

Summoned Slaughterer

Arc 15: In the world the seeds of the war are
exhausted

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Chapter 154 – Desert Rose

At the time when they left the chaotic castle, Hifumi, Origa and Viine weren't questioned by anyone, or rather, they weren't seen by anyone.

Horant's soldiers of both factions, who fainted due to the stench, are carried out by Orsongrande's soldiers. There aren't any casualties, but there's a great number of those who have nightmares.

Orsongrande's raid party, which is scattered about outside the castle, is retrieved and the fainted soldiers of Fokalore are carried out from the second floor as well.

Having said that, Hifumi's group, which jumped down from the third floor into the disorder outside, started to leisurely walk towards the castle town.

The city's people are coming back from the previous evacuation, and the servants are heading to the castle in groups, too.

Reopening the stalls as early as possible, there also were resolute merchants who have started calling out to potential customers.

“Shall we go buy some suitable food?” (Hifumi)

“Yes, let's do that.” (Origa)

“Master!” (Viine)

Viine rushes over to Hifumi who walks while leading Origa.

Viine, who runs with her rabbit ear and breasts wobbling, gathered the attention down-town due to the people there encountering a rare beastman with a well-featured face and figure.

“I have passed on the verbal message for Alyssa-sama to a soldier-san of Fokalore.” (Viine)

“Okay, good work.” (Hifumi)

No more than a brief comment. Those were short words of gratitude, but Viine was happy even with this small communication. What she wished for is here.

“Thanks to my husband's kindness, it has been decided that you will be

granted the position of a minister's secretary in Fokalore. Please do your best, okay?" (Origa)

Viine has a troubled expression toward the words she was told by Origa.

"Umm... **secretary**, what's that?" (Viine)

"So I have to start from there..." (Origa)

The position of minister's secretary, which was given to Viine, was a post Hifumi created moments ago. It sounds as if it's quite the title, but in short it's no more than her being entrusted with odd jobs, which were done by Origa and Caim, while being in a position of working as exclusive assistant of Hifumi. However, for Viine it's essential to be able to work close to Hifumi. Something like the details of the job comes second.

"Thank you very much, master! I will work hard at it!" (Viine)

"Well, it will be fine if you handle it properly." (Hifumi)

When Hifumi is pondering *Shall I take some horses from the camp for Fokalore's soldiers?*, a sole little girl approaches.

"Hifumi-sama, I looked for you."

The girl, who wore the clothes of a servant, bows elegantly and looks straight into Hifumi's eyes.

"Who are you?" (Hifumi)

"I have the privilege of serving in the castle. I'm called Levi. I'm one of the servants who has been in charge of Tannin-sama's care." (Levi)

"I see. So...? I wonder whether you can have me hear an agreeable reason for having approached me while scattering an irritating level of blood thirst." (Hifumi)

Hifumi's surrounding, which confronts her, becomes freezing and the air turns heavy.

Origa, who is used to such situations, is calm, no, grasping the iron-ribbed fan, she is clad in the same air as Hifumi.

Viine made sure to not become a hindrance for Hifumi and Origa by taking some distance.

“W-What are you talking about? Being requested to pass a verbal message to you, Hifumi-sama, from Tannin-sama, I just came to...” (Levi)

“Humph... do the maids in this place hide a dagger inside their apron while coming to give a verbal message?” (Hifumi)

Before Hifumi finishes his question, Levi took out a knife from the chest part of her apron.

“Yaaa!” (Levi)

The dagger’s point, which was pushed out alongside her yell to encourage herself, could be called fast for her slender arms, but even so it falls short of injuring Hifumi.

Hifumi, who seized Levi’s small right hand as if wrapping it up, restrained the bottom of her neck with his left hand while averting the dagger’s point to the side.

Using the force of the pushed out hand just like that, he casually pulls her right hand.

“Gyaaaaaaah!” (Levi)

Hifumi coldly lowered his eyes at Levi who tosses herself about in great pain while raising a scream that doesn’t befit her adorable appearance.

“W-What did you do?” (Viine)

Viine, who approached timidly, had a pale expression.

“I only dislocated her shoulder a bit.” (Hifumi)

“There are no suspicious people in the vicinity. It seems she acted by herself, Hifumi-sama.” (Origa)

He answers Origa’s report with 「I guessed so」. She was far too ill-prepared for an assassin considering those do it systematically.

“Shut up!” (Hifumi)

He grabs the neck of the suffering and agonizing Levi.

“Just answer one thing. What’s the purpose of you having tried to kill me?” (Hifumi)

Due to Hifumi's question, Levi tries to no match his line of sight while revealing her tears.

"Then, were you asked by Tannin whose name came up earlier?" (Hifumi)

"Rig-..." (Levi)

Levi started to say something, but the hand, which grasps her neck, was filled with strength before she spoke the words.

"Origa, Viine, sorry, but please investigate who this Tannin guy is and where he is. I will be in the restaurant over there." (Hifumi)

"Understood." (Origa)

"Ah, don't ask the surroundings of Nelgal or Imeraria. It's obvious that it will become troublesome." (Hifumi)



Imeraria, who recovered the next day, woke up in the high-class inn which was prepared by Nelgal, and sat up on top of the bed.

"Your Majesty! Is your body alright?"

The attending maid rushed over to Imeraria and called out to her uneasily.

"Yes, I'm okay. ... Though I'd like to bath in hot water." (Imeraria)

"I will have it prepared right away. And, is it alright for me to contact Sabnak-sama? Since he was very worried..."

"Yes. I ended up having caused him to worry as well. Is it currently still noon?" (Imeraria)

"It will become noon after around one more hour, Your Majesty."

Throwing off the thin dressing gown, Imeraria was depressed thinking *I showed disgraceful behaviour once more* while changing into a robe for taking a bath.

"Then, please call Sabnak-san, Vaiya-san, Puuse-san and Alyssa-san. I want to have lunch together with them." (Imeraria)

"As you wish."



“Though I believe your physical condition to no be perfect yet...”

“Your worry is unnecessary. Rather than that, I was able to look over this document, but... is that alright?” (Imeraria)

After the luncheon, Imeraria, who received a written invitation from Nelgal, checked the letter which was delivered in addition, and visited the castle in a hurry after being surprised about its details.

“By no means do I want to believe that you have proposed a treaty which is disadvantageous for yourself.” (Imeraria)

Nelgal showed a smile at Imeraria who played the fool with “It seems my head feels dizzy.”

“It means that we got this much assistance from you. Besides, it doesn’t mean that there’s no profit for our side.” (Nelgal)

The contents of the draft created by Nelgal firmly promised the lending of magic tools from Horant for cheap and that neither side will try to claim reparation from either side regarding the damages to both countries. Moreover, the time limit and the upper limit of the quantity is intended to continue for the period of Imeraria’s reign.

“Everything is for the sake of preserving a connection with your country and to avoid being doubted unnecessarily. Besides, the magic tools, which have been developed by us, well, how to say it, are like that, but since we have progressed quite a bit thanks to Hifumi-san, they also serve as thanks for having received your help this time.” (Nelgal)

“It’s shrewd, I guess”, Nelgal winks.
Having been worried whether he is fearing that it would cause domestic fights due to those circumstances, Imeraria was relieved.

“Then I will gladly accept concluding a treaty in this shape.” (Imeraria)

“Thank you very much. Let us create a written contract right away.” (Nelgal)

Nelgal, who called a civil official and ordered them to make a clean copy of the draft, began to completely stabilize as a king.

“Honestly, it was a great disaster. It’s regrettable that many lives ended up lost, but... I have nothing more impressive to my record than getting crowned. I was able to obtain the achievement of suppressing the domestic disturbances at the same time...” (Nelgal)

“It has been decided that Kuzemu will be accused of the crime of having sent soldiers against the king though it’s post-mortem. The rebels, including their families, and their relatives are scheduled to be punished severely”, Nelgal explained.

Also, the people who followed Kuzemu, except those who committed crimes against parts of the citizens, would be given back their former posts after being acquitted.

“The ones who suffered the most troubles are the servants working in the castle. The oil doesn’t come off easily. The stench hasn’t disappeared yet either. I decided to lockout the first floor, except for the stairs, for a while.” (Nelgal)

“It’s something you have to properly reward them for. The matter of wages is important, but I believe it’s indispensable to acknowledge their value after examining them accurately.” (Imeraria)

“I shall engrave it into my heart. Please treat me well from now on as well by offering me various guidance and encouragement.” (Nelgal)

“Yes. Please resolve yourself for it.” (Imeraria)

Due to Nelgal requesting it earnestly with exaggerated gestures, Imeraria takes a posture of acting self-important like a noble’s daughter.

After a short while they burst into laughter as they couldn’t endure it any longer.

A single maid rushed into the room which was filled with a harmonious mood.

“Your Majesty!”

“How noisy. Did something happen?” (Nelgal)

The out-of-breath maid held her chest and handed a memo to Nelgal.

“... I see. Got it. Call one of the soldiers and tell them to get the person in charge to this place.” (Nelgal)

Seeing off the maid who once again leaves with a quick pace, Imeraria asks Nelgal,

“Did something happen?” (Imeraria)

“A civil war in Vichy... no, Pearsan went independent. It seems battle broke out between Vichy and Pearsan.” (Nelgal)

Imeraria tilted her head to the side due to Nelgal’s words.

“Isn’t the scale completely different? I can’t believe that a small country with around one independent provincial city is able to win against a city alliance state, but... what is the head of Pearsan thinking?” (Imeraria)

“I don’t know. But there’s one thing I do know. Apparently Pearsan obtained some powerful weapon.” (Nelgal)

In the report was written that Pearsan is encroaching upon Vichy with overwhelming military might.



“I guess I will last for a while with this. Shall I hide in father’s territory for the time being...?” (Tannin)

Tannin, who finished the preparations, ties a horse to the carriage loaded with the baggage.

“You are Tannin, aren’t you?”

“Who’s there?” (Tannin)

The one who called out to him was Hifumi who shouldered Levi’s body.

“You, huh...? In addition, Levi, is it?” (Tannin)

“This one?” (Hifumi)

“Uwaah!” (Tannin)

Having Levi’s body thrown at him by Hifumi, Tannin collapsed together with her small body while holding her.

Due to Levi not moving with a twitch even when receiving such treatment, Tannin’s face pales rapidly.

“Mentioning your name, she turned a dagger against me. What’s that about?”
(Hifumi)

While indifferently looking down on them, Hifumi hits the ground with a steel staff he took out unnoticed.

“I-I don’t know! I haven’t ordered her anything!” (Tannin)

“Hmm?” (Hifumi)

He pressed the staff’s end against Tannin’s throat.

“You haven’t given her any order, huh? This one told me that **you can return to the castle once I disappear**. Even if you haven’t ordered her, it can be interpreted as you hinting her towards it, but...” (Hifumi)

“It’s different! That’s probably something that fellow did selfishly!” (Tannin)

Tearing off Levi’s body from atop Tannin, who frantically denied ((the accusation)), she turned over with her facing upwards.

“This woman has only lost her consciousness, but... if what you say is true, I have to make her suffer the consequences of having attacked me.” (Hifumi)

A heavy sound reverberates.

Hifumi struck Levi’s abdomen with the staff he holds.

“Ha, haha... I-I-If you understood the truth, it’s probably alright by now! Please go back!” (Tannin)

“What’s so funny? This one was your woman, wasn’t she?” (Hifumi)

“Humph, there are as many women as I want.” (Tannin)

Did his waist give in? Tannin doesn’t even try to stand up.

“That one is also one amongst many. What did she misunderstand? Intruding into my mansion, she even killed my servant. She’s insane.” (Tannin)

Tanning laughs with a “Hehe” as if he went mad.

“I just called out to her because she obediently believed what I told her and because she had a slightly cute face, but she was an unthinkably messed up woman. If you kill her in my stead, I will be thankful to you in reverse!” (Tannin)

A bluff to gloss over his fear? Tannin's words are smoother than at the time when he seduces a woman.

"... You, it seems you were the general in the battle some time ago, but are you unable to differentiate whether a person dies or not?" (Hifumi)

"I feel completely disappointed", Hifumi shakes his head.

"What do you think, Levi?" (Hifumi)

"... Ue?"

Once Tannin shifted his attention to Levi who has collapsed while facing upward, her eyes were completely open. While turning her head this way, only her eyes face him with a stinging glare.

"Tannin-sama... why...?" (Levi)

"Hasn't he told me something like to **kill** this person?" (Hifumi)

Hifumi smirks.

