There were five initial arrows fired from the Varow group. Kou, acting as the wall for the rear members, was unharmed by the arrows. Of course, the ones he was protecting, Karen and Lef, were also unharmed. Mandel held his shield up to block the arrows and Gawiik temporarily stood behind him to use him as a defense. An arrow was being fired every second.

The arrows used in the match were non-lethal, but its rate of fire had a psychological, intimidating effect.

Gawiik's group also opened fire with Lef's offensive magic and Karen's arrows, trying to measure their opponent's defense. As the warrior in the middle row of the

formation blocked the attack with his shield, it became clear that his shield had an anti-magic enchantment.

For now, the battle was mainly a psychological one and the audience was beginning to voice its dissatisfaction. However, the Varow group had already begun to make their move.

-- Lito, are you ready? --"

-- Yes, I'm perfectly stable now. --"

When jobs were accepted from the Adventurers' Association, depending on the mission, sometimes communications equipment was loaned out. It was special magical equipment called "Opposing Far Voices" that allowed conversations to be carried out at long distances, and the Varow group was in possession of a particularly high-performance one.

The four Opposing Far Voices allowed the other members to communicate directly to both Captain Varow and Vice-Captain Stua. The weakest-looking member among them standing at the back, Litoaize was the one who confirmed with Varow that she was ready.

Nobody knew about the fact that the Varow group was using the Opposing Far Voices equipment to communicate to each other.

-- It's a good time... Go, Lito! --"

-- Yes~ Here I go! --"

It was known that she was likely from Eiyoa. What was not known was that she was a rare Sorceror with the ability to fight in direct combat, known as a "Shadow Artist."

Leaving a magical illusion of herself in place and concealing herself with a partial barrier, she went to circle around the edge of the arena to bring down the defenseless rear members with a surprise attack. Shadow Artists were professionals at assassinating and causing havoc behind the scenes.

Varow's arrows aimed at the rear members were to draw attention to himself as well as provide cover for Lito's surprise attack on her targets, the Magician and archer

hiding behind the Golem. Lito finally arrived at the wall of the stadium after moving carefully so that her footsteps would not be heard and her feet did not cause any clouds of dust.

The spectators who were wanting the battle to be more spectacular would soon be letting out voices of surprise. As this thought went through his head, Varow continued pulling the string of his mechanical bow. The Shadow Artist's Hidden Movement Technique. Nobody would be able to see her behind her barrier's concealment.

... Normally.



[Huh? What's that?]

Seeing a flow of magical power wavering like steam near the wall of the arena, Kou tilted his head. The magical power was wavering in an arch-like shape and moving slowly along the arena's wall. Lef was right behind him so he told him about it through letters and she replied that it might be a Shadow Artist's Hidden Movement Technique.

Kou, able to see magical power, had detected the Shadow Artist's approach by seeing the small amount of magical power she was emitting to maintain the barrier that was concealing her body. Lef and the other were cautious of her, but even if they wanted to intercept her, they could not accurately pinpoint her location without getting close enough to feel her magical power.

But she was getting dangerously close, so Kou decided to intercept her. Varow's rapidly-fired arrows were still coming, so Kou produced a wide, heavy shield as a counter-measure.

"It's heavy -" (Karen)

".. It's heavy." (Lef)

"Voh vaah~""I'll be back soon~"

Lef and Karen would have to endure this for a while. One part of the audience stirred as they wondered where such a large shield had suddenly appeared from; perhaps he had the shield on his back and they had been unable to see it from such a distance?

Coming to this conclusion, they settled back down.

But the majority of the audience were wanting an end to the stalemate of the battle, and had their hopes raised for a new development as the strange Golem of Gawiik's group began to move.

"What is it, what's wrong, Kou!" (Gawiik)

Seeing Kou suddenly break the formation and run towards the arena's wall, Gawiik called out to him. Kou, deciding that there was no time to explain, simply wrote "I'll explain later!" on his back as he dashed forwards with the same speed that he had shown in the match with the Crimson Wolves.

After quickly closing the distance to the wall, Kou embedded barrier-breaking properties into his arm and swept his arm through the barrier. As if the air itself was being distorted, the area around his arm became a blur and the girl dressed in black who was supposed to be at the back of their formation appeared.

"Hyii! I-I've been exposed!" (Lito)

With her Hidden Movement Technique broken, Litoaize was in a panic. The illusion of herself that she had left at the back of the Varow group's formation faded away and disappeared. Seeing the technique of an extraordinarily rare Shadow Artist, the audience was suddenly excited again.

At the same time they were awestruck by the hidden abilities of Kou, the composite Golem who appeared to have some barrier-breaking function built in.

"Ah, ah, err..."

Facing the giant Golem with her back against the wall, Lito pressed her small body sideways along the wall to try to get some distance from him. But perhaps because her legs were trembling, it seemed she was unable to escape properly.

*Tch, to think my barrier was destroyed, what the hell kind of Golem is this... In any case, I have to look for an opening and at least try to crush one part of it...*

Her frightened behavior was an act; her frail appearance was a weapon she used to cause hesitation in her opponents' attacks and make them lower their guard. It was

particularly effective on opponents that had human morals.

However, Kou could read the thoughts in her heart and knew that she was pretending to be afraid while looking for a weakness in the Golem.

[I see, her appearance is that kind of weapon, too~]

Kou was observant when it came to anything. Leaving her intentions aside, her appearance was indeed thin and frail-looking. Kou extended his hand to attack with just the right amount of force.

“Hyi~ H-help me...” *Ah shit, this won't work on a Golem?*

“Vooh~” [I see!]

Carefully holding her head to protect it from hitting against the wall, he sent one attack into Lito's body.

“Ah!”

Taking a light body blow just strong enough to lift her body off the ground, she thought [it's useless after all] as she lost consciousness and crumpled onto the ground.

From the outside, it appeared as if the Golem had held the helpless girl's head against the wall and delivered a merciless attack. The crowd began to stir.

“--Captain, Lito's been taken out!--”

“--Yeah, I know!--”

As Varow replied to his subordinate via the Opposing Far Voices, he clicked his tongue as he realized that Lito's psychological defense did not work against the Golem. Though the Golem may have the personality of a human, there was no guarantee that its behavior would be that of a human. But that was something that made it more like a human.

