

スピリット・マイグレーション

Spirit Migration

3

へろー天気
Hero Tenki



捕らわれた敵国で、憑依系青年の正体判明!?

アルファポリス

美女将軍に導かれ

青年コウ ついに

目覚めの時!?

著者累計
30万部!

ネット発
大人気作家
待望の新シリーズ

憑依系主人公の異世界大冒険 第3弾!

SPIRIT MIGRATION

- Arcs 6-7 -

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[Translated by: Light Novel Bastion]

【 ARC 6 】

CHAPTER 28

IMPERIAL CAPITAL LIFESTYLE

The day after the finals of the tournament.

The composite Golem had taken heavy damage during the match, so for now it was in the care of Professor Andagi in his laboratory for testing of its self-repair functions and monitoring the progress of its repair.

Kou had gone to the professor's laboratory immediately following the match for inspection and repair, so he had been in this single room of the laboratory assisting with experiments since yesterday.

"Good morning, Professor. Breakfast has been prepared." (Sayaka)

"Oh, is it that time already?" (Andagi)

"Voooooh~" "Good morning, Sayaka~"

The professor and Kou had been holed up in the laboratory all night; they calmed down a little upon hearing that breakfast is ready. Pulling an all-nighter had taken its toll on the professor's old body; his hips and shoulders were making noises. Kou seemed fine as he did not require sleep.

"Have you been observing him non-stop since yesterday?" (Sayaka)

"Yes. His recovery speed is fast, you see, so I couldn't let my eyes off him at all." (Andagi)

As he left the room to eat breakfast, the professor explained that he had finished observing the progress on the internal repairs, so now he was observing how well the armored skin would be able to repair the damage and whether it would be able to return fully to normal.

"Kou-chan, are you okay?"

“Voooh-vo-vauh~”“I’m mostly back to normal now~”

Kou was lying on a table, attached to monitoring equipment. Some marks of the harsh battle he had gone through still remained here and there, but all of the smaller wounds had already disappeared. The only places where scars still remained were where the attacks had been strong enough to penetrate his armored skin completely.

“I see... Kou-chan, you were amazing yesterday.” (Sayaka)

“Vooh~”“Ehehe~”

Sayaka was relieved to hear about Kou’s well-being. She had an enjoyable discussion with Kou about the tournament and Gawiik’s group and then left the room, saying she had to prepare to go out.

“Voaaah?”“Are you going somewhere?”

“Yeah, to see Layos-sama for a bit.” (Sayaka)

He might be feeling depressed, so she was going to cheer him up. Sayaka had received the permission needed to enter and exit the royal palace district, which was still valid now. She seemed to know where Layos would be.

“That guy, even though he looks like that, he has some delicate parts to him as well.” (Sayaka)

The noblewomen who gather to try to gain the favor of the First Prince Layos. Feeling that both of them are carrying a heavy burden, Sayaka let out a sigh. Judging from her behavior and words, he could imagine that Sayaka has some kind of misunderstanding about the Prince Layos and the noblewomen who chased him around, and replied simply with [I see.]

“Well then, I’m going to get going.” (Sayaka)

“Vaah-vooh~”“See you later~”

Wearing a dress a little simpler than normal town clothes, Sayaka headed towards the royal palace district on foot, choosing not to use a carriage. As she came out of the magical research district and reached the entrance to the royal palace district, the

familiar gate guard called out to her.

“Yo, if it isn’t Saya.” (Gate guard)

“Hello~” (Sayaka)

“I heard you’ve been taken in by the abnormal professor, but you seems well.”

“I feel bad for him when you call him abnormal~” (Sayaka)

After exchanging pleasantries with the gate guard, Sayaka passed through the gate and headed for a place she knew that Layos often visited when he was feeling down. The royal palace district was an enormous area with the countless mansions forming a maze inside.

There were places with benches and small streams running through, but most of the district was contained inside. Even Sayaka, who had lived here before, was only familiar with a small portion of it. She knew that if she walked down a street that she was unfamiliar with, she would get lost.

“Shortcut, where’s the shortcut~” (Sayaka)

The royal castle in the center was the first level and the area where the lowest-class nobles lived was the eighth level. In between was the sixth level which was the section where most of the middle-class nobles lived, containing parks and plazas. Passing through that, Sayaka reached the fifth level that contained yet more parks and plazas.

Around here, the stone passageways changed to polished, marble-like stone. Going up another level, the passageways were lined with carpets. Her destination was a gazebo in one of the parks that dotted the fifth level.

As Sayaka walked along the plaza beneath the castle she encountered a large group of noisy people. They were familiar faces, but not people that she could celebrate meeting again. They were the middle- and high-class noblewomen who had conflicted with Sayaka for Prince Layos’s affection when she had lived in the royal palace district.

“Oh? I was wondering what kind of maid servant had gotten lost around here.”

“Well, would everyone look here? There’s a Butterfly Lady here.”

“To let this vile prostitute in here, I wonder what the gate guard was thinking?”

“I am sure she must have tempted him with her body.”

Sayaka cursed her misfortune as she tried to leave. But she was surrounded! The maids and servants that were following the noblewomen around were giving her looks of pity.

“I wonder where you think you are going?”

“The way home is that way, you know?”

“No, I have something I must attend to. Excuse me.” (Sayaka)

Though they were standing in front of her as if to not let her pass, Sayaka tried to walk to the side along the castle wall. But she was surrounded once more. The noblewoman who seemed like the leader of the group placed her hand against the wall to block her path and looked down at Sayaka with a smile overflowing with elegance.

[What a pain...]

Careful not to let her impatience show on her face, Sayaka thought about whether she should try to force her way through or go around. A person walking on the other side of the corridor happened to notice them. It was a man wearing the clothing of a royal member, with a young male attendant and a knight following him.

“What are you doing here.”

“Eh? S-Suaro-sama!”

The Second Prince Suaro casts a dubious look towards the group of noblewomen standing here as if to block off the corridor.

In contrast to the wild nature of Prince Layos, Prince Suaro seemed like a gentle man. He seemed intellectual, but seemed like he was nervous.

The noblewomen immediately offered their greetings and flattery to him, but they could not speak coherently.

Prince Suaro's conflict with the First Prince Layos was well-known. Even the noblemen who supported each of them engaged in conflict every single day. They feared that if they showed too much support for one side or the other, the noblemen of the other side would glare at them.

Therefore, they could not be too enthusiastic in their praise. They could do so with the First Prince who had already been decided upon as the heir to the throne, but it would be better for them not to become too intimate with the Second Prince.

Sayaka decided to take advantage of the fact that the attention of the noblewomen was focused on Prince Suaro to leave. None of the noblewomen noticed Sayaka, but as Suaro was handling the noblewomen with a reserved approach, he noticed Sayaka with the corner of his eye.

[That girl... Might be useful again.]

Around noon.

Karen had visited the laboratory with the messenger bird on her shoulder, so Kou had left the composite body for now to possess the messenger bird. Gawiik's group had decided to use the tournament winnings to buy everyone new equipment, so they were taking a break in the city until all of the items they had ordered were delivered.

Karen had come to the professor with requests for a resupply of magical tools and new armor. And, of course, to visit Kou. The items that could be bought in the lower area of the city were only ordinary items and strings needed to be pulled to obtain armor with special properties. That being the case, it was cheaper and more reliable to order from well-known magical technicians.

"I'm getting a new bow as well~" (Karen)

"Pyui~" "I see~"

Gawiik had sent Karen with the message that they were planning to make trips into the imperial capital's dungeon, so Kou should participate from time to time. Kou thought it might be good to try possessing dungeon monsters again.

In the evening, Sayaka came back to the laboratory. With no time to rest, she began

preparations for dinner. Kou had already returned to where Gawiik's group were staying and the professor was making something in a research room separate from the one that the composite body was being inspected in.

"You can rest, you know? Saya-chan, you're tired from being with the prince, aren't you?" (Sarta)

"... Sarta-san, you're imagining something weird right now, aren't you?" (Sayaka)

Sayaka gave Sarta a reproachful look while saying that she would not do such things. Sarta teased her, wondering if that's the truth. Suddenly, a familiar messenger bird fluttered in.

"Huh? Kou-chan?" (Sayaka)

"Pyuri~" "It's me~"

Kou, who had been told by the professor to return to the laboratory by evening, replied with letters of light as he drank water from the water container for the messenger bird. He was to take the completed magical tools back to Gawiik's group with him.

"Oh, you're here, Kou." (Andagi)

Feeling a little hungry, the professor had come out to pick away at the ingredients for dinner. He beckoned Kou towards the research room. Sayaka scolded the professor and told him to at least eat the things that had been prepared properly first. Chewing some vegetable-like thing in his mouth, the professor returned to the research room with Kou following him.

Kou could not ride on his head or shoulders for various reasons.

This was the room for his work as a magical technician, creating new magical tools. On a wide table there were various minerals that were half-finished magical power vessels, catalysts and tools of unknown use. From among the tools on the table that was more suited to be called a manufacturing stand than a table for research, the professor picked up a magical tool that he had completed just before.

"Pyui?" "What is that?"

“It is something that becomes the core of a summoned beast; a “Summoning Stone”, so to speak. I am going to teach you how to use it, so pay attention.” (Andagi)

As the professor poured magical power into the Summoning Stone, it acted as a catalyst and the summoned beast that was carved onto its surface began to take shape. Normally, catalysts for summoned beasts produced an artificial personality for the beast depending on the magic used, so suitable raw materials were needed.

A catalyst that acted as a core did not necessarily have to be a mineral, but they were often easy-to-obtain, easy-to-use gems or bones that contained magical power. The professor had adjusted the Summoning Stone with the technique of summoning magical soldiers in exchange for the control to maintain its body.

“Well, this is something that I just put together in my spare time and thought it might be perfect for your body.” (Andagi)

Before long, what formed with the Summoning Stone as its core was a black-haired boy, around twelve years old in age. It was a human-shaped summoned beast created from magical power. Kou remembered what he learned about summoned beasts that were used for things outside of combat when he visited the House of Butterflies for the composite body’s sexual intercourse experiment.

“I tried making it for the sake of it, but can you possess it?” (Andagi)

“Pyui-pyuri~”“I’ll try~”

With Sayaka’s appearance having been used as a reference, its face had a foreign appearance. Kou confirmed that there was a hole in the back of its neck and rested the messenger bird Pii-chan on its shoulder to try and possess it. His earlier attempts to possess humans had not worked, but this boy was an artificial life-form.

To his surprise he was able to possess it without any difficulty. Vigor appeared in the boy’s lifeless eyes.

“Oh, you’re inside now. How is it?” (Andagi)

“I ken moof eet jost lake thur cermposite bodu... Huh?” (Kou)

Kou spoke while producing letters in light as he usually did, but he was surprised that

he could speak words, even though they had not quite come out correctly. The professor explained that he had originally made the summoned beast not with the intent of making it like a human, but to make it possible to communicate with words.

After trying some vocal exercise, his groaning voice was soon able to speak proper words.

“Now I can talk to everyone through words~” (Kou)

“Hmm, it seems that there are no problems with the possession.” (Andagi)

The composite body that was now undergoing inspection drew attention as he walked around the town, and had other problems like not being able to enter smaller stores. With this body, he could do shopping more normally. His life would become completely different.

Summoned beasts normally had limited operating time, but this one had been created with the intent that Kou would possess it, so it had been designed for maintaining the body only. Kou could provide the magical power it needed to maintain itself, so it did not require any additional catalysts to assist with that, so the problem of operating time was completely solved.

The composite body was the one registered with the Adventurers’ Guild, so it was a strange situation where the composite body was his main body and this was his alternate one. But once the composite body’s inspection was complete, he could spend most of his time in this smaller body. When needed, he could undo the summoning and produce the composite body to possess it.

From the outside, it would look like a boy transforming into a Golem.

“Thanks, Professor!” (Kou)

“Yes, yes. Now go and show Sarta and Saya-jou.” (Andagi)

Incidentally, this boy-shaped summoned beast’s appearance had been improved from the most popular model of girl-shaped summoned beasts. The fact that the one who had created that model was the professor himself was a secret.

Knowing that it would not sell well if it was known that the professor was the one who

designed it, he had made requests to the selling agencies to keep it a secret.

The clothes were a part of the summoned beast, so it was possible to change clothes by changing the magical power connections; the clothes that were currently available to it were boys' town clothes and noble's clothes. There was also a dress included from when it was still a girl-type summoned beast. According to the professor, it had been too much of a bother to remove it so he had left it there.

Kou, now a boy wearing town clothes, headed to where Sayaka and Sarta were.

“Sayaka, Sayaka~ Look at me~” (Kou)

“Eh? Who's this?” (Sayaka)

“Oh, this boy... A summoned beast?” (Sarta)

Sayaka opened her eyes wide at the sight of this unfamiliar boy running in from the inner rooms of the laboratory, but Sarta, with the knowledge of a magical technician, quickly saw that it was a summoned beast.

“Eeh?! This is Kou-chan?!” (Sayaka)

“Yeah, the professor made another body for me!” (Kou)

Kou tried talking in Japanese, but his attempts turned out like a foreigner reading romaji. Sarta explained that he couldn't speak in either language proficiently because he was not used to speaking yet.

In reality, when Kou tried to speak, the language that came most naturally to him was Japanese, but the summoned beast had been made to speak the language of this world. So the movement of his tongue produced some errors in his speech. In short, he could not move his tongue properly, so Sarta's explanation was partially correct.

“Kyaa~ so cuuute~” (Sayaka)

“Mugyu~” (Kou)

Sayaka hugged him without thinking. At that moment, the bell that announced the arrival of a new visitor rang. It seemed that Prince Layos, who had received comforting

from Sayaka in his favorite place desperately wanted to see her, so he had come to the laboratory, but –

“Who is this?” (Layos)

His voice was stiff as he saw Sayaka hugging this boy.

“This boy is Kou-kun.” (Sayaka)

“Kou... You say?” (Layos)

Sayaka was hugging the boy as if protecting him, but Layos did not find this amusing. Upon hearing Kou’s name his stiff expression turned into that of suspicion. The professor appeared to take his seat at the dinner table and offered an explanation.

“It is a man-type summoned beast that I created. Though in this case, it is a boy-type one.” (Andagi)

“Why did you make something like...” (Layos)

“There’s a demand for it.” (Andagi)

Andagi, under his alias, had received orders for them from ladies in their thirties. Layos sighed as he remembered that the professor was an expert in such areas as well.

“That’s... certainly profitable, I suppose.” (Layos)

“Well, if you are interested in them, I can make one for you as well.” (Andagi)

“I don’t need that. I am fine as long as I have Sayaka.” (Layos)

“What are you saying, taking advantage of this situation?” (Sayaka)

Layos sat opposite Sayaka, who had sat Kou beside her. Sarta quickly brought bread and soup for Layos to eat.

Today, dinner time at Andagi Magical Weapons Development Center was just a little bit livelier than usual.

CHAPTER 29

INDOOR GARDEN

A few days after obtaining the boy-type summoned beast body, Kou, who was fast becoming a mascot-like existence among the members of Gawiik's group, visited the laboratory again. The first time he had returned to Gawiik's group in his boy form, Karen liked it so much that she held on to him and didn't let go for a while, causing knots in Daido's stomach.

Nowadays, he was learning how to use a bow from Karen in the morning. In the afternoon, he dropped by the laboratory to talk with Sayaka or to help the Professor with his research. At night he studied magic with Lef. This had become his lifestyle.

"Ara, Kou."

"Good morning~"

As he entered the laboratory, he saw Sarta, who seemed to be collecting and sorting things. Instead of her usual white robe, she wore clothes that looked like a formal dress. The laboratory was quieter than usual. Not seeing the Professor or Sayaka, Kou tilted his head.

"If you're looking for the Professor and Saya-chan, they've been called to the Research building today, and I don't think they'll be back till tonight."

"Are~? I see."

"It was a sudden call, but it seems they are discussing the Professor's inventions."

It seemed that from among the Professor's research and inventions some were being considered for official use. Sarta told him that the Professor took Sayaka along because one of the inventions was something he had built based on her knowledge from the other world.

"Sarta is also going out?"

"Well, I have some business at the Royal Palace. Would you like to come along?"

said Sarta as she picked up the bag in which she had crammed her things. Kou, who

was interested in the Royal Palace block, happily decided to go along. Kou changed his town clothes to the noble's clothes with a swish, as if they had seeped out from his body.

“Transform!”

“So convenient.”

Sarta looked at him with envious eyes because of the summoned beast's function of immediately changing its outer appearance, thus removing any need for changing clothes.



Kou and Sarta headed to the Royal Palace block in a carriage. Until now, Kou had only ridden on carriages while in the form of small animals like dogs, cats, or birds, so he looked very happy to be riding on one properly in human form. Eventually, they passed through the gate leading into the Royal Palace block and arrived in front of the entrance of the building.

“The building, it's like a city with a roof!”

“Ufufu. Isn't it huge? If we get separated you'll get lost, so be careful.”

The eighth level where the lowest-class nobles lived received a lot of passers by, although it wasn't as much as the town. The wide corridor extending into the distance gave the impression of an underground labyrinth. However, a place with such a clear view only existed near the entrance, since the Royal Palace block was made by connecting many mansions and the deeper you went the more complex it became.

Passing through the seventh level where an indoor plaza and garden had been established, they reached the sixth level, where the residential district of the middle-class nobles was lined up. Sarta entered a room of one of the houses to take care of an errand of hers. In the meantime, Kou passed the time by visiting the garden on the fifth level.

The garden on the seventh level had some kids playing here and there, but the garden on the fifth level was quiet and peaceful. There was a big window in the roof of the garden and rays of the sun were descending into the garden at regular intervals; the scene which showed the contrast between light and dark was quite fantastic.

“It's so pretty~”

After a while Sarta finished her errand and came back, so they moved on to the next place, leaving the garden behind.

From the fourth level, the mansions and courtyards of the upper-class nobles appeared one after the other and this area was built such that the atmosphere felt much more luxurious compared to the lower levels. The corridors and the walls, even the ceiling was finely decorated. The floor was polished, and in some places, you could even see carpets.

As Kou and Sarta walked along that corridor, they found several small groups of people after some bends in the corridor. They saw a girl coming this way accompanied by a maid and knight that looked like a bodyguard. She was wearing a light-yellow dress; clothes that showed that she was royalty.

As Sarta stopped at the end of the corridor and bowed, Kou also tried imitating her and bobbed his head in quick manner. The group that they thought were going to pass them stopped in front of them and the girl in the royal dress called out to them.

“...You are the magician assistant that works at the Andagi Professor’s place, are you not?”

“I’m called Sarta, Elrose-sama.”

Staring at Sarta as she replied graciously was the First Princess of Grandahl, Elrose. In fact, she was the sister of the Second Prince, Suaro. She told her attendants to stand back and addressed Sarta while lowering her voice.

“I heard that Professor took in that girl...Saya. What is she doing right now?”

“Saya? We’re having her help with the chores around the laboratory. She also helps the Professor with his inventions.”

Kou, who was listening to Sarta and Elrose’s conversation from the side got quite interested in the way Elrose was asking things about Sayaka in a roundabout manner, and tried to read her thoughts.

Haa...And I thought that she had finally settled down too ...Why does that girl have to stir up her surroundings so much...

Elrose was in a dilemma. She couldn’t ask any deep questions because her attendants were close by. On the other hand, Sayaka had left the House of Butterflies and went to

the Magical Research building near the Royal Palace block, thus making it easier for Prince Layos to visit her, which was making Elrose very worried.

She was worried that her brother would somehow use this against Prince Layos. It seemed like her feeling towards Sayaka weren't especially friendly, however, Kou didn't detect much enmity either. He read her thoughts up till then, when her conversation with Sarta finished and the whole group left.

"That person just now was the First Princess Elrose-sama. She is the little sister of His Highness the Second Prince Suaro. Both were born from the concubine Liiza-sama."

"A Princess, hmm. There were three Princes, weren't there?"

"Ara, you already know."

"I heard it before. I have talked about a lot of things with Sayaka after all."

"I also know that there is a prince that is not in the Royal Palace." Said Kou, as if showing off his knowledge about the Palace. He looked like a boy trying to stretch to look taller and Sarta couldn't hold back her feelings of warmth.

However, even though from his appearance, honest reactions, and tone of voice which gave off the impression of a small boy, she knew very well that Kou was anything but a child. Therefore, she tried talking about a topic that was not meant to be discussed with children.

"It is rumored that there are various complicated issues surrounding the conflict between Prince Layos and Prince Suaro. It is becoming something of a problem."

It was not something as simple as appearance or way of thinking, or even the difference in lifestyle. Apparently, there was some secret about the birth of the two, or something like that. A very dangerous topic and yet Kou was the same as usual, which made it hard to discern if he was interested or not. Answering with "I see~" every now and then, he absorbed the background knowledge relating to the two prince brothers which was not very well known.

The third level of the Royal Palace block housed the mansions of pure-blooded families, with courtyards lined up on each side, one after the other. Sarta had come to deliver an item to a certain lady who lived on this level and she recommended Kou take a walk around the neighborhood as she might be held up talking to her.

“You can walk around the courtyard freely, but don’t enter the buildings around here without permission, alright?”

“Yes~”

Sarta began negotiating with a lady in her thirties who looked at the boy Kou with decidedly suspicious eyes. Just like before, Kou went out into the courtyard to enjoy his walk, so as to not get in the way of Sarta’s work.