The fainted Levi woke up from being stabbed in the abdomen by Hifumi. And then she heard Tannin's real feelings.

"S-Such a..." (Tannin)

"Tannin-sama." (Levi)

Standing up slowly, Levi gently grasps the part of her apron below her chest. She ascertains the sensation of the knife being there.

Holding the knife which she took out quietly, she approaches Tannin who is still sitting.

"T-This is different! I never doubted your feelings, but this is, with words I was induced to say by this situation, it's the truth that I I-I-love you!" (Tannin)

"Thank you very much." (Levi)

Levi smiles sweetly.

"Your army was defeated, Tannin-sama. The surroundings of the castle are constantly filled with Orsongrande's soldiers and the soldiers of Horant are made to work like slaves. That's not a place where you belong anymore, Tannin-sama..." (Levi)

This contains substantial misunderstandings, but Hifumi doesn't correct her.

“Even if it's one sword strike against Hifumi-sama is what I thought, but I ended up failing. Therefore, your last moment ((will be)) together with me here...” (Levi)

Grasping the knife, Levi raises her arm slowly overhead.

“P-Please stop!” (Tannin)

Tannin, who is in a state where he can't retreat properly due to his knees trembling, couldn't avert his look from from the blade's edge reflecting the sun's light.

“I shall follow after you right away. Resolve yourself.” (Levi)

“Hifumi-dono! Please save me! I will do anything!” (Tannin)

Ignoring his appeal, Hifumi tosses the staff into his darkness storage.

“Sav-...” (Tannin)

The knife pierces into his left eye which is shedding tears.

The thin blade, which slipped in fully until the root, had apparently a sufficient length to steal his life.

Tannin, who fell down with a dull sound, had properly died even after getting assessed by Hifumi.

“... Then.” (Levi)

Levi, who grabbed the knife and extracted it together with the eyeball, turned around and fiercely rushed towards Hifumi.

“Aaaaaaaaah!” (Levi)

Despite howling as if she had gone crazy, the unleashed knife with the eyeball attached never reached Hifumi.

The one attack by drawing his katana and attacking in the same stroke released from Hifumi's waist is too quick.

“Regrettable. If you hid your blood thirst a little better, you might have come a bit closer.” (Hifumi)

Her slender waist was cut in two.

The lower half of her body collapsed on the spot.

The upper half is still alive.

“Tannin...-sa...ma...” (Levi)

She heads towards Tannin's corpse while dragging herself with just her arms and pulling along her guts.

“Togeth...er...” (Levi)

Levi's hand gently brushes Tannin's cheek.

Releasing a satisfied smile, Levi's life came to an end.

Chapter 155 – Soldier

Although there were some people coming and going for business and politics after Pyursang became independent from Vichy, it dropped sharply in comparison to the time when they were the same nation.

There was export of goods such as salt and a part of the processed marine products, but the scale wasn't that large because of the distance to other countries besides Vichy.

Because there's almost no people coming for sightseeing to begin with except for a part of the nobility, merchants not coming means basically people not coming.

Hence the unusual phenomenon inside Pyursang wasn't noticed until its influence spread to outside the country.



The messenger, who received a magic tool from the person who called himself a spy of the messenger's country, looked through the documents which had the way how to use it written in it along the way back home.

Originally it's logical to hand it to Minoson who's the country's leader and the one in charge, but judging it as extremely unlikely for himself being able to explain why he went to the capital of Orsongrande, the messenger intends to sell this magic tool as "item gifted by Fokalore at the end of the negotiations" and thus thought that he should know about what kind of item it is in order to explain it.

Even while feeling uneasy due to piling up lies for the sake of deception, there was apparently no other way but to do it like this.

"This is... there is such a thing..."

The effect of the magic tool explained in the documents was enough to make him tremble in fear. And, it was overflowing with a charm making him hold onto ambitions that are beyond his abilities. Moreover the circumstances were in order.

"You are doing something unusual."

“That’s not how it is. I had you come along with me this far. I will do at least this much.”

Along the way, with the distance between cities being far, there are several places where they have to sleep outdoors no matter what. Accordingly the messenger took over the preparation of the soup which is one of the dishes. Usually it was something the soldiers would do, but at that time he explained it with 「It’s my way of thanking and rewarding you」.

And then, while the soldiers are sleeping like logs after they drank the soup with sleeping medication in it, he prepares the magic tool. Even the sleeping pills were explained in the documents as “for the sake of medical treatment during sleep.”

Stripping off the tunic of one man first, he smeared his own blood on the soldier’s chest while feeling jealous about its trained condition which is different from his own skinny self, and then put the small magic tool against the soldier’s chest.

While the magic tool buried itself towards the heart with a *zubo zubo*, the soldier didn’t stir even once. A few seconds after the magic tool embedded itself completely,

“Uwah!”

Due to the soldier suddenly rising his body, the messenger fell on his backside while screaming.

The soldier, who breathes roughly while his body is convulsing all over, has his muscles swell gradually from head to foot, and, after he literally grew to twice his size, he shrinks back to the size close to his original figure.

What remained was the figure of a robust reinforced soldiers who was clad in muscles which were stiff like a rock.

“A-Amazing...”

Once the messenger orders the soldier, who is sitting absent-mindedly with blank eyes, 「Stand up」, the soldier gets up swiftly, and straightens up his back while extending both hands.

The excited messenger embeds magic tools into the sleeping soldiers one after the other.

“If I have this, I’m...”



The messenger, who brought back home the soldiers who turned into puppets, approached the sovereign Minoson pretending to make his report, and forcibly embedded the magic tool by using his reinforced soldiers. Ordering Minoson, who became the yes-man of the messenger, he made him write his own abdication declaration after setting himself as the heir, had him hand it over to a doubtful close aide, and had him make an official announcement to the people.

The male messenger, who became the king, remodelled the soldiers into reinforced soldiers successively, and moreover succeeded in creating 10 giant soldiers as well.

If there was someone who criticized or opposed him, he executed them without hesitation. As the reinforced soldiers, who don’t know fatigue, were able to serve as constant guards, they guaranteed the safety of his body.

Reorganizing the army, he remodels the low-ranking soldiers into reinforced soldiers, sets himself as sole commander and dismisses all the other commanders. Those, who were unhappy with it, were killed after finding a suitable reason for doing it.

“Isn’t this amazing? People, who possess power, can feel this good?”

The mouth of the former messenger, who was drunk on sake as he sat on top of the throne he got used to, got slack.

“I wonder whether Earl Tohno, who walks merrily in Fokalore’s territory or such, feels like this as well? No, no, that person is satisfied being the feudal lord of a single area in the end. ...After all that means that he has no more than the strength of an individual?”

Pyursang’s king raised his voice unable to stop the laughter welling up from the bottom of his abdomen as he wondered why the hell he was so afraid of Earl Tohno.

“That’s right. My soldiers aren’t an army of mere humans anymore. Vichy’s central committee members seem to be excessively scared of Earl Tohno, but in the end he has the strength of one individual. Isn’t he a mere human that tries

to be a soldier!?”

Standing up from the throne, the king does a strange dance with his drunken feet.

“There’s no need to finish with being the king of such small country! Orsongrande depends on Earl Tohno. Horant has been ruined due to the fight with Orsongrande...”

He held down his voice as he felt nausea, but he changed his mind with “there’s nothing I have to be shy of.” Summoning a maid, he vomited into the washbasin, he had her hold, with all his might.

Rinsing his sticky mouth with sake, he vomits once again.

“Let’s take Vichy for starters. And, crushing Orsongrande’s Fokalore, it will be great to make that queen, whom I will see soon, into my possession...”

Pointing at the reinforced soldiers lining up in the corner of the room, he raised a yell mixed with saliva.

“Reinforced soldiers! Using you guys, I will seize the world! First we will attack Vichy! Assault the villages and cities nearby, and show them your strength!”

Without replying, the soldiers leave the room in groups according to the king’s decree. The king’s words continued in their back.

“Convey it to the other reinforced soldiers and giant soldiers as well! It’s fine for you to steal supplies locally on site! Kill them without minding their appearance! Kill all of them, those who resist and those who don’t!”

Hearing those words, the reinforced soldiers suddenly stopped moving.

“What’s wrong? Do it quickly!”

The reinforced soldiers were faithful to orders. Drawing their swords, they started by slaying a nearby maid without minding her appearance and then killed every single person who was inside the room. Of course the soldiers also get close to the king.

“W-What is it? What’s wrong?”

If he wasn’t dead drunk, he might have been able to utter the single word 「Stop」.

However, with the maids who have been suddenly killed in front of his eyes, the drunken, foolish king was unable to do anything but being panicked.

“Ah.”

A short scream. Those were the last words of the king.

Without looking at the fallen corpse of the king, the reinforced soldiers leave the room.

“... All of the reinforced soldiers. The giant soldiers as well.”

“Kill everyone. Steal food.”

They mutter the orders of the king severally. Their thinking is concentrating on accomplishing their instructions, but their movements aren't dull at all.

Devilish cut-throats who were released by careless words.

They massacred the people inside the building within the blink of an eye, conveyed the orders to their colleagues who were on standby, and released the giant soldiers within their cages by killing their guards.

Pulling the chains which are controlling the giant soldiers, the reinforced soldiers scatter into the city.

The city gets almost completely destroyed by 200 reinforced soldiers. Chasing those who ran away, they further spread out in order to scatter in all directions outside the country.



Like this, a calamity spread into Vichy alongside the downfall of the small country called Pyursang.

There's no one left who remembers that a former messenger was the cause for all this. Although he became a phantom king, there's generally no doubt that he was a foolish king, who took along extremely many lives with him, in this world.

Escaping the attacks of the reinforced soldiers, the people, who somehow got away, informed Vichy about those news as well, but extreme damage spread until a report, which has authenticity causing the central committee to get its heavy body moving, came in.

And finally from there on the information was circulated to Orsongrande and Horant as well.



Hifumi, who took several soldiers for the sake of steering a platform wagon from Fokalore's army, sat in front of Origa and Viine on top of the shaking load-carrying platform.

"Nevertheless, it was wonderful swordsmanship. As expected of Hifumi-sama." (Origa)

Next to Origa who is piling up one word of praise after the other towards Hifumi, Viine agreed while making her head go up and down like a toy. Her sole rabbit ear above her head is swaying while being one beat late in comparison to her head.

However, Hifumi discarded it completely with 「Such stuff doesn't matter at all」.

"The part you should pay attention to isn't that." (Hifumi)

First he tells them to remember the time when they were attacked by Levi. And then Hifumi says that they have to think about the problematic issue Levi did there.

"Umm... her holding a weapon was easy to understand, is it about that?" (Viine)

"Greeting and then being unprepared at the time of the attack is the problem, isn't it?" (Origa)

Hifumi nodded and said "there's that as well" towards their answers.

"You should consider the difference in reach between me and Levi, too, you know? If she reduced the distance to a range more favourable for a dagger or if she made sure that I can't use a weapon by slashing my arm, she could have fought me directly for a bit longer." (Hifumi)

Even so, since there existed a fundamental difference in technique and physical strength, it was hopeless either way.

"Besides, if one thinks **I will kill you, I will kill you** with all their might, the hostility can be immediately read by the opponent." (Hifumi)

The only capable of such thing is you, the attending soldiers of Fokalore thought simultaneously the same thing, but of course they didn't voice it out.

"It's that. If you always think about killing people, the air around you will

stagnate and the expression of your eyes will become weird as well.” (Hifumi)

Due to his statement which seems to be completely blind to his own shortcomings, Viine was dumbfounded, but Origa nodded obediently.

“There’s no need to ponder about things that seriously while killing people. Of course it’s indispensable to prepare and refine your techniques in order to be capable of killing, but it’s unnecessary to mind it too much.” (Hifumi)

Taking out a flask, he gulps down a mouthful of the water inside.

“Drink water if you are thirsty and have a meal if you become hungry. Sleep when you become sleepy. Sign documents when necessary... it’s the same as that. Kill since you want to kill. Kill since it’s no good if you don’t kill.” (Hifumi)

“What’s necessary isn’t fighting spirit or resolution”, Hifumi says.

“Umm... master, what will happen if I kill? Don’t you think about such things as well?” (Viine)

Hifumi returned a smile due to Viine’s question.

“I’m not really a homicidal maniac? Not considering the consequences while killing is the deed of a mere fool. Having the necessity to kill, it’s only natural to accept the outcome from that, I think.” (Hifumi)

“T-Then, the readiness to accept that outcome is...” (Viine)

Hifumi lightly puts his hand in Viine’s direction.