“We have no choice, let's do it! Stua, you take command!” (Varow)

“Affirmative!” (Stua)

The Varow group had wanted everything to go smoothly with their surprise attack, but they had no choice but to deviate from their pre-planned strategy. Captain Varow took position to continue his rapid fire while Vice-Captain Stua took over the role of giving detailed commands.

Their formation had been as packed-together as Gawiik's group, but now they opened their formation up and began expanding sideways to go on the offensive.

"We're going to go at the same time as the captain's rapid-fire. Be careful of that Golem. Karvan and I will engage their advance guard, the rest of you go for their rear members." (Stua)

Soon after that, Varow's mechanical bow unleashed a fierce attack of consecutive arrows.

## CHAPTER 26

# THE BATTLE AGAINST VAROW GROUP (2)

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The Varow group attacked under the cover of the constant rain of arrows and Gawiik's group had no choice but to respond to them, so they intercepted the attack to try to stop it.

"Kou! Hurry and get back to Lef and Karen!" (Gawiik)

Gawiik gave Kou this order while taking cover behind Mandel's shield as he was trying to figure out his own timing to jump out. He channeled his magical energy through his enchanted sword "Wind Cutter" and surrounded himself with its power. His opponent was the vice-captain of the Varow group, the female swordsman Stua.

When he engaged he had to keep the Varow squad in his line of sight as much as he could; it would be dangerous for him to turn his back on them.

After a while Stua had closed the distance, but it was Gawiik to made the preemptive move. Due to the natures of their swords, Gawiik had to keep making the first move, constantly repelling Stua's sword by swinging the "Wind Cutter". His opponent's sword would create a shockwave if he tried to block it, so he needed to evade it.

As sparks were scattered through the air from Gawiik and Stua's swordfight, Mandel and Karvan had also locked swords nearby. Both of them were heavily armored so they were able to fight without worrying about the arrows.

While the front members were battling, Varow's arrows rained down incessantly on the rear members of Gawiik's group. Though Varow was only a single archer, the rate of fire of the mechanical bow was such that by the time an arrow arrived at its target the next arrow was already fired.

"Vovaah~""I'm back~!"

As Kou returned to Lef and Karen and picked up his heavy shield, he was engaged by the warrior and Magician who had charged in under the cover of Varow's arrows. Because Kou was acting as a wall to protect Lef and Karen from the arrows, he could

not separate himself from them. He faced his opponents with Karen's backup and Lef's offensive magic.

The warrior and Magician of the Varow group had taken position at a certain distance under the cover of Varow's arrows, with the warrior covering the Magician with his enchanted anti-magic shield. As the warrior looked for an opportunity to charge in, the Magician aimed offensive spells towards the enemy archer and Magician from behind him.

The front members and rear members were both making their offensive and defensive moves, with both sides receiving covering fire from Varow. His influence on the battle was small, but he was dominating the battle in a way.

Mandel's precise attacks had a good balance of offensive and defensive ability while Karvan excelled in defense. The fight between them was even as they traded blows with both of them gradually getting exhausted.

However, the one with a calm mind was Karvan. He knew that Captain Varow was dominating the battlefield. Even if he were to fall together with Mandel, they would win the match. Mandel was also aware of this, so he was slowly getting more desperate.

In the swordfight between Gawiik and Stua, Gawiik was running around while attacking so that the "Crumbling Wave Breaker" would not release any shockwaves, slowly pushing Stua back. Stua wanted to make some kind of counterattack, but she was barely managing to block the fierce, high-speed attacks of the "Wind Cutter" so she was unable to make use of the power of the "Crumbling Wave Breaker".

[--As I thought, he's a formidable opponent.--] (Stua)

[--Don't panic, should I give him a hit?--] (Varow)

[--Please do.--] (Stua)

Giving Varow a signal through their communications, Stua leapt back to gain some distance and created a shockwave against the ground, kicking up a cloud of dust as a smokescreen. Gawiik chased her in, but faltered for a moment as he was blinded.

At that moment, Varow opened fire.

“!”

Knowing that Varow’s arrows would come for him if his opponent gained distance on him, Gawiik reacted incredibly quickly to deflect the arrows with the ability of the “Wind Cutter”.

“That’s amazing!”

“To think he could strike down all of those arrows with that timing...”

The crowd erupted in applause at the superhuman feat of deflecting arrows that were fired from the other side of a smokescreen. The arrows continued flying in and Gawiik continued deflecting them safely. However, Stua used that opportunity to go on the offense.

“This guy can really do some unbelievable things, huh?” (Stua)

While admiring her opponent’s strength, Stua found a timing to go around and swing her “Crumbling Wave Breaker”.

“Kuah!”

Gawiik tried to dodge an arrow flying in from the side as he blocked the attack coming from below with the “Wind Cutter”, but he did not manage to evade it completely. He let out a cry of pain as he took the damage from the attack. As Stua pressed further with another attack from above, he parried it sideways. The explosive sounds of this battle were quite different from a regular swordfight.

This time it seemed he had managed to evade the attack. As Gawiik moved in to pursue Stua, she leapt back again to gain some distance. If he pursued her here the same thing would happen - a combination attack of arrows and a shockwave.

Making a quick decision, Gawiik jumped in the opposite direction from Stua. Mandel and Karvan were slowly approaching his way. He took cover behind them to avoid the arrows’ line of fire.

“You think quickly and your situation assessment is accurate. As I would expect of a famous, first-class captain like you, Gawiik.”

The one praising him was Stua. Even Varow was astonished that he had managed to dodge their combination attack so well. This was a two-on-one situation so Gawiik had no time to make a joking reply back. Even so, he gave her a fearless smile.



The rear members were facing the warrior and Magician, wary of the arrows that were constantly flying at them. If they got too close, the warrior would flank them and aim for Lef and Karen. Therefore, Kou was holding up the shield and maintaining a defensive posture without moving.

Their only way to attack the enemy Magician at this distance was Karen and Lef's long-distance attacks, but Karen's arrows and Lef's magic were being blocked by the warrior's anti-magic shield. This sporadic exchange of fire was essentially a stalemate.

The arrows fired from the other side of the members at the front were quite accurate, but they were being deflected by Kou's body. From time to time they came from directly above; they were being fired at an angle. They were easily avoid if they looked out for them, but if they paid too much attention to the arrows the warrior would charge in and they would receive attacks from the Magician.