Compared to the garden that covered the fifth level, the space that was made from joining all the courtyards of the mansions seemed a bit narrower. However, the gently sloping plaza was in the form of a lawn which had been meticulously taken care of and had a beautiful gazebo. On one side, the trees had been planted in a bunch, making a space that was kind of a miniature forest. There was a bench installed which was causally surrounded by different flowers and so on, there were quite a variety of different landscapes all around.

“Ah, there are fish swimming here.”

Heading upstream along a streamlet, Kou separated the tall grass, and entered the place where the trees were densely growing, finding a small clearing. This place which had been built deep inside the trees and could not be seen from the outside seemed like a place of relaxation. There was figure of a young man sitting there on a wooden bench.

“Oh? It’s rare for a guest to come here.”

Said the young man with a soft smile, relaxing on the wooden bench that gave off the feeling of being handmade, like something children would make for their secret base in the garden by joining pieces of wood together.

“My name is Rozeth. Where did you come from?”

“I’m...”

“I came along with the assistant Sarta on her work, and am taking a walk right now...”
As Kou was explaining this, he felt as if she had heard the young man’s name somewhere, and tilted his head.

“Ahh, from Professor Andagi’s place...Even so, how did you find this place?”

“I was just walking along the stream and ended up here.”

“Ahaha. Well yes, it is along the stream, but usually if you are not a gardener you wouldn’t come in here.”

“Children from the town would though.” Rozeth said and laughed. Trees and grass as big as the height of an adult surrounded the space, and unless you purposefully divided the grass to enter, you could not reach it. And among the people living on this level, there was no one who would do that, including the children.

“By the way, what is your name?”

“Me? I’m called Kou.”

“Kou...? I’ve heard of a Kou at the Professor’s laboratory from Layos Nii-san, but if I recall correctly, he was supposed to have the body of a golem.”

“Ah, that’s me...Wait, Nii-san?”

TLN: Nii-san, as you probably know, means older brother.

Rozeth called Layos his older brother. He was one of the three princes of Grandahl, the Third Prince Rozeth. Kou recalled that he had picked up his name from when he had tried to read Layos thoughts at the laboratory.

Rozeth Third Prince, like the Second Prince Suaro was also born of a concubine, but compared to the Second Prince, he had no supporters, nor did he have his own faction and while everyone respected him because of his status as royalty, almost everyone had no expectation of him; a prince only for show.

He was in a place farthest from the power struggle, but he himself was satisfied with the current situation.

“I see, so you’re the one...You seem to possess different forms. Again, nice to meet you, Kou-kun. I’m happy that we’ve become acquaintances.”

“Nice to meet you too~”

Inside Prince Rozeth’s place of relaxation and not his secret base, both shook hands. Kou spent some time talking to the sociable prince. About Sayaka and Prince Layos, they talked about various things, ranging from the Professor to the King himself. He learned about the time when Sayaka lived in the Royal Palace and about her relationship with Prince Layos. This was a very interesting topic for Kou because he wanted to know about it from his heart.

From the time Prince Layos started his obsession with Sayaka, conflicts among the supporters of Suaro and Layos from the pure-blooded families deepened, and clashes between the two factions happened, sometimes even resulting in injured people.

“Although there were few public acts of violence, it seemed like there were quite a few nasty things happening behind the scenes.”

“I see~”

Perhaps sensing that Kou was not a child as his outlook and tone of voice suggested, Rozeth went ahead and told him about the specifics of what happened back then. After Sayaka left for the House of Butterflies, Layos couldn't visit her so readily anymore. The emotions of the ladies in the Royal Palace cooled down somewhat and the fight between the Layos faction and Suaro faction that were using the hot-headed ladies for their purposes also cooled down. It seemed like nowadays, the situation was showing signs of relapsing again.

“Prince Suaro and Prince Layos are on bad terms?”

“Who knows? It's not like they are fighting directly. However, I have seen some suspicious people in Suaro Nii-san's surroundings.”

“I will become the Adventurer King!” Said Prince Layos without a hint of hesitation, and seeing his 'charismatic hero' stance, Prince Suaro replied: “What is needed of a true ruler is not military force and achievements, but rather knowledge and wisdom.” With that, he intended to add the parliamentary officials to his own supporters to consolidate his power. Some whispered that he would use this power to target the right for the throne.

However, there were also rumors that behind Prince Suaro's actions was the will of someone else.

“It might become a bit hectic from now on.”

Saying that, Prince Rozeth ended the conversation.



Since they had been talking for quite a while, Kou decided that it was about time he returned, and leaving Prince Rozeth behind who gave him permission to come again, saying “Come visit again”, left the secret place of relaxation.

Kou headed for the exit of the courtyard. As he approached the halfway point between the garden and the corridor, he ran into Princess Elrose who Sarta and he had met earlier, wearing a light yellow dress and royal clothes, who seemed as if she was going out for a walk.

“Ara, you’re the one from before...”

She seemed to be in a hurry and the voices of her maids calling out “Princess!” who were apparently searching for her could be heard from the direction of the corridor. As she glanced back once in the direction of the voices–

“Keep me company for a while.”

–she took hold of Kou’s hand and ran with him somewhere in the courtyard hastily.

“Where are we going?”

“Just be quiet and come along.”

They ran to a place which was not visible from the corridor. Hiding under the shadows of the trees, Elrose peeked out to see if the maids were following them, and addressing Kou who was also trying to stealthy peek out, asked:

“Are you perhaps an attendant who recently joined? If you stay at the Professor’s place then tell me something about Saya and Layos-sama.”

“What kind of things?”

“What kind...Well, you know, how are Layos-sama and Saya when they’re together...or what kind of things they talk about...”

Even as she tried to keep her composure, Elrose became increasingly flustered. As Kou tried to read her thoughts, he caught a glimpse of a strong emotion in the depths of her closed heart. I love Layos-sama. But I can’t bring myself to hate Saya either...Such feelings were swirling out.

“So you love Prince Layos.”

“Wha-!? Y-You don’t have to inquire about useless things!”

Kou found her flustered and ruffled state quite lovable and told her about how Prince

Layos and Sayaka spent time together at the laboratory.

He told her about how Sayaka didn't think much about Prince Layos; rather, she didn't think that he really loved her. He also told her about how Prince Layos seemed like he couldn't help but be drawn to Sayaka.

"You, you get what Layos-sama is feeling?"

"Somehow or the other."

Hearing Kou's reply, Elrose convinced herself that it was because he was a child and could pick up on what others were feeling intuitively.

Kou realized that she was making decisions about him based on the physical appearance of this body, but since it was convenient he let it be. He was subtly practicing the art of "making his outer appearance his weapon" that he had picked up from the Shadow Artist of the Varow Group during the tournament.

As they had finished talking for the most part, Kou and Elrose left the shade of the trees and headed back towards the corridor. The maids and nights who were gathered at the entrance of the garden discussing how to find the Princess came running over.

"Princess! Try not to act on your own. Everyone was so worried."

"Ehh. I'll try to be careful."

"Um...who might that child be?"

"He was coincidentally wandering around here, so I thought I'd lead him back."

Elrose told the guard who was suspiciously eyeing the boy who was apparently an attendant of Professor Andagi's assistant to stand down, and turning to Kou, said the words that would give Kou the permission to move around more easily.

"I've taken a liking to you. Come to the Palace sometimes to talk."

Implying that she was going to use him to get information, she told Kou that she would let the gatekeeper and guards know about him, and left. The droves of maids that followed after her looked at Kou with curiosity and interest as 'the boy who Elrose-sama has taken a liking to'.

Kou being Kou was feeling very pleased inside that he had gained two new people to talk with at the Royal Palace. After seeing Elrose and her procession off, Kou decided

to finally go back to the room where Sarta was and entered the corridor. As he did, Sarta appeared from somewhere.

“Well then, I’m done with today’s errands. Shall we return to the laboratory?”

“Yes.”

“Fufufu~ I heard that Elrose-sama has taken a liking to you.”

“I was told I could come again to chat.”

Talking about things like that, they started on the way back. Suddenly, Kou felt a small whisper coming from Sarta’s thoughts, even though he didn’t intend to do it. Looks like the first stage was successful. Kou thought that it was related to her work today at the Royal Palace block and didn’t pay it too much attention.

CHAPTER 30

SHADOW OF CONSPIRACY

The Prime Minister Tormerge had passed 50 years of age, and there were rumors that he was going to retire soon. The regular meetings that he presided over were attended by the heads of each of the pure-blooded families, and daily problems that were on the agenda were discussed.

A relaxed discussion about the discord between Prince Layos and Prince Suaro was taking place near his seat at the end of one such meeting. The majority opinion was that their opposition was not very favorable, considering the stability of the Royal Family. Since the two factions formed by supporters from both sides had deep roots, if this topic was discussed on the agenda during the meeting itself, there would be undoubtedly lots of disorder and confusion. That is why it was discussed in this way to encourage the supporters from each side to speak prudently. It could also be called a half-hearted last resort.

However, the president Tormerge expressed his opposition in bringing up the topic about the discord between the two princes at all.

“In my opinion, these kinds of things should not be discussed by the people not directly related.”

“Prime Minister, are you saying we should let their conflict continue like this?”

“The stance under which Prince Suaro is expanding his control, doesn’t it imply that Prince Layos is not fit to be the next ruler?”

TLN: Referring to Suaro’s “What is needed in a ruler is not military force and achievements...”.

“If we let it be, won’t their conflict just get worse?”

In reply to the attendees who believed they should seek out some sort of solution to this problem, the Prime Minister just warned them again that there was no need for the people not involved directly to clamor about it, and dissolved the meeting. While there were some attendees who left as soon as the meeting was over, the ones who

were dissatisfied with the result gathered around and started to talk secretly, in whispers.

Prime Minister Tormerge looked at this scene, and then left the meeting room.



Late night. In the center of the Royal Palace, at one corner of the area that formed the first layer, a masked man that wore clothes like those of a magician visited Prince Suaro's room. He explained what had been decided about the opposition between the Princes at the regular meeting of the heads of the pure-blooded families, and offered his opinion on what their next move should be.

“Including all the nobles, you now have about 40% of the total supporters. It would be best if we were cautious in increasing our supporters from now on.”

Prince Suaro had been taking advice from this masked man on how to increase his influence in the Royal Palace for about six months. As if trespassing on the room of a member of the royalty to sell his services wasn't amazing enough, the information he possessed was highly accurate, and his predictions about future events were also spot on.

That time when the opposition between the two factions had worsened considerably, it was him who had contributed the most towards making the plan to send the girl that Layos was obsessed with to the House of Butterflies a success. Back then, the situation had gotten out of hand so much because supporters from both sides got into a frenzy after Prince Layos declared his love for the girl.

Layos had made the outrageous decision to marry a foreign girl of doubtful origin; a girl who couldn't even speak properly, let alone read and write. Of course, the opposition was great, and they started all sorts of schemes to separate them. Suaro found a chance to lower Prince Layos's popularity as a member of the Royal Family, and busied himself in stirring up things between the two. The Noble Ladies Alliance also got mixed up in this, and a battle of tactics began between Suaro and the Alliance, both trying to use the other for their own goals. The result of that was a situation that was spiraling out of control.

“At the time, because our supporters got out of control, ours plans were affected, but right now our base is quite firm, so there won't be too much confusion.”

Suaro was planning to use Sayaka to distract the nobles, while he himself gathered even more supporters. Since Sayaka had entered the House of Butterflies, the opposition against Prince Layos and Sayaka having a relationship had been decreasing, if ever so slowly. Why had it been decreasing? It was because of the influence of the mother of the Third Prince and the Second Princess, the concubine of King Leozeos who was also a former Butterfly, Aira.

Sayaka, the girl who had no identity joined the House of Butterflies and made an 'identity' for herself, and now had been taken in by Professor Andagi, who was famous in many ways, and had obtained some standing in society, no matter how small. And on top of it all, they learned that she was apparently a visitor from another world, and it was apparent that King Leozeos would like her very much because of it.

"Big Brother seems very into that girl."

"Then let us think up a plan." The masked man said and bowed, melting into the darkness of the room.



Around the same time, there were two ladies talking on the terrace attached to the corridor on the top floor of the castle. The Queen Elishuwon and the former-Butterfly concubine, Aira.

Elishuwon was quiet and reserved, and her body was a little frail. In contrast, Aira was the strong-woman type, full of vitality. Aira was often fussing over Elishuwon, and thus the two were often together. Aira had been directly acquainted with Leozeos since she was a young woman, before her house collapsed and she became a Butterfly, and her relationship with Elishuwon from back then had been one of friendship.

Gazing at the night scene of the garden in the Royal Palace block, the two were having a fun chat. Passing by, Liiza called out to them.

"Good evening. May I join you?"

The mothers of the First Prince Layos, The Second Prince Suaro, The First Princess Elrose, The Third Prince Rozeth and the Second Princess Suwida were all gathered face to face. The three of them holding tea parties together wasn't uncommon, and

under the protection of King Leozeos, the three had built up an ideal relationship.

At least, on the surface.

The Queen and the concubines; the three mothers were talking about the recent news related to the Princes and Princesses, but none touched upon the subject of the discord between Prince Layos and Prince Suaro.

“If I recall correctly, he received quite a blow from the golem at the tournament the other day; is his body in good health?”

“Fufufu~ That boy has a strong body like his father, so it seems that there are no problems.”

Elishuwon replied with a chuckle to Aira who was concerned about the health of Prince Layos. Hearing that, Liiza mentioned that all around the Royal Palace block, a rumor was going around that Prince Layos was getting feverish about that one girl again, and brought up the topic of Sayaka.

“Just the other day, I heard the maids saying that she was called to the higher levels of the Royal Palace.”

“Well, I guess he took to his father too much, down to his taste in women.” Elishuwon said, smiling bitterly.

“I just hope it doesn’t become an uproar as it did before...” Aira said, and comforted Elishuwon by mentioning that at least Layos seemed relatively devoted to Sayaka.

It was that kind of peaceful evening tea party.



Having spread his scope of activities to the higher levels of the Royal Palace, the next morning Kou was practicing the bow with Karen. As he began practice with Karen who taught everything with great care while sticking as close to him as possible, Daido also started muscle training nearby. Watching on with smirks on their faces were Reaper and Dis. Such was the scene.

Kou then left for the laboratory, where he chatted with Sayaka, and helped stimulate

the creative spirit of the Professor until noon. The Professor had been called to the Research building because the rapid-fire function of his internal-combustion weapon had garnered a lot of attention, and it was being debated if this weapon could be wielded by normal soldiers, who were not very good at using magic. Thus, at a request from above, he was doing research to improve the projectile weapon. He was also making changes to Kou's weapon little by little, and it was being upgraded, if slowly.

In the afternoon, Kou went to the garden in the higher level of the Royal Palace, and in the secret place of relaxation he enjoyed tea with Rozeth while they talked about complex stuff, and received confectioneries as souvenirs. Since he was going there almost daily, he became a very familiar sight to the gatekeeper of the Royal Palace block who was also acquainted with Sayaka. He also enjoyed talking with Elrose who regularly came down to the garden in the third level.

"I see, so that Professor is doing that kind of research..."

"Just yesterday the knights were at the laboratory, and they were discussing various things."

Elrose, who had asked about nothing but Layos before, started asking about Sayaka and the happenings at the laboratory and little by little got interested in the Professor's research. She became inquisitive about things ranging from the magical tools adventurers used to the activities of adventurers related to Layos.

Kou stayed at the Royal Palace till evening, after which he started magic training with Lef. And then after everyone went to sleep, he went to the empty piece of land outside the walls of the city where he had trained with Gawiik's party before, and practiced attack magic all alone till sunrise.

Kou's days at the capital were mostly spent like this.

TLN: I'll translate "Gawiik's group" as "Gawiik's party" from now on; I dunno, it just sounds more natural to me, especially in this setting.



That day, Kou arrived as usual at the laboratory, and hearing that the inspection of the composite Golem had finished, decided to change bodies. Even the smallest scars on the armored skin had completely disappeared. After checking out its condition by doing a test run in the plaza in front of the laboratory, Kou remembered that Gawiik's

party was going to descend into the dungeon today, and decided to join them.

“You’d been made to do nothing but talk for a while, so you might be feeling a bit rusty. Go wild to your hearts content!”

“Voooh~” *Yep~*

He had went down in the dungeon of the capital once before to gather medical herbs and such. At the time, they had stayed on the upper levels of the dungeon, so they hadn’t run in to any dangerous monsters, and hadn’t experienced fighting like he did in the dungeon of the town of Barasse.

In front of the special training institute of the army of the capital, which was near the entrance to the dungeon, a platoon of the army which was getting ready for training and parties of adventures which had gotten permission to explore the dungeon were gathered. Gawiik’s party was also gathered along with them. Participating in today’s exploration was Dis, the young, immature magician of Gawiik’s party and other apprentices.

The members of Gawiik’s party welcomed the familiar golem that arrived with heavy footsteps, saying “Glad you could make it.”, and smiling and waving at it. The other parties and soldiers that were around were very interested in the rumored golem that had become very famous at the great tournament the other day.

“Okay, so we are all gathered. Today, we’re going down to the third floor. Dis, you are going to lead the attacks. The rest of you, just follow your training and decide on your roles as the situation dictates.”

Getting their orders and roles distributed by captain Gawiik, they descended into the underground ruins that were the dungeon of the capital. Incidentally, Kou’s role was of course being the Tank, but if the need arises, he was the convenient all-rounder who can serve any role from Melee Fighter to Attack Magician to Healer. However, since he was still in the learning stage, his current abilities were akin to a jack of all trades and master of none.

As they descended into the first floor, the soldiers platoon broke off from them to headed to the area exclusive to the army where their training was going to take place. The group of adventurers were apparently on a collection mission, and they headed off into the wide corridor that lead to the rooms that had the medicinal herbs or the

secretions of the experimental animals. The Gawiik party headed to the place that had stairs leading to the next floor.

The monsters that appeared in the dungeon of the capital were different than the monsters that appeared in the normal dungeons which you could enter freely. Most of them were demon types that had been created because of magical experiments.

Sometimes, they encountered the rare small animal, such as a rat or a bat, but their number were very limited because the crowded environment that was created by the increase in experimental animals was not very suited to breeding.

Another way in which the dungeon of the capital was very different from the other dungeon was that the will of the monsters were not controlled by a “collective consciousness”. Simply put, the “collective consciousness” did not exist in the dungeon of the capital. The dungeon of the capital was not a place where monsters lead by a “collective consciousness” had settled down naturally, but was an underground maze that had been made artificially using the already existing ruins.

“There are two mummies, and one spider-snake. How should we deal with them?”
Asked Gawiik.

“Well, first, let’s start with the main body of the spider-snake” Replied Dis, getting into position to cast offensive magic.

Gawiik muttered “Only half right” under his breath and sent a signal to Kou with his eyes. Receiving the ‘Protect him’ order, Kou moved forward the moment Dis shot the magic, putting up his shield.

“Ah.” After noticing the effects of the attack, Dis realized his own mistake in judgement. The magic attack that he had shot at the spider-snake had been intercepted and absorbed by the Mirror, and then shot back at him with three times the force. Kou had blocked all of that with his shield.

The magical beast Mirror and the fused demon-beast spider-snake. Spider-snake was officially referred to as Eight-Headed Snake Spider, and had eight snake heads growing out of the body of a spider. The main body of the spider-snake was very agile, and one of the 8 snake heads also contained poison. The head that had the poison had a spotted design on it, and if you destroyed that first, it became a relatively safe monster to fight.

The Mirror was like three, round lumps of meat joined together with a tube; a strange looking magical beast that absorbed whatever magic was shot at it and returned it back. The power of the magic it shot back was less than the magic that was shot at it, but the magic was shot back from all three round bodies, and thus it was called “Three-times-over Mirror”.

What was most interesting, however, was that even if you cast healing magic at it, it would cast it right back, thus making it useful in some situations. It was very weak against physical attacks, but you had to be careful when facing it in close quarters to destroy the round bodies one by one, starting from the main one. If you accidentally severed the pipe-like connection between the bodies, then the body that was cut off would explode, making it quite dangerous.

“In this situation, it also okay to shoot at the tube of Mirror to make them explode.”

“So-sorry...”

As Gawiik paused to give advice to Dis, an explosion resounded. Kou had blocked the advancing Mirror with his shield and pushed it back with a blow of his axe, but during that the main body had gotten disconnected from the tube and had exploded.

“Vuvuoaaa~” *That surprised me~*

“Ah, I should have told you beforehand.”

In under any normal circumstance, that explosion would have easily sent a fully equipped warrior flying through the air, but Kou didn’t even sway from the blast because of his composite body that was carrying a heavy shield, on top of having toughness guaranteed. Lightly kicking off the spider-snake that had latched itself on his ankle, he returned to everyone.

“All right, there is only one more Mirror, and a wounded spider-snake. Deal with them aptly.”

“Y-yes~”

Dis and the other apprentices got into formation again, and focused on the fight using the advice they just received.

When they reached the place where the stairs lead down into the third floor, the Gawiik party found a large, luminescent, white ball floating in the corner of the passage.

“Vuvuvo Vuuvoaa.” *Something is floating over there.*

“A Bo, huh. We found it at a good place, lets capture it.”