“Why are you living while being so nervous?” (Hifumi)

“What an odd fellow”, Hifumi smiles and the soldiers’ faces are filled with tension.

“You don’t know when you will have a meal, right? There are still three days remaining until the next salary. It’s the same with the hesitation whether to eat a meal at a cart for 5 copper coins or at the dining hall for 20 copper coins at the time when you can’t use more than 30 copper coins. if you choose to eat in the dining hall, it will be wrong if you don’t decrease the number of meals for the remaining two days. How many hours will you be troubled because of that?” (Hifumi)

Origa answers 「It's just as you say, Hifumi-sama」 while smiling. Viine answered that she agreed even while being confused. The soldiers send pitying looks towards Viine.

“If you think that you should kill, then kill. It's necessary to think about the result of that, but there's no need to hold back regarding the matter of killing itself. It's no more than a means. ... In that sense, Imeraria might be ((ready)) soon as well.” (Hifumi)

Drawing the katana in order to maintain it, Hifumi muttered delightfully while lining up the tools.

“What about Her Majesty the Queen?” (Origa)

Even while her face is smiling, Origa's eyes aren't.

“That person will probably soon reach the stage where she can prepare by pondering “how to kill him?” since she has no other goal but killing me. She has felt the atmosphere of battle, and furthermore she even experienced herself giving the order to kill others on-site. Her emotional, evasive sense against killing has faded, and she has reached the point where she can consider murder as one of the possible means.” (Hifumi)

Viine is captivated by the complex structure of the katana, but Origa looked seriously at Hifumi.

“Her feeling of wanting to remove me, to kill me, probably isn't weird. But it's about removing me more calmly. She is able to think about the consequences of that. In that case, her thinking will likely revolve about a method to kill me with a further cooled down brain in reverse.” (Hifumi)

Confirming the condition of the tang, he carefully wipes it.

“Hifumi-sama...” (Origa)

Origa started to say something but stopped. Hifumi doesn't ask Origa either.

“This part is beautiful, master.” (Viine)

“Ah, it's called guard and is originally for the sake of protecting the hand. I have an obsession regarding this. The design is simple for the sake of strength.

With the holes being as small as possible as well, it's to make sure that the point of of a sword never enters." (Hifumi)

The guard, which was presented by holding it aloft in front of Viine, had six tiny, open holes in the vicinity of the hole for the sword blade to go through. The character of "一" has been carved into the open space, but Viine can't see it as anything but a simple horizontal line having been drawn. (T/N: *The character means "hitotsu" (one/single) and is also part of Hifumi's name (一 二 三))*)

"I don't know its value, but... I see that it was created thoroughly." (Viine)

"Isn't that fine then? If you think that it's nice by the scope of what you know, that means it has value for you. If I consider that it received praise with such meaning, I'm happy as well." (Hifumi)

"Fufu", while spilling a laughter, he spreads oil on the wiped blade.

"Shall we create a new weapon while listening to the news about the battle after we return to Fokalore? I wonder what happened to Vichy. There's probably no way that they were crushed in the blink of an eye, but I'm looking forward... no, no, after I meddled with that Horant, having too much expectations is rash, isn't it?" (Hifumi)

After he finished maintenance, Hifumi tossed the katana into his storage and lied down.

"Let's look forward to it just a bit. Origa, I leave the assistance to you once we return to Fokalore, though it will increase your troubles. Since it's obvious that Caim will push the work on us anyway." (Hifumi)

"I don't consider it to be trouble." (Origa)

Quietly approaching Hifumi who is facing upwards, Origa gave him a kiss.

"I'm your wife, Hifumi-sama. Until the day we perish together... no, even after we perished, my soul will be together with you, dear." (Origa)

"I see." (Hifumi)

Origa moves quietly and places the head of Hifumi, who replied her briefly, on her lap.

Viine, who intently glanced at their exchange while blushing, gently mutters 「I'm jealous」.

Origa, who heard that, revealed a composed smile and wasn't able to say 「Me too」 until the end while Viine moves her lips with a *monyu monyu* having an expression mixed with jealousy and embarrassment.

Chapter 156 – Stop and Stare

Orsongrande and Horant decided to not directly interfere in Vichy's disturbances.

With this being a declaration that they won't support either Vichy's nor Pyursang's side, both countries stopped at just fortifying their border's defence. In the case of an outbreak of refugees, they wanted to give permission for entering their countries based upon the refugee's recorded social status. It's a measure they adopted because of the reports, stating that it's likely a small scale war according to the situation, that reached both countries' central governments. If they had more detailed reports regarding the turmoil in Pyursang, they might have gone to reinforce Vichy. Of course that doesn't mean they looked at it lightly, but because they closely observed the movements of Hifumi, whose territory is adjacent to Vichy, while feeling rather tense, they never became aware of the truth. That is, with the exception of Fokalore's administration.

“A rampage by Pyursang's soldiers, it is?” (Caim)

Reviewing the report from a soldier of Fokalore who has gathered intelligence about Vichy's area, Caim returned his look to the assembled civil officials in the room without moving a single eyebrow.

“It's related to the war between Vichy and Pyursang, but it seems the current situation is such that Pyursang's soldiers have scattered and are attacking the surrounding cities. They are carrying out massacres that can't be called battles at all. That's what the report states.” (Caim)

“Vichy's side has soldiers as well, don't they? What are those guys doing?” (Doelgar)

Upon Doelgar's question, Caim lowers his sight on the report once again.

“It looks like they have been defeated all together by Pyursang's soldiers. At present they are apparently evacuating the people from the villages and cities close to Pyursang.” (Caim)

“They are that strong?” (Miyukare)

Everyone else had the same opinion upon Miyukare’s question. Especially from the point of view of Miyukare who has campaign experience, it was unbelievable for the defending side to be torn apart by soldiers, who don’t work together in units and whose numbers are insufficient, unless there’s quite the difference in ability.

“We still don’t have precise information, but it appears that they are mostly operating like night burglars. They attack at random while travelling without caring whether it’s night or day.” (Caim)

“Even though Pyursang is small, I thought that the person who became king is relatively capable of negotiations, but... The people from the delegation were ordinary people, too.” (Brokra)

Brokra says while remembering the envoys who visited Fokalore. It didn’t seem like a government that will do such reckless acts at all, was Brokra’s impression.

“It seems that merchants, who are sensitive to information, are beginning to evacuate. It’s hopeless for them to survive if their goods and tools are stolen. Their reaction towards new information is quick. Being lured by that, refugees from the ordinary citizens will likely appear as well.” (Caim)

“What about Pyursang?” (Doelgar)

“They aren’t doing anything in particular. No, they can’t do anything.” (Caim)

Putting down the report, Caim fixed his eyes on the asking Doelgar. Even while being aware that Caim doesn’t particularly blame him, Doelgar feels some discomfort from being directly stared at with an expressionless face. *It resembles the strange inability to calm down when I was seriously asked a question by the teacher of my studying place in my childhood*, his thoughts went gradually astray.

“We should be able to deal with them if they come attacking our side, but with Lord-sama currently absent, we can’t move the soldiers as we please. Even if we do, that’s probably something for when Lord-sama has returned.” (Caim)

“Caim-san.” (Paryu)

Paryu takes a short pause to confirm that Caim's line of sight turned towards herself.

"If there's a possibility of people escaping, we should gather information, confirm and examine it, and have all soldiers cooperate. It's wrong if we don't prepare for accepting the refugees." (Paryu)

Everyone agrees with the opinion of Paryu who is the youngest.

"Then, I will leave the assignment of personnel to you, Miyukare and Paryu." (Caim)

"Sure. There's still leeway as for the personnel. We have to also increase the number of guards and defenders." (Miyukare)

"No, please let the soldiers rest as much as possible." (Caim)

Because of the unusual word "rest" appearing from Caim's mouth, everyone turned silent due to being startled.

Are they unhappy with it? Caim slowly looked at everyone.

"The news about the turmoil have already been sent to Lord-sama. It's obvious that he will come back flying and poke his nose in Vichy's affairs while leading soldiers again. There's no way that we can send the soldiers, who only returned, to Vichy just like that, right? The currently stationed unit will handle the battle in Vichy's area. If we don't have them rest for now, unnecessary losses will appear among them." (Caim)

There wasn't a single objection.



Even Vichy's central committee wasn't able to grasp precise information regarding the rampage of Pyursang's soldiers.

Although the damage is spreading slowly, it's not like they are moving in a large unit. On top of increasing the damage while moving in small groups, their own troops just get defeated systematically as it's said the the enemy 「Attacks without even minding being injured」. Nothing but such unbelievable details are being reported.

"What are we going to do!? What is Pyursang thinking!?"

The members of the central committee lose their temper as they can do nothing but confirm that neither of them possesses any relevant information even after meeting up.

“Let alone a declaration of war, there’s no contact from their side at all. In addition, they don’t even try to rule the cities and villages but just destroy them utterly...”

“Just like the act of madmen. It’s not only Minoson either. I can’t think anything but the entire lot from Pyursang having gone mad.”

The severally mentioned accusations towards Pyursang vanish without anyone being able to react.

What’s left is just a feeling of powerlessness.

“It’s already a situation that can’t be dealt with by the various cities themselves. For the sake of not spreading the damage, we should entrap the enemy by concentrating our country’s military strength just like before.”

“Yes, it’s probably plenty to leave a minimum of troops to deal with Horant’s and Orsongrande’s side on this occasion.”

“We have sent a lot of personnel to Fokalore for training purposes. Training units from Fokalore have also come to our cities. There’s no way that Orsongrande’s side will come attacking in such situation.”

At the moment they decided a rough plan, they selfishly established a city, which hadn’t sent a committee member, as line of defence and one-sidedly announced a recommendation for evacuation. At the same time they decided to gather the military forces from within the country.

There was a lot of criticism towards that manner of handling things especially from the cities close to Pyursang. But, being threatened with 「Then we will just abandon you」, they weren’t able to oppose the decision either.

With this, the turmoil will finish and the just newly established country named Pyursang will have its short lifetime come to an end, everyone in Vichy believed.



Five days later, at the time when half of the entire forces had been assembled from the neighbouring cities, a report, which was delivered to the central

committee, plunged the city-state assembly called Vichy into the worst-possible crisis.

“W-We are being invaded!”

The members of the central committee had all gathered and greeted the soldier, who rushed into the council room, with cold stares.

“What are you saying at this point in time? We are in the middle of moving the army in order to hold back the invasion of that Pyursang, aren’t we?”

“No, it’s not from Pyursang’s direction! It’s from the opposite side!”

“What did you say!?”

A middle-aged committee member, who stood up with the force of knocking over his chair, shouted while succumbing to an agitation that made his face blush.

“Meaning Orsongrande is attacking!?”

The messenger denied those words by shaking his head.

“I-It’s demons... an army of demons came attacking in great numbers from the wastelands! It took me three days to get here, but it looks like they had taken up position on the other side of the national border when I left...”

“Demons, you say? Is that information correct?”

“I saw them with my very own eyes. Troops with grey skin lining up and a man on horse with blue skin, who’s likely the general, boldly standing in front of the army.”

After that it didn’t take much time for the committee to decide sending a request for reinforcements to Fokalore.



At the time he left the royal capital, the news of the war progress between Vichy and Pyursang as well as the stand-off of the demon’s army against Vichy reached Hifumi’s location.

Just reporting that he received instructions from Caim, the messenger from Fokalore hands over the written report and quickly leaves again. It’s in order to

convey Hifumi's current location to Caim.

"They finally came, huh?" (Hifumi)

"Aren't they slow", Hifumi muttered.

"The demons, you mean?" (Origa)

Receiving the written report from Hifumi, Origa scans through its contents. Stretching her neck at Origa's side, Viine took a peek as well.

"Come to think of it, I met with the demon's king called Vepar-san. When I was travelling with Puuse-san and the others, we ran into her in the wastelands. Just as woman, Vepar-san was a particularly beautiful person, but..." (Viine)

She frowns while lowering the edges of her mouth.

"Did something happen?"

"Apparently knowing about you, master, umm... she talked badly about you..." (Viine)

Recalling the degree of her frustration which made her wail at that time, large drops of tears accumulated in Viine's eyes.

"Vepar, huh? She properly became their king. Does her attack on Vichy mean that she was able to resolve herself to fight against me? Or did she deliberately choose Vichy while avoiding a direct clash with me...? At any rate, it will likely become more enjoyable than Horant." (Hifumi)

"Hifumi-sama, the ones called demons, how do they fight?" (Origa)

Origa, who heard Vepar's assessment of Hifumi from Viine, asks with a voice that contained her anger.