"It's quite hard to put an end to this, isn't it?" (Karen)

"Vooh~""Yeah~"

"... The situation is unfavorable for us." (Lef)

The members at the front were struggling in their battle as well. If both sides continued simply grazing each other with their attacks and they continued to exhaust themselves, the Varow group had the advantage as Varow himself was completely uninjured. If the battle dragged out too long, the Shadow Artist that had been defeated at the opening of the match might regain consciousness and rejoin the battle. If that happened it would be very difficult for them.

[Hmm...]

Kou tried to think of a way to break out of this situation. If he went forward to attack, Lef and Karen would be exposed to danger. Because it was just a match, he could

sacrifice one of them to defeat the warrior, and then the protection for the Magician would be gone and it would be easy to win after that. But such a method would never occur to Kou. At that moment, Varow's arrows stopped.

It seemed that he had run out of arrows and was reloading a new box of arrows into his mechanical bow.

[If only I could use a projectile weapon too... The one I received from the professor's aim is too inaccurate and it would just get blocked by that shield as well.]

As he searched through the tools in his dimensional storage for ideas and looked through his own memories, seeing a certain piece of armor, he remembered a standard method of attacking from a distance. The image of it being "standard" was a feeling he got from the scene in his memories

"Vooh, vaah~" "Lef, Karen, can I get your attention for a bit?"

"What's up?" (Karen)

"... What is it?" (Lef)

Using this pause in the rain of arrows, Kou created letters across his back to tell them the plan. He requested a combination attack from both Karen and Lef. They would keep the warrior unable to move while Kou moved into a position where he could target the Magician.

"What is that...?"

The Golem that had been protecting the archer and Magician suddenly began running forward. Guessing that it was running forward to back up the members at the front, the warrior of the Varow group waited for an opening in the combination attack so that he could charge in. The Magician behind the warrior also began to gather magical power for a counterattack as well.

After running to a position that was horizontally in line with the enemy warrior and Magician, Kou halted abruptly. He brought out a heavy, armored gauntlet from his dimensional storage and -

[Rocket punch!]

- he threw it, aiming at the Magician. He could not remember clearly what exactly a “rocket” was, but he had an image in his mind of it being something with amazing power.

“What?!”

It was a dull gray fist that cut through the air as it flew forward. Seeing the Golem hurl a hand at them was so wildly outside of the warrior’s expectations that he was slow to react. The Magician who had been preparing for a counterattack was completely taken by surprise and was unable to dodge in time. The heavy, armored gauntlet scored a direct hit on the Magician, who somersaulted before falling to the ground.

The warrior froze for a moment as he realized that they had made a mistake and Kou used that opening to fiercely dash towards him.

“Voooh~”[Take that!]

“!”

Kou closed the distance in one movement. With a crashing sound, he struck his opponent with the giant shield. No matter how perfectly equipped he was, the warrior could not withstand a powerful attack from such a heavy shield.

With this, things began going in Gawiik’s group’s favour.

With the threat to the rear members being reduced, Kou headed forward. Running past where Gawiik and Stua were fiercely crossing swords, he held his shield up to block his continuous fire and went to strike him.

“Tch, they got us good!”

Varow changed his equipment to a spear and prepared to engage. Now that the cover of the mechanical bow was gone, Karen and Lef could move in to provide backup for the battle between Gawiik and Stua and the battle between Mandel and Karvan. The Varow group were now completely cornered in a disadvantageous position.



“Vaauuh~”[This person is so strong~]

Varow had sent the heavy shield flying and was precisely targeting Kou’s ankles and knees, maintaining a distance where Kou’s punches could not reach him. Kou’s running punch hit nothing but air. A strong thrust from the spear struck Kou’s ankle accurately, causing him to lose his balance. Even as he fell, Kou twisted his body around to aim a falling spinning kick at Varow.

The giant fell onto the ground with a loud crash, kicking up a cloud of dust.

Although he was able to dodge it, Varow felt a chill at this completely unexpected attack.

“If I got hit by that attack, my neck would have been broken!”

As Kou tried to stand up, Varow got a strong attack in Kou’s neck, forcing him onto his back, then began stabbing him all over his body. As Kou tried to cover various parts on his body, he focused his attacks on those parts.

Kou tried to grab the spear that was repeatedly stabbing him, but it was quickly withdrawn. When he tried to stand up again, an attack came to knock him off balance and roll him around on the ground again. He was being pressured so that he could not stand up, while being searched for any weak points. Kou could feel the overwhelming difference in their ability.

Deciding that attacking while rolling around would be better if that was the case, Kou rolled sideways to gain some distance.

“Daah - Shit, what the hell is this thing?!”

Varow moved towards Kou’s head so as not to be swept off his feet. Suddenly, one of Karen’s arrows flew at him and he deflected it with a spin of his spear. Finally out of the spear’s range, Kou was able to stand up.

Kou knew that he would be put on the ground again if he charged in carelessly, so he changed his strategy to corner him slowly and put pressure on him.

While this was happening, Karvan had been defeated thanks to the assistance of Lef's magical attacks, so Mandel came to support Kou.

Karen had provided backup for Gawiik as he fought against Stua. Even though a single blow from the "Crumbling Wave Breaker" would have been a critical hit, Gawiik had finally overpowered her with the high-speed attacks of the "Wind Cutter".

"Kou, keep going just like that! Mandel, go from the left, I'll go from the right!" (Gawiik)

"Affirmative."

"Voooh~" "Okay~"

"Damn it - !"

The only one left at the end of the fierce fight was Varow. As Kou, Mandel and Gawiik all attacked him with Karen's backup, he was defeated.

"And that's the end - ! The winners, Gawiik's group!"

As the announcer's declaration of the battle's outcome rang out, the arena was filled with loud cheering.



"They were strong..."

"If this was a real fight, who knows what would have happened."

Varow was lying on the ground, gasping for breath. Around him were the members of his group, and Gawiik's group was sitting nearby, trying to catch their breath. Karen was brushing off the sand that was covering Kou's body with a handkerchief.

Both groups were basking in the afterglow of the match, not even particularly exchanging any words. After a while, they returned to the waiting rooms.

"See you later, Gawiik's group. If you come out onto the battlefield, let's fight together."

"Yeah, if the countries get caught up in some diplomatic dispute, I hope we're on the

same side.”

Expressing their desire to not be enemies in the future, both groups turned their backs to each other and left the stadium.