“Voo?” *A Bo?*

‘Bo’, or ‘Healing Jellyfish’ as it was officially called, was a magical creature about one meter in diameter that looked like a jellyfish, and just drifted around the dungeon. It had no attack power, and if you fed it, it released a healing powder of light. When you found it, you attach it with a string and carry it around with you, lessening the burden of healing for your party.

The powder of light that it gave out healed indiscriminately, so putting it at the back of your party and feeding it after the battle ended was the common method to use them. Sometimes, monsters were also carrying them around, and in those cases, there did exist two strategies to deal with them: Defeat them first or rush the enemy and take control of them. Most of the time, people chose to rush in and take control of them.

The fresher the ingredients you gave them, the more healing powered they released. Sometimes, they would even release the healing stone which was the crystallization of the healing light powder, and apparently, there were some adventurers that explored just to find them. They couldn’t take it outside the dungeon, but they could take it to the entrance to give it to an adventurer party that was just entering the dungeon.

When it died, it just liquefied and disappeared, and it didn’t even leave behind any useful materials, so it wasn’t hunted per se. In other words, it was lucky monster. Incidentally, it was called ‘Bo’ because it made a ‘Boo~’ sound.

So there are monsters like this too~ Kou was impressed by the explanation Gawiik gave him while he taught the apprentices how to attach a cord to the Bo. *Can I possess it?* He thought, and searched for the ‘hole’ that would let him possess the Bo, but he couldn’t find any such hole. *Maybe it’s not a living creature...*

After that, the exploration continued smoothly, and the Gawiik party decided to come back up from the dungeon in the afternoon. After that, they held a small meeting to discuss areas which needed improvement, and they disbanded. Kou had also learned a few things. It seemed like there were some magical creatures that existed only in the capital's dungeon that he could not possess.

"Well then, lets head back to the inn. Kou, what are you going to do?"

"Vovoha..." *I'll...* Suddenly, the composite body disappeared, and the light of summoning began to shine, from which a small boy appeared. "I'll drop by the Royal Palace."

"I see." *Are you sure that isn't his real body?* Is what Gawiik had begun to think recently, and smiling wryly to himself he saw off the boy Kou as he ran off energetically.



As Kou approached the gate of the Royal Palace block the usual gatekeeper called out to him.

"Yo, you're late today."

"I went to the dungeon with the others."

"Heee~ That's pretty reassuring. Hahahahaa!" The guard said, and laughed loudly. Actually, the gatekeeper did not know that the boy Kou and the golem were the same person. Not only him, but most of the servants, maids, or guards within the Royal Palace who were familiar with Kou did not know of his real identity.

There was no real reason to bring it up either, and the people who knew of Kou's real identity like Layos and Rozeth met him in the laboratory and the hidden place of relaxation respectively, and since these places were not so conspicuous, nobody could overhear them talking either.

The fact that the Professor had just made and given him the body on a whim was also becoming a reason for the spread of misinformation, and adding on top of it the childish looks and way of talking, Kou was now recognized as the "attendant that works at Professor Andagi's laboratory" and most people thought that he was just a boy. Thus, he had unexpectedly deceived the "eyes of intelligence" around the palace.

Heading to the garden on the third floor, Kou ran through the corridors. When he passed by some of the servants, they recognized him as the boy was always being called by Princess Elrose and saw him off with a smile. It was the same, peaceful scenery that he had recently seen in the Royal Palace block.

“I’m a little late.”

Reaching the garden where he could finally have a conversation with Elrose, Kou started searching for a bench that was a little hidden. Elrose didn’t want her conversation with Kou to be heard by other people, so she had designated a bench that was surrounded by trees and grass, had the stream flowing on one side and had flowers all around it their ‘secret’ meeting place.

“Ah, there she is.”

“Ah, he’s here! ...You’re late! How long are you going to make me wait~” Elrose, who was pacing around in front of the bench impatiently, smiled upon seeing Kou, but immediately returned to her pouty face. However, this was a daily occurrence, and Kou didn’t pay it any attention and dived into the conversation.

“Today, I was at the dungeon.”

“The dungeon? Why visit such a dangerous place...?”

As Kou was about to tell her that since his composite body had finished with all the repairs and test, he had gone to the dungeon to explore with Gawiik’s party, they heard footsteps of someone approaching. As they turned towards the sound, they saw a black robed man wearing a hood low over his eyes.

“...? Who are you? This is place is off limits for a while. Leave immediately.”

“Fufu.” As Elrose told the man to leave, he gave a nasty smile and held up something that he was holding in his hand. Kou recognized it; it was a ‘summoning stone’. The summoning stone which had been filled with magical energy began to glow brightly and the shape of summoned beast began to take form. When the light subsided, they saw the figure of a one-horned wolf-type summoned beast that had a spear like horn on its forehead.

“!? An assassin...”

“Indeed.” The assassin faded to blue as he retreated while inciting the summoned beast to attack Elrose.

From a low position, the one-horned wolf shot out and began sprinting towards Elrose. Elrose was petrified, unable to move. As the wolf was about to pierce the thin, frail body of Elrose with his sharp spear, someone intervened.

“Kou!” Reflected in Elrose’s wide eyes was Kou’s small body impaled on the horn of the one-horned wolf.

The wolf that had skewered the boy growled and lifted his neck, sending the lifeless, doll like body flying, after which it landed in the bushes.

“Kukuku. If he had just been a good boy, he wouldn’t have gotten involved.”

“Ah...Ah...What have you-!”

“You should worry about yourself.” The wolf cornered the trembling Elrose as she slowly backed away. It straightened its aim, as if it didn’t intend to miss a second time.

“If you want to curse someone, curse your brother’s ambition.”

“Brother...? You can’t be...” Elrose was staring at the man with fear and confusion mixed with surprise. The one-horned beast leapt forward. At the same time, Kou sprinted out from the bushes and rammed himself in the side of the wolf’s face. The horn of the wolf missed its target and pierced the back of the bench, and the wolf began struggle to try and take it out. Standing in front of the robed man, shielding Elrose was Kou. The hole in his body was still there.

“What’s up with this kid...” Sensing something special about Kou, the robed man faltered and took a step back.

“Kou! Don’t push yourself! Weren’t you stabbed!?”

“I’m fine; step back.” Kou said, and raising his hand up in the air began to glow. He extended his spirit body as far out from his body as he could, and released his summoned body. In an instant, the huge amount of magic that had been maintaining

his summoned body was released at once, and a bright light was let out. Elrose and the robed man reflexively turned their faces away from the bright light, and as they did, Kou brought out his composite body from the other dimension and possessed it.

“Wh-What!”

“It can’t be...”

“The boy transformed into a golem!?”

In that moment of disbelief, the wolf finally freed its horn from the back of the bench, and seeing two targets, turned to his master for instructions on who to target. The robed man hesitated for a moment, but then instructed him to injure the original target, Princess Elrose.

“Grrrrrararu~!” The wolf aimed at Elrose again, and shot forward like an arrow, but since the tournament Kou had leveled up and was easily able to keep up with the wolf. Kou grabbed the wolf who moved forward with light steps by the scruff of its neck, and hauling it high–

“Vuooooaaaaaaaaa!”

–slammed its body on the ground with all his force, causing the earth to tremble underfoot. In the huge crater that was formed, the one-horned wolf, which had taken more damage than it could sustain, had its summoning forcibly released and scattered with a flash of light. After the light subsided, only a summoning stone was left.

“Kou, you’re...”

“Vuvuoaa?” *Are you alright?*

“Y, yes...I’m quite alright.”

“Vuvuoaa, vuvuoaaa.” *The person from earlier ran away.* Said Kou, and Elrose looked around in surprise. Before they realized it, the robed man had disappeared.

Hearing the loud sounds of the battle of the one-horned wolf and the composite body, the guards assigned to Elrose realized that something was wrong and rushed to the scene. Just to be sure, Kou remained at Elrose’s side in his golem form.

The summoning stone left behind was handed over to the knights, so that they could launch an investigation to find out its owner.



After this incident, as the rumor that the First Prince had tried to have the sister of the Second Prince assassinated began to openly circulate around the Palace, the voices of people who had fears about the discord between the two princes also began to rise around the palace.

“Well then...It’s a little different from the schedule, but it’s mostly going according to plan. Now, next is...” The one who had caused this situation smiled to himself somewhere in the darkness of the Royal Palace.

CHAPTER 31

EXPERIMENTAL UNIT

On the eve of the day Princess Elrose was attacked by someone within the Royal Palace district, while the knights were out and about in full force searching for the attacker, the members of the regular meetings were clashing their opinions against each other on a subject that was not usually discussed in the meetings: The discord between the two Princes.

The backlash against the Prime Minister was great, especially from the members of the two factions of Suaro and Layos. They flared up against him by saying “See, we told you!”, referring to the fact that they had waited until the situation had become so bad. However, Prime Minister Tormerge was the same as usual, and it seemed that his fame as being able to calmly cope with stress was not without cause. In fact, he was serving to calm down the atmosphere of the chaotic meeting while maintaining an evasive attitude and dodging most questions and concerns.

“In my opinion, until the details of the incident are made clear, it would be best if we wait and watch.”

Considering the possibility that this could be ploy of the people who wanted to fan the flames of the opposition between the two Princes, the Prime Minister warned not to get carried away. This meeting had in fact not been called to discuss the details of the incident, but to let everyone know about the order of the King to not make too much fuss about the incident.

“Does His Highness intend to do nothing but spectate...?” Muttered one of the members of the meeting, worried about the future of Grandahl.



The highest level of the Royal Palace district had been constructed in the very middle; it was pure white and was a place where you could look over the whole surrounding area of the Royal Capital of Tortoluse. A middle-aged man was staring towards the west from the terrace of the Royal Chamber. Queen Elishuwon called out to him.

“The ministers are making quite fuss, you know?”

“Pay them no heed. My sons are not so frail as to be affected with something like this.”
Replied King Leozeos.

With a hint of a smile on his lips, he stared continuously towards the land to the west with a gleam in his eye. Elishuwon stood next to him, and knitting her eye-brows together, she asked him:

“Is it happening again?”

“Yes, they’ll be showing movements soon.” Leozeos replied to his wife, who had completely understood what was on his mind.

The place he had been looking at was the Empire to the west, Na’Hatome.

The Empire had tried to invade Grandahl several times, and had captured the bordering territories, and then had them retaken. Ever since Leozeos had become King, Grandahl had seen much development in magical technology, and so it had been on a winning streak. And while there had been some skirmishes on the border, recently there had been no signs of any invasion and peaceful times had continued, however...

“I wanted my generation to deal the final blow, but it seems that other side won’t break and back down so easily...” Feeling the hint of war in the fierce winds that suddenly picked up from the west, King Leozeos muttered and turned his back to them with a flourish of his mantle.



The people working in the Research building were unaffected by the fuss happening in the Royal Palace block, and were carrying on their experiments as usual. Professor Andagi was no exception; today he was doing an experiment of observing the composite body as it carried a window frame and walked behind the knights as they marched through the plaza in front of the laboratory.

What kind of experiment is that? All the knights that had gathered in the plaza to observe the experiment tilted their head simultaneously.

They were testing the internal-combustion weapon, which had the rapid-fire function build into it after it went through incremental update after update. It was now named the “magic rifle”. The weapon was used in the same orientation of how a magician would shoot magic from the tip of his magic cane by keeping it horizontal, and the bullets that had not been even as strong as the fire magic that apprentices used were now strong enough to tear through cheap, leather armor.

The Professor was against the idea of making the magic rifle a standard weapon for all the soldiers, which now possessed enough fire power to be approved by the army. He instead proposed to make a separate specialized unit for it, much like the bowmen unit, and was immediately given permission by King Leozeos to go ahead.

To that end, an experimental unit was created, and they were trying to come up with operation procedures that the unit would follow in the plaza in front of the laboratory. Looking at the knights holding the magic rifles and running in unison, Kou told the Professor that something stirred in his memory.

“I feel like I have seen this somewhere.”

“I see. For now, would you mind telling me whatever you remember? Whatever you remember is fine.”

At the Professor’s insistence, Kou dredged up the image of seeing soldiers clad in armor through a square frame. They were carrying weapons that were much like the magic rifle and were fighting giants made of steel. The Professor tried to recreate that scene by making the knights fight in a mock battle using magic weapons that spouted short burst of flame, like the magic rifle, and looking through that scene through a “square frame”; a window frame.

By making Kou carry the window frame in front and looking through it at the experimental unit’s knights and following them around, they were trying to revive his memories by first stimulating the images he had strongest in his mind. Sayaka stuck out her head from the laboratory to let them know that lunch was ready.

“Professor, it is about time for lunch...wait, what are you guys doing?”

“Oh, it’s time for food.”

“Vuova vovoaa voa~” I think I might be able to remember something.

Taking a break for a while, the Professor sent off the soldiers in the experimental unit to have lunch at the army's facilities, while he himself headed to the laboratory's dining room. Kou changed back to his boy form, and showed the reference images he had drawn to Sayaka to ask her if she knew anything about it.

"It looks like something like this..."

"...Isn't this a game?"

"A game? Game...game...Ah." Hearing the sound of the familiar word, Kou remembered what had happened when he had first woken up in the dungeon of Barasse. He remembered the various "Keywords" that had come flooding to him when the rat he had been possessing had been shot by the newbie party and he had seen humans for the first time.

"A game! That's it! It's a game~!" Using the flood of images that he got from the that keyword, Kou released his summoned body and reentered the composite body, and started taking down the fighting moves and movement styles in a memo before he forgot the images, and even started practicing them.

"Don't you have to show them to the Professor?"

"Vuou ve vuoa" I'll show it to him later.

Apparently, he was going to practice his magic next, and sitting on the ground with wham! and spreading out his legs, Kou began to gather magical power. Seeing the composite body sitting like a child would when playing in the sand, Sayaka softly giggled to herself.



As the Professor and the others were enjoying their after-meal tea, Prince Layos entered the laboratory. His coming here had almost become a custom, and today he was being followed by two people that looked like his guards. I'm sure it has something to do with the incident from the other day...Sayaka thought as she prepared tea for the visitors.

"I'm posting my men here as your guards." Layos suddenly said, as he took Sayaka's

hand and kissed it lightly, before he even touched his tea. Warning Sayaka to keep attention to her surroundings because there might be retaliation from the followers of the Suaro faction because of the mess involving Elrose, Layos assigned the warrior and the fighter from the Golden Sword Dragons to her personal safety. If these two competent guards were protecting her then he would be able to rest easy.

The fighter and the warrior that had served as the frontline combo during the tournament. Even among the Golden Sword Dragons, they were permanent members and had been with the Prince for quite a long time, and were also acquainted with Sayaka. As the two lightly bowed to her, Sayaka asked:

“Will anybody even target a nobody like me...?”

“For a while, stay away from the Royal Palace district. If you have some business, I’ll come to you.”

“I can’t very well send summons for a Prince.”

“Send it. If you call for me I will definitely come.”

“You can’t be serious.” Said Sayaka and shrugged her shoulder, but Layos remained extremely serious. Layos yearned for her, and thinking that he would like her to realize his true feelings soon, started sipping his tea after kissing her fingers. He didn’t let her hand go.

As for Sayaka who was on the receiving end of his usual approaches; she had long since resigned herself to the fact this kind of behavior came as a set with Prince Layos. That said, even though she was used to it, she hadn’t grown accustomed to it and ended up blushing.

Seeing the unchanging loveable reactions of Sayaka stirred his heart, and Prince Layos yearned for her even more. She had always been very caring and good at making decisions, and cheered him up without expecting anything in return, and ended up accepting Layos for himself. For Layos, her kindness had a huge healing impact.

“By the way, what kind of experiment is Kou doing outside?” The two he had brought along to serve as guards for Sayaka had begun to shoot him weird glances, so he decided that it was enough for today, and trying to change the subject, brought up Kou who he had seen doing some experimental activities in his composite body in front of

the laboratory.

“Oh, you mean the window frame? Apparently, it is related to an entertainment product in the world Sayaka used to inhabit.”

“No, I heard about the window frame from the soldiers outside...but I just saw him doing some weird magic technique that looked similar to the endowment-type reinforcement magic.”

Normally, endowment-type reinforcing magic was used by adding a special effect to your weapon by using magic, or was used to cover your own body with a layer of magic thus increasing defense, and had various other such close-range uses and effects, but what Layos had seen Kou doing was to cover his lower half body by a layer of magic to make himself easier to slide across the ground. He had confusedly observed Kou doing this meaningless action repeatedly as if he was trying to figure something out by trial and error.

“What? I hadn’t heard about such an experiment.”

“Ah, now that you mention it, Kou-chan seemed like he had remembered something when we started having lunch.”

“Why didn’t you say that before! Ei! I can’t sit around like this!” The Professor stood up in a hurry, and filled to the brim with curiosity about what Kou had remembered and was trying to do, he ran off.

In the plaza in front of the laboratory, Kou had succeeded in increasing the sliding distance despite failing multiple times by covering his legs in a magic layer and creating a pocket of air under himself. However, it still wasn’t the perfect form that Kou was aiming for.

“Vovaou.” Like this, you can move along by sliding on the ground.

After telling the Professor who had come bursting out of the laboratory about the image in his mind and handing him his notes, Kou was asking for advice from the him.

“Fumu...a high-speed movement that is possible sitting with legs extended

outward...Why is standing no good...? Is it a problem with maintaining your posture? No wait, it's because the underside of your feet can't generate enough buoyancy and thrust. Adding to that, standing would have a lot of problems with stability. So, can I use the "Magic Wheel" with this...? Wait here."

Saying that, the Professor returned to the lab, and came out a moment later carrying some magical vessels and tools, and started assembling something right there. Most of the inventions that the Professor thought up of were so technologically advanced that they conversely had no use case and were indefinitely put on hold.

This invention named the "magical wheel" was a product of trying to upgrade carriages and carts from their "standard" level to a more "advanced" level by using magic technology. It was an experimental product that would be used instead of normal wheel to make the frame float in the air.

By using multiple magic vessels on the round board to gather the magic required, and limiting the area where the magic had to be cast, a strong air pocket was created, and the magic wheel could make the body frame float just as the Professor wanted. But as you put a hand to get on the floating carriage, the carriage would slip away.

Like a round stone that been placed on ice, the carriage slipped this way and that would not stabilize. Even if they pulled it with horses, they couldn't just move in a straight line forever. Whenever they turned a corner, the carriage put a huge stain on the horses from behind because of centrifugal force, the horses neighed in protest as if saying "It's too hard to pull!". Such had been the situation.

He had suppressed most of the vibrations that occurred when travelling, but the stability of the vehicle itself could only be maintained by following the carriage closely, and in that case, there was no meaning in making the carriage float in the first place.

He had found a solution; however, the cost wasn't really justified. In the end, the magic wheel ended being one of "the usual inventions on hold", and had slept for quite a while in the storage of the laboratory.

"The item itself isn't made badly at all, but I had no use for it. The idea of attaching it directly to your body never occurred to me."

The miniaturization of magic vessels had progressed a lot since then, and now he was capable of attaching a propulsion system that would allow the whole body to move in

one direction while simultaneously making an air pocket to float. The Professor hastily improvised a self-propulsion experimental magic wheel from Kou's notes, and immediately began attaching it to Kou's composite body.

"There are two plump legs below your backside, so I've attached one to both. You can control it by adjusting the how much magic you supply to it. The only problem remaining is if it will work how we want it to."

"Vu~ov~auuu." I'll try it out.

As the experimental unit came back after having their lunch, Layos exited the laboratory and was interested in Kou's composite body sliding around on the ground while leaving a trail of dust in its wake. It seemed like he was continuing the siding-movement that he had been doing when Layos first arrived at the laboratory.

"What is that all about?"

"Apparently, it's a mobility technique that appeared in his memories of the other world. It looks like his posture is also stable, so it might be a good paring with the magic rifle."

Holding up a window frame and walking behind the troops to stimulate Kou's memory had led to an unexpected invention of a new type of movement technology. Thinking that this was a chance to create a special corps, not just an experimental unit, the Professor displayed an urge to develop this attachable-type mobility gear, the New Magic Wheel. For the time being, Layos asked him to distribute it to the Golden Sword Dragons once it was complete, and left for the Royal Palace district.

That afternoon, the Professor was still busy with the development of the new magic wheel, so the soldiers in the experimental corps were just milling around discussing some maneuvers that they could do with the magic rifles or arguments about whether or not bows and magic should be kept separate.

Occasionally a few new samples would be carried out of the laboratory, and someone would equip it based on the order they had agreed on beforehand. They would turn it

over in their hands and look it all over, or smash it against the wall and then check for any problems, and generally report on the level of completion of the finished product.

Then, as the day turned to evening, around eight soldiers had been outfitted with the new magic wheels, and they slid around the plaza shooting at targets with their magic rifles. As they successfully completed a practice hit-and-run maneuver, the Professor announced that the new magic wheel had been successfully completed.

“Alrighty! This is a new concept! I want to show it off as soon as possible and see everyone’s surprised faces! Kuwakakakaka!”

“Good work Professor. I’ll go and report to the people above as well as submit the application for the formal registration.” Said Sarta as she held the papers to officially request the adoption of the new equipment. The soldiers had already returned to the barracks. Standing to one side Kou and Sayaka were discussing their plans for the rest of the day.

“Kou-kun, are you going to stay here today?”

“Un, because the final tuning of the magic wheel is still left.”

Sayaka thought that if they were going to do experiments all night again, they need to have some food, and so returned to the kitchen to start preparing. This kind of detailed attentiveness was one of the reasons why Prince Layos was so endlessly obsessed with her.