"Their strength lies in magic. It seems that there are many among them who possess unique abilities. There was a guy who could create strong barriers. And there was also another guy who could turn his voice into an attack." (Hifumi)

"It was fun!" Hifumi smiles.

"Their abilities and strength was splendid as well, but their main is magic, I guess. Which reminds me, there was also a guy who could use electric shocks, wasn't there?" (Hifumi)

“Electric shocks, you say?” (Origa)

Not understanding the words’ meaning, Viine looked at Origa, but Origa mentions that she doesn’t understand either.

“Ah... electricity. No, there’s lightning, right? It’s something like manipulating a small version of that phenomenon, I suppose.” (Hifumi)

“Lightning...”

After hearing Hifumi’s explanation, both looked at each other. For them, who can use similar magic, it was something they couldn’t imagine. Receiving such reactions, there was something Hifumi thought of for a bit, but as it couldn’t be helped even if he mentioned it here, he kept silent.

“I’m not very knowledgeable about magic, but as for its practical use and deployment speed in battle, the demons are the best, then the elves and at last the humans, I guess. I don’t know how much magic the beastmen can use, but aren’t they far below humans as it still hasn’t been long since they became able to use it at all?” (Hifumi)

“In any event, if the demons’ opponent is Vichy’s military, it’s very likely that they will be annihilated within a few days”, Hifumi predicted.

“That’s under the premise that they are intending to really attack Vichy though. Vichy’s chance of winning lies in the fact that they are the defending side and that the demons themselves aren’t accustomed to war. It depends on what Vepar is planning regarding that.” (Hifumi)

The demons, who were isolated from the other races for the extended period of several generations passing, have no combat experience besides fighting amongst themselves and subjugating monsters. Even the long battle against the elves is a talk from a distant past, and only remains in books and hearsay. Can they return? And how do they plan to move against the humans? Hifumi looked forward to this.

“If it were you, how would you handle it, Hifumi-sama?” (Origa)

Hifumi looked up to the sky upon Origa’s question.

“Let’s see... starting with battles in several steps, I would watch how the

humans' side reacts. And then I would have spies infiltrate while using the confusion." (Hifumi)

"Reconnaissance, it is?" (Origa)

"Something like the intelligence from just facing each other in battle is of no importance. The reserve forces, provisions, a route in case of retreat, and in reverse, places where it's possible for the enemy to circle around and stage an ambush; there are many such facts you won't know unless you are on **the other side.**" (Hifumi)

Hearing the reply to Origa's question, Viine understood why Reni, who received Hifumi's teaching, regarded information highly.

"It seems that demons can disguise as humans. After sending in some people into the humans' camp by having them disguise as the enemy's soldiers, they can recover them while having skirmishes once again. And then they can form counter-plans." (Hifumi)

"Since Vepar believes in cautiousness, she might possibly thinking like this", Hifumi evaluated.

"Then there's also the possibility that a spy will enter Fokalore as well, right?" (Origa)

"That's to be expected." (Hifumi)

There isn't even a shred of sensing impending danger as Hifumi nods lightly.

"Will we help Vichy then?" (Origa)

Accepting the explanation, Origa simplified it in her mind and judged that Vichy likely has no chance of winning. *In addition to them having to split their forces for the battle with Pyursang, one can't say that Vichy's military prowess raised that much even after sending in training units. Moreover, seeing that they are an assembly of city-states, there's no way that they have prepared a chain of command either.*

Even if it's not Fokalore, Vichy will probably lose unless they get powerful assistance from somewhere.

However, Hifumi denied that.

“No, we won’t help Vichy.” (Hifumi)

“... Then it’ll be the demons’ side?” (Viine)

Hifumi denied Viine’s timid question with a “it’s something else.”

“There’s no necessity to become an ally of either side, right? Let’s keep our thinking a bit more flexible.” (Hifumi)

Showing the left hand which was covered by the glove, he raises one finger for each.

“The demons, Pyursang and Vichy... currently those three powers are heading towards the battlefield. In that case...” (Hifumi)

He held up yet another finger.

“Even if a fourth power joins, it probably won’t matter.” (Hifumi)

While slowly swaying four fingers he laughs and says “it might be fun to take bets which side is going to win, you know?” Origa smiles and says 「In that case my bet on you, Hifumi-sama, won’t come true」.

Viine was troubled as she couldn’t follow the conversation since her knowledge about the human countries, Vichy and Pyursang, still wasn’t up to date.

Chapter 157 – Freedom

“It’s a boring mission, isn’t it?”

Straddling the special horse, which only lives in the settlement of the blue-skinned demons, and gazing at the humans’ military forces that can be seen on the other side of the wastelands, Bashim, who is the general of the demon’s army, pinned down and stroke his beard with a finger, he had licked, while venting his dissatisfaction.

The mission he was given is 「reconnaissance」 to the bitter end. He had been instructed to keep the combat to a minimum. Simply put, he is to fight for just a bit to confirm the humans’ way of fighting.

The result of this operation is an important move that decides whether they will aim for hostility or peaceful exchange, but even if he understands it with his head, his dissatisfaction only piles up as far as Bashim is concerned.

“At last we were finally liberated. Shouldn’t we let all races know about our existence by raising flashy war achievements?” (Bashim)

Due to the death of the former king, who was quite strong, a new king took the reins.

The details regarding that have been concealed. Excluding Vepar, who became the ruler, the majority of the personnel, who frequented the castle, including Vepar’s subordinates, has died or gone missing.

Even Bashim wasn’t informed of what happened in the castle as he wasn’t promoted into one of the opened posts. Among some of the rumours it’s even said that it had to do something with a joke-like powerful human, but Bashim hasn’t believed in that from the very beginning.

“The former king had the hobby of experimenting and researching magic. In that case it’s only natural to think that some kind of accident occurred during one of his experiments.” (Bashim)

It was said that the former king Agachion obtained an immortal body as result of his magic experiments. The fact that he died is also proof that the rumours weren’t true, I guess. However, there was no room to doubt his knowledge and

strength. At the very least it's correct that he was strong to a degree that made others think that he's immortal.

Bashim sensed something unnatural about Vepar's rise to power as well.

"Surely, her court rank might be high. But, even as the king's vessel, I can't believe that she's possessing that much strength." (Bashim)

For now I will obey, but it's not like I gave up on aiming for the top once I see a chance. Now that Agachion, who was the king, and his powerful subordinates Beleto and Phegor were eradicated, I will check if there's a possibility for me to rise up.

"Let's make use of this operation for that sake." (Bashim)

While he was muttering his monologue, a single soldier on horse arrived from the encampment where the humans took up position.

"I'm a messenger from Vichy's central committee. We are requesting an explanation why you have brought your soldiers in front of our country and why you have taken up camp here while facing our way."

It was inevitable for Bashim to find the soldier, who frantically suppressed the trembling in his voice, funny.

Though it remains only in books, it's said that the ones called humans are far weaker at magic and also physical strength than elves, not to speak of demons. Only their numbers are high, but mankind is split in settlements which are scrambling for soil and people by fighting against each other.

It's a fact that there are demons who returned from the outside, albeit only few, but because Vepar is keeping their stories to herself, Bashim isn't aware of it.

There's no necessity to hide it, I guess, Bashim exposed a mocking gaze and had his favourite horse step forward.

"I'm the general. What's your business?" (Bashim)

Due to Bashim's attitude of "Since I didn't hear it, say it one more time", the young messenger ground his teeth.

"It's just as I told you before. I'd like you to tell us for what reason you came here!"

Bashim snorts at the words loaded with anger and replies,

“Hmm. Isn’t such kind of attitude impolite? I have come to this kind of place as representative of the demon race. Shouldn’t you kneel and beg if you want to know?” (Bashim)

At last the messenger couldn’t stand the Bashim’s attitude which he expressed by not changing the haughtiness in his words.

The messenger was trembling in rage, but when he suddenly sees the soldiers lining up behind Bashim, he talked with obvious ridicule.

“... After all you are mere demi-humans, huh? It seems you don’t comprehend neither dignity nor the truth of the matter. There’s nothing to talk about. Just regret for having come here with a small military force.”

The messenger, who turned around, started to return to the humans’ encampment without even looking back.

When he advanced around a single metre, his body was pierced by a blade.

“... Ha?”

Seeing a sword penetrating his own chest, the messenger shook violently and fell off the horse unbeknownst whether he was able to understand anything.

“The ones called humans are this stupid? They turn their backs on their enemy without any vigilance while announcing their hostility.” (Bashim)

The soldiers who were nearby raised laughters at at the words of Bashim who looked over his shoulder after erasing the sword he created with magic.

“Well then, gentlemen, shall we teach the retarded humans the true way of battle?” (Bashim)

At the time when the demons raised a war cry, Vichy’s army was swept away by the unexpected situation of their messenger being killed.

And army of around 50 demons against Vichy’s forces of around 250.

The battle began with an attack by the minority.



“Hello. There’s something I have to deliver, but...”

“Ah, thanks... huh? A demon-san?” (Reni)

The one who came visiting Reni's place was Vepar's subordinate, Nyarl.

"... How did you get inside?" (Reni)

"I came with everyone in front of the city and entrusted my weapons to the city's soldier-san." (Nyarl)

Due to Nyarl presenting a thin, folded, wooden board with a "here," Helen got close while feeling uneasy about the defence measures of the city, and received it.

She hands it over to Reni just like that.

"Thank you. Please sit down, demon-san. Helen are there any sweets and tea left?" (Reni)

"There are, but hold back on eating them a bit, okay?" (Helen)

"Ah, please don't mind me." (Nyarl)

The vigilante corpse, which includes a part of the elves, and the demons are confronting each other at the city's entrance, but for the time being it won't develop into an uproar, it seems.

As for the demon who wanted to hand a letter to Reni; the vigilante corps apparently gave its permission as long as it's only a single person.

Nyarl thanks for the tea, which was swiftly prepared by Helen, and tastes it. It appears that she doesn't have any worry that it might be poisoned at all.

Helen was unable to judge whether she's bold or a natural airhead.

"So, what's written on it?" (Helen)

"They are requesting our cooperation in the fight against the humans, it says." (Reni)

"Can I have you write a reply, too?" (Nyarl)

"Understood." (Reni)

Reni lets the quill pen fluently run across a parchment. Her writing style shows no hesitation. She apparently decided on her reply while reading the letter.

Watching Reni fold the paper in an inefficient and unfamiliar manner, Helen kept Reni's cup away so that it isn't knocked over by Reni getting hooked on it.

Since there isn't anything like a sealing wax, Reni hands over the letter which has been only folded tightly with her soft fingers.

Nyarl, who drank tea and stuffed her cheeks with fruits, that were cut into mouth size, without any reservations, wiped the fruit juice, which clung to her fingers, away at the cuff of her clothes and received the letter.

"Please hand this to the king of the demons." (Reni)

"Yes, thank you very much. Thanks for the delicious meal as well." (Nyarl)

"Thanks for your hard work~." (Reni)

Reni waves at Nyarl who runs away with a *tetete* while holding the letter in her hand.

"... So, what did you answer?" (Helen)

"*Maybe next time since the circumstances are bad* is what I wrote." (Reni)

"It's not an invitation to play by a child, thus..." (Helen)

"I haven't told a lie." (Reni)

Pulling the cup to herself again, she tastes the tea which has become lukewarm.

"Even if we were to fight somewhere, we won't be able to put up any opposition since our numbers are lacking. Thus I think that it's useless to try." (Reni)

Although one might say that their numbers increased some with the elves joining, the scale is only at the level where it can be called a vigilante corps. Restraining the forces of the human side, which are living in Swordland, by including traps is the best they can do. Even if they get dragged into battle with a foreign enemy, it would be equal to them being unable to do anything.

"To begin with, as long as Swordland is split among itself, we don't have any spare energy to assist others." (Reni)

"What will you do if the demons attack us after getting angry over this?" (Helen)

"I think it would be best to run away." (Reni)

“Run away?” (Helen)

When Helen asks “What’s this about?”, Reni answered with “It’s simple.”

“The part of us not having the numbers to fight means that our side has few. We are also used to the wastelands and forest, right? Thus it will be fine if we hide after running away with everyone during the night.” (Reni)

Stretching out her hand towards the remaining fruit, Reni raises her voice in joy as the one left is her favourite fruit, Bodan.