# CHAPTER 27

## THE BATTLE AGAINST THE GOLDEN SWORD DRAGONS

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The day after the match with the Varow group.

The members of Gawiik's group spent their time as they liked, resting to recover from their last match or out in the town buying things. As usual, Kou was undergoing an inspection at Professor Andagi's laboratory.

"Hmm, there doesn't seem to be any particular problems. As to be expected of something that I created, kuwakakakaka!" (Andagi)

After examining whether the composite was showing any signs of wearing or had any damaged parts, the Professor praised himself and laughed.

"Ah, by the way, Kou, that magical weapon, I've thought of an interesting way to use it, so could you take it out?" (Andagi)

"Voh?" "This one?"

At the professor's request, Kou produced the weapon from his dimensional storage. The weapon that was made using a concept from another world as a reference: the rapid-fire flame projectile launcher with an inbuilt internal combustion magical vessel. He had not used it as a weapon yet, but it was capable of shooting flaming projectiles about as powerful as an apprentice Magician's flame magic from its internal combustion magical vessel.

Of course, projectiles of this level of power would be able to fend off demon hound-level monsters at best. For a weapon that had fine devices incorporated in it, it would not have been an exaggeration to call it a failed product. But despite its low power, its ability to fire constantly to provide covering fire was this weapon's special feature.

"I'm going to mess with it for a while, so talk to Miss Sayaka or something while you wait." (Andagi)

“Voooh~”“Okay~”

Kou chatted with Sayaka in the waiting room. Their topic of conversation was unsurprisingly the fighting tournament and they discussed yesterday’s match and tomorrow’s finals.

“Those guys yesterdays were strong~”

“It was a hard fight, wasn’t it? But you know, Kou-chan, you’re quite merciless, you know?” (Sayaka)

When Sayaka pointed out how he had defeated the Shadow Artist at the beginning of the match, Kou explained that he had held back properly. But as Sayaka continued to explain how it looked from the audience’s point of view, Kou’s body rocked side to side as he asked,[Eh~ Why~?]

“When people walk past me in the town, they’re actually avoiding me...”

“Ahaha, that’s definitely because they’re scared of you.” (Sayaka)

“Ee~eh?”

Despite his giant body, Sayaka thought Kou’s rocking back and forth was childishly cute as she enjoyed their conversation. While they were spending this meaningful time together, the bell that signaled midday rang out, so Sayaka began to prepare lunch.

“Prince Layos isn’t here today, is he?”

“Prince Layos? Now that you mention it, he isn’t.” (Sayaka)

He had been showing his face here every morning recently, but he was absent today.

The assistant Sarta came into the room to tell them that the adjustments to the magic weapon had been completed and overheard their conversation. She suggested that Prince Layos was being considerate so that Kou, who would be fighting in the finals of the tournament tomorrow with Gawiik’s group, would not be forced to interact with him.

“Tomorrow’s our battle with Prince Layos, huh~”

“They’re strong, you know? The prince’s “Golden Sword Dragons”.” (Sarta)

“Their matches ended right after they started, didn’t they?” (Sayaka)

“They have gathered plenty of first-class equipment and personnel, kuwakakakaka!” (Andagi)

The professor laughed and said that they were invincible and defeated their opponents instantly because they were not holding back on using their power, . The professor liked flashy things, so he seemed to have taken a liking to Prince Layos, who showed no compromise and no restraint as his group used their overwhelming powers to their hearts’ content when they fought.

“I wonder if we can win?”

“Wahaha, for just you brats, it would be impossible.” (Andagi)

“Even though Gawiik-san is probably a little more skilled than Prince Layos.” (Sarta)

The central members of the Golden Sword Dragons were a knight of the Grandahl army and a Magician of the royal court; it went without saying that they were extremely skilled and their coordination could not be compared to that of a normal group of adventurers.

They had armor with enchantments such as anti-magic, recovery and weight reduction. Their weapons were imbued with special properties, similar to the enchanted swords that Gawiik and Stua had used. In addition to that, every one of their members wore all kinds of expensive ornaments to increase their movement capabilities and magical power.

“I did watch all of Layos-sama’s matches, and most of it looked like they were cheating, you know?” (Sayaka)

“They’re that amazing, huh -”

Incidentally, Prince Layos was a swordsman himself and his sword of choice was the enchanted sword “Wind Sever”. This was a superior enchanted sword to the “Wind

Cutter”; it was surrounded in a vacuum so that it could be swung without any resistance from the air and had the ability to nullify any wind-element magic. In terms of their specialized weapons, this was a bad matchup for Gawiik.

“Well, I just want you to do your part, don’t push yourself too hard and just get the crowd excited.” (Andagi)

After saying that, he began teaching Kou how to use the magic weapon, to which he had added a new feature.



The next day, the day of the finals of the tournament.

In the fighters’ waiting room that they had become accustomed to entering and exiting in the past few days, the participating members of Gawiik’s group were holding a final meeting before the match: Captain Gawiik, Vice-Captain Mandel, the archer Karen, the Magician Lef and the composite Golem Kou.

“Our opponent today is Prince Layos. As we discussed yesterday, we have no plan for this match.” (Mandel)

“To be perfectly honest, it’s because there’s no effective plan that we could come up with against this kind of opponent. Therefore, I’ll be leaving you to make your own individual judgment on how to proceed after the initial attack.” (Gawiik)

Every single group that had faced the Golden Sword Dragons in the tournament had been defeated without landing a single strike on them. The only confirmed attacks used were the multiple, simultaneous fireballs from the Magician and the projectiles of light fired from the enchanted sword of the swordsman. Following up with these long-ranged attacks would be the fighter charging in with a warrior backing him up.

TLN: What was previously translated as “fighter” is now warrior, because there’s a new separate term that only translates into “fighter” that seems to mean “hand-to-hand combat fighter”. I’ve gone and made this change to previous chapters. Sorry about the confusion.

That was enough to win all of their matches. Prince Layos and the heavy warrior at his side did not even need to make any moves. But it was known that the captain who had gathered the Golden Sword Dragons and its vice-captain were their two strongest members.

“They’re opponents that we don’t have to hold back against. Everyone, let’s put all our strength into it, but be careful not to get injured.” (Gawiik)

Deciding to show enough force to make Prince Layos’s group falter, Gawiik’s group left the waiting room and headed for the arena.