The new magic wheel was a mobility equipment that one could equip all alone, and by its nature was suited for a lot of tasks. Its speed was less than half of a running horse, but it was still faster than running on foot. It was also very silent and could be used for scouting. Combined with the magic rifle, it became standard issue for the army of Grandahl.

With this, the Professor was promised a huge amount of fame and wealth, and he secretly decided to share some percentage of the huge amount of money he would be making by developing the newly designated “Otherworld Series” with Sayaka and Kou.



The next day. The announcement for the official adoption of the new equipment hadn't been made yet, and Kou had received some early prototypes of the magic wheel for testing. He distributed them to the Gawiik party and was giving them a lecture about their usage. They were testing its ease of use in the same place they had trained multiple times when preparing for the tournament.

Reaper and Karen were very quick on the uptake, and were riding around like they had obtained a new toy. Dis could not turn very well and had crashed into the wall several times. Daido was safely able to use it. Lef was sliding along silently and sometimes did a flashy turn. They seemed to be having fun. Gawiik also learned to use it almost immediately, and was considering if the magic wheel could be incorporated into the tactics of their party.

"We might be able to use them in a dungeon too." As he was thinking that, Mandle and Viido returned from gathering information from the town center and joined the rest of the party. Judging from their faces that the info was not something good, Gawiik lowered his voice and asked them while looking at the rest of the members:

"Something bad happen?"

"Yes, something a little worrying..." Apparently, movements of the "Dark Alliance" had reported in the capital.

Dark Alliance. Also called "Dark Guild". An underground organization that arranged work for criminals that couldn't join the Adventurers Guild and such. It mainly took on illegal work, and it was commonly known that they also took on jobs such as assassination. It seemed like they had point of contact in each major city, and their headquarters was believed to be somewhere in the area surrounding Eiyoa.

"Are they behind the fuss at the Royal Palace?"

"We don't know that much. However..."

It was also well known that the neighboring country Na'Hatome used the Dark Alliance for gathering intelligence and info on movements of the enemy whenever they were planning to invade into Grandahl. Mandle also noted that they might be gathering info on the movements and happening in the Royal Palace to find the best

time to move.

“I agree...Well, I’m sure the top brass of this country already know about the movements of the Dark Alliance, but I guess we’ll let Prince Layos know just in case.”

If war did indeed start with Na’Hatome again, Gawiik’s party would also have to cooperate with the army for defense whenever and wherever they were short on hands. The country would send a request to the Association, which would in turn call upon the Adventurers for help. You could decline, but in that case declining without a good reason could have severe impact on the evaluation of the whole party.

The best outcome would be that they not get involved in a battle between two countries, but snice they wanted to avoid having their rank drop, if they were requested they’d have no choice but to comply.

“Dark...Alliance?”

“Yes, it’d be fine if you can just tell the Prince to be a little cautious.”

“I got it. All I have to tell him is to be cautious because the Dark Alliance is on the move, right?” Having gathered the data concerning the magic wheel from the members of the party, Kou was about to return to the laboratory when Gawiik asked him to relay a message for him. Even if the upper brass had not realized the movements of the Dark Alliance, if this news got to the Professor it would undoubtedly also reach the ears of King Leozeos.



“Dark Alliance, Dark Alliance...I think I’ve heard it before somewhere~”

If he left now, he’d reach the laboratory at the time when Prince Layos showed up, so Kou began making his way to the laboratory while thinking here he’d heard the name Dark Alliance before.

And then he realized.

“Ahhh! That thing I got from Alice’s place!”

One time when he'd been cleaning his other dimension storage during the time between midnight and morning, he'd seen a document titled "People frequently making deals with the Dark Alliance in the capital" among the various documents he received in Curacall with the warning to deal with them cautiously. These were the same dangerous documents that he'd received from Alice's father, Count Bamist with the warning to treat them cautiously, and that the Count had decided that he had never seen.

The documents showed that a lot of high ranking officials within the Royal Palace were making secret maneuvers and had dealing with the Dark Alliance, and if this information ever got out, heads would fly, quite literally.

"I'll look up their names later."

Kou had plans to visit Prince Rozeth in the afternoon, and he might be able to learn a lot from him. If the problems that was causing such a fuss in the whole palace were solved, Princess Elrose would also be able to come down to the third level again.

Heading towards the laboratory, Kou collected his thoughts. As he began to see the research building in the distance, he picked up speed and ran through the streets of the capital.



A bracelet that had a significant healing effect and a dagger that warriors always had fixed behind their armor. And a handful of black hair. The two pieces of equipment were highly expensive, and to prepare two similar ones would require a lot of money. And most of all, that black hair. Layos only knew one person in all the capital that had hair with such color and texture.

"Sayaka..."

With the equipment of his two subordinates and the black hair which was undeniably Sayaka's was a map with the location of a corner of the ruins under the Royal Palace marked on it and letter with a message to come there all alone. It was blackmail.

He couldn't fathom his two men betraying him. Thus, it was apparent that someone with enough skills to defeat them and kidnap Sayaka in broad daylight from the

laboratory was involved, most likely someone that specialized in kidnapping high profile targets. Of course, there must be an intruder in the palace.

Layos pocketed the black hair and the letter, and holding the letter in his hand, equipped his sword “Wind Sever” and left the room in a hurry.

CHAPTER 32

THE DARK ALLIANCE

Under the Capital Tortoluse, several “Legacies of the past” had been discovered; vast ruins that were said to have lead the magic civilization of Grandahl to maturation. After exploration and investigation of these ruins had been completed, they had been opened for use in training exercises. Some experienced Adventurers had also been given permission to explore here.

All the hidden rooms that had been found in these ruins had been investigated thoroughly, but there had been some incidents in which a long sleeping trap was activated by some kind of stimulation and opened up passage to a new corridor or hidden room. In these special places, one could find objects which were the “Heritage of the Ancient Civilization”, and whoever discovered them could keep them in his possession. Therefore, there were a lot of Adventures who descended into the dungeon of the capital, in which monsters dropped less items as compared to other dungeon, for the express purpose of hunting for treasure.

Proceeding further inside from the area designated for training was area that was still unexplored, closed to all but authorized personnel. There was no knowing what kind of traps or monsters were lurking in the unexplored areas, so a specialized unit explored these areas slowly, making sure they were all safe.

In a slightly open room that was in a section of one of these unexplored areas, a masked man with magician-like appearance watched the hostage lying at his feet, waiting for a report from his subordinates. The hostage, who had been breathing in a regular rhythm, suddenly showed a slightly unnatural movement.

“If you’ve woken up, act normally. Even if you pretend to be asleep, no convenient opportunities will present themselves.”

Sayaka slowly looked up at the masked man, who was saying that even if she got an opportunity, there was nothing she could do and was laughing.

“Where is this...?”

“The unexplored area in the underground ruins. If you move around in this place without a plan, you’ll get lost and never can get out. So, you’d better behave.”

One year ago, Sayaka had woken up in darkness on stairs made of stone with nothing but the formal clothes she was wearing, confused. She was supposed to have been on a plane that had crashed into the sea. As she was running around trying to get away from a white monster that looked like a jellyfish, she had been found and rescued by a battalion of soldiers of the army of Grandahl who had been on a training exercise. This time, she had left the research building block to go for shopping with her two guards and then yet again had awoken in this place. She had no idea what was going on.

“You seem pretty calm.”

“...I’m just confused and don’t know what is going on.”

She tried to get up, but her hands wouldn’t move and she realized that her hands were tied behind her back. She put some strength into her abdomen and sat up, finding the two who had been serving as her guards collapsed nearby.

Looking at the two who were not moving at all, she was worried for a second, but it seemed that they were breathing. She couldn’t see any wounds on them and figuring out that they were just unconsciousness, she was relieved.

Begin surprised and taken aback, then suddenly shining, then darkening, then finally relaxing. The masked man was amusedly watching the frequently changing expressions matching with the internal mental state of Sayaka. Still watching her expression, he told her not to worry, as Prince Layos would be coming for her soon. Of course, at that time, we’ll have him die, he thought to himself.

“We left him a letter to come alone if he wanted to save you.”

“Wait, that won’t work.” That request was far too unreasonable. There was no way the First Prince of a country would jump into danger all alone just to save a girl that he was a little bit interested in who had no value or connections. Even if he wanted, no one would let him.

Saying that, Sayaka shrugged her shoulders. “There’s no meaning in kidnapping someone like me.”

“Is that so? We wrote in the letter that if he tells anyone else or ignores or request, we will deliver your body to him every day, one piece at a time.”

The masked man squatted behind Sayaka, and gently stroked his finger from her slender arms to the tips of her fingers. A chill ran up Sayaka’s back.

“Such pretty fingers. Including your toes, they’d last us at least twenty days, won’t they?”

“..”

The gentle and cool sensation of the black gloves traveled from neck to her cheeks, finally stopping on her ear lobe.

“What a cute ear.”

He lifted her chin upwards and towards himself and lightly pinched her nose with his thumbs.

“The nose is a little small.”

His fingers came down to her mouth, and his fingers tickled her upper lip and lower lip in circles.

“Should I send the lips together with tongue?”

And then, caressing her neck, his hand dropped down towards her chest. Sayaka, who had been frozen, suddenly returned to herself and shook herself free.

“Stop it!”

“Kukukuku”

Under the gaze of the man that looked like he was playing with a toy, Sayaka grew cold. This man could play with lives of others very easily. In this presence surrounded with death, Sayaka felt that she was being gazed at from all around, perhaps because of her

uneasy feelings and began to shiver.

The masked man turned around and from the depths of the shadow in the corner by the wall, a shape with black clothes seemed to seep out. Sayaka's breath caught in her throat. The masked man received some kind of report from him, and turned towards Sayaka, grinning broadly. He told her that Prince Layos was heading this way.



At the same time, Kou reached the laboratory to report to the Professor about the impressions of the Gawiik party about the New Magic Wheel. He was very surprised to see that neither Sayaka nor Prince Layos were present. Sarta told him that Sayaka had left in the morning with her guards to go shopping and had not returned yet. The Prince also hadn't showed his face, so they must have met on the way and were probably loitering somewhere. That's what she said.

"I see. Well then, I think I'll go meet Prince Rozeth first."

"If Prince Layos comes around, I'll let him know about the Dark Alliance."

"Yeah, I'll leave it up to you." Springing off his chair, Kou left the laboratory and headed towards the Royal Palace.



At the same time Kou was visiting Prince Rozeth's secret relaxation place, Prince Suaro sat in his private room on the first level of Royal Palace, reading a letter that his attendant had apparently picked up in the garden with a raised eyebrow.

"...What is this?"

The boy attendant that had picked up the letter had been astonished upon reading the contents of the letter, because the contents of the letter were what they were he thought that he had to tell someone, and panicking, he took it to his own master. And now, seeing the baffled look on Prince Suaro's face, he began to worry if this wasn't someone's idea of a prank.

"Ah, um, Suaro-sama."

“I’m going to see the person responsible for the escorts.”

“Ah, um, but...it might just be a prank.”

“We’ll confirm it just in case. You go and check Professor Andagi’s laboratory.”

Sending the boy to check Sayaka’s safety at the laboratory, Prince Suaro headed towards the post where the Royal Palace’s escort guards were stationed.



Kou was at the secret place of relaxation, getting a detailed explanation of the Dark Alliance from Prince Rozeth. At first, Prince Rozeth had been startled when the name “Dark Alliance” had come up, but as he had already confirmed that Kou was not the child he looked like, he dug into the subject and started explaining like usual.

Although it was usually considered an underground organization that Adventurers who had lost their way and became criminal joined, it had a long history of specializing in the dirty work that took place in the shadows of the conflicts between those in power. Wherever people of power flourished, the underground organization could be found. They had a mutually beneficial relationship.

“It’s an organization that doesn’t really get involved in the lives of the general public, but for the rulers who govern the people and the country, it is an indispensable organization.”

How to use them, make them obey, and build good relations with them. To expect a one-sided subordination from them was impossible and history had proven that trying to tame them would only get your head chomped off, but make them your allies and they could prove useful. The rulers that had been successful in dealing with them had all reached glory. Light and shadow were two faces on the same coin.

“Well, there are exceptions, like King Leozeos, that have reached glory without relying on them.”

“I see~”

Kou learned that Count Bamist had pretended not to see the documents that had records of people high up in the palace dealing with the Dark Alliance because it was

not really a strange thing. Of course, they were dealings that had been carried out in secret, so there was danger in carelessly revealing them.

So instead of the fact that people were dealing with that Dark Alliance, it was more important to know what kind of deals were taking place, and exactly who was requesting what.

The documents that he had received only mentioned who had paid what amount at what time, and to get detailed information about the dealings, you'd have to find out directly from the Dark Alliance itself, but since no one even knew that location of their headquarters, there was nothing to be done.

“And here I was thinking that when the uproar at the Royal Palace had died down, I could talk with Princess Elrose again.”

“Is that why you brought up the Dark Alliance? There certainly are people from the nobility in Grandahl that are making use of the Dark Alliance.”

As they were talking about such things, someone entered the clearing. It was the Rozeth's escort, who usually hid in shadows of the grass and erased his presence. The plain looking man that at first glance seemed like an ordinary guard, who was usually stationed some ways away observing Prince Rozeth and the people around, walked up to him and whispered something in his ear. An unusually stiff expression came over Rozeth's face.

“What's wrong?”

“Hmm...it seems like a problem has occurred.”



At around the same time, in the corridors of the Royal Palace, groups of noblemen and noblewomen could be seen standing around, chatting. Among them, you could also see the young women that had harassed Sayaka the other day. They were talking about a certain rumor that had been spreading all around the Royal Palace.

The rumor was that Sayaka had been kidnapped by someone and Prince Layos had went to rescue her all alone from a very dangerous part of the dungeon.

“It's about that girl again.”

“But I’ve heard that this time the target is Layos-sama.”

“Then, it really is connected to the incident concerning Elrose-sama...! Eh?”

They turned to look in surprise at Prince Suaro as he walked briskly through the corridor, the deep lines on his forehead and difficult expression on his face surrounding him with an aura that was very hard to approach.

Following closely behind were his escort guards, who also had difficult expressions on their faces and were giving off a feeling of nervousness, and the attendant boy who had become the start of everything, who was also seemed unable to calm down.

To confirm the authenticity of the letter they had found, reports from guards patrolling all around the Royal Palace had been gathered on the orders of Prince Suaro, but they had been unable to locate either Prince Layos or Sayaka, thus confirming the fact that both of them were not inside the Royal Palace.

On top of that, the map marking the place in the underground ruins that Prince Layos had been called to was discovered in his private room, and at the same time, information about this incident was leaked all over the Palace. Someone was intentionally getting hold of the information and leaking it. That was what Prince Suaro had deduced.

“What is their aim...?”

“Suarosama?”

“Why has the one who kidnapped the girl to lure out Big Brother, after causing all these incidents, now moving to make them all public?”

There was no way for the guards following him to reply to his musings. Prince Suaro was trying to find out the goal of the one who was causing all these incidents, factoring the fact that this incident was also related to the attack on Princess Elrose.

This wasn’t a runaway incident that had escalated from the conflict between the supporters from both sides. No, he was certain that all these incidents were caused with the intention of fulfilling some other goal.

“This is the plan of someone aiming to use the conflict between me and Big Brother for their own purposes...I guess I’ll have Faze look into it.”

Prince Suaro decided that it wasn’t so farfetched that Prince Layos would be

assassinated during this incident, and to find out the identity of the one behind these incidents quickly, he decided to entrust the job to the reliable and trustworthy masked man (Faze). Right now, he was investigating Prince Rozeth and his surroundings.

“As soon as he comes back, tell him to wait for me in my private room. I’m going to go and meet Father.” He said to his guards and the boy attendant in front of the huge gates that separated the Royal Palace district and the Royal Castle, and then went through the gates to the highest level, accompanied by guards in white armor. The knights who accompanied him up till now exchanged glances with the boy attendant, and then shrugging lightly, headed towards his private room.



An uncertain amount of time after Prince Layos had descended into the dungeon, the Gawiik party, after hearing everything from Kou, rendezvoused with the Golden Sword Dragons that had mobilized to rescue Prince Layos and Sayaka in front of the entrance of the dungeon. Duplicates of the map that had been found in Prince Layos’s private room were distributed among the Gawiik party’s members.

A search and rescue unit had also been formed from among the knights of the Grandahl army, but because of their structure as an organization, their actions were restrained. Compared to that, the Adventurers could take action without any orders from above and so had a lot more freedom, and they were also more agile because of their smaller numbers.

Throwing a backward glance at the knights that were only just beginning to line up, the Gawiik party and the Golden Sword Dragons descended into the dungeon with speed of a compact and fast scouting unit.

“Any possibility this map is fake?”

“It is a possibility, yes, but right now we have no way or time to confirm it.”

“I guess we have no choice but to advance.”

“Pyuri pyriiii~!” I’m going on ahead! Kou said to the members of both parties as they were standing around discussing their plan in a circle with the map between them, and flew off into the dungeon from the shoulder of Karen, where he had been perched in bird form and had been peeking at the map. “There is no scout better than him in this situation.” The members of the Gawiik party said expectantly.

There was someone who was observing all this from the shadows. One of black robed men that was hiding in the shadows near the entrance of the dungeon and observing the movements of the rescue teams reported to his comrades using the “Opposing Far Voices” that both the Gawiik Party and the Golden Sword Dragons had entered the unexplored part of the dungeon. Soon after the knights also descended the stairs, and to make sure that he remained hidden while reporting on the size and composition of their unit, he headed deeper into the shadows.

“– The plan is progressing according to schedule. –”

“– Roger, keep on monitoring their movements. –”

After receiving the report from his subordinate posted at the entrance, the masked man nodded satisfactorily. He turned to the worried Sayaka and gave her a smile that although was devoid of any maliciousness, was also devoid of any compassion. Sensing that everything was going according to their plan, Sayaka became even more worried.

The black robed man that had been posted at the entrance was fully concentrating on staying hidden from the knights that were flooding the entrance of the dungeon, and did not realize that the Gawiik party and the Golden Sword Dragons had split up after progressing a bit down the corridor.

The Gawiik party that had gotten their hands on the New Magic Wheel before the official announcement decided to test out their mobility.

“We’re going ahead!”

“Sorry; We’ll leave it to you!”

The Gawiik party accelerated along the corridors of the unexplored area of the dungeon in pairs, with a total of three rows. Karen, who was part of the vanguard, fired

arrows with light sources attached to them. Lef also casted light magic from the rear and lit up the surroundings to make sure that traveling in the New Magic Wheels was as safe as possible. The Golden Sword Dragons followed them at a run.



While the search and rescue unit were starting their advance into the unexplored part of the dungeon, Prince Suaro was standing in front of the throne of King Leozeos in the top most level of the Royal Palace and was explaining to him the events that had been occurring lately.

“Some of them have put forward their opinions that this is all you doing, you know?”

“Surely you jest.”

As Prince Suaro ignored King Leozeos attempt at humor and pressed forward with the matter at hand, Leozeos shrugged his shoulders and said “He’s such a serious chap as usual.” As the conversation went on, King Leozeos, while sitting on his throne, hinted that the current secret maneuvering happening in the Royal Palace were all happening because of the influence of an exterior country.

“Is that...Na’Hatome again?”

“Ho. So you had guessed as much as well.”

“That country is still targeting our Kingdom, there is no way that they would let such a delicious opportunity such as the conflict between me and Big Brother go by.”

“I see. So, your recent actions have all been in according to this information.”

It was clear that Prince Suaro was gathering supporters and strengthening his base because he had his eyes set on becoming the next heir to the throne, causing the Layos faction to retaliate, and making the neutral faction worried that this power struggle would cause harm to the country. Such was the general viewpoint among those living in the Royal Palace.

“...Aren’t you going to denounce it?”

“Un? Denounce what?”

“The fact that I’m disregarding Big Brother and strengthening my own base by gathering more supporters in the Royal Palace.”

“Hahahah! That was pretty direct.”

King Leozeos smiled a teasing smile towards Prince Suaro, who was looked straight at him without wavering. Nihihi!~

“I know that you care a lot about Layos.”

“Ch!” Suaro’s eyes opened up just a bit, and he showed signs of agitated.

There was a certain secret about the birth of Prince Layos and Prince Suaro. Both had been born on the same day, one at dawn, and one in the early morning. The one who had been born before had actually been Prince Suaro.

At the time, the ones who had been present for delivery of Elishuwon and Liiza consulted among themselves and announced Layos, the son of the Queen as the First Prince. The child Liiza had given birth to was treated as the Second Prince because he was the child of a concubine and this fact remained a secret until both had become ten years of age.

Leozeos, who had been away at the time due to the war with Na’Hatome, only learned of this fact after the birth of the Prince Rozeth.

Leozeos had considering announcing this and making the correction, but both Princes were already very much grown up, and in light of their current relationship, if the truth was revealed it would just cause chaos within the Palace. Liiza also requested him, so he decided to let it be, which had led up to the present day.

“Layos is a pretty clumsy fellow, isn’t he?”

“Although some of it is on purpose because he knows that his intentions have been found out.”

The rash Adventurer activities of Layos that made him seem uninterested in succeeding the throne. Suaro thought that maybe it was because Layos was being considerate of his “Big Brother Suaro” who was supposed to have been next in line to succeed the throne. Layos was willing to give up the right to the throne to Suaro.