“It’s not like there’s any particular need for us to protect **this soil**. I mean it’s fine for us to create a new city in the forest if we can protect it by ourselves. There isn’t any need for our friends to shed their blood for the sake of someone else, is there?” (Reni)

Although she does agree with Reni, it was surprising for Helen that Reni was able to part with this city, which she learned to love, easily.

“I believe it would be better if you talked with everyone about that. Even if you tell them to abandon the slums all of a sudden, I think that there will be people who can’t move right away.” (Helen)

“It’s as you say, Helen. Before the demon-san’s come once more... oh, I have to go to the vigilante corps and check whether the demon-san’s went home properly.” (Reni)

Reni heads to the city’s entrance.

After looking around in a circle inside the building, Helen let both her rabbit ears hang down.

“I wonder whether that means that we will have to abandon this city and this home...” (Helen)

For Helen, who got completely accustomed to living in the city, just imagining that caused painful feelings.



Hifumi, who heard the state of affairs from Caim after returning to his territory, entered Vichy by himself immediately after spending just one day for repairing and supplementing his weapons.

It was decided that Origa would remain to assign the training regimen in both, military and literary arts, for Viine, and that Alyssa would lead Fokalore soldiers while waiting for his return.

“Leave them alone.” (Hifumi)

With that brief comment the request for reinforcements by Vichy was literally ignored. The messenger, who returned to the central committee while crying about being sent away, came back to Fokalore several days later because he defected while bringing his family along.

That’s how much Vichy’s central committee had been driven to the wall.

“Please be careful!”

“Aye. I leave the rest to you, okay?” (Hifumi)

Leaving Arosel, which is prospering equally to Fokalore, after being destroyed once, he enters Vichy through the new border city Lorn which has turned into a city of merchants who gathered for the purpose of the soldiers and the money those soldiers spend.

The state’s soldiers, who were assigned at that place, know Hifumi’s face as if it’s only natural and thus there’s no need for him to show his permit anymore. Leaving his horse in the care of the border security’s unit, he leisurely departed Orsongrande. Even the soldiers on Vichy’s side, who saw that, gave him the necessary permission while cowering and avoiding eye contact.

Several people, who are camping out, sat at the border on Vichy’s side. Many of them are merchants, but sporadically people of the common populace can be seen there as well. They apparently intend to escape by crossing the national border.

When he was advancing leisurely through the area between Vichy and the wastelands just like that, three man jumped out in front of Hifumi.

“Soldiers of Vichy, huh?” (Hifumi)

Looking at the simply designed armour they are wearing, Hifumi muttered that while looking uninterested.

“What are you doing at this place? Fight against the demons or the soldiers of Pyursang.” (Hifumi)

Apparently the soldiers of Vichy don't know about Hifumi. They coerced Hifumi with 「It ain't the time to show such composure」 while surrounding him.

“Listen, hand over your money. Your food as well!”

Hifumi looked with cold eyes at the man who threatened him by bringing his face close.

“It's that, eh? The thing that's called deserter, right? Were you scared of the demons?” (Hifumi)

“You bastard!”

The hand which tried to grab his collar only grasps air, though he was right in front of the man.

“Huh?”

He seizes both knees of the man after lowering his body and stands up once again in that state.

The man, who fell down with his face up after having both his legs trapped, severely struck into the ground with the back of his head unable to take any defensive posture.

Hifumi's toes sank into the nether region of the man who is groaning while holding his head.

“What are...!?”

Hifumi silently circles around to the back of the excited soldier who watches his colleague faint while foam gathers at his mouth.

By just lightly pulling his waist belt, the soldier falls on his backside with a thump.

Before he comprehends why he was sitting, his cervical vertebrae gets twisted and broke.

“Uwaaaah!”

The last one tries to run away but gets secured by having the nape of his neck grabbed by Hifumi's left hand.

“You saw the demons before running away, right? Tell me the state of affairs.” (Hifumi)

Drawing his katana, he stabs the foaming man to death in front of the seized man.

The man, who saw his friend's head getting stabbed without any kind of hesitation, is trembling to a degree that it even affects his teeth.

"I-In the first battle close to half of our side was killed! They should still be fighting at the border after getting reinforcements from the other cities, but with the story that not a single demon could be killed..."

"You got scared and ran away, huh? In which direction is the battlefield?"
(Hifumi)

Where the trembling finger of the soldier pointed at was the direction where Hifumi had planned to go for now.

"For a change my intuition was right, wasn't it?" (Hifumi)

Kicking the back of the soldier's knee, Hifumi makes him kneel.

"H-Help..."

"You won't tell me to not kill you, right?" (Hifumi)

Setting the angle of the blade so that it won't hit bones, he stabs the soldier's heart from behind.

Wiping the extracted katana, he slowly returns it into the scabbard and fixes his slightly disordered attire.

"The festival venue is over there? Though it would be best if it hasn't ended yet." (Hifumi)

Retrieving a bread with grilled fish sandwiched in from his darkness storage, Hifumi kept lazily walking towards the battlefield while enjoying the aroma of the slightly sweet sauce spreading inside his mouth.

Chapter 158 – Footsteps

“It ain’t a child’s invitation to play, thus...” (Vepar)

Due to reply brought back by Nyarl, Vepar curbed her eyebrows while feeling a headache.

“You didn’t hear or see anything besides what’s written in the letter, did you?” (Vepar)

“The fruits were delicious.” (Nyarl)

“... Got it, wait for further orders.” (Vepar)

Watching the retreating figure of Nyarl who returned to her partner Pheres with a *totete*, Vepar regretted that she made a mistake in her choice of personnel out of concern over an easily trustable outer appearance.

“Anyway, I wonder whether the beastmen’s side has no intention to make a move... at least it looks like you can’t call them belligerent.”

Once Vepar turns her sight to the front, the beastmen, including some elves, have prepared their weapons at the entrance towards the slums, and even in the city said to have only humans living there, the soldiers have lined up. In contrast to the beastmen who seem to even have composure in their expressions brimming somewhat with confidence, the soldiers stood in loose ranks as they coweringly turned their looks at Vepar’s group and the beastmen. *They are giving me the creeps*, Vepar thinks.

The side of the beastmen who seems to be close with the elves, should be more knowledgeable about the us demons than the humans. Thus, wouldn’t it be natural for the beastmen to be afraid of us?

I don’t know how accurate their intelligence about us is, but they have properly decided on the course of action and have likely finished their preparations as well.

And the humans, or at least the humans living in this country, probably have experienced being beaten up by the beastmen to a degree that they are unable to believe in their own strength. Since that memory is still fresh, they might be

all the more scared of us demons with our unknown identity.

“Well then, what shall we do...?” (Vepar)

On top of being able to somewhat offset our numerical inferiority against the humans if we can form a friendship with the inhabitants of the slums which will also hasten the rallying of the beastmen, it would be convenient for obtaining information about the world during the time us demons were isolated, Vepar thought.

However, the representative of the beastmen didn't fall in line with that way of thinking.

“She knows about the strength of the demons and yet has the confidence to protect the city, is what she's indicating?” (Vepar)

She doesn't understand the basis of that confidence and that's scary for her.

“I considered crushing them in one go and then turn them into our subordinates, but I'd like a bit more information.” (Vepar)

She doesn't want to fail, even in the worst case.

“Having said that, seeing that she easily turned me down, even discussing it... I dislike forcing our way without intelligence, but it can't be helped.” (Vepar)

Vepar summoned a demon who commands an unit and gave him a mission.

“Well then, let's teach the beastmen about us in detail.” (Vepar)



The following early morning.

With a minority of 30 soldiers the demons attacked the city of Swordland.

Completely ignoring the slums, they surged into the humans' city.

With just the battle in the morning, Swordland lost half of its soldiers and heavy losses appeared among the civilians, too. On the other hand, there's no damage to the slums, where the beastmen live, at all.

“What's this about!?” (Vepar)

Vepar's face, which is evaluated as being beautiful, warped as she stamped her feet in frustration.

“Not having any means to protect the city, they abandoned the city all together!”

Vepar, who visited the slums once more with the intention to press the beastmen into allegiance after delivering serious damage to the humans' side, stood right in the middle of the completely deserted city.

Did they sense the movements of the demons who prepared for battle during the night? The beastmen, including the elves, escaped the city before the chaos of the battle started to spread.

“That's right, isn't it...? If I think properly about it, they are basically a group who lives by creating settlements inside forests. There's no reason for them to

be that fixated about this place, is there?" (Vepar)

In order to not get involved in the war, the elves, who abandoned their forest, and those, who left the humans' city, likely didn't have a strong opposition against taking refuge in the forest.

"This time it's my defeat... since I don't want to incur losses, I will properly get my share." (Vepar)

Among the humans who survived, Vepar executed those who had a high ranking positions among the people who were in the castle, and dropped the remaining personnel into to the status of slavery.

There wasn't any particular harm towards the civilians, but their coming and going was severely restricted.

"This is the place of our, the demons', comeback! We, who were outcasts, will show everyone proof in the battles from now on that we stand at the top of this world!" (Vepar)

Due to Vepar's drama-like speech, the demons' soldiers got excited and the humans were deprived of their willpower.

The name of the country called Swordland vanished at that moment.



After the demons, who attacked Vichy, tore Vichy's line of defence apart with magic attacks, they invaded Vichy by dispersing in small units.

Disguising at places where Vichy soldiers and civilians didn't see them, they slipped in as spies. The plan succeeded. Those, who shook free from the pursuit of Vichy's soldiers, safely changed into humans while pretending to have escaped the war, and were successful at infiltrating the other cities.

Even so, there was also the fact that splitting the forces increased the losses.

"What are these guys!? They aren't humans, are they!?"

"Fuck! Why have I become this unskilled... gyaaaaa!"

The demon, who screamed after being pierced very deeply with a knife by an opponent whom he burned to nothing with his special fireball in his right hand, died at the same time as his voice disappeared.

The demons, who had the impression "humans are weak" because of the first

attack, trembled in fear when the reinforced soldiers approached them even while being injured.

Swift sword attacks and powerful spells aren't able to make the reinforced soldiers flinch at all.

Due to the reinforced soldiers, who approached them directly without any tactics even when wounded, the demons slowly suffered losses as well.

“Aren't you scared of dying!?”

“Hasn't your brain been messed up? Humans are insane!”

Demons, who die after receiving attacks by Vichy's soldiers while struggling with the reinforced soldiers emerge. Moreover those soldiers of Vichy get killed by the reinforced soldiers.

Because the demons and reinforced soldiers move about as they please, 3-way battlefields were created all over Vichy while also dragging the civilians into it. And, the general of the demons, Bashim, can't grasp the state of affairs either. On top of the battlefield being stretched out too far, reports about the situation didn't reach him since the numbers of the single units were too low.

As his soldiers don't return, he has no other choice but to believe that they infiltrated Vichy successfully. The fact of him not having established a means of communication invited an amplification of the losses. However, even that's something Bashim isn't aware of.

Of course he also didn't know about the person, who can become another power just by himself, entering the field until the time of meeting him.



“Hmm...” (Hifumi)

Tearing off the armour of the reinforced soldier he slew, Hifumi gazed at the chest of the opened-up enemy.

What was embedded there was a magic tool without a doubt. Guessing it from the soldiers having attacked him without feeling any pain, Hifumi was able to conclude that it's the same item as the one he had seen until now.

“Did its movements became a bit better? Or is that an individual difference?”
(Hifumi)

The corpses of three other reinforced soldiers, merchants, people who were

apparently a family and three adventurer-like men, who were armed with leather armours and swords, are scattered in the surroundings.

“Without any discrimination, huh? Though that doesn’t really matter. But with this I won’t know who did them in, right? Well then, that means the enemy is unclear and the target of hatred isn’t set. How boring and stupid.” (Hifumi)

Sheathing his drawn katana, he chews a bread which was inside a carriage, with its horses dead, that had toppled over. The texture of the food still has dampness remaining.

“Mmh~... from relatively close-by? It hasn’t become overly dry.” (Hifumi)

They were probably attacked by the reinforced soldiers at the time when they ran away from the demons’ invasion. The adventurers were the escort? Or they might have been bandits who attacked the merchants.

At any rate, since all of them are dead, there’s no point in guessing.

Once he stuffed the remaining bread into his mouth with gusto, Hifumi removed the glove of his left hand and crammed it into his obi.

“Did they finally come?” (Hifumi)

Once he waved his left hand, two thirds of the ice spear, which came flying, was shaved off and it scattered after falling to the ground.