“AND NOW -! THE FINALS OF THE ROYALLY SPONSORED TORTOLUSE GRAND FIGHTING TOURNAMENT -! BETWEEN THE GOLDEN SWORD DRAGONS AND GAWIIK’S GROUP -! WILL NOW BEGIN!”

As the two groups appeared with the announcer’s voice, the crowd cheered so loudly that it felt like the arena would break. Kou was a little overwhelmed by the cheers of the crowd, which was even bigger than when they had fought against the Varow group. But he quickly became used to it and focused his attention towards the match.

[Ah, it’s Prince Layos. The air about him is different from usual~]

Even the appearance of the Golden Sword Dragon members was very different from normal adventurer groups or mercenary bands. The warrior’s armor and the Magician’s combat uniform were elegant and refined, like nobles’ clothes, polished from head to toe.

It was very different from the style of scratched, dented armor and leather belts darkened that was typical of adventurers. Gawiik’s group was a group of hardened warriors who were equipped better than most other groups, but this was on another level.

As Prince Layos faced one part of the crowd and raised his sword towards them, the cheering grew even louder. He appeared to be responding to the audience’s encouragement, but the one he was appealing to was a single girl sitting in the nobles’ seating section.

“He’s appealing to Saya-chan now, isn’t he?” (Sarta)

“I’m surprised he can see me from there.” (Sayaka)

“Kaka~ That just shows how much he’s in love!” (Andagi)

A suspicious-looking old magical technician in a white coat, a woman wearing a similar white coat and a young, black-haired girl were all sitting together. Sayaka simply shrugged in response to the professor and Sarta’s words. And so the Golden Sword Dragons turn their gaze towards Gawiik’s group, paying particular attention to the Kou, who was towering a head’s height above everyone.

“I wonder if Kou-chan will be okay.” (Sayaka)

“No need to worry; he’s the sturdiest one among them. Even if some part of him breaks, I’ll fix it straight away!” (Andagi)

Saying that, the professor gave his usual laugh of “kuwakakakaka!”



Somewhere among the cheering of the crowd, the start signal was given and the final match of the fighting tournament began. As soon as the match started, seven fireballs and a projectile of light flew straight at Gawiik, leaving shining, arcing trails in the air.

“Waah, they’re aiming for me first after all!” (Gawiik)

Gawiik ran forward in a diagonal line, drawing more focus to himself to create an opening for his allies to counterattack. The fighter and warrior attacking at the same time were met by Mandel while Lef and Karen provided backup for him.

As soon as the fighter stepped in front of Mandel, he moved to the side and wrapped around, pretending to be pulling a surprise attack from behind before heading straight for Kou and the others. In time with the fighter’s movements, the warrior charged in and locked swords with Mandel.

“Kou! They’re coming for you!”

Mandel, with his duties ingrained deeply into his mind, continued to give orders and

warnings to his allies, even while being pushed back by the warrior.

The fighter had very fast movements considering his large, solid build as he charged in with his fists ready, wearing battle gloves. Kou stood ready to face him.

The fighter darted left and right as he closed in, ducked under Kou's punch and launched a series of blows at both sides of the composite Golem's body. Sounds like a hammer repeatedly striking a rock echo out. As his movements became slower, Kou realized that the composite Golem had taken damage.

Even Kou's punches in retaliation were because the fighter was deliberately delaying his attacks enough to allow them, so that he could easily dodge them and return a counter-punch. It became clear that the fighter's movements had a lot of freedom.

"Hmm, well, I guess I should expect something like this." (Fighter)

As Kou threw yet another punch, the fighter performed an upper blow that drove into him and sent him reeling over backwards. He then moved sideways past Kou to target Karen, who was providing backup for Gawiik. By the time Kou had gotten onto his feet again, Karen was already within the fighter's range.

"Uwah!" (Karen)

"Pardon me, ojousan\*." (Fighter)

*TLN\*: Young lady.*

Karen tried to put some distance between them with a swift back-step, but the fighter closed it again in an instant and landed an attack in her side.

"Kuhah!" (Karen)

"Vooah!" [Karen!]

It seemed that the fighter had held back his strength; Karen was sent flying sideways a short distance and crouched on the ground in defeat. The moment after, as Kou was trying to rush over to Karen, several fireballs passed by his huge body, as if deliberately avoiding him.

"!" (Lef)

“Vauh! “[Lef!]”

The seven fireballs from the enemy Magician flew towards Lef and she managed to block three of them using defensive magic strengthened by “The Flowing Hand”, but the other four struck her one by one. Lef’s small body was thrown into the air like a twig caught in a strong wind.

Kou had been played around with by the fighter and was completely unable to fulfil his role as a protective wall. He could only watch in a daze as Lef, with white smoke rising from her body, fell to the ground.

Hearing the crowd cheer, he turned around to see Gawiik, who had been drawing the light projectile attacks of the enemy swordsman, defeated by a combination attack between Prince Layos and the heavy warrior. Mandel, who had been crossing swords with the enemy warrior, was defeated under the pressure of the backup of the light projectiles from the swordsman.

[Eeh, even Gawiik and Mandel... Everyone’s been defeated!]

The professor and even everyone from Gawiik’s group themselves had said that it would be impossible to win against Prince Layos’s group, so Kou had imagined that they would not be able to win even after experiencing the difficult battle against the Varow group. But he had not expected that they would be cornered so quickly.

His astonishment was brief, as the fighter who had brought down Karen returned to face him, drawing his attention. Thinking that he should show the willpower of Gawiik’s group by defeating at least one member of the Golden Sword Dragons in return, Kou clenched his fists.

“Oh? You still want to fight?” (Fighter)

The fighter whispered this question as Kou, with movements quite unlike that of a Golem, threw a punch at him. Stepping forward while dodging the attack, he drove in an attack with his battle-glove-covered fist. The power of his attack would have been enough to floor an average warrior.

However, the composite Golem was sturdy and Kou did not feel pain, so Kou continued attacking even as his body’s movements became slower.

“Vaauh!”[I can’t hit him at all!]

Each time Kou’s punch missed or was parried he received three heavy blows in return. Each time that happened, the composite body’s movements slowed down momentarily and made it even more difficult to land an attack and easier for him to be hit by the counter-attacks. However, his sturdy body would not fall.