Actually, Suaro was always worried Prince Layos, and spent every day trying to support him. He also decided that if it became clear that Sayaka had such a background that the King would like her, it would become a plus for Layos's standing. The staging of a "conflict" was just a means to gather all the people opposing Layos in one place. It was part of defense that he was preparing against the people who would eventually find out or had already found out about the secret of their birth and would use this information for all kinds of ploys.

"If he learns that you have no intention to take over the throne, he might just set off on a journey."

"I have no intention of letting Layos let go of his right to the throne."

For that purpose as well, he had to find the mastermind behind the incidents happening around the Royal Palace and stop the assassination of Prince Layos, but the situation was looking grim. Thinking of what would happen if, on the off chance that Prince Layos was assassinated in this incident, Suaro had come to King Leozeos to confirm his intentions.

Having all his intentions and actions been interpreted correctly, Suaro could do nothing but be impressed.

"Well, don't worry about it too much. That guy won't break too easily. And about the rat that has infiltrated the castle, Aira and the others are currently working on it."

"Is that...Wait, is Rozeth also involved in all of this?"

"Fufufu. Even your "attendant" didn't notice his movements? In fact, he has been investigating here and there ever since that girl appeared."

"Wha...Wait, then does that mean...!?"

Suaro had been sure that Sayaka had been sent to the "house of Butterflies" because of the movements of Faze, which had thus caused the chaos caused in the Royal Palace because of the conflicts between the two factions to simmer down a bit, but now it seemed that King Leozeos also had a hand in sending Sayaka to the House of Butterflies.

The mother of the Third Prince Rozeth was the former butterfly and current concubine, "Aira the Golden Butterfly". She was close friends with the woman who was serving as the current owner of the House of Butterflies, Madam Salina.

The Second Princess Suwida was currently in the care of Madam Salina, and several spies had been dispatched from the Royal Palace who served as her bodyguards while acting as employees of the House of Butterflies. In fact, the House of Butterflies was an intelligence center outside the Royal Palace that had direct contact with the Royal Palace. Of course, there were few who knew of this fact.

"I guess that really was the best place to keep that girl safe."

"I never imagined that Andagi would take over as her guardian."

A part of King Leozeos's plan to find out the mastermind behind the events happening in the Royal Palace was to make the existence known as Kou encounter the Third Prince Rozeth and the First Princess Elrose. He had heard about the ability of Kou to "read people's minds" from Professor Andagi and the plan was to see if anyone showed any suspicious movements after the encounter.

If there were any people who wanted to take advantage of the conflict between Prince Suaro and Prince Layos, instead of agitating the followers of either factions who had already decided their loyalty and were unified, forming a third "faction" from among their own close people and controlling them would be far easier.

The Third Prince who was normally under everyone's radar correctly predicted that the little sisters of the Second Prince would be targeted in some way, and using Sarta, had Kou get closer to her.

The fact that they had tried to directly harm her was a bit unexpected, but it did tell them that the mastermind had a pressing need to cause some kind of chaos, and that the time for something big was close. King Leozeos offered his opinion on the matter.

"Making the guards stand some distance away might have been a bit too much." Although he had heard of Kou's impressive feats, that he had almost single handedly taken down most of Layos's handpicked elite party and won the tournament, so he hadn't been too worried.

"Causing a huge ruckus and the time for something big...Could be that the incident happening right now is also a part of that?"

“Most probably. After the incident with Elrose, the security at the Royal Palace got beefed up, didn’t it? They can’t move around as freely anymore and are probably panicking.”

In case these intruders were backed up by a foreign enemy, they were keeping an eye on the situation around the borders, and also on the movements of Na’Hatome.

“To cause this many incidents, a large number of spies and collaborators are needed. What about the possibility of traitor?”

“Ahh, I’m letting Tormerge handle that. It seems that Rozeth came into possession of some very interesting documents, and the identification of the mastermind is only a matter of time now.”

Prime Minister Tormerge was investigating those who seemed to want to fan the flames of the conflict between the two Princes. From among those who were pretending to be a neutral party and acting worried about the conflict while bringing it up again and again, he had been able to pinpoint some people who were either being led astray by the members of the Dark Alliance or were intentionally working for them.

Actually, they had received a document from Kou via Rozeth which Kou had obtained in the town of Curacall. It had a list of all the people that were frequently doing dealings with the Dark Alliance.

The little dealings were very subtle, and the clever part was how little the total amount of dealings were. The people who were just sitting and stressing that something should be done about the conflict between the two princes would look like they were far from trying to cause chaos, instead, it would seem like their actions were because of worry for their country. They would gather and mix in with people who really were worried about their country, and from there, they wouldn’t let anyone feel that anything was wrong.



The origin of a lot of the bribes that had been distributed among the nobles as part of this deal was written in this list, and from there they could find the agents of the Dark Alliance that had infiltrated into the Royal Palace and apprehend them. The “attendant” named Faze who was working for Suaro right now had just been identified in this way.

“D-Don’t tell me...Faze is also working with the conspirators–”

“No, your attendant is in the clear. That one has left the Alliance behind.”

It seemed like the extraordinary agents of the Dark Alliance were given a mask and were allowed to call themselves by a special Dark Name. This was like the medals the Adventurers Guild gave out. It seemed Faze was a former agent that had honestly been interested in Prince Suaro’s viewpoint, and cutting all ties with the Alliance, he had shown up to work as a subordinate for Prince Suaro.

“It seems like there were two masked agents dispatched by the Dark Alliance. One of them left the country a few days ago.”

“And the other one?”

“His current location is unknown. His Dark Name is “Judge””



In one corner of the underground ruins, a small, dimly lit room opened to a corridor. Inside the room, a small lamp placed near the center of the room lit up the two guards on the ground and Sayaka, who had her hands tied behind her back, from behind.

“Layos!”

“I see you’re safe.”

Sayaka was usually mindful of their positions and called his name with an honorific, but the situation being what it was, she called him by just his name, just like she used to when they first met. Layos was secretly very happy. Holding his drawn “Wind Severer” in one hand, he slowly approached her. From the shadows of the wall several figures seeped out.

And then, before he knew it, a masked man was standing besides Sayaka.

“See, didn’t he come alone?”

“ ... ”

“You bastard...take your hands off Sayaka.” The masked man let go of Sayaka’s hair with an exaggerated motion of his hand saying “Oh my”, and taking a few steps towards Layos, introduced himself in a very gentle manner.

“It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Prince. My Dark Name is Judge. Ah, there’s no need to get familiar with each, although I’m honored that you took the time to visit us,-”

As he took out a dagger specialized for assassination from inside his jacket, the black figures surrounding them also readied their daggers.

“-seeing as this will be the place where you will sleeping for eternity.”

Saying that, Judge pointed the dagger to Sayaka’s neck.

“Of course, I’d really appreciate it if you let go of that magic sword.”

“Don’t behave like a spoiled brat, you shit.” Layos got into a fighting position with the vacuum covered “Wind Severer”, and letting out bloodlust, looked at the assassins. “My life is not as cheap as you lot. If you lay a hand on Sayaka, none of you will be leaving here alive.”

“Even if we promise to let this girl and those two over live?”

“Fu~ Do you really think I’d trust you?”

As Layos took a step forward, his eyes determined, it became clear that these kinds of negotiations wouldn’t work on him. Having determined as much, Judge tried to signal to his subordinates hiding in the shadows. Although he was outnumbered many to one, they couldn’t completely avoid any losses if they fought him normally but they all specialized in assassination, and had a last resort.

A trump card that had not even given the Warrior and Fighter a chance to retaliate, and they were two of the more skilled members of Layos’s party...

“Pyurii”

A single small bird divided into the space filled bloodlust and tension.



As Kou reached the room where Prince Layos was facing off with the assassins first, he understood the situation and moved to free the two who had been serving as Sayaka's guards. The Fighter and the Warrior had a small, round magical device attached around their necks which was splitting off their consciousness from their body, making them sleep like the dead.

Kou saw a few blobs of magic floating about the arches near the walls where the two were laid. He knew immediately that these were people using illusion magic to hide themselves, just like he had seen that Shadow Artist use in the fight against Varow's party.

"Just a bird, huh?"

Making certain that it was just a messenger bird from the Gawiik party, Judge laughed and turned his attention back to Layos. He was about to give a signal to his subordinates that had hidden themselves to pounce on Layos, when suddenly he panicked seeing the Fighter and the Warrior, who were supposed to have been unconscious, wake up.

Thinking that the magical device that had been keeping them unconscious had come undone, he urged the subordinates that had been standing on guard near them to check.

"Don't tell me, that bird from earlier!"

But then, something even more unbelievable happened. The bird flew up towards the ceiling of the room. In the next instant, a composite body appeared from nowhere and landed with a crash. The Fighter and Warrior had woken up, and sensing a disturbance in the surroundings, rushed over to Sayaka to protect her. The invisible black robed men that moved to attack them were sent flying from a few attacks by the composite body.

"Wha...somehow, I missed the sight of the golem."

"Kukuku, you came at just the right time, Kou."

"Vuowaaa!" I've come to help~

“Kou-chan!”

Judge was completely frozen for a moment because so many unexpected things had happened in succession. Layos took this chance to charge forward and slash at him. Judge barely dodged the attack and hid himself with illusion magic. Layos slashed the empty space where he had disappeared a few times, and then rushed over to Sayaka.

“Sorry for the wait, are you hurt?”

“Layos...Why?”

Sayaka was tongue tied, and her face had a very complicated expression on her face. Layos untied her ropes, and turned around to face the black robed men. Having received weapons from Kou, the Fighter and Warrior also got in a defensive position to protect Layos and Sayaka.

The two had failed earlier because the attacker had hidden their movements using illusion magic, and then snuck up on Sayaka to put the magical device on her, making her faint. As they had been distracted by this, the attackers put the same device on them too, knocking them unconscious.

If they had been in a defensive position, even if the attackers used illusion magic, as soon as they got within range, they'd be able to sense their presence. It had been a surprise attack using the very person they were guarding.

“Can you fight?”

“I wouldn't say that I'm in top condition, but I can still move my body.”

“Fighting an invisible enemy with just these numbers is gonna be a bit tough.”

“I want to recover some dignity that I lost by not living up to the Prince's expectation here but...If they use ranged attacks on us it'll be troublesome.”

The black robes made themselves invisible one by one. The agents of the Dark Alliance mainly consisted of Shadow Artists, and all of them could use illusion magic.

Adventures like Litoinaize from Varow's party who were Shadow Artists were rare, but due to the nature of their work, among the people who called themselves assassins, this was one of the most adequate and basic jobs.

“Things have gotten a bit off schedule, but the plan remains unchanged. As soon as we

can assassinate Prince Layos, our mission will be complete.'

Just as the Warrior had feared, he gave orders to his subordinates over the "Opposing Far Voices" to pacify the targets using their mini bow guns from the cover of their illusion magic. To make sure to avoid friendly fire, they changed their formation from an encircled formation to a straight-line formation on one side.

However, to Kou who could see their magic, their movements were very clear. It was very hard for him to use his magical weapon when surrounded, on top of shielding Layos and Sayaka and the rest. However, if they were all lined up in one direction, it was very easy to target them.

Rushing in front of Layos and the others, Kou took out the upgraded magical weapon from his dimensional storage. "Oh, it's that weapon." The Fighter raised one eyebrow after getting a glimpse of the familiar weapon.

Thinking of the loud sounds and reverb it would create if that weapon was fired in this closed space, Sayaka tightly covered her ears with her hands and steeled herself.

"Vuooooo!" Fire!

Bullets were fired almost simultaneously from the multiple muzzles. What had been more of a DonDonDonDon firing sound before, was now more of Vuuuuuu motor-like sound. Because of the improvements in not only power but also speed made to the magical weapon due to the development of the magic rifle, it was now closer to the image of the original weapon that Kou had in mind.

"- Wha-What is this!? -"

"- Captain! The illusion barrier is being broken! -"

The incredible number of bullets put a huge strain on the barrier, and the illusion spells were dispelled one after the other. In one fell swoop, the continuous fire from the magical weapon revealed the front of the black robes that had been standing ready with their bow guns.

And this wasn't the only thing that was going wrong with Judge's meticulous plan.

Just as he decided that this was no time to be worrying about losses and was about to give the order for an all-out attack to subjugate the targets with sheer numbers, an

arrow with a light source attached to it flew past his face, grazing his cheek, and struck one of his subordinates. The Gawiik party had arrived on the scene.

“Impossible!”

Judge panicked even more because they had arrived too fast. The path from here to the entrance had no monsters, but it was still far enough that walking normally would take at least more than one minute. Not even a minute had passed since he had heard from his subordinate at the entrance.

He had left a lot of time between Prince Layos entering the dungeon and the attendant of Prince Suaro finding the letter. Even if they mobilized immediately after finding the letter, there was no way they could have made in time to stop the assassination of Prince Layos.

If they had used horses it would have been a different story, but on the way here there were a lot of narrow corridors and stairs. It was not a place horses could enter easily and he had received no such report either. The best outcome would have been the assassination of Prince Layos without any witnesses, and his body being found on the same day. Judge realized that his plan had utterly failed.

The members of the Gawiik party cut through the ranks of the confused black robes. Karen and Lef took up positions and supported the rest from corners of the room, while Daido and Mandel and protected them. Gawiik and Reaper ran to where Prince Layos and the others were standing.

“Are you unharmed?”

“Yes. It saves me a lot of trouble that you came. But, how did you find this place?”

“Prince Suaro’s attendant picked up a threatening letter addressed to you, and he found out after a bit of investigating.”

Gawiik told him how they had jumped on their Magic Wheels and rushed over after a map had been found in his private room, and how the Golden Sword Dragons and the knights from the army were on their way as well.

“Threatening letter? But I have the letter and the map right here...?”

“Eh?”

As Layos took out the letter and map from his pocket and showed it to him, Gawiik was lost for words. The two exchanged a quiet glance.

“Looks like there’s more to this than is apparent.”

“Agreed.”

Saying this, both turned their attention to the one leading the black robes.



“Kuh. To think that situation would degrade this much...ch.”

Shadow Artists, who were based on casting magic did not have much direct fighting power and were not suited for close combat. Before, they could have a chance of winning by using their sheer numbers, but their most effective magic, illusion magic was in tatters because of the attacks from the magical weapon.

On top of that, Lef and Karen had secured the two back corners of the room, and Gawiik and Layos were standing near the opposite wall, so the black robes were sandwiched between the two. Their illusion magic taken away by Kou’s magic weapon, the black robes were falling fast trying to fight a close quarters combat.

“Ch! Capture the masked man! Don’t let him get away!”

Judge tried to escape this situation using the only way out, but as soon as he stepped into the corridor he froze.

“Prince! You’re safe!”

“You came at just the right time! Capture that man!”

It was the elite party, wearing glamorous armor and holding weapons that had special magic effects applied to them, looking more like a part of a parade than a search team in the dungeon. Of course, they were not just all show; they possessed considerable strength. Judge, the masked man, was quickly subdued by the Golden Sword Dragons who had arrived a bit late.



The group that had rescued Sayaka and the others waited for the knights to arrive, and then handing off the black robes to them, left the room behind and headed for the surface.

“The Prince shouldn’t be fighting on the frontlines~”

“I don’t want to give up the role of saving you to anyone else.”

Layos began his usual advances on her on the way back, saying things like how he’d never give up the role of saving her from danger, and how he’d always be at her side. Knowing that when they got back to the Royal Palace he would be very busy with things related to this incident, the members of the Gawiik and Golden Sword Dragons parties watched over them with light-hearted feelings and let him flirt in ease.

Kou felt Sayaka’s heart beginning to move. Just a little bit, she wanted to believe in the actions and words of Layos. He remembered a phrase fit for such situations.

“All is well after the rain comes and fair weather ends.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

It was mixture of various things.

TLN: He mixed up “All is well that ends well” and “After rain comes fair weather”.

【 ARC 7 】

CHAPTER 33

THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE CONSPIRACY

When Kou and the rest returned to the Royal Palace, it was already late afternoon. After Sayaka, Layos, the Gawiik party the Golden Sword Dragons reached the surface, the unit of knights followed them in droves, bringing along with them all the black robes that they had captured.

At the Royal Palace, lots of messengers could be seen running here and there, and groups of guards were standing here and there, discussing something.

“It’s quite noisy. Did something happen?”

“Isn’t it about this incident...?”

“No, this is something different.”

Layos deduced from the atmosphere surrounding the gossiping guards that this was a different matter entirely, and as he was about to get a hold of a guard to ask him what the fuss was all about, a masked man appeared. Upon seeing him, Sayaka shivered unintentionally.

After explaining that he was Faze, a former Dark Alliance member that was presently working for Prince Suaro, he told them that the King and the rest were waiting for them in the throne room.

“The Na’Hatome army is trying to cross our borders. The King and Prince Suaro are going to explain everything including the details of this incident as soon as you can get there.”

“...I see.”

As Layos nodded with a rather grim expression on his face, Faze bowed and left. Seeing him off, Layos abruptly turned around and said a few words of gratitude to the Gawiik party.

“Good work everyone. I’ll have your reward delivered to the inn you’re staying at later.”

“We’re thankful. Well then, we’ll take our leave here.”

Knowing that it would be rude to ask unnecessary things, Gawiik decided to return. The details of the incident would probably be told to them at a later date, even if some parts would still be kept hidden. For now, they had to gather information in town about the movements of the Na’Hatome Army.

The Gawiik party headed towards the exit of the Royal Palace, while the knight unit lead the black robes towards their new home. Layos and the rest turned and headed towards the Royal Castle.

“Shall we go?”

“Eh, me too?”

“I don’t want to let you go just yet.” Still holding on to Sayaka by her shoulders, Layos lead the Golden Sword Dragons towards the highest level of the Royal Palace.

Meanwhile, the Gawiik party that had just left the Royal Palace decided to stop by the Professor’s place, and headed towards the Magical Research building.

“We’ll pick up the remaining magic tools we ordered, and order more of these.”

“Yeah, we should have spare one lying around, just in case but I think they will be expensive.”

“From what we saw back then, it looks like we’re gonna be going up against the Na’Hatome Army. When the request for assistance comes through, the demand for these will rise quite a bit.”

“...If the Experimental corps do well, the cost of the Magic Wheel will increase significantly. They might even become equipment that is not available to the public.”

Considering the case that the mass-production model of the Magic Wheel might become a piece of equipment reserved for the Army, and Lef’s argument that they should get them as soon as possible, it was decided that they would obtain a few of them using their connection to the Professor.

As they were discussing things about the new piece of equipment, Karen suddenly

realized. The bird sitting on her shoulder was not participating in the conversation, and was instead grooming itself. Meaning that Kou was not inside it.

“Wait, where did Kou-chan go?”

The Imperial Guards had secured the entrance of the top floor of the Royal Palace. Sayaka, who had never entered the throne room of the King was a bit nervous.

Although she had caught sight of him from afar a number of times, it was her first time meeting him face to face. From his expression and the air about him, he seemed like a kind-hearted middle-aged uncle, but there was certain heavy aura coming off him that made you realize that this man was a ruler. It wasn't easy to express in words, he was somehow, “big”.

In addition to King Leozeos, the Second Prince Suaro, the Third Prince Rozeth, the Prime Minister Tormerge, and the senior officers of the army were also present, however, the impression of the King was so strong that they didn't really stand out. The King suddenly brought his face very close to Sayaka and she instinctively bent backwards.

“Hrm?”

“I-Is something the matter?”

“What's wrong, Father?”

“Not much, just thought that you brought along a pretty strange bug.”

As Layos who had stepped in front of Sayaka looked at him in astonishment, the King ignored him. Sayaka panicked at hearing the word “bug”, thinking Is he talking about me!?, but then opened her eyes wide when she spotted letters of light floating near her shoulder.

Ah, I got found out.

“Eh? K-K-Ko-Kou-chan!”

A small bug came flying out of Sayaka's clothes, and in the next instant, a black-haired boy appeared accompanied by the light of a summoning stone. Kou had been

interested in the throne room of the King and while the Gawiik party had been talking with Layos, he had taken the chance to silently possess a nearby bug, and entering Sayaka's clothes, he had snuck into the throne room.

"What are you doing!" Sayaka was panicking at Kou infiltrating the throne room of the King, but the King himself seemed to have no intention to rebuke him.

"It's fine, that unusual guest can also hear what we have to say."

As King Leozeos gestured, a secretary of the Prime Minister Tormerge began explain the things happening behind the scenes of the incident.

They had already been investigating a few of those who had been showing suspicious movements from among those that had been deliberately fanning the conflict between Prince Suaro and Prince Layos, or those that had been encouraging others to speak up about the subject, but after getting the document that had the names of those making deals with the Dark Alliance from Kou through Prince Rozeth and adding that to their investigations, they were able to find the ones who had been the center of these operations. And after they had been brought to light, they were also able to find out who the mastermind behind the recent maneuvers of the Dark Alliance was and his goals.

The conspirators had planned to include the concubine Liiza into their ranks by revealing to her the secret about the birth order about the two Princes, but after learning that it was none other than Liiza who had wanted to keep the secret hidden, they decided that approaching her carelessly might bring their movements to light, so they gave up hope on that end.