“W-What did you do?”

Even while realizing that it was repelled, the demon soldier, who fired the ice, doesn’t seem to know how it was done.

“Don’t mind it! A human isn’t capable of directly dealing with magic anyway!”

What attacked Hifumi next was a fireball, but with one swing of his pitch-black left hand, its centre was hollowed out and the rest vanished towards the ground while slowly swaying and turning into sparks.

“Let’s do something totally different. It will probably end up the same as with the other guys as well, won’t it?” (Hifumi)

Drawing the katana with his right hand, he provokes the demons with the left hand.

There are five demon soldiers. All of them hold swords and are capable of using

magic at the same time.

“The likes of a human!”

Kicking the one, who came rushing at him, with a full-power front kick, caused the demon to roll back the ten-odd meters he ran.

“That’s no good. Even the humans have begun to learn fighting while using their heads. Leaving aside the lot from Vichy, if you are going to fight humans from now on, right... try scheming like Bennia did.” (Hifumi)

Apparently there was one among them who knew Bennia. Is he confused? He shows a strange expression.

“W-Why do you know her name...?”

“We had a relationship of fighting to the death against each other.” (Hifumi)

“Just like this”, Hifumi shortens the distance in one breath and approaches the demon he sent flying with a kick just now.

“As if I would let you!”

Evading the demon’s counter-attack of thrusting out his sword in order to stand up by turning around, Hifumi reaped the demon’s head with a sideways swing of his katana.

“I know, I know. You demons are good at magic.” (Hifumi)

He knocks down all the pebbles with his katana.

“Your bodies are somewhat sturdier than those of humans and you are powerful, too.” (Hifumi)

Once a demon appeared in front of him while holding a sword, he drags him into a power struggle between the swords’ guards by putting blade to blade.

“W-Why...?”

In contrast to the demon who tries pushing frantically with both hands while investing his entire body’s weight, Hifumi uses just his right hand. The demon’s sword, which is three times as thick, scratches against the blade of the Japanese sword with a creak.

“And, there’s no considerable difference between you and humans in the

structure of your bodies.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi extends his left hand and pulls the obi which was coiled around the demon’s waist.

“Nuoo!?”

Being placed in a situation of having his body bent against his will, the demon becomes unable to use his sword. He has no other choice but to watch with wide-open eyes the katana approaching in front of him.

“Oops.” (Hifumi)

At the moment the pressure exerted became lax as Hifumi had to avoid a fireball which was thrown at him by another demon at that time, the demon separates from Hifumi by rolling on the ground after abandoning his sword. They concentrated another barrage of pellets at the feet of Hifumi who tries to chase, and during that time another demon prepared their sword and stood in the way of Hifumi.

“Your teamwork is good.” (Hifumi)

“Well done, I’m pleased”, Hifumi nodded and crushed the fireball, which came flying at him, with his left hand.

A clenched left fist with only two fingers standing up.

“I will kill two more and let the other two of you go.” (Hifumi)

“Eh?”

The instant he opened his eyes widely due to the sudden statement. Hifumi’s intense thrust violently hit the blade of the sword he set up.

“Heavy!”

The demon who hit his head with his own sword, is confused while shedding blood from his forehead.

Kicking away the demon’s pivot leg, Hifumi pierces the heart of the demon who toppled over.

“The placement of the organs is the same as well... one more.” (Hifumi)

Pulling out the katana’s point from within the grey skin, he shakes off the

blood clinging to it.

“D-Don’t come any closer!”

When one of the demons swung his arm, the ground under Hifumi’s feet burst open as if exploding.

Countless small rocks scatter in all directions and Hifumi vanishes within a cloud of dust.

“Let’s escape now!”

Once the man, who cast the spell, looks at the face of his comrade, the katana is piercing one of his eyeballs.

The one who is holding the katana is naturally Hifumi.

“It was an interesting attack. However, its output was too low.” (Hifumi)

There are several small holes in his hakama. Though only slightly, were his feet injured? Blood was trickling down on the ground beneath him. Even so, there’s also the fact that he evaded getting directly hit by escaping to the front. For Hifumi ((those injuries)) are at a level that he can ignore them easily.

“Such a...”

In front of the scared demons, the body of their comrade, whose soul departed this world, was released from the katana by collapsing.

“Just as I announced, two are left. Since I’m letting you go, get moving!” (Hifumi)

Upon Hifumi’s order, the two demons turned around and started to sprint with all their might.

Weren’t humans weak?

Weren’t they supposed to be unable to decently cope with magic attacks?

Are the human groups we thoroughly overran in the wastelands different from the man who killed our comrades just now?

“What shall we do?”

While cursing at the troublesome reality, they head towards the forces with their leader.

Just like Bashim, who is their general, many of those in the higher ranks among the demons reach their positions because they can use unique magic. It's the magic Bashim used at the time when he killed the messenger from Vichy. Instantly creating a blade out of thin air, he sends it flying. No matter what opponent it might be, if they don't know about it, it has a speed to a degree of being unavoidable. Even in the battle some time ago, it has easily killed the human general.

If we reach Bashim's location, we will be able to kill that human.

They pretend to not hear the footsteps chasing them from behind.

We will be safe if we return to our forces.

They ran while embracing that belief.

Chapter 159 – Timebomb

Having his own subordinate soldiers, who came running towards him, being bisected in a single stroke made Bashim flustered.

“What the hell is this? Someone tell me what’s this about!” (Bashim)

“It’s an enemy attack, Don’t be so frightened if you are the supreme commander here.” (Hifumi)

“A blue horse is unusual”, carrying the katana in his hand, Hifumi approaches with a slow swaying.

The demon soldiers, who desperately ran away, had been altogether split into upper and lower body halves and died while stretching their hands towards Bashim as if asking for help.

“A human... it is?” (Bashim)

“Let me tell you something nice. Some of your subordinates died.” (Hifumi)

Bashim, who looks down at Hifumi from atop his mount, bit his back teeth while sweating.

“Human, did you bastard kill them?” (Hifumi)

“The ones I finished off were at a level that I could deal with them with one hand. The others were killed by Vichy... this country. If you are going to attack a place, you should at least know its name, don’t you think so? Within Vichy there’s a civil war... or rather it’s a partial rampage. It looks like your soldiers died after getting dragged into that.” (Hifumi)

“Are you telling me to believe that?” (Bashim)

“Not really. Do as you like.” (Hifumi)

While talking, Hifumi’s vicinity gets surrounded by demon soldiers. Seeing Hifumi calmly continuing to talk even while being encircled from all sides, Bashim wondered whether Hifumi is some kind of lunatic.

“But you know, to properly gather information is Vepar’s order, isn’t it?” (Hifumi)

With the name of the sovereign mentioned, Bashim temporarily refrained from giving the order to wrap things once and for all up by killing Hifumi.

“Your numbers are too lacking. If one really considered taking down a country, there would be personnel in order to reign it and not just soldiers to attack it. Though it’s different if it’s plain annihilation, I guess. Vepar should know at least this much.” (Hifumi)

“... We are strong. If we observe one or two cities, that will be plenty.”
(Bashim)

“One or two? Ufu, ahahahaha!” (Hifumi)

Hifumi, who had his fill of a bellyful loud laughter, muttered “What an utter let down” towards Bashim.

“You have to do much better if you are going to deceive someone. If you tell a lie and it’s immediately exposed, one will be able to see your true nature.”
(Hifumi)

“You!! Though you are an inferior life-form!” (Bashim)

Once he roared, the blade of a longsword was created by Bashim from thin air in front of his eyes and at the same time it was shot like a bullet.

There isn’t even 10 meters distance between the two.

Bashim imagined the sight of the blade piercing the enemy’s belly, and thinking how that would be reproduced in reality right away, his expression warped, but it never came to pass.

“There’s no way for the blade to reach from this far away, is there?” (Hifumi)

The sword, which Bashim released, is piercing the ground diagonally behind Hifumi who was grasping the scabbard he is wearing at his waist.

“W-Wh-What happened...?” (Bashim)

“You aimed at my belly, right? That’s why I repelled it like this.” (Hifumi)

He swings the mouth of the scabbard left and right.

“As if such foolishness is possible!?” (Bashim)

“Told you.” (Hifumi)

The second sword was knocked down with the pommel.

“Something like firing it directly at me from ahead in front of my eyes is like telling me “Please defend against it”, right...? Good grief, Bennia and Phelgor were capable of doing a lot more different things.” (Hifumi)

Being compared to names he knows, Bashim tightly bites his back teeth once again.

“Putting aside Phegol who was the king’s aide, you are telling me that I’m worse than Bennia who didn’t command anything above a platoon?” (Bashim)

Hifumi replied to the enraged Bashim by laughing frivolously.

“It’s slightly different. If you can’t do anything but sending swords flying, it should be corrected to **a lot worse.**” (Hifumi)

Did he reach the peak of his rage? Raising a roar with unknown meaning, Bashim held up his right hand immediately and ordered the soldiers with a very loud voice,

“Everyone, attack him with magic all at once! The attribute doesn’t matter! Erase the insolent human so that not even a speck of dust remains of him!” (Bashim)

At the same time as the order reaches them, a variety of magic attacks, such as ice, flames, rocks and water, comes flying from the soldiers who were surrounding Hifumi.

Steam and sand swirls about, and a smoke, mixed with the colours of white and light brown, rises up at the place where Hifumi stood.

Once someone extinguished it with a water spell, only the hollowed-out ground was left there.

“... Humph. He was a human after all, huh? A fragile being.” (Bashim)

“If they hit, that is.” (Hifumi)

A sole answer was audible from behind the muttering Bashim.

“You bastard...” (Bashim)

Knowing the cold sensation at the nape of his neck, Bashim only turned his eyes, but his field of vision didn’t reach Hifumi’s face. Only the cold blade, which

reflected his face wet with cold sweat, entered his sight.

“Cut it out with the attacks where you lose sight of your enemy. Not knowing what your opponent did is disadvantageous, right?” (Hifumi)

“Even if you kill me, there are still 20 soldiers here. Don’t believe that you will be able to get away...” (Bashim)

“You are furious, aren’t you? That’s good.” (Hifumi)

While keeping the katana closely at his neck, Hifumi grabbed the left arm of Bashim and twisted it.

Despite being on top of a horse, Hifumi doesn’t lose his balance at all. On the other hand, Bashim’s balance crumbles and he is a situation where he supports his stance somehow with the stirrup.

Even the surrounding demon soldiers have no other choice but to watch from a distance out of fear that they would accidentally shoot Bashim if they attacked. Hifumi spoke up towards them.

“Currently you are attacking Vichy. Next to it, there’s a country called Orsongrande. I’m staying there. Come after gathering bigger numbers. If you do that, I will face you directly.” (Hifumi)

He removed the katana from Bashim’s neck, but Bashim can’t move due to his wrist being immobilized.

“The thinking that you are strong and the humans are weak resulted in this. You feel offended, don’t you? There might also be some fellows who are considering it as unreasonable, if they are a slightly stupid. So, since I’m a feudal lord-sama who possesses a heart as wide as the wastelands, I thought that I will give you an opportunity for revenge.” (Hifumi)

He makes a sound as if rubbing silk.

Without anyone noticing, the katana, held by Hifumi, was swung up from below.

“Guaaaaaaaaah!” (Bashim)

Having his left arm severed from the tip of the shoulder, Bashim finally ended up falling off his horse.

Holding up the arm while grabbing it with his left hand, Hifumi glares at the

surroundings.

“I will return this arm if you come in front of me.” (Hifumi)

In front of the dumbfounded demon soldiers, he tosses the arm into his darkness storage and wipes his katana with repeatedly stacked papers. While hearing the voice of Bashim, who has fainted in agony, from behind as the discarded papers flutter down, Hifumi leisurely goes home. A person, who would try to stop him, currently didn't exist in this place.



Three days later than Hifumi's party, Alyssa returned to Fokalore while leading the exhausted soldiers.

“I'm home~...” (Alyssa)

“Welcome back.”

Alyssa, who finished the explanation about their holidays and their assignments afterwards, had the unit disperse while having a completely exhausted expression herself as well.

Returning to the feudal lord's mansion, Alyssa searched for Hifumi in order to give her report, but as he apparently left to meddle with Vichy right after returning and had departed casually to some place once again, she wasn't able to meet him.

In exchange, she's greeted by Caim and Brokra.

“Thanks for your hard work, director.”

Once she gulps down the cold tea, Brokra poured in her cup, in one go while sitting in a chair of the conference room, Alyssa prostrated limply on the table.