“Now then, I guess I’ll step up!” (Warrior)

The fighter switched out with the warrior who had initially charged in together with him and returned to his original position. It was not that the fighter had grown tired of facing him, but his role was simply to attack the rear members and make them powerless. The warrior’s role was to provide backup for the fighter as he did so, and it had been previously decided that it would be the warrior’s job to defeat Kou.

The warrior, using a fighting style faithful to the fundamental concepts of attack and defense, held up his shield as he closed in Kou. Kou produced the battleaxe and swung it at him.

However, it would not hit. The warrior dodged it at the last moment and stepped forward, raising his arm in an upwards slash aimed near the wrist before landing another blow with his sword on the handle of the battleaxe.

As they simply watched the battle between the Warrior and Kou, the members of the Golden Sword Dragons wondered if there was some kind of trick for such a large weapon to appear suddenly in Kou’s hands, or perhaps it was some kind of magical tool.

In the audience, there was an atmosphere of [this isn’t much of a competition] as they wondered how the Golden Sword Dragons would bring down this strange Golem, or how long the Golem would last.

As Kou’s second weapon, a spear, was knocked out of his hands, he produced a hammer as a third weapon and swung it down at the warrior. The warrior dodged to the side and swung his sword downwards. He struck the end of the hammer with force and continued his swing all the way into the ground, throwing the hammer and Kou’s wrist to the side.

Kou's weapon was disposed of once more.

“Vooh!”[Why you!]

Kou tried to throw a punch, but the Warrior deflected its trajectory with his shield and launched a counter-thrust. Having been stabbed in his throat, Kou's head was thrown back as he staggered back one step, two steps. As he tried to regain his balance yet another blow came to his right side, upwards towards his shoulder.

Kou tried to retaliate immediately with another fist. However, the warrior had already stepped out of its range and taken a stance, preparing for his next attack.

“Voooooh...”[Ugh~ I can't hit him...]

Kou let out an impatient, irritated groan. At that moment, Karen who was crouching on the ground behind him, clutching her side, whispered to him.

“Kou-chan... Don't push yourself too hard, okay?” (Karen)

Karen was concerned for Kou even though she looked like she was in pain herself. A small distance away was Lef, lying on her back with her staff still in her hand. Gawiik and Mandel were behind the enemy warrior. Seeing his defeated allies, Kou's hazy feelings began to erupt.

[It's just so frustrating.]

Feeling this deep frustration and thinking,[we can't just lose like this], Kou tried to think of a way through this situation.



Meanwhile, the Golden Sword Dragons, seeing the sturdy Kou who was still standing despite having received countless powerful attacks, wondered how they should defeat him. It would look bad to keep attacking him until he accumulated enough damage to finally collapse, so they decided to destroy one part of his body to stop his movements.

“As long as we don't destroy it completely, Professor Andagi will be able to fix it so it should be fine.”

“Well then, shall we break his right leg?”

Leaving Layos and the heavy warrior behind, the swordsman, fighter and Magician joined the fight to defeat Kou. Their formation looked as if they were exterminating a Monster. It seemed that they intended to bring an end to the battle and the spectators watched in anticipation of the match’s conclusion.

Next to the professor, Sayaka had been tensely watching Kou being attacked one-sidedly.

“Will Kou-chan be alright...?” (Sayaka)

“Mmm, even the composite body will take damage if it keeps receiving attacks like that.” (Andagi)

“Even its armored skin is reaching its limits now.” (Sarta)

The professor voiced the need to return it to the laboratory for inspection and repair as soon as the match ended. The composite body theoretically had a self-repair function, but it had not yet demonstrated in practice whether it can repair itself after taking such heavy damage.

In the arena, Kou was surrounded on three sides by the warrior, the swordsman and the fighter while occasionally receiving fireballs from the Magician. He was fighting alone, desperately swinging the battleaxe and hammer around.

In order to not be so easily defeated, Kou was swinging the weapons in his hands together to limit the attacks coming towards him, but they are completely dodged. The enemy’s attacks were focused on his leg. Rather than his whole body, the movement of his leg was slowed down.

He was hardening the part of the composite body that was receiving the attacks, blocking the impacts and slashes, but repeatedly taking damage on the same place would eventually become too much. Feeling problems all over his body, Kou desperately tried to think of a way.

[I can’t let it continue like this.]

Remembering the basic adventurers’ principles that he had learned from Elmerl and

the others in Barasse and Gawiik group, he looked at his surroundings and thought calmly. His allies were all defeated, so the only ones left standing were his enemies. It would probably be fine to use the inaccurate weapon that he had received from the professor.

He understood perfectly well that attacking at random would be meaningless. Keeping this in mind, Kou created a plan in his head. First, he would need to use magic to escape the enemies surrounding him. Putting his weapon away and gathering magical power in his hand, he produced the light that he had once used as a flare and threw it.

Seeing Kou use magic, the members surrounding him were suddenly cautious as they stopped moving. Thinking that Kou had pulled out a trump card after being cornered, the Magician put up a defensive magical wall to try to nullify Kou's ball of light. However, nothing happened.

"What is this?"

"It seems to just be a light source; it is not an offensive spell."

"So, he's trying to blind us?"

"So he's using this kind of method, what an interesting opponent."

Kou used the moment that his enemies faltered because of the blind to escape their surround, and the Golden Sword Dragons commented on his strategy. They continued to casually discuss Kou's flexibility and future potential, but they raised their guard as they suddenly heard a series of small explosions and saw several fireballs flying their way.

"What is it this time!"

"This is... basic-level fire magic, isn't it? It seems that he's shooting it from that box."

"An invention of that professor's?"

"It's not very powerful, but that's an impressive amount of attacks."

It was not powerful enough to break through the Magician's defensive magic and the anti-magic enhancements on the equipment of the other two were enough to repel the fireballs. But it would be painful if they were to hit the parts of their bodies that were not covered by armor, so they had no choice but to take a defensive stance against this number of fireballs. But that is all that the barrage accomplished.

Though the barrage of attacks forced a defensive stance from his enemies, it did not do any damage. The warrior raised his shield and began moving forwards.

Realizing that the attacks from the magic weapon were ineffective, Kou began to think of the next course of action to take. It did slow down their movements, so it was not completely ineffective. The warrior was slowly approaching, deflecting the fireballs with his shield in a flashy manner, while the other three were on standby behind him.