After searching for something something else they could use to cause a fuss in the Royal Palace by monitoring the movements of the Princes, they found out about the existence of a girl that had been the source of an incident half a year ago, a kind of incident that was almost ideal for them. A former Butterfly that Prince Layos was so interested in that he visited her every day. They planned to call out Prince Layos and assassinate him by using Sayaka, and then also getting Prince Rozeth mixed up in the resulting chaos between the members of the two factions.

"Rozeth was also one of their targets, huh?"

"Ahaha. If I also got mixed up in the fight for the throne, the capital would have been thrown into pure chaos."

The idea behind the incident this time was to lure out Prince Layos by using Sayaka and then assassinate him, then put the blame on Prince Suaro. This would have caused a backlash from the supporters of Prince Layos and sent the Royal Palace into chaos. The beginning had been the apparent warning from Prince Layos to Prince Suaro, in other words the attack on Princess Elrose. This had been to fan the flames of the conflict between the two princes and agitate their followers, and once the chaos had gone on for a while, the ideal plan had been to somehow rope in Prince Rozeth into it all.

If the blame of the assassination of the First Prince was directed towards the Second Prince, and then the Third Prince who had been mostly been ignored as a very ignorant prince-for-show joined the battle for throne, it wasn't hard to imagine that there would be some supporters of the First Prince that would come out and support the Third Prince.

Since it seemed nobody had much expectations for the Third Prince and as such it seemed like he didn't have much power, becoming his supporter early on and then helping him rise all the way up to the crown would be like getting your hands on the authority of the Royal Family. That was the reason that a lot of families jumped to support Prince Rozeth.

“And aiming for the chance created by the chaos in the Royal Family is none other than the Na’Hatome Empire.”

“Has their involvement in this been made clear?”

“We haven't found any clear evidence, but their army beginning to move with such timing suggests a lot.”

As soon as the knight unit had gone underground to rescue the Prince, an emergency message had been relayed from the fortress in the west that the army Na’Hatome had been begun to show some suspicious activity. After that, all contact with the western fortress had been cut off, and the flying dragons of the airborne troops had been mobilized to scout the area and get a clearer idea of what was happening.

In the north-west of Grandahl, a huge lake continued along the border which also straddled some territory of Eiyoa. The Na’Hatome army was planning to invade through a small corridor that extended all the way from the south to inland formed by a gap between that lake and a gulf. The western fortress was the first line of defense

against the invading Na'Hatome army.

These past few years, after facing defeat after defeat from Grandahl ruled by King Leozeos, the Na'Hatome Empire had begun to focus more on things like their domestic industry, and even though there had been some skirmishes on the borders, they had showed no signs of starting a full invasion.

In particular, they had been sinking lots of resources into developing mechanization technology, and the senior officers of the Grandahl army all agreed that they were probably focusing on mechanical weapons to counter the magical technology of Grandahl.

“Since they had improved technology for their army, they decided to resume their invasion, huh?”

As the outline of the details behind the string of incidents that had been happening in the Royal Palace were being discussed, a messenger arrived with a report.

“Announcement. Just now, the Na'Hatome army crossed the border, and is advancing into Ariatorune. Presently, the border patrol is cooperating with the city's guards and are engaged in battle with them.”

“What happened to the regular army that had been stationed there?”

“It seems like most of the army stationed in Ariatorune have left for the fortress to provide relief.”

Ariatorune was a city to the south of and about half-a-day's distance from the western fortress, and it served as a base to supply the western fortress with supplies. If this city was taken, the western fortress would be isolated.

“According to the report from the scouting team, half of the fortress has collapsed, and black smoke can be seen rising from it...”

There were also reports of a large, siege weapon type object seen in use by the enemy army. The battle from the fortress was still continuing, but with the outer wall collapsed, it couldn't hold for much more than a few days.

“Losing that city will be bad for us. Prepare to send reinforcements immediately.”

Leozeos instructed them to send reinforcements immediately to solidify the defense of the city, and if the fortress was still standing, to have the airborne troops to support them. The troops would be transported using magic vessels. In order to command the

transportation corps and the reinforcements, some of the present officers bowed in front of the King and hurriedly left the throne room.

And then, as if switching places with them, another messenger brought a new report. For one report to reach the King, a messenger had to cross the entirety of the Royal Palace and bring the report to the top floor of the Palace, which was very inefficient.

“I guess I should move to the Army Headquarters soon...”

As he had given his sons an outline of what had been happening in the castle and who had been behind it, Leozeos considered changing his location as he unreservedly stroked Kou’s head which seemed to be at just the right height. For some reason Sayaka was taken aback.

“Announcement. We’ve received reports that a fleet with ships resembling that of Na’Hatome’s warships have been sighted to the south of the neighboring country of Eptita.

“The south of Eptita? Umu...So that’s their move.”

As Leozeos was about to leave the throne room, he stopped and fell in thought after hearing that report. Layos and Suaro, who were following after him, exchanged glances and started discussing the fact that it had “appeared in that place suddenly”.

Kou, who’s hand had been taken by Sayaka, had never heard of such a place, and asked Sayaka about “Eptita”.

“Eh? Er...I’m not that familiar with it myself-”

“Eptita is one country from among a group of small countries in the southeast of Grandahl, and a satellite state of Grandahl.”

TLN: A satellite is a political term that refers to a country that is formally independent, but under heavy political and economic influence or control by another country.

When Sayaka couldn’t answer very well, Rozeth answered for her. On the peninsula extending out to the southeast of Grandahl were a lot of small countries made up of cities and tribes, and one of those countries which shared borders with Grandahl and was relatively larger than the rest was Eptita.

It’s capital Penta was the in the center, and it had two port cities; one in the north and

one in the south. Near its western border was a city called Pulse, and this city had a lot of cultural exchange with the city near it on the other side of the border, Barasse.

“A neighbor of Barasse, huh.”

“The city in which Kou woke up?”

“Yup, there are some people living there who took care of me.”

The country of Eptita which had been protected so far by Grandahl due to its location didn't have enough power to retaliate against Na'Hatome, and depending on the size of the fleet, the whole southeastern peninsula could be taken over by the Na'Hatome army, and it would become center to attack Grandahl from two sides.

In response to the Leozeos's concern, the messenger which had come bearing the report said that according to info which they had obtained from a fisherman from the port city, the size of the fleet was about 20 ships.

“We have no way of getting a detailed breakdown, but according to the witness, most of the ships were transport ships.”

“In that case, it'd be safe to assume that they are carrying at least 1500 soldiers.”

Leozeos guessed that it was not a plan to take over the southeastern peninsula, but actually a plan to cross Eptita and start a disturbance at the back of the country. He ordered that the regular army stationed at Curacall should be moved to the city of Barasse.

The King, and everyone else, including the Princes and the officers headed towards the Army Headquarters, while Kou and Sayaka were told to return to the laboratory. From here on, a lot of meetings discussing things such as military maneuvers and other things important for the survival of the county would be held, so members of the public could not be present. Layos also reluctantly let go of Sayaka after kissing her.

Usually, Sayaka would immediately avert her eyes after being kissed, but today she looked directly at him even after being kissed.

“...I'll leave after a more deep ki-”

“Just hurry up and go already~!”

Layos was sent off being scolded by Sayaka, whose face had gone red.

CHAPTER 34

MECHANIZED UNIT

As King Leozeos declared a state of emergency, the Capital Tortoluse shifted to a wartime regime, and throughout the city, at various important locations, floating encampments using magic warship technology were raised up into the sky, and an aerial corridor connecting them all was constructed using small magic boats.

A place for dragons to land and take off was also constructed in the capitals airspace, so efficiency went up a lot. From here, scouting teams could take off in all directions.

The central headquarters of the Adventurer's Guild sent out information about that start of the war to all the branches of the guild using communication equipment, and requested them to share all info and to gather more.

Among the people of the capital, the elderly ones were mostly calm as they looked upon the construction of the floating encampments, saying things like "It's been awhile since we saw this", while the young people were divided into those that were scared and those that were excited.

"The Na'Hatome Empire, while making a show of gathering their forces at the fort on the border, snuck around Grandahl from the sea and landed on the port city Lapa of Eptita."

"It seems they're planning to occupy Pulse and invade into Barasse, and from there, attack Curacall, the city that is called the Granary of Grandahl."

As Adventurers and mercenaries alike sat in the tavern shoulder-to-shoulder discussing the information they had gotten from the Adventurer's Guild, a neat and trim boy who looked to be about 12 years of age pushed open the heavy wooden door with the whole of his body and entered, walking carefully between the tables.

Unlike the usual lively yet peaceful tavern, today the tavern was very rough and filled with violent-looking mercenaries that had gathered from all over the place to take part

in the war, and the boy looked really out of place. There was certain charm in his well-defined and innocent looking features, and he caught the gaze of the gentlemen with that kind of inclinations.

The young boy walking through the group of such beasts headed towards the party that was most unapproachable among all the groups at the tavern, and was suddenly hugged by a glamorous woman that was a member of that party.

Gasps of “He got caught by the woman!” could be heard from among the outsider groups, but the regulars at the tavern who knew about the situation just looked on with envious eyes and drank their liquor.

“We thought we didn’t see you, but you had gone along to the throne room?”

“Kou-chan, didn’t you get scolded?”

“They weren’t really angry, you know?”

Being hugged by Karen while on top of her knees as she sat in the chair, Kou gave himself up to the two soft backrests and gave them a basic explanation of the incidents that had been occurring in the Royal Palace. He worriedly told them of the fact that the troops of Na’Hatome’s fleet were moving on the city of Barasse.

“Barasse, huh...I heard that reinforcements from Curacall are being sent.”

“Although there was movement yesterday, it seems like it will take time to relocate the troops at Curacall.”

Although the city of Barasse normally had a lot of Adventurers, as it had a training school and dungeon, and also army veterans with many years of expertise, most of the proper army was formed by inexperienced amateurs or retired soldiers, and soldiers that could be used immediately in battle were few.

“I’m pretty sure Gashe from the defense team and Elmerl and the rest will also be

fighting.”

“Ah, that female swordswoman from that time.” Gawiik suddenly remembered that she had an aura similar to the vice-captain of the Varrow Party.

It was a perfect chance for them to go to Barasse and wipe their bad reputation from that one time ages ago, but the Gawiik party had been requested by Grandahl army through the Adventurer’s Guild to go help defend the city near the fortress, Ariatorune. Looking at Kou who was worried about Elmerl and the rest in Barasse, Gawiik thought a bit and then voiced an alternative.

“We’ll have Kou go to the city of Barasse as Gawiik party’s representative.”



Per Captain Gawiik’s proposal, Kou was going to be heading to the city of Barasse to join the defense as a representative of the Gawiik party. As such, he was going around saying his farewells to the people that had taken care of him in the Capital. The members of the Gawiik party had already boarded the magic ship headed to Ariatorune, as they were leaving for the defense line early in the morning. As they were parting, Karen offered a prayer that they would have safe travels and meet again. As she gave Kou a kiss on the cheek as a blessing, Lef also gave him a blessing on the other cheek.

“Kou-chan, lets definitely meet up and travel together again!”

“...There’s a lot of things that I haven’t taught you yet.”

“Un. Good luck to you guys as well. Let’s have another adventure again sometime!”

At Professor Andagi’s laboratory, Sarta hugged Kou, and putting her forehead against his said: “Take care of yourself.” Sayaka also hugged him, and shyly putting her cheek against his said: “Be careful.” The Professor also made to hug him, but for some reason, tea came flying out of the saucepan and stained his lab coat, and he hastily got up to change his clothes.

“Farewells like these have to be beautiful, you know?”

“Ahaha...”

Sayaka ignored Sarta’s whisper, who had “accidentally” spilled some tea, and laughed wryly.

“But...Isn’t that town you’re going to quite far, Kou-kun? Won’t it take you a lot of time to reach there?”

“Yes, but right now, we’re in a state of emergency, so the army will cooperate.”

“Normally, it would take around 10 days to arrive, but if you fly there, you can reach it in just 1 or 2 days.”

“Kou-kun, you’ll be fighting the enemy army, won’t you...?”

Sayaka had seen Kou fighting in both the tournament and the underground ruins, but she was still worried about him taking part in something as big as a “war”. “I’ve something to give you, so hold on.” On that note, the Professor who had left to change clothes came back, pushing a big cart loaded with something.

“What, you don’t have to worry. With this, which has all the labor of my research, and Kou, those Na’Hatome bastards will be sent flying! Kuwakakaka!”

The Professor gave him a “Magic Hammer” as a parting gift, that was tailored for use by the composite body. Apparently, it had a self-repair function built-in, a huge hammer that as usual seemed to have evolved into a strange thing, with sharp pointy bits on one side of the head, and apparently the whole thing was infused with composite cells.

On the other side of the head, a propulsion device utilizing the internal combustion engine was attached, and it was activated by a switch located on the handle. When activated, it made the head of the hammer accelerate with an explosive force, and it wasn’t something anyone could just pick up and use.

“Since I want a detailed report on it’s performance, make sure to come back, okay?”

“Yes~ Thank you.”

Even at times like these, Prince Rozeth was relaxing in his secret place in the garden of the Royal Palace. After hearing that Kou was leaving for Barasse, he lead him to Princess Elrose. She was enjoying tea on the wide terrace on the top floor of the Royal Palace, and invited him to the table without getting angry at the sudden interruption.

“I see, so you’re also going to fight.” Her expression clouding a bit, Elrose reached forward and parted Kou’s bangs. “May the blessing of the God of War be with you.” Saying that small prayer, she kissed his forehead. The maids and servants standing nearby all silently made excited expressions, but she purposely ignored them.

“Aren’t you the popular one.”

“Ehehe.”

Kou came back to the garden with Prince Rozeth, and headed towards the section where the military facilities were housed while confirming the details of his journey to Barasse. On the way, Rozeth also told him all the info and the rumors about Barasse and its dungeon.

“By the way, I heard from Brother Layos before that the dungeon of Barasse has a treasure named ‘Gate of Life’ in its deepest parts.”

“I see~”

It seemed Layos had been planning to go have a look with his own party one day.

“Tell your friends I said hi. Let’s meet again.”

“Un, thanks for seeing me off.”

Having taken a magic boat from the military facilities to the floating encampment where they had set up a landing pad for the dragons, Kou waved Rozeth goodbye.

Almost immediately, the messenger bird flew into view, and flapping its wings, landed on a handrail nearby. Kou released his boy-type summoned body and possessed the bird.

He was going to ride the unmanned scouting dragon, which was trained for high speed and long distances flight, and in one go reach the city of Curacall, from there he was going to travel to Barasse using the messenger bird. Kou touched the dragon with his spirit body, and said "I'm counting on you" to which it replied "Leave it to me."

Among the various scouting teams flying in Tortoluse's airspace, some of them returning from all over Grandahl, and some of them taking off for their next mission, the dragon carrying the messenger bird took off and headed towards the city of Curacall.

The scouting dragon reached the city of Curacall late in the afternoon. As it flew in circles over the city, the messenger bird took off from its back.

"Pyuriii~" *Thanks a lot!*

"Kyouu."

Exchanging a few words with the dragon as it descended towards the city of Curacall, the messenger bird turned east and flew off in the direction of Barasse.

"Is something wrong, my lady?"

"There is dragon out there."

While patting the head of the lively dog Fausta, the daughter of the Diretoss family Alice looked up at the dragon that was circling the skies while descending slowly. The gardener Halbad acknowledged the presence of the dragon and guessed that it would be involve in the war against Na'Hatome.

"That's a scouting dragon, it probably flew here from the capital."

Halbad narrowed his eyes, saying that it might have come to observe the stationed troops that were having trouble getting reinforcements to Barasse.

“The capital...Kou is in the capital, isn't he?”

A mysterious existence that had officially registered as a Golem Adventurer a while ago. Worrying about him because she had heard that he had grouped up with a famous party of Adventurers, Alice was thinking about her friend who she thought was far away in the capital.

At her feet, Fausta, who had been frolicking around up till now, suddenly sat down, and looking to the eastern sky, wagged his tail.

At the same time, the one who had become part of the Gawiik party had been flying over mountains for a while. Among the mountains, he saw a glimpse of the town through the haze. The city of Barasse was being lit up by the evening sun from the west, and a part of its defensive walls had broken, and smoke was rising from one corner of the city.

Please hurry, messenger bird!

“Pyuriii~!”

The Na'Hatome forces had landed on the port city Lapa of Eptita, and had moved on to the border city of Pulse. Now, they were moving their resources from Lapa to their base in Pulse, while the scouting team launched a preemptive attack on Barasse. They were trying to gauge their fighting power and reactions.

“As we thought, they are very vulnerable. Captain, if they are this weak, couldn't we invade with the forces we have right now?”

“Don't be ridiculous, Vice-Captain. Even if it's a remote region, it is still a part of Grandahl. It won't go down so easily like Pulse.”

Knowing that the Vice-Captain already knew all this, the Captain leading the scouting team went along with the Vice-Captain's nonsense. He felt that if that had just a little bit more offensive power, they could forcibly go in and capture the city.

“Well, let’s make it so that we can rest easy later. Deploy the tank.”

“Understood. Tank Corps! Forward!”

On the Vice-Captain’s orders, the Anti-Settlement Suppression-Weapon “Mechanized Tank” operated by the Mechanized Unit of the Na’Hatome army revealed itself.

CHAPTER 35

BATTLE IN FRONT OF THE GATE

Gashe and the rest of the defense team, who had been keeping an eye on the movements of the Na'Hatome through the hole in the wall, called out to Elmerl and the rest who were protecting the gate.

“Something is advancing again!”

“That’s the Mechanized Tank of the Na'Hatome army. Apparently, it’s power core is made with golem technology.”

“Are they trying to break down the gate with that?”

The box-type Mechanized Tank with an attached battering ram. It was covered in shields and thick armor, and looking like a dangerous carriage, it was also equipped with multiple mechanized bows.

Currently, both the members of the Adventurer’s Guild and the town guards had joined up and were engaged in holding back the enemy, but if the gate was destroyed, the fighting would spread all over the town and they would become severely underhanded. If the main army of the enemy decided to take over at that time, they would stand no chance in defending against them.

The catapult behind the tank continued to launch flame barrels, and they couldn’t have anyone defend the gate directly because of the risk of getting them caught in the explosion and rain of fire. They tried to attack the tank with large stones and arrows from on top of the wall, but they had no effect.

“It’s not even wavering.”

“If only we had a huge weapon of some sorts...”

“Wishing for things that are not even there won’t get you far. For now, it seems that that tank cannot cross large holes or steps due to it’s structure.”

Opening up a huge hole in front of the gate would be too difficult, but on Richello's suggestion that they drop a huge piece of wood in front of the gate to delay the battering ram, Gashe gathered his men. But a shouting voice called out to Gashe and stopped them.

"Oi! Where's the leader of the defense team! Don't tell me he ran away!"

"Yes yes, I'm right here, commander."

"Why are you over there! Don't leave your position without permission!"

An old man wearing an old Grandahl Army uniform was currently in charge of the town guard of Barasse, and was going around barking orders to everybody while waving around a stick.

He was former soldier, and had been made the commander of the defense forces of the town by the ruler since he used to be a commander of a platoon back in the day.

However, although he seemed used to ordering people around, Elmerl had doubts about his ability as a commander. Elmerl called out to him as he was lecturing Gashe who had come down from the on top of the wall about how a leader should act.

"Commander, the enemy is approaching with a tank equipped with a battering ram. We want to delay it by putting a huge piece of wood in its path; will you move the soldiers?"

"You idiot! Who would waste wood that we can use for repairs! You're just an Adventurer, don't go around giving suggestions to the army!"

"Then how do you think we should stop it?"

"Fumu. We don't need to slow it down or anything. A handful of soldiers is all we need to turn that toy threat upside down."

To the commander who was boldly planning to mount a counterattack, Elmerl explained the the problems about the situation at the gate.

First, the catapult was continuously firing flame barrels, and the effect of the explosions and the fire rain was reaching all the way to the gate, so it would be quite

dangerous to put soldiers outside the gate. The tank was also equipped with multiple mechanized bows, so approaching it would be difficult.

Also, it seemed like the tank had quite a bit of weight, so even if they managed to approach it, they would have trouble lifting it much less turning it over, and the enemy force could attack them in that time.

“We won’t know those things until we try it! No, we have to do it!”

“Old man, if you’re planning to exhaust your soldiers without thinking, how about you step down from the position of commander this instant?”

“H-how disrespectful!” As the commander yelled, a huge bang echoed from the direction gate as if to drown his voice out, and a dent appeared in the gate. The gate had taken a hit from the battering ram of the tank. The tank began to reverse to build momentum for another hit. As if to reinforce the damage from the original hit, a flame barrel exploded against the gate.

“This is not the time to be fighting among ourselves, Gashe! I’m leaving the preparation and hoisting of any wood we can use it slow down up to you.”

“Stop giving unnecessary instructions! Deploy the Combat Engineers unit. Time the opening of the gate with the next attack, and turn that heap of junk on its side to use as a barricade.”

“Are you insane! If we open up the gate, that tank will be all over us!”

“That’s why I said we will turn it on its side to use as barricade!”

There was much conflict between the commander of the army and the representative of the Adventurers Guild. Outside the gate, the volley of the flame barrels stopped as the tank got ready for a second attack. Gashe would have preferred to carry out Elmerl’s safe plan, but since he was under the command of the army, he couldn’t disobey his orders.