“In the end it didn't become much of a training. Orsongrande and Horant became friends, and that was it.” (Alyssa)

“In this time's matter Orsongrande has probably acquired a superior position in regards to Horant. And in addition, it's only Fokalore and Münster who supported the royal army at all places. Together with the previous uproar in Horant, the two Earl households have become extremely powerful and influential voices within the country.” (Caim)

While feeling a sense of discomfort towards Caim who explains it with a tone completely like that of a teacher, Alyssa received another cup of tea from Brokra and sighed.

“Hifumi-san’s influential voice, or rather, his powerful influence isn’t something that started just now, is it? Even in the matter this time, he manipulated the princess... err, queen-sama and the king over there.” (Alyssa)

Due to Alyssa chatting as if she had forgotten that she participated in that expedition as well, Caim answered 「Is that so?」 without moving even one eyebrow.

Since he has finished listening to the reports from the soldiers who returned together with Hifumi, for Caim, who had all the fact stored in his head, it’s apparently no problem to ignore Alyssa’s impressions.

“However.” (Caim)

Caim placed a thick bundle of documents in front of the sitting Alyssa.

“It’s Lord-sama’s influence. And not only that. it’s necessary for you to grasp the influence of the Earl Tohno household and this territory. Since the current Lord-sama is fortunately the source of it all, there is little history that you have to remember, but regarding the circumstances inside and outside the country, you have to do it down to the basics.” (Caim)

Alyssa timidly extends a hand and looks at one paper titled 『History and the Beginning of Orsongrande』. A long, long essay with illustrations put in-between sometimes was written there.

“Y-Yeeaa...?” (Alyssa)

Next Brokra approaches Alyssa who doesn’t know how she should react. She holds a dress in her hands.

“Umm...” (Alyssa)

“The study of history and politics is important, but for a lady it’s also necessary to practise dancing and etiquette, right? If it’s your age, director, I believe that a cute design still suits you much more than a beautiful one, but what do you think about this one?” (Brokra)

“I don’t understand what you are saying, Brokra-san.” (Caim)

Caim retorted from the side with a flat voice, that suited his expressionless face well, towards Brokra, who presents a frilly dress, making her eyes change into dots.

“It’s very likely a problem to be called a lady with an unsubstantial character. If she studies properly first, her performance will be great, right?”

“Different from you, Caim-san, there are no cool girls burying their noses in books all day long. If you don’t weave in some enjoyable content, the director will be pitiable, won’t she?” (Brokra)

“It will be embarrassing as long as she doesn’t possess a proper political sense. You can’t compare social life with diplomacy.” (Caim)

“Since you can’t compare them, you have to consider their balance.” (Brokra)

“W-Wait a bit.” (Alyssa)

Alyssa stopped the two, who started a discussion about her training for some reason, by stretching out both hands.

“I can’t follow your discussion. But, why do I have, umm... to learn history, politics or dance? Or do I have to study such things?” (Alyssa)

“Huh?”

Brokra looks at Alyssa with a startled expression.

“... I see, it seems she didn’t hear about it.” (Caim)

“Ah... so that’s how it is?” (Brokra)

When Brokra was looking at the ceiling while curbing her eyebrows, the door of the conference room suddenly opened.

Caim swiftly lowers his head and Brokra follows up on him as well.

“Did you return? Good wor-... what’s going on here?”

Hifumi, who entered the room, picks up a document, lifts it up and scans over it.

“Being suddenly told to study, I’m totally lost...” (Alyssa)

“Ah.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi slaps his own cheek with his right hand.

“I forgot to tell you. Alyssa, please become my daughter.” (Hifumi)

“Ha?” (Alyssa)

“I’m asking you to become my adopted daughter, is what I mean. Since I will give you the territory such as Fokalore and various other.” (Hifumi)

Alyssa wasn’t aware herself for how many seconds she froze, but after plenty of time, she raised a voice that resembled a scream.



“... Recently I feel like I’m fainting often.” (Imeraria)

Imeraria muttered while getting up from the bed and scooping up the oatmeal prepared by her maid.

“Umm, that’s not because of Your Majesty. It’s because you are troubled over various matters regarding a certain person...”

It was the maid who accompanied her to the battle with Horant that is frantically searching for words to comfort Imeraria who has an expression that seems to be on the verge of crying.

Directly after returning to the capital , She was also present at the place where Imeraria fainted due to seeing the severed head of the completely changed Balzephon put on display at the plaza right in front of the castle. The maid lost consciousness for an instant as well, but somehow managed to support Imeraria. When she recovered more or less after a good night’s sleep, there was a document sent by Fokalore notifying her about an adopted child.

Due to not being in a normal condition, Imeraria fainted once again after she read the message of Hifumi taking an adopted child in the document. After that she was finally able to get up once it became evening.

“If I’m told that this is also the duty of a ruler, it will probably end with this, but... the one who summoned that gentleman into this world is definitely me... geez.” (Imeraria)

Imeraria, who ate around half of the dish, once again picks up and examines

the document regarding the adopted child which was sent from Fokalore. A noble taking an adopted child so that they can have the child succeed the family headship doesn't really need the king's permission. It's been arranged that it will be fine as long as they at least request consent if it's a current family head or a bereaved family.

This was once again a document composed with a content that might serve as a role model due to its regular and well-ordered characters which can be considered to not be Hifumi's own writing, only the signature lines up strangely poor characters which appear to really be Hifumi's.

Imeraria didn't particularly intend to object about the matter of Alyssa succeeding the territory. It might be something one-sided, but Imeraria feels some intimacy toward her born from the fact that they fought together.

If I can have her show presence in the upper class, which is a male society, as one of the few female feudal lords, it might become a good restraint towards the men who make light of a queen, she thinks.

"Excuse me. How's your condition?" (Sabnak)

Imeraria silently handed over the document she received from Fokalore to Sabnak who entered after knocking as he probably received a report that Imeraria had woken up.

"?... This is..." (Sabnak)

"What do you think is his aim?" (Imeraria)

The one who probably knows the most about Hifumi inside the castle is Sabnak. Imeraria felt uneasy about him being too close feeling-wise to Hifumi's side, but she judged that he's appropriate as advisor.

"Ah... how to say it...?" (Sabnak)

"Is it something difficult to say?" (Imeraria)

"Not as long as I can state it with the premise that it's nothing but my own guess." (Sabnak)

Shifting the plate with the oatmeal to the side, Imeraria placed both her hands, with the fingers entangled, on the table and made a short pause.

"I don't mind. Please let me hear it." (Imeraria)

“Isn’t he planning to retire so that he can move about freely...? He might have lost interest in being a noble.” (Sabnak)

“Hasn’t he been moving around freely until now?” (Imeraria)

“To me it looks like he’s pushing his duties on Alyssa in order to begin preparing something big, but...” (Sabnak)

Imeraria felt impatient due to Sabnak words.

“... I guess I have to directly hear about it from the person himself.” (Imeraria)

Imeraria, who accepted the document from Sabnak after standing up, ordered while furrowing her eyebrows,

“Please send a summons to Earl Tohno. ... Let’s use the war in Vichy as pretext.” (Imeraria)

However, that matter is naturally no more than a side business. What Imeraria wanted to hear was just one thing.

“What do you intend to do to our world...?” (Imeraria)

Even if something happens, as person responsible for a country, as person bearing the responsibility of having summoned him and even after putting her desire for revenge aside, there’s something she has to do.

I might die, but it’s definitely my duty, Imeraria was determined.

Chapter 160 – A Hard Day’s Night

The chaos in Vichy is continuing, but for some strange reason Tohno Earldom, which included Fokalore, was calm to a degree that one wouldn’t be able to think that there’s a war going on in the neighbouring country. That is, except for the city at the border, Rhone.

Besides the soldiers of Orsongrande, who are controlling the national border, the soldiers of Fokalore, who have been stationed there to govern the territory, their families and some merchants, no one lives in Rhone where all inhabitants died before.

That’s the reason why this town was chosen. It’s easy to manage and close to the border while being filled with empty houses where refugees that escaped from the turmoil in Vichy can live.

Upon the suggestion and appeal of Orsongrande’s Prime Minister Adol out of worry over the royal treasury, it was decided to entrust the care of the refugees to Hifumi who is governing the area. In all honesty, it’s no stretch to say that Orsongrande’s financial situation is in a dire strait due to the continuous battles. It didn’t have the monetary leeway to support refugees with especially as it’s unknown by how much their numbers will grow.

Accordingly it resulted in Orsongrande’s government discreetly pushing it onto Hifumi, but Caim, who manages the operational business of Tohno Earldom all by himself instead of Hifumi, readily decided to take responsibility for the matter at hand.

“It will be fine to take them in as residents and not as refugees on this occasion. It will also be possible to resolve the shortage in human resources. If we provide them a place to stay, they likely won’t complain even about some slightly harsh jobs. If we consider it as procurement of cheap slaves, there won’t be any issues regarding the expenses either.” (Caim)

Caim’s idea immediately got Hifumi’s authorization. For that reason the number of people in Rhone is now increasing rapidly. It’s necessary for the refugees to get examined by Orsongrande’s border guard and to furthermore receive a check-up by Fokalore’s soldiers, but as long as

they aren't overly suspicious or have a bad attitude, they will be given permission to enter Rhone.

For the people, who ran away from the demons and reinforced soldiers in fear while sleeping outdoors for many days, the treatment of being legitimately assigned a house and being even offered work was better than the life in their villages or cities until now.

Not that much time passed since all the houses became deserted. Thus, even if they have to do the repairs by themselves, the amount of bothersome damage to the houses is little.

Once they registered things such as their full name, age and career by properly filing a report, they were even able to obtain a temporary support in food and daily commodities. The information about their career was to confirm whether there are any dubious parts, but it will also serve as reference to assign jobs to them.

I wonder from where the rumours are originating? Factoring in the reality that the war situation isn't good, the number of refugees flowing into Rhone is increasing day by day.

As they apparently absolutely forgot who it was that weakened their own country, many of those people are praising the feudal lord Hifumi who is also the Knight of the Slender Sword. Because a theatre troupe, which visited several places inside Orsongrande such as the royal capital, performed the highly popular play 『Knight of the Slender Sword』 for a prolonged time in Rhone for little money, the refugee's enthusiasm knew no bounds.

“... To even call a theatre troupe, I believe that to actually be over the top.”

“If you got any complaints, take them up to the expressionless bastard in Fokalore.”

The temporary town hall set up in Rhone. In one of its rooms Doelgar and Miyukare continued a thorny dispute without taking their eyes off the documents and without raising their voices.

This is a daily occurrence in the civil official's room in Fokalore. Even Brokra and at times Paryu will grumble about something while continuing their work. As it's a spectacle that can be observed especially well when their workload reaches a peak, Paryu, who was currently working in the same room together with those

two, didn't pay any heed to their quarrel.

By the way, since Caim is the type to do his work silently and moreover doesn't care about the way others work, he doesn't participate in the quarrelling and speaking to himself nor does he caution others about it.

“In the first place, why do I have to be sent to the border? It would have been probably fine if we had left it to each of the commanding officers.”

“If you say that, it applies to me as well. Even in regards to picking out craftsmen and apprentices, it would probably finish quickly if each of the trade guilds sent someone over.”

In reality, for the soldiers who had received only training related to combat, it's difficult to negotiate with Orsongrande, no matter whether they obtained a commanding officer rank, and they also hold no right to make any decisions. Even in regards to trade; Doelgar is carrying out the regulation of the guilds. Because the scramble for personnel is a daily struggle, this is a task that has to be done by personnel who holds the power of the state.

Though both of them understand that, they keep complaining about it, but this time Paryu, who was in the same room, was unable to ignore it.

“... Doelgar-san, Miyukare-san, are you telling me to handle the documents here all by myself...?” (Paryu)

“Uh...”

Once the two, who had complained until now, turn their looks at Paryu, they see her exhausted expression with only her eyes gleaming with a glare. She's the one in charge of the family register. If the number of people in the territory increases, it becomes inevitable for additional work to visit her. Performing an investigation of all the people who crossed the border, and deciding on an appropriate handling for them after confirming all kinds of information is part of her post. As a matter of fact, the majority of staff members, who were made to follow those three, are her subordinates, but even then they are the busiest as well.

They had even lost the time to complain. At the moment she was fed up with the problem of several bundles of documents being brought in every 10 minutes, she apparently got mad at her two seniors who started to talk about

abandoning their work.