The barrage of flaming projectiles covered a wide area, but did not have a long effective range. Even though they would not do much damage even if they landed, Kou could sense that they were letting their guard down by the fact that they were not moving around. It seemed that they were relying on the warrior to stop his attacks before they tried to surround him again.

It was understandable that they did not want to be on the receiving end of these one-sided attacks, but now Kou saw a chance. Even if he fought one-on-one he had no chance of winning if he fought normally. In that case, he would just have to use an effective attack and catch him by surprise.

Kou confirmed the position of a newly-added switch on the magic weapon before fiercely charging in. It was difficult to run because of the weapon's recoil, but even so, he managed a fast pace. Despite the focused attacks it had received, his right leg was still fine.

Seeing Kou charging at him, firing flaming projectiles randomly, he knew that he would not be able to handle a forceful impact with that huge body, so he quickly began to fall back with his shield still raised. As Kou ran past the swordsman, the swordsman raised his sword to get an attack in. At that moment, Kou stopped in his tracks and turned around.

“Voah!” [This is it!]

Flipping the switch from “rapid-fire” to “simultaneous discharge”, Kou fired at point-

blank range. This was a feature of an original weapon that the professor had learned of from Sayaka, reproducing the concept of a shotgun.

However, his target was not defeated. Receiving several flaming projectiles of moderate power was only enough to knock him off balance.

[Err, umm, oh yeah! I'll step on him!]

As the warrior tried to stand up, he was met by Kou's trampling attack. His armor collapsed with a heavy sound and the warrior lost consciousness from this powerful impact.

A shiver ran through the arena. Rather than cheers, voices of confusion were rising from the crowd.

"Oi, that Golem defeated one of them..."

"To think that the Golden Sword Dragons would suffer a casualty..."

No matter how much they had let their guard down, nobody had imagined that the group that looked so powerful that it appeared as if they were cheating would have one of their members defeated. The arena was filled with the commotion of the crowd. And so, Prince Layos, who had been watching the battle unfold from his position at the back, began to move.

"The proud will have their legs swept away from under them. It is just as Father always said." (Layos)

"Prince Layos..."

"It seems we have fooled around a little too long. We have paid the price. Now we'll end this!" (Layos)

Unsheathing the enchanted sword "Wind Sever", Layos gave the command to attack. Now the Golden Sword Dragons' attack began in full force.

The one who leapt forward first was the fighter. Jumping left and right to dodge the simultaneous-discharge attacks from the magic weapon, he stepped to one side and landed a powerful blow in the side of Kou's body. Unable to counterattack with the

heavy magic weapon in hand, Kou returned it to the dimensional storage and faced the fighter in direct combat for the third time.

The bracelets in the center of the fighter's battle gloves were special equipment that had the property of reducing fatigue, so even if he attacked incessantly, his arms did not tire. Even as Kou raised his arms to counterattack, he landed blows on those arms to prevent him from doing so.

It could not even be called a fight; Kou was simply on the receiving end of a one-sided series of blows. Feeling that his body was beginning to have problems under this violent rush, Kou spotted on his own head one of the several small insects that he had attached to the composite body's surface before the match. Slipping his spirit form away and storing the composite body, he possessed the tiny creature.

The fighter was bewildered the Golem's body collapsed before vanishing, causing his punches to swing through the air. He wondered, [did I accidentally destroy it?] However, the fact that not even a piece of the Golem was left was too suspicious.

"I'd understand if it was a summoned beast, but..." (Fighter)

"Be careful! There's a rumor that he can teleport!" (Heavy warrior)

As the vice-captain, the heavy warrior gave a warning not to let his guard down, the Golem appeared behind the fighter.

In the next instant, the fighter's body was flying through the air. Kou had flown behind him using the small insect and then produced and possessed the composite Golem once more. Despite not standing a chance in a direct fist fight, Kou had seized the opportunity behind the fighter to land one attack that threw him into the air. The crowd stirred again at the sight of the Golem's power that was enough to send the large fighter flying.

"So that's how it is, but...!"

The fighter twisted his body in mid-air to regain his balance, but as he looked down, he saw Kou gathering power in his fist close to his hip. He knew from this what Kou was aiming for, and tried to put some strength back into his body. At the same time, the swordsman and the heavy warrior also realized what Kou's stance meant and stepped forward to block him. However –

“What?!”

The heavy warrior was attacked by Mandel and Gawiik while the swordsman was stopped in his tracks by ice magic and an arrow that had accurately hit his ankles. As the fighter was still in mid-air, he was unable to dodge as Kou landed an attack with all his might.

The warrior and fighter had so far handled Kou’s attacks by avoiding or parrying them, so they had been unharmed even in direct combat with him. But the composite Golem was Professor Andagi’s strongest magical soldier. The destructive power of its attacks, if landed, was truly fearsome.

With his armor breaking into pieces the fighter flew close to six Ruuka, about eight meters. The impact of the punch and landing on the ground after that knocked him out cold.

Gawiik’s group had all recovered and they began to go on the offensive. Using the “Hand of Flow”, Lef was acting as a healer. She had regained consciousness while Kou was standing against the enemy, and healed everyone from distance.

Karen aimed at the Magician and Lef attacked together with her. Using the “Hand of Flow”, Lef was able to imitate her counterpart’s fireballs, managing to produce four of them. As the Magician blocked them with defensive magic, Kou also began firing with his magic weapon.

The barrage of flaming projectiles and imitated fireballs broke through the defensive magic, and Karen’s arrow struck the circlet on the Magician’s head, shattering it. The Magician seemed to have suffered a concussion. However, straight after that, the enemy swordsman sent a light projectile at Lef. Lef, having been on the offense until now, had no defense prepared. She collapsed for a second time. The swordsman raised his sword again, this time facing Karen.

The heavy warrior was unable to keep up with Gawiik’s high-speed swordsmanship. Not wanting to go down without a fight, he performed a reckless attack that ended up with both him and Mandel defeating each other. Meanwhile, Gawiik crossed swords with Prince Layos, who had come to back up the heavy warrior.

“As expected of Gawiik’s group, we can’t look down on you!” (Prince Layos)

“Looks like you’ve paid the price for letting your guard down!” (Gawiik)

With that said, Gawiik was aware that the only reason they were able to recover and come back with a counterattack was because Kou had persisted for so long.