“Hired help has it hard, don’t they~”

They decided on a middle ground, and decided to use the wood they were going to use to slow down the tank, and use it to turn it over instead.

“Can you do it?”

“We’ll try our best. As soon as the tank crashes into the gate, open it up. I’ll be counting on you help from above.”

A few soldiers from the city guard teamed up with Gashe’s defense team, and holding planks of wood, hid behind the gate. They were waiting for the next hit from the battering ram of the mechanized tank. To support the defense team from above, the bowmen team got into position on the wall, keeping themselves low.

“Here it comes!”

The tank struck with a huge crash, and the massive gate creaked. A large amount of dust mixed with splinters of the wood blew in from the gap in the middle of the gate and from underneath it. A few iron latches that reinforced the surface of the door flew off.

“Now!”

“Opening gate!”



The tank, which had begun backing up to strike once more, suddenly stopped as the gate started opening. The operator of the tank thought that there had been a time-lag between the strike and the gate latch breaking, so he immediately put the tank into “advance” to get through into the city, and only then noticed the soldiers like men rushing towards the tank.

“Enemy soldiers approaching!”

“What about interception from the mechanized bows?”

“They are too close!”

“Contact with enemy soldiers!”

There was noise of something being slid under the body of the tank, and then they

heard the enemy soldiers shouting as one as the tank rocked a little. The tank commander understood what they were trying to do and laughed.

“Hahahaha! These guys are trying to turn this thing over.”

“This is an Anti-Settlement weapon that doesn’t exist in Grandahl. We can’t blame them for being desperate.”

“Let's go ahead and scatter them.”

The mechanized tank made using golem technology for self-propelled movement was a five-seater vehicle that was based on a military, armored horse-drawn carriage reinforced with iron armor. As such, it was too heavy to be drawn with horses.

In both the front and back of the tank were huge wheels installed diagonally with the part contacting the ground having ridges like a gear reinforced with iron, and by turning the wheels on both sides in the opposite direction, the tank was able to do a sudden turn, sending the Barasse guards flying.

Gashe and his defense team were also hit by the arm of the battering ram and the armor from the side, and were sent flying. Elmerl, who had been keeping the enemy forces away from their own using a large launcher instructed the bowmen unit to shooting and calmed some of them down, and then asked the commander to send help to the soldiers outside and a diversion for the tank.

“Commander, please order their rescue!”

“Why won’t they move according to plan...Why can’t they move according to my orders...!”

“Commander!”

“He’s no good anymore, Elmerl. We will create a diversion; I will leave the rescue of Gashe and his team to you.”

Richello took some of the Adventurers and made to get behind the tank. “That’s supposed to be my job.” Elmerl muttered under her breath as she readjusted her squad to rescue Gashe’s team, and wait for the perfect time to jump out.

Sensing the new unit approaching it, the tank turned towards them as if to give chase. However, instead of chasing Richello and the rest, the tank headed towards the city gate, which had been left open. Ignoring the fallen unit and the bowmen unit that had rushed out to rescue them on both sides of the gate, the tank started to invade into the city.

“No! It’s going to get into the city! Someone, stall that tank!”

Of course, there was a danger of important facilities in the city getting damaged, but in this situation, if the tank got past the gate, there was a greater danger of the catapult resuming function and launching flame barrels on the rescue squad. Although the bowmen unit were continuously firing to keep the enemy forces from mounting a sudden attack, they couldn’t do anything to stop the catapult.

“Y-You damned Na’Hatome barbarians!”

“C-Commander! Stop, it’s dangerous!”

Standing in front of the tank that was trying to get clear of the gate, sword in hand, was the man who had been a part of the knight’s unit of the regular army of Grandahl, the old commander. Shaking off his subordinate who was trying to hold him back, he took on the old-fashioned “Assault stance” and tried to strike the tank with his sword head on.

“That idiot...Richello! I’ll leave Gashe and the rest to you!”

Entrusting the rescue to the diversion team, Elmerl rushed after the tank.

“Commander, stand down! Don’t be unreasonable!”

“I’ll deliver the hammer of justice on the barbarians that would seek to pollute my great homeland Grandahl with the sword of my vow!”

The commander attacked while shouting the attack vow that was custom that long since been thrown away. To crush such an old man, the mechanized tank sped up. Elmerl and the rest could already see it– Either he would be impaled by the battering ram, or he would be sent flying by the body of the tank. *He won’t make it...* Just as everybody had resigned themselves to the fact–

The cry of bird echoed from somewhere.

A terrible roar followed. Splinter of wood danced in the air, and the shockwave from the caved in ground spread in all directions in the form of strong wind, blowing dust everywhere. They spotted the mechanized tank for moment through the smoke and the dust; it's rear end raised high in the sky as it bounced backward. All movements ceased as the onlookers wondered what had happened in that one moment.

As the commander, who had fallen on his back due to huge shockwave looked up, he saw the back of huge suit of amour like thing, standing on top of the crushed battering ram in a daunting pose.

“Vuaoooo~” I made it.



Inside the tank, which had been shook up severely when the battering ram that had been attached to the body had been hit, the operators who had bumped their heads hurried to make sense of the situation. Since the coupling was broken, they detached the whole mechanism, and making sure that there was no problem with the power, began to back up while confirming the situation.

“What happened? Was it an enemy launching device or something?”

“Negative, look at that...It seems we received an attack from that golem...”

“...I've never seen that type of golem. Was it a high-level magician or what?”

Confirming the appearance of the suit of armor like golem through a small window, the tank commander ascertained that a there must have been a magician nearby who had summoned it, and ordered the tank crew to switch from charge mode to anti-personnel mode, and to continue towards the city while avoiding the golem.

That humanoid type golem could not hope to keep up with the speed of a vehicle type golem that was tis tank. Although it had destroyed that battering ram and few other equipment with a sudden blow, the main body of the tank was unharmed, and the main purpose of this tank, to suppresses settlements, could still be served by going around the city and taking down the enemy forces.

It would be hard to destroy buildings, and the ones protecting the city would come at it in droves, but they were no threat to the tank. The tank armor also boasted huge defensive capabilities against offensive magic. A sharp blade and a rotating saw came out from a gap between its armor, and the tank targeted a city guard nearby.

It was a mechanism to dismember humans. Letting out the decidedly unpleasant sound of metal on metal, the tank rushed towards the group of soldiers gathering around the commander, brandishing the blade and the saw. However, the golem quickly moved in front of it, and receiving the brunt of the attack by its body, it broke the blade.

“What are you doing! I told you to avoid the golem!”

“I’m-I’m sure I did...the golem moved too quickly- Uwaah!”

The received a heavy attack, and the whole body of the tank shook. After that, sounds of consecutive hits on the tank body resounded, and the crew member in charge of the equipment of the tank gave out the warning that the anti-personnel equipment had been destroyed.

“Front and side saw blades, completely destroyed! The spikes are also being folded one after the other...Ahh! Upper mechanical bow also destroyed!”

“Kuh! What an agile golem...Retreat! At this rate, all of our equipment will be destroyed!”

The gear shaped wheels of the tank spun and the tank started going backwards. However, the golem grabbed hold of one of the mechanical bows installed on top of the tank and climbed on top of it, continuing to attack the tank all the time. He pulled out all of the extra bows, and started hitting the ceiling of the tank.



The tank was retreating right before Elmerl’s eyes. The tank, which was being repeatedly hit by the golem on top of it headed towards the gate. After confirming the safety of the commander, she ran to the gate, and shouted at the soldiers that were still recuing the fallen soldiers to retreat inside the city walls.

“Hurry up! Once the tank retreats completely, the flame barrels will start raining down

again!”

The tank, which had gotten outside the gate, was turning sharply trying to shake off the golem, but the golem grabbed on to the peeling armor of the tank and wouldn't let go. And then, with a forceful blow from its right fist, it punctured the ceiling of the tank. The tank ground to a complete halt.

It seemed like it had dealt a decisive blow to the power core. The back of the stopped tank opened and the tank crew began to run away.

“Ohhhh. That golem, it completely destroyed the tank!”

Someone shouted upon seeing the golem as it kept pounding the tank and the tank crew as they ran away. Cheers rose from the rescue squad and the city guards and Adventurers they were helping to get inside the city walls.

“Movement in the catapult spotted! Hurry up and withdraw!”

One of members of the bowmen were squad who were aiming for the escaping tank crew from the top off the walls noticed movement in the catapult and shouted a warning. The barrel that was launched from the huge catapult set up on the side of the road on level ground exploded near the tank. The wreckage of the tank and the golem were enveloped in flames.

Ototo~ It's burning It's burning!

After transferring various things like the armor plates covering the tank, the rations that were inside the luggage compartment of the tank, and the golem catalyst ore that formed the basis of the powering mechanism of tank into his dimensional storage, Kou also put his composite body in there because his surroundings were now aflame.

The one I caught a glimpse of earlier...that was Elmerl-san, wasn't it?

Kou decided that he would go back into the town in his boy form after the fire died down, and floating in the flames and the smoke in his spirit form, he began sorting the things that he had retrieved from the tank. They could probably use the armor plates in some way. The rations consisted of stick of dried meat and fried fruits. The catalyst ore was just a normal cheap ore filled with magic.

The rations are more simple than the Grandahl army ones. There doesn't seem to be any special seal on the containers, so the food itself has to be long lasting or it would go spoilt.

Incidentally, the Grandahl army rations were put in containers that were produced magically, and had functions to keep the food warm, cool, or moisturized. The seals were also vastly superior, so you could put fresh food in them.

As he looked over, he saw the Na'Hatome soldiers gathering around the large catapult and beginning construction of an encampment in the evening light.

CHAPTER 36

HOMECOMING AND REUNION

The Tank Commander and the the rest of the crew that had ran away from the tank to save their lives were now telling the others about what little they had seen of the inside of the town. The Mechanized Scouting Unit had stopped advancing because their tank had been destroyed, and had decided to hold their ground there while waiting for the main force to arrive.

Considering that the Tank had been designed to resist attacks from even some of the stronger Summoned Beasts, the Commander of the Scouting Unit decided that the enemy must have been using a golem of exceptionally high caliber.

“Well, we also destroyed their golem, so it a draw this time around.”

“Grandahl are good with things related to magic, as expected.”

“What happened with the tanks that were with the main force?”

“It seems like they finally finished loading them, and they are being transported here this very instant. When all four of them are mobilized at once, it won’t matter if a Summoned Beast or a Golem stand in their way, there’ll be no way to stop them.”

The young vice-commander said that and looked toward the city of Barasse, with one of it’s walls almost collapsed and it’s damaged gate. It was waste that they had lost one of their tanks here, but just with that one tank and a long-range catapult they had been able to do this much damage. Once the Assault Tanks and the main force arrived, a small city such as this wouldn’t even be a pit spot, he mused.

“That’s right. Until the main force arrives, keep the enemy busy with the catapult while also keeping unit on standby here. Make preparations to camp here, and also keep a lookout for any nighttime attacks.”

“Understood.”



The city of Barasse was beginning to be enveloped by the dusk. The rubble that had been scattered in front of the gate had been cleared away, and the gate itself was shut tight. Treatment of the wounded and rearrangement of the troops was underway, and Elmerl, who had been going around checking the state of the city returned to the gate and grouped up with Richello and Gashe.

“Gashe, who is your wound?”

“It’s fine, it’s just a scratch. I was just blown away by the battering ram, that’s all.” Gashe said, and laughed.

Even more important right now was the fact that the Commander had to lie down, and the command was in a bit of chaos right now. They had been very anxious when the tank had entered the city, but it had retreated without being able to do anything, so they had been able to minimize the damage.

“That golem appeared at just the right timing.”

“Do you think the normal Adventurers living in the city lent us a hand?”

“Hmm...I dunno who was controlling that golem, but anyway, it helped us a lot.”

As they were talking, the sound of something hitting the gate echoed throughout the area. Elmerl and the rest immediately hushed their voices and backed away from the gate with tense faces, thinking that it was the Na’Hatome scouts or something, and strained to their ears. A knocking sound was coming from the gate. And then-

“Elmerl-saann~!”

“Eh?”

“A child?”

“Open uuuuppp!”

The time, the three of them exchanged dubious glances. They tried to get the guard who was on the wall to confirm who it was, but it seemed like whoever was knocking

was standing directly beneath the walls, and they could not confirm his appearance. For now, they opened up the gate just a little bit to see who it was, and there stood a boy with who looked to be about 12 and had black hair and a foreign-looking face.

“It really is a child. Have you been outside all this time?”

“How did you manage to stay safe?”

Making sure that there was no movement from the fires of the Na’Hatome camp in the distance, Elmerl and Richello invited him inside. Kou was relieved to see that they were both alright. Seeing them both together even after meeting them after quite while made Kou happy, and he was thinking of where to start explaining, he caught sight of Gashe.

“Ah, it’s Gashe!”

“Oh? You know me too?”

“I’m Kou.” He took that old amulet and wore it around his neck.

“What?”

“Huh?”

“Ehhhhh!?”

It was trio of surprised faces.



“Could it be that you have returned to your original body?”

“Ah, I’ve not told you yet, have I?”

He remembered that in his letters, he had already told them that he had registered his composite body as an adventurer, but he hadn’t told them about his boy-type summoned body yet. He explained to them how he had also gotten this body from Professor Andagi, and how he used it when he had business around the city.

“Wait! Don’t tell me, that golem from before. That was also you?”

“Yup, I flew over in a hurry, and I was quite relieved that I made it in time.”

“I see.” After hearing of this, Elmerl and the rest thought back to the fight between the tank and the golem.

There were getting a lot of curious looks from the soldiers and the Adventurers passing by, as they were standing right in front of the gate, lively talking to a young boy.

“We were saved by you once again.”

“Ehehe~”



At midnight.

In the lounge of mansion of the governor of the city of Barasse, which was also being used as an emergency headquarters for the army, army officers, members of the Adventurer's Guild and the Barasse nobility were gathered around a large table which had a huge map on it, showing the city of Barasse and the surrounding area. They were discussing how to deal with the onslaught from the advancing Na’Hatome troops. Due to the swift orders from the capital, reinforcements from the city of Curacall were on their way, and if they could hold out for just two more days, the advancing Na’Hatome would have no choice but to retreat.

“I believe that the aim of the Na’Hatome forces arriving here is to capture Barasse and using that as a headquarters to keep Curacall in check, all to aid the main force attacking from the west.”

“They’ll force us to deploy some of the strength of our main forces here, huh.”

The Na’Hatome forces that had landed in the port city of Lapa of Eptita and were now gathering in the border city of Pulse were estimated to be at least 1000 strong, and were also using long-range catapults and mechanized weapons to make up for an deficit in foot soldiers.

“As for defense, I have a suggestion- no, a request for the governor.”

“What is it?”

“I want you to change the commander.”

At the meeting, Elmerl requested that the old commander that had been in the knight’s unit of the regular army of Grandahl be replaced because there were some doubts as to his capabilities as a leader. Elmerl was so blunt that the whispers of confusion and indignation were heard from the other attendees. Incidentally, the old man himself was still resting, and so was absent.

“But, it seems like he is fulfilling his duty to protect the city?”

“This time, we just got lucky. He allowed the tank to get inside the city, and he was about to scatter the soldiers for no good reason...If the backup sent by the Gawiik party had not made it in time, he himself would have not made it out alive.”

“Hmm...But, you know...Ah, then let’s do it like this. You can take charge of the units from the Adventurers association, and make an independent force.”

“A force independant from the city guard? That would just make the battlefield chaotic.”

The governor was hesitating to remove the old commander from the command. Elmerl wondered if he some personal fondness for the man.

“No no, we will properly split up the battlefield in advance, so you just have to coordinate well afterwards.”

“Why are you going so far to take his side? As long as I will be responsible for the lives of the soldiers under my command, I will not accept this if you cannot provide a satisfactory reason.”



As the meeting for the defense of the city was going on in the in the mansion of the governor, Kou had met up with Nina and Lukabell in the building of the training school, which was being used as one of the shelters of the city. The students of the training

school were helping with patrols, rationing of supplies and other things around the city.

“Eeh! Are you really Kou-chan?”

“Yep, it’s me~”

“Wait, isn’t a human-type summoned beast a very expensive thing...It looks like the Magic Engineers of the capital are very grand.”

“The Professor is very rich after all.”

The three of them plus one cat were talking in one corner of the building. The cat Kou which had been resting on the knees of Nina woke up and then curled himself up on the knees of the boy Kou.

“Ah, Elmerl-san”

“So this is where you were Kou. Are you two on night duty? Don’t push yourselves.”

“Roger~”

“Is Elmerl-san returning to the meeting?”

As the cat wrapped itself around her feet with a meow, Elmerl let them know how they had discussed about the plans for the defense of the city, and also how they had a bit of a fight regarding the commander. IN the end, it had been decided that the old commander would resume his duties as the commander as soon as he recovered.

“Good grief. That governor...Even in a situation like this, his true nature doesn’t change.”

“Did something happen?”

“Yeah...a little something.”

At the meeting, in response to Elemerl requesting that the old commander be replaced, the governor just said that the old commander had been put under his care by King Leozeos himself, and so removed any and all room for argument. Even those

that had agreed with Elmerl's request couldn't say anything after the King's name had been spoken. Elmerl didn't know what were the circumstances behind that old soldier becoming the leader of the troops in Barasse, but it was clear in her mind that the governor was refusing to remove the commander from his post to gain favour with King Leozeos.

"And on top of that, he also justified having denied protection to Kou that one long time ago by bringing up the fact that he had come as a representative of the Gawiik party."

Elmerl was very angry when the governor said that the Gawiik party had sent a powerful golem because the town had not got in their way when they had assassinated the Demon Dog Kou, and reminded the members of the Adventurers Guild members and others who had opposed the decision at the time that it had been decision with long-term interests in mind. However, since Elmerl was also hiding the existence of Kou from the rest because she didn't trust the plans of governor, she couldn't object too strongly.

"Well, what's done is done, right? Water under the bridge. I've heard that getting too angry is not too good for your health and beauty, you know?"

"...This is about you, you know."

Elmerl let out a big sigh, and then changing the subject welcomed Kou again, and after welcoming him, started to explain about their strategy starting tomorrow. The general plan was to hold out for reinforcements to arrive from Curacall. Specifically, they were to solidify the city's defences and prevent enemy intrusion into the city. This would become complicated especially when you added those tanks to the equation.

"The Na'Hatome army is going to use the troops they have stationed in the neighbouring city of Pulse to attack this city. It's highly implausible that the tank that Kou destroyed is only one they had."

"That thing, it was very well built, you know."

"Um...Elmerl-san, what did you mean that Kou was the one who drove off the Na'Hatome forces-"

Nina and Lukabell, who had yet to see Kou's composite body were having a hard time

imagining how such a small boy had fought against and destroyed a tank, and had scattered the enemy forces. Kou decided that since it had come up, he would show the two of them composite that was supposed to be his “real body” right now. With a flash of light, he un-summoned the boy-type summoned beast, and taking out the composite body from his dimensional storage, he possessed it.

“Vuouuooo” *This is how it looks like~*

“!!”

“..”

The two were awed by the huge golem that had suddenly appeared with a sharp sound. Lukabell was frozen in place as he looked up at it, while Nina fell down on her backside. The cat Kou was unaffected, and was calmly grooming itself by the wall.



The third day after Kou had arrived to defend the city of Barasse. There were suddenly lots of signs of activity from the Na’Hatome camp visible from the wall of the city.

On the evening of the day before, a large transport of the Na’Hatome army had been confirmed coming from the direction of the city of Pulse, and the watch guard on duty reported that by the light of fires in the enemy camp he had seen among the transport several long-range catapults as well multiple tanks mixed in.

When dawn approached, they saw that the number of long-range catapults standing by over at the enemy camp had increased from two to ten, and although they couldn’t see the troops directly, just by looking at the amount of smoke rising from cooking fires just behind the camp, they could estimate that quite a large number of troops had arrived.

“It feels like the city will be flattened just by attacks from those ten catapults.”

“I think not even half of them are active right now.”

Besides the catapults that had been set up from the beginning were materials necessary for firing the catapult, and from what they could see out of the ten only four catapults had these materials ready. The rest were either not ready yet, or they had

been set up just for intimidation, Richello observed.

“Well, even if only four are active, that is still a lot of power.”

Yesterday, the two active catapults had been occasionally firing flame barrels at the city, and because of that, the eastern wall of the city was already in very bad shape. The part of the wall and the gate which had been damaged in the first attack had been reinforced to some extent using wood and stone, but if they were broken down again, they wouldn't be able stop it from crumbling down completely.

“The silver lining is that we are not completely surrounded. If we can just make it through today, reinforcement should arrive.”

If reinforcements from Curacall arrive at Barasse, it would become practically impossible for the Na'Hatome forces to take Barasse. It would become a fight where the Na'Hatome forces would be fighting with a fixed number of troops and supplies on enemy territory against the Grandahl forces which could receive reinforcements again and again.

“They are probably aware of this...and will probably go all out trying to take the city today.”

Richello grasped what the enemy was aiming for after counting the number of catapults. They were probably planning to set them up inside the city as soon as they got control of it, temporarily fortifying it to repel the forces coming from Curacall. After that, they would call for more reinforcements while continuing to be a thorn in side of Grandahl.

“I short, these huge number of troops are not here to threaten Barasse into giving up, but are rather there to make Barasse into a headquarters that they can defend indefinitely, thus putting pressure on the Grandahl forces.”