“No, this is just a joke to vent a bit. Each of us is busy. That’s why we need at least this much freedom of mind, right?” (Doelgar)

“I-I didn’t particularly plan to really abandon my work? I just tried to complain a bit since I have to always associate with filthy men.” (Miyukare)

In front of the two who were trying to justify their conduct in panic, Paryu swapped an armful of document bundles from the pile of documents lying on her desk towards them.

“Doelgar-san, if you have freedom of mind, I leave this to you. It’s the part of the people related to commerce and industry who registered to have work experience among the residents who have completely drawn-up official papers after entering the country. I intended to sort them according to their type of industry, but... since you have leeway, there won’t be any problem, right?” (Paryu)

“... Yes.” (Doelgar)

“Miyukare-san, this is the part among the documents about those, who reported to have been civilians in military employ in the past, I considered it necessary for them to receive a secondary check. Since there are plenty of women included here, please check them as the one in charge of military affairs.” (Paryu)

“... Got it.” (Miyukare)

“I will go to pick up the documents at the border”, saying that, Paryu left the room. Immediately following that Doelgar and Miyukare spit out the air in their lungs and dropped their tensed shoulders.

“It’s the first time for me to feel frightened by a girl who’s more than 10 years younger than me.”

“... Aren’t you 20?”

“I’m younger than Caim.”

Due to Miyukare opening her eyes widely in surprise while unable to speak, Doelgar cursed with a brief comment and started to fight against the

documents which had increased by more than twice.



The ones struggling hard in front of documents aren't just the civil officials who are on official business in Rhone.

“Gununu....” (Alyssa)

“Alyssa-sama, even if you groan, that doesn't make you progress through the textbook.” (Caim)

Being cautioned by Caim, Alyssa pursed her lips which had a pen in-between them.

“Why do I have to do this?” (Alyssa)

“As noble it's a necessary study to stand on your own as feudal lord. Alyssa-sama, you have to lead us for the residents, who are continuing to increase even now, as next head of the Earl household.” (Caim)

The smoothly explained details were ones even Alyssa had already agreed on. At the time when she was told the gist of her being accepted as adopted daughter by Hifumi, Alyssa rejected it as it was far too sudden, but decided to accept it in the end as she was beginning to become vaguely aware of the fact that the emotions she felt at the time when she headed to Horant were reliance towards a senior rather than love towards a man.

Once it was decided that Alyssa will inherit the Earl household, Caim piled up his own textbooks which he prepared immediately and Brokra arranged for as many noble-like items as possible. Now they are looking for a private tutor to teach her the necessary etiquette for a noble lady.

There hasn't been an official announcement to the residents about Alyssa becoming the heir, but those related to the territory's management and the soldiers, who heard about it from the staff, spread the story in less than a day. Since there are many people among the staff members of the feudal lord's mansion who don't know Alyssa well, there have been many bewildered voices. However, since it's hard to imagine for Hifumi, who is still young, to retire, they were able to accept it with “Isn't that one of his usual whimsical policies?”

The soldiers were greatly delighted.

There was also the feudal lord's side until now. That suppressed the degree of

enthusiasm towards Alyssa more or less. But now they were excited that they should mainly guard her even in exchange for their lives, not with the attitude towards a superior officer as until now but from now on towards the heir. Setting aside such reactions of her environment, the person herself was simply happy about being able to become Hifumi's family, but because the predecessor Hifumi was too far apart from a noble-like life, the idea that he had become a noble didn't reach him at all.

The next day after she consented to become his adopted daughter, she was heading towards Hifumi's office while racking her brain over an Alyssa-typical important matter of whether she should call Hifumi father and whether Origa will get mad if she calls her mother, but on the way she was caught by Caim and forced to study.

And there's one more woman in the same room at her wit's end in front of a textbook. It's the one-eared rabbit beastman Viine.

On the day they returned while bringing her along, she was introduced to the staff members with the new title "Secretary" added. Right now she's in the middle of systematically getting the documents prepared by the civil officials and staff members driven into her head for the sake of understanding the circumstances of the current Tohno Earldom and the knowledge necessary to support Hifumi's work.

"It looks like my head's going to explode..."

It's documents filled with earnest schematic entries and content after such things as the population's movements, the changes of industrial structures and the composition of the army were entrusted to Fokalore by Hifumi.

As they had apparently no feelings of avoiding her, the staff members reaction was that of very deep curiosity towards the beastman Viine as the person who was brought along by Hifumi and as someone unusual. Especially the female staff members are harbouring slightly dirty interest wondering whether they will be able to hear about Hifumi's private life in a delicious manner.

As result of that, they drew up more-than-necessary, finely-detailed documents in high spirits at the time when they were ordered to present the territory's documents of each department to Viine. Under the pretext of explaining those, staff members continuously visited Viine for few hours at start while changing places with each other.

Since she couldn't concentrate in that situation, Caim had her move to the study room of Alyssa whom he is supervising.

No matter how much interest they might have; in front of Caim, who asks 「Your business?」 while directly looking at them with no expression, there were no staff members that were bold enough to try starting an idle chat round.

Thanks to that, it resulted in Viine being able to study with Alyssa's groans as BGM inside the room with a feeling of tension hanging in the air due to the continuous monitoring.

“Please don't hold back and ask me if there are any parts you don't understand.” (Caim)

“Y-Yes.” (Viine)

Though she gave him an answer, Viine's first impression of Caim was her considering him **scary**. Even though she was sending fleeting glances at Caim, far from asking a question, she hesitated to even call out to him.

At the time she was restlessly grasping a document tightly, the civil official Brokra knocked and entered the room.

“Excuse me. Alyssa-sama, since I was able to arrange for a private tutor, the time for education will start from the day after tomorrow.” (Brokra)

“... I want to train outside with everyone.” (Alyssa)

“That's not allowed.” (Caim)

Not Brokra but Caim flatly comments with an indifferent voice.

“If I study while keeping sitting for such long time, my butt will get sore!” (Alyssa)

“Please endure it for a while. Since there's also dancing in the general education course, you will have the chance to move your body.” (Brokra)

“That's not the problem here”, Alyssa objects with teary eyes. Due to that, Caim repetitively explains just how important education and studying is for the bearings of a feudal lord in a dispassionate manner.

Due to the indifferent persuasion that seems to even tire out Viine who is just listening from the side, Alyssa threw the towel, 50% out of weakness, and returned to transcribing the textbook after saying “Got it.”

Viine, who saw Alyssa's great efforts in Horant with her own eyes, wondered that such a strong person was talked down with words to a degree that she couldn't even refute at all resulting in her having even more difficulty in dealing with Caim.

Because Brokra discovered her look searching for help by chance, she tried to resolve it by receiving Viine's question, but the rabbit beastman, who will otherwise stay eternally afraid of Caim, might get locked up in the room without graduating the secretary curriculum.

However, since it developed into an endless clash of opinions regarding Viine's education between Caim and Brokra, the pressure felt by Viine only increased.

“Is this the staff room here?” (Hifumi)

Hifumi, who came to see the situation of Alyssa and Viine, muttered that comment after hearing the dispute and ran away without entering the room.

Chapter 161 – Animals

Even while having his hatred towards Hifumi flaring up once again, the tiger beastman Malfas, who was persuaded by Gengu, returned to the beginning of the wastelands after being led by a soldier of Fokalore.

“Thank you very much ~ssu. On top of accompanying us until here, even souvenirs...” (Gengu)

A bundle with daily necessities and foodstuff given to him as souvenirs from Orsongrande is tied on the back of Gengu who bowed his head to the soldier of Fokalore.

Even the back of the gloomily silent Malfas next to him had a large baggage affixed to it.

“Don’t mind it. By nature we don’t know what Lord-sama is thinking. It’s a little apology because he acts like a bad person though he is a good-natured fellow.”

“Please take care of Viine-san and Puuse-san.” (Gengu)

“Yeah, Viine-san has probably arrived in Fokalore by now. Since she will be warmly welcomed if it’s our guys, I don’t think there’s anything to worry about. If it’s Puuse-san, won’t she be popular anywhere, seeing that elves are strong at magic and that she is such a beauty to boot?”

“Then I’m relieved”, Gengu laughs alongside the soldier of Fokalore and pulls Malfas’ clothes.

“Ah, well then we will head out now ~ssu.” (Gengu)

“Well then, stay healthy. Come visit once again if you ever feel like it.”

“We will definitely come back one day ~ssu.” (Gengu)

Gengu lowered his head to the soldier of Fokalore who bid him farewell while waving his hand strongly and began to walk.

Malfas walks at a slightly quicker pace in front of Gengu.

After walking for around two hours, the environment completely changes into

that of forests and wastelands with no traces of a human city visible. Even though he sees the forests and wasteland which should be dear to him, after leaving the human city, Gengu can't settle down his mind in all honesty. *From now on we will continue to travel for some time while sleeping outdoors.* Thinking about that, his footsteps become heavy.

“I guess I got completely used to the human city as well. Do we have to go to a place with as many ponds as possible ~ssu? Even if we do meet unexpectedly with the demons again... mmh?” (Gengu)

Gengu moves his ears with a twitch. What they picked up is a great number of footsteps.

“Malfas! A great number of footsteps is approaching! We have to hide!” (Gengu)

While saying that, Gengu grabbed Malfas hand and hid in the shade of a nearby rock.

He also lowers the baggage from his back for the sake of being able to escape without any burden when push comes to shove.

“Aren't those beastmen moving in a group?” (Malfas)

“They are too slow-footed for that to be the case. There's also the clanking sounds of armours. In all probability, it's the demons.” (Gengu)

“We won't fight? If it's beastmen...” (Malfas)

Malfas breaks off and keeps silent after receiving Gengu's stare.

“Malfas... if you speak any further, I will leave you behind here.” (Gengu)

The footsteps are still far away and they seem to be exhausted. Even for demons, the footsteps are too slow and too disconnected.

Gengu sat down and leaned against the rock.

“Why did the beastmen live inside the forest scattered all over? Malfas, did you never consider that?” (Gengu)

“T-That's because they settled according to their tribes...” (Malfas)

“No, it's different.” (Gengu)

Thrusting a hand in his luggage, he took out a sandwich with plenty of meat put in-between.

Splitting that into two pieces, he handed one piece to Malfas and bit into the other one.

“Tigers and wolves... us and you, even those of the same tribe split up into several settlements. Putting it the other way, even humans and elves lived together, not to speak of the dispersed beastmen in the slums.” (Gengu)

Malfas also bites into the sandwich and enjoys the taste of the meat which was blended with a fragrant sauce. Suddenly he remembers that he never ate food, that was prepared like this, when he lived in the forest. He stares at the sandwich with complicated feelings.

“In the end it’s just as you said before, fight if you see another tribe and be simply satisfied with surviving from day to day. And that’s why the beastmen never progressed. ... In reality I should have thought about that a lot more during my time in the slums. Seeing the humans’ cities... or rather, Hifumi-san’s city, I was forced to realize the real meaning for the first time.” (Gengu)

“However, since beastmen are strong, they can live in the wastelands. We even repelled the humans...” (Malfas)

Gengu laughed scornfully with a “Humph” at Malfas objection.

“Until now, that is. There’s nothing that never changes. Beastmen slaves decreased in number and we learned how to create a city and live in it. We also comprehended that it’s possible to live together with other races. Of course there are bad things. The demons, the lot that became free; there’s no doubt that they hate the elves. Even the humans learned various ways of fighting after being taught by Hifumi-san. We were taught as well, but if you ask me whether we are able to use that knowledge skilfully, I guess there’s still a long way to go for that to happen.” (Gengu)

He shows the remaining sandwich and swings it around.

“For us there are very likely many things that we haven’t learned yet and if we did, are unable to do. Being able to make delicious food is one of them...”

(Gengu)

He tosses the remaining sandwich in his mouth and drinks some water from his flask.

“Probably the guys, who have been living in separate settlements until now, have been crushed by the demons or killed by the humans. Trying to enable the beastmen to use traps and group combat or having them take lessons in magic from the elves shows that Reni-san probably understands that not only the humans of Swordland are our enemies... Do you know why I decided to follow Reni-san?” (Gengu)

Malfas shook his head.

For an instant he wondered whether Gengu lost to Reni. That’s after all the most simple and basic means of deciding the relationship between fellow beastmen. However, the abilities between a sheep beastman and a wolf beastman are fundamentally too different.

Gengu held up his hand with its sharp claws and furrowed his brows.

“Beastmen are proud of their speed and strength, and thus there are only guys who think that everything can be decided by that. If there’s a guy who