As “Wind Cutter” and “Wind Sever” clashed, the high-speed swordsmanship was prevented by the properties of “Wind Sever”. Gawiik had the upper hand when it came to skill with the sword, but the performance of their weapons was too different. Gawiik was slowly pushed back and eventually defeated by Prince Layos.

While keeping the swordsman who was shooting projectiles of light in check with his magic weapon, Kou tried to move to a position where he could protect Karen. But then, Layos, who had defeated Gawiik, came charging in. Knowing the threat that the “Wind Sever” presented, Kou turned the weapon towards Layos to stop his charge.

But now that the swordsman was free from the barrage of Kou’s attacks, he moved to take out Karen. An archer with normal equipment would have no chance against a swordsman covered in armor with anti-magic and recovery properties who was able to shoot projectiles of light at his enemies.

Karen was able to escape from him for a while, but her body was still injured and fatigued from earlier. She quickly ran out of breath and finally fell prey to a light projectile.

And so, the battle between the Golden Sword Dragons and Gawiik’s group that had started out so one-sided became a full-fledged melee that nobody could guess the outcome of. In the midst of all of this chaos, the Kou’s battle against Layos and the swordsman began to unfold.

Kou was restraining Layos with his magic weapon. He could not deal damage, but he could prevent his movement to a certain extent. As the swordsman closed in from the other side, he continued to hold the magic weapon in his right hand and took a stance that was ready to produce another weapon in his left hand to intercept.

The swordsman closed in as he fired another projectile of light. If Kou turned the magic weapon away from Layos for a moment, he would close the distance in an instant, so Kou kept the weapon focused on him.

The light projectile attack had little effect on Kou, so the swordsman came to attack him directly. Kou swung his arm.

“Watch out, he might produce another weapon!” (Layos)

Layos gave a warning to the swordsman. Kou produced a weapon and swept it across. The swordsman, hearing the warning, barely dodged Kou’s sweeping attack in time. The swordsman then landed an attack on Kou’s arm, causing him to drop his weapon.

It seemed that there was something wrong with the arm after that attack; Kou tried to grab the swordsman but he was not able to move it very well. The next attack hit his side. His armored skin had taken too much damage in the battle against the fighter and the sword’s tip pierced into his body a little. The swordsman then produced a light projectile from that position.

“Kou-chan!” (Sayaka)

“Mmm, that one did quite a lot of damage.” (Andagi)

“It seems we’ll need a vat to culture composite body cells.” (Sarta)

Sayaka was watching the match to its conclusion and worried about Kou, whose injuries covering his whole body were clearly visible from the outside. Meanwhile, the professor and Sarta were estimating the extent of the damage done to the composite body and thinking ahead to how they would repair it.

The composite body had taken interior damage where the sword had stabbed into it, and its movements grew substantially weaker. The swordsman had taken half a step backwards from the recoil of the light projectile. As he prepared for yet another attack, Kou spun his body left to face him.

Even taking the rapid fire of flaming projectiles from the magic weapon at point blank, the swordsman’s armor was too strong and he took almost no damage as he slipped behind Kou. Now that the barrage was no longer being aimed at him, Layos closed the distance between him and Kou in an instant.

Was this the end? Everyone asked themselves.

Kou quickly aimed the magic weapon at his feet. Layos’s vision was obstructed by a

cloud of dust, but he pressed forward, knowing where Kou was. “Wind Sever” found its target behind the curtain of dust. He could feel a response.

When the dust lifted, Layos’s sword was piercing Kou’s back, near his right hip.

“...?”

Layos wondered,[why is his back facing me?]The answer to that question was in the swordsman, whose legs were hanging in the air. At the moment the cloud of dust had blocked vision in all directions, Kou had seized the swordsman.

“Voooooh~”

Raising the swordsman into the air, Kou threw him at Layos. Layos dodged sideways. The swordsman, who had been thrown with full force, bounced twice against the ground kicking up the dust as he struck the ground before rolling to a stop. He showed no signs of being able to stand up.

The crowd murmured restlessly. Confusion, astonishment and anticipation. The voices of the ground, filled with various emotions, spread and expanded like a wave.

“I didn’t expect you to be this capable.” (Layos)

It had come to a decisive one-on-one battle. The confrontation between the heavily injured Kou against Layos. Layos raised “Wind Sever”. Kou wondered what he should do. The difference between their abilities was clear. There were no longer any small insects on the composite body’s surface. The crowd erupted in applause at the sight of the giant, whose body was in tatters, and the brave prince facing it with a composed expression.

Kou was no longer able to make fast movements due to the damage to his body. He tried to think of a way to make an effective attack with a relatively small movement, and came up with an idea.

[Alright, it’s sink or swim.]

Kou crossed his arms. Layos put up his guard. Kou tilted his body forward and raised his arms diagonally. The crowd watched him closely, not knowing what stance that was but knowing that he was about to do something.

With this stance, he was full of openings for Layos to take advantage of; it was unclear what he was aiming for. There were no signs of him using magic. The magic weapon was now lying on the ground, and even if he were to produce another weapon, it was impossible to think of a weapon that he would need to swing from this pose.

If Layos were to be cautious, it would be best to circle around and attack from behind, but the battle was at its climax. His opponent truly looked as if he had fought a hard battle, and there was no meaning in not facing him from the front. Layos's personality was such that he thought that. Layos raised "Wind Sever" above his head, challenging Kou head-on.

Kou extended his spirit from the Golem's outstretched arms as far as he could without losing control of it, matched the timing with Layos's charge and produced... that. In front of the composite body's outstretched arms. In the space where there had been nothing, about a meter above, falling downwards, there was a steel-blue shadow.

THUNK -

"Buh!" (Layos)

Layos took a direct hit from the heavy shield. To be more precise, he charged straight into the shield that had suddenly appeared over his head.

[Now!]thought Kou as he raised his right arm -

"Voooooooooh~"

With the sound of a large impact echoing out, Kou slammed his fist into the back of the shield on top of Layos.

The impact was largely absorbed, but his stance was just a stance for his surprise attack. The heavy shield rolled loudly across the ground. Layos rolled around with the sand of the stadium covering his back, unable to stand up.

The crowd murmured.

The announcer's tense voice echoed out to announce the end and the winner of the match.

“W-winner, Gawiik’s group!”

Gawiik’s group had defeated the Golden Sword Dragons, achieving the incredible accomplishment of winning the championship. At this completely unexpected conclusion, the arena that had been almost silent suddenly exploded with applause and cheers.



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