“In that case, that would explain the makeup of their force well. For a force that is made for cutting through the enemy as fast as possible, their forces lean too much toward long-term defense.”

Richello was explaining all this in a tent that had been set up as a headquarters of the Adventurer's Defense Unit in the shade of the eastern wall of the city. As he wrapped up his explanation on a map that showed the city of Brasse and it's surroundings, a

voice suddenly called out to them.

“A moment please.”

“Eh?”

As they heard the voice and turned around, there stood the commander with one of his men. For a moment, Elmerl’s face darkened, but almost automatically Richello took her hand in his to soothe her, and she stayed quiet.

After hearing Richello’s explanation, the commander asked him three questions, and after hearing his answers, nodded and went off towards the city guard headquarters. The short man that had been with the commander slightly bowed his head to Richello a couple of times and followed after the commander.

“...What was that all about?”

“Hmm, he seemed like a changed man.”

Even as she agreed with Richello’s apt observation, Elmerl couldn't completely shake off her doubts about the slightly changed commander.

CHAPTER 37

DEFENSE OF BARASSE

The sluggish atmosphere of the morning had yet to dissipate in the city of Barasse. In this time of emergency, there was no sign of the everyday life that the ones living here were used to, and an air of tension hung around the gate of the city. This temporary stillness was shattered by the alert shouted by the guard on watch.

“Movement spotted among enemy troops!”

The smoke from what they had guessed to be cooking fires had disappeared, and for a while they had been observing some kind of activity near the long-range catapults, but now it seemed like the attack had begun in earnest, as two tanks appeared from the directions of the plains, followed closely by a formation of foot soldiers; an estimated 500 of them.

“Here they come...Kou, are your preparations ready?”

“Vuouuaa.” *Yep, I’m ready~*

The prominent composite body that had been helping the Defense Reinforcement team to carry wood panels replied with words of light. Elmerl, who had guessed that the enemy would be making extensive use of their long-range catapults had come up with the plan of slowing down the tanks so they couldn’t get into the city, no matter if they wall were destroyed or not.

When the foot soldiers reached the wall of the city, the catapults would have to naturally stop firing, so they could leave slowing down the tanks to Kou, and the foot soldiers would be dealt with by the city guard while being supported by the Bowmen unit.

This time, the commander had no complaints either. Although this could be also attributed to the fact that he couldn’t complain. As decided in the meeting with the governor, the command chain had been split, and the commander that was commanding the city guard had no say in the movements of the Adventurer's lead by Elmerl.

“Enemy forces advancing!”

“Projectile from catapult incoming!” The watch guard shouted out the warning and crouched to protect himself. Immediately after, they heard a sound of a projectile flying in, and an explosion resounded outside the wall. The flame barrel attacks by the catapults had started. The consecutive attacks by the four catapults resulted in near constant explosions.

The long-range catapults had been installed such a distance away that fire arrows from this side could not reach them, and indeed, flame barrels fired from that side could only reach the wall if they had tailwind. However, in such conditions where the catapults were barely in range, there was a need to be extra careful, as some flame barrels could clear the walls and land inside the city purely by chance.

Even as they were hiding in the shadow of the wall with bated breaths, everyone was anxiously waiting for the explosions to end while discussing things like “If we can hold out here in Barasse, I think next we’ll be advancing on Eptita.” As that was going on, a messenger arrived on a horse, rushing into area through the main street and announced:

“Tanks sighted approaching the western gate!”

TLN: Remember, until now all the fighting and stuff had been going on near the eastern gate.

Last night, when the Na’Hatome army had received reinforcements from Pulse that had made camp, a different unit had moved into a position where they could attack the western gate. They had lit fires in the camp showing off all the catapults they had prepared to focus attention on them, and using that and the cover of darkness had gone around the city towards the west gate.

They had known that reinforcements from Curacall were expected from the west sometime today, so if they were not careful, the Na’Hatome could be the ones who ended up in a pincer. As such, it seemed like they had not sent any foot soldiers to attack the west gate. According to the messenger that had just arrived, only two tanks were advancing on the west gate, and apart from them no soldiers could be sighted.

“They did such a risky maneuver on the assumption that reinforcements are coming. The enemy is betting everything on this one battle.”

“They knew that we would be focusing our forces on the eastern gate. Kuh, they’re going to keep us on our toes.”

The eastern gate was being assaulted by the long-range catapults, and two tanks and an infantry unit was also advancing on it, so it would be difficult to take forces from here. Elmerl hesitated on what to do. At that moment, the old commander gave his men some orders and split the city guard into units, and adding a few soldiers to Gashe’s Defense team made an Engineering unit.

“I’ll head to the Western gate. I’ll leave this to you.”

“Commander...?”

With an air that was really different from just a day before, the old commander left about half of the city guard with Elmerl and headed towards the western gate with the Engineering unit. Elmerl watched him go with a complex expression on her face.

“Kou?”

“Vuaau?” *What?*

“We’ll manage on our own here, so go help out the commander.”

“Vuvuaouu” *Got it.*

Kou took out his Magic Wheel and slid after the carriage carrying the commander. All the Adventurers and soldiers in the area were curious about this new method of locomotion, but they were soon distracted as a part of the wall began to crumble after a flame barrel hit it.

“Hold out today, and it is our win! Let’s drive them back!”

“Yeah!”

The Adventurers and soldiers responded to Elmerl’s encouragement.



In the years past when the first war with Na'Hatome had been going on seemingly forever with no end in sight, there was one soldier who threw himself into the war, and lead soldiers in both small skirmishes and battles of larger scales. He was made a member of the knights of the Grandahl army, and quickly rose in ranks. This was the old knight, Basclay.

At the time, the young Shishiou Leozeos had just succeeded the King, and due to his policy more and more magical tools were being introduced to the battlefield. Seeing this changing battlefield, the old knight was reminded of his own age, and deciding to raise his own successor, he made one of his men his personal assistant.

That young man was had been a failed Adventurer, and thus was not thought well of by his peers, but Basclay saw his potential as his commander, and taught him all of his techniques and knowledge. The young man absorbed all of this like dry earth absorbs water.



One day, a large battle was planned to happen in the area where Basclay and his troops were deployed, and King Leozeos himself rode out. In a meeting, details were given about the use of the new special weapons that used magic, such as carriages equipped with magical armaments or soldiers equipped with special armor; things that had not yet been adopted by the Grandahl army as a whole. The most efficient use cases and strategies for winning were discussed, and opinions were both given and taken.

Basclay came up with several strategies and planned them out, and shared them with his subordinate, and asked for his opinion and such. Basclay knew that if the subordinate could get major achievement in the upcoming battle, he would be promoted to a position where he could replace Basclay as a commander. And so, Basclay decided that it would be his last fight, after which he would give up his position.



The next morning, after spending a rare night drinking with his subordinate, Basclay overslept. As he hurriedly made his way towards the meeting place, he was told that the King's unit had already moved on. He couldn't see his subordinate anywhere, and

when he asked those in the vicinity he found out that the young man had already left with the King's unit.

The young subordinate had proposed the plans Basclay had come up as his own to the King, and had went along with his unit. After a fierce battle with many ups and downs, King Leozeos came out victorious, and highly prized the one who had come up with the plans that had contributed to the victory.

After this battle, the Na'Hatome army, which had suffered heavy losses stopped it's invasion on all fronts, and the war entered a stalemate. Grandahl was now virtually victorious.



Some time passed, and a month after that battle, Basclay and his unit, still lacking one member, got some time off in the capital. He was invited by some of his old friends to a party held in the castle's garden, which he accepted without hesitation, with the intention of finding his old subordinate and asking him about what had happened that day. But...

"You've thrown yourself into battle for too long. I'm sure you're a little tired."

Hearing his former-subordinate shrug him off with a seemingly lamenting reply, Barksure was astonished. All of the nobles there wanted to be together with the "young hero".

The young man had returned to the Capital before the army and the King's unit, and using the fact that he had contributed in the final battle and had earned King Leozeos approval had busied himself in making connections, and already had a lot of supporters. The only sympathizers Basclay had after spending a lifetime on the battlefield were the old members of his unit, and there were none of them in this gorgeous palace.

Realizing that he had been betrayed by his subordinate, who he had trusted and who he had wanted to succeed him, Basclay collapsed where he was standing due to the shock. This caused a slight disturbance in the area, and eventually King Leozeos also heard about it.

Soon after that, Basclay retired from the Knights, and his lifelong service to the army was recognized, and he was awarded a position as an army advisor in the city of Barasse from the King for his efforts; a calm life for the rest of his time. However, since the time he had collapsed in that courtyard, Basclay's life had lost all color, his consciousness was always covered in a haze, his heart lost in a mist.



That mist had let up a few days ago. As he had tried to make a suicidal attack on the Na'Hatome army's tank, a giant golem had appeared out of nowhere and stopped the tank. As he looked up at Kou's armor clad back, much like that of a knight, various memories and scenes rose up in his mind.

The Captain of the knights that had taught him sword fighting and tactics back when he was just a brat. Back then, there were a lot of knights that carried themselves such that they were indistinguishable from Adventurer's or common thieves. Knights which held pride and honesty near and dear were a minority, and only existed near the capital.

Even while surrounding environment was filled with betrayal, cheating and falsehood, that Knight Captain never allowed himself to become warped, and hung onto his beliefs and skills.

"Hey Clay, no matter who someone else is, don't you think that you can only be yourself?"

"What the hell? That makes no sense."

"Hahahaha! I meant, no matter where I go, no matter how far that is, I will remain me, and no matter what happens, you will still remain you."

"Like I said, what does that mean? Isn't that obvious?"

The boy Basclay had looked up to one such knight. After resting for some time while immersed in these memories, he finally recovered from the emotional damage that he had been carrying around all this time. So the ambitious young man had used him to raise to greater heights. So what? That's all that had happened. In fact, it meant that

the plans he had come up with had been that much effective.



The commander and the Engineering Unit arrived at the western gate, and asked the guards stationed there for a status report. The gate had already been struck multiple times by the battering ram, and the warped and battered gate was being held together by wood that had been hastily tacked on. It wouldn't hold out for long.

“The enemy is just tanks?”

“Yes, we can't see any enemy soldiers.”

“We can already see cracks in the two pillars that support the gate. I believe it is only a matter of time before it breaks down completely...”

“I see...Well then, let's think of a countermeasure on the presumption that the gate is already destroyed.”

Saying that commander Basclay got lost in thought, trying to come up with countermeasure against the tanks. Just then, the powerful golem that had been apparently sent by the Gawiik party arrived on the scene, sliding across the ground. It's body glowed with light, and words of light appeared.

“I came to assist~”

“..That's it.” Seeing Kou arrive, Basclay hit upon an idea.



The Mechanized Tank of the Na'Hatome had attacked the western gate of Barasse multiple times now. The tank captain noticed some activity behind the gate, and presumed that they were trying to desperately reinforce that gate by building some kind of barricade. He signalled to tank No.5 to accelerate.

Tank No. 5, which didn't have a battering ram attached to it's front pushed Tank No. 4 from behind and drastically increased its momentum, plowing into the gate with the cracked support pillars. The crew, who had braced from impact, immediately realised on contact that the gate had finally broken completely because of the vastly different

sensation compared to the previous hits.

“Yes! We’ve broken through! After engaging the anti-personnel mode, we’re heading straight to the Eastern Gate!”

“Two carriages sighted in front!”

“Multiple sighted on the sides too!”

“A desperate barrier using carriages, huh? Pay them no attention, and break through!”

It seems like their prediction that the enemy would be focusing on defending the Eastern Gate so much that they would not be able to defend the Western Gate properly had been spot on. Although the fast thinking to try to stop the advance of the tanks using carriages was commendable, the defense was too weak to stop these tanks. The captain of Tank No. 4 gloated and gave the order to advance.

The battering ram collided with the carriage their way forward, and the carriage started to give way, creaking. But then it suddenly stopped, and the loud noise of the tank moving forward was suddenly replaced by a high pitched whine and the sound of metal striking something again and again.

“What happened!?”

“Controls unresponsive! This is...the gears are slipping–”

“It’s oil! Oil is spread on the stone pavement, and we can’t move forward!”



The plan Basclay had come up was to spread oil all over the pavement in front of the gate and then open the gate intentionally, luring in the tank and then sealing its movements by surrounding it with carriages. Getting the carriages into their proper place in such a short time could not have been possible without Kou’s help. And then–

“Alright! Set it on fire!”

They threw heaps of dried grass soaked in oil on the tank that was stuck, surrounded by carriages, turning its wheels in vain, and then set fire to it. The tank was built to

withstand light fire attacks too, but the grass was a special smoking type used to smoke out prey when hunting, and the tank was soon completely enveloped by smoke.

“Vuouau” Here we go.

The tank tried to escape by turning around, but since it was surrounded with carriages laden with heavy stones, it couldn't move much at all. Then the other tank came to the rescue of the first. The saw coming out from a gap in its armor cut up the frame of one of the carriages. Using a connecting mechanism, it then attached itself to the body of the first tank, which was surrounded by flames and smoke, and retreated at full speed, taking the first tank with it.

“Close the gate! Put out those flames and move those carriages! Engineers and Kou, as soon the space is cleared, make preparations for digging!”

Commander Basclay was energetically giving out orders. Before the tanks that had retreated recovered and charged again, they were going to start on the next plan. The half burned carriages were moved in front of the closed gate to act as a barricade, and taking the fact that the tank could break through them into consideration, they were now removing the pavement and digging a hole. The earth had already been plowed up where the tank wheels had dug in, so they were going to use that as a starting point to dig efficiently.

“Hurry it up! The depth will be fine at about 1 Luuka. Make sure that shape of the hole is such that the tank cannot climb back out.”

“Vuuouoau” I'm going to dig too~

When Kou started to help with the digging, in almost no time, a huge hole had been prepared. His was a strange way of digging, as the earth that was supposed to be come out of the hole never appeared, and yet a hole big enough to completely encapsulate that tank was prepared. The tanks were constructed in such a way that if one fell into the hole, the other would not be able to go over it to cross the hole.

It was quite different from his original plan, but in a way Commander Basclay's plan to use the enemy tanks as barricades was going to be achieved, just in a slightly different form.

“Great work, Kou. We'll be fine here now, so go reinforce the Eastern Gate.”

“Vuuavuau” *Got it.*

Urged by Basclay who was now extruding the atmosphere of a fully dependable commander, Kou equipped his Magic Wheel and headed towards the Eastern Gate to help Elemerl and the others.



The walls of the Eastern Gate which was undertaking the full brunt of the attack by the Na’Hatome troops was close to collapsing because of the attacks of flame barrels and the mechanized tanks.

“Get away from those walls! They’re going to collapse!”

“Enemy forces making to fire arrows!”

“Fire back!”

One of the mechanized bow that Kou had torn off the tank was set up in the window of a building near the gate, and one of the bowmen positioned there fired of an arrow. The enemy fired off a volley of arrows that made over the wall and struck some stragglers that were late in getting away from the wall, but because most of the had already scrambled away from them, the damage was minimal. But a part of the gate and the wall had already crumbled under attack by the tanks.

“The tanks are blocked by the rubble, and can’t come in for a while. The enemy soldiers are going to rush in. Get ready to intercept them!”

“Alright, it’s our turn!”

The Adventurer’s and the Defense unit lead by Gashe rushed forward, and getting into the the streets assigned to them, they took stances to push back the invading troops. And soon after, the Na’Hatome soldiers appeared, raising a battle cry. The soldier that had been the serving as the first one through was immediately struck by an arrow fired from the building with the mechanized bow.

“Don’t let them into the city! Push them back! Don’t let them remove the rubble!”

“Elmerl! An attack from the mechanized bows of the tanks is incoming! It’s dangerous there!”

Even if they were blocked by the rubble, the tanks could still fire their mechanized bows, and they were letting off round after round like an artillery battery. With their backs to a wall, the guards equipped with shields protected their leader Elmerl by raising their shields high, but they wouldn’t last long under the constant fire from the tanks.

Elmerl and the rest retreated under the shade of a building, and the arrows then began targeting the other Adventurers and the Defense unit.

“Uwaaa! Th-This is bad!”

“We’ve got to do something about these arrows first...Ch!”

As the Defense unit got busy dodging the arrows from the tanks, the enemy soldiers took this chance to begin removing the rubble. If this went on, the tanks and the enemy soldiers would enter the city. They tried to concentrate arrows and magic attacks on the tanks, but even when the tank received a direct hit from a magic attack, it didn’t even move. What was more, it returned the favor ten times over by concentrating fire from the mechanized bows in the area where the attack came from. This led to attacks from this side becoming less and less frequent, and didn’t even amount to diversions.

“This is bad...We have to drop the attack power of the tanks somehow.”

Suddenly, the tank just in front of the gate changed his target and began firing at something at the far end of the street, as if it had noticed something. When Elmerl and the rest looked over, they saw Kou sliding over to them from the other end of the street.

“Vuuouvuvuovuaau” *Elmerl-saaaann!*

“Kou! What happened to the defense of the Western Gate?”

Sliding through the rain of arrows that resulted from the concentrated fire, Kou joined up with Elmerl and explained to her that the situation at the Western Gate had been mostly resolved, so he had been come back to help them.

“Vuououo?” *The wall looks a bit broken, you know?*

“Ahh, we’re in a bit of trouble here...It looks like you’re unaffected by the arrows. Can’t you silence that thing over there?”

“Vuoua?” *I just have to break it?*

“Well, if the tank stops moving, we’ll be out of immediate danger.”

Nodding, Kou confirmed that he was standing in a position where his allies would not get caught up in the fire before taking out the internal-combustion magic weapon from the dimensional storage. And then, aiming at the the two tanks and the enemy troops clearing the rubble around them, he pulled the trigger.

In answer to the tanks’ incessant firing, Kou began to return the favour a hundred times over with a loud whine by raining bullets on them. As the bullets impacted they let out smoke and sparks. They merely bounced off the armor of the tanks, but just the huge amount of bullets being fired was enough to get the Na’Hatome forces to prepare to flee.

The soldiers clearing the rubble all decided that this was too much and retreated behind the fallen wall and hid themselves in the shadow of the tank.

Using the Magic Wheel, Kou immediately accelerated after them, and putting the internal-combustion magic weapon that he had used just as a diversion in his dimensional storage, he took out the Magic Hammer that he had received as a parting gift from the Professor. The tank was damaged pretty easily if you tore off its armor and hit it. If that was the case, then he could just use this Magic Hammer to break apart the tank along with it’s armor.

First of all, he would aim for the gear shaped wheels on the side of the tank to stop it in its tracks. Aiming for those wheels, Kou raised the hammer high, and then swinging it downwards he pressed the switch on the handle, igniting the internal-combustion engine attached to it. With a high pitched whistle-like sound, the head of the hammer was explosively propelled forwards and downwards from the explosive forces expelled out the back and buried itself into the side of the tank.

“The armor on the side has been broken through! Fore wheels damaged!”

“Shit! What is with that superhuman strength! Retreat at full speed!”

With its remaining wheels, the tank tried to retreat. Kou nimbly circled around it and raising the heavy hammer high above his head, dealt another blow to the tank. The rear armor became greatly warped, and the gear shaped wheel caught and stopped while making creaking noises.

“Tank No. 3 is down!”

“Rescue the crew and retrieve the tank body! We have to do something about that golem.”

The other tank retreated a bit and pointed its battering ram at Kou. As he was tearing off the mechanized bow off of the body of Tank No. 3, the tank accelerated towards him. *Hmm, how should I deal with this?* Kou pondered. Just before the tank made contact, he pulled the composite body into the dimensional storage.

Because the huge body of the golem had disappeared just as the battering ram had seemingly come into contact with it, the Na’Hatome forces thought that they had defeated it and began to cheer.



Elmerl had been staring wide eyed at the rampage Kou had been causing, and took this chance when the enemy forces were in disarray to reorganized her own forces. In the battle the other day, Kou had had disappeared after destroying the tank, only to turn up later. Elmerl knew that Kou was an immortal existence and was not worried.

“Retrieve the wounded and carry them to the rear! Ask Richello and the others to heal them! Gashe, you and your unit block that hole in the wall! The rest, remain alert near the gate!”

The front of the gate was conveniently blocked by the body of the destroyed tank, so Elmerl sent the Defense unit to the hole in the wall, and then turned her attention to the Na’Hatome forces who were coming to retrieve the body of the tank.

With a loud bang, the armor covering the roof of the tank flew off. It was the tank that had used the battering ram and then came to the rescue of the other tank. As both allies and enemies focused on it, wondering what had just happened, the rear door of the tank opened and the tank crew came all but tumbling out. From inside the tank, everyone could hear the sound of something banging, and the tank body continued

shaking for a while, after which the side armor of the tank flew off and an arm could be seen sticking out.

What the hell is that!? Is what both allies and enemies unanimously thought at this sight. The next instant, “that” golem tore through the roof of the tank, surprising the Na’Hatome forces and causing the Adventurers and the city guard to rejoice.

Kou had passed through the tank in his spirit body as it had charged at it, and getting inside the body of the tank, he had deployed the composite body and possessed it. He had gone on rampage from inside the tank. You almost felt sorry for the tank crew that had a golem suddenly appear inside their tank and began rampaging.

Having lost their tanks, and so their main attack power, the Ha’Hatome forces were starting to get pushed back. Just then, a message was brought by a messenger from the western gate.

“Reinforcements from Curacall have arrived!”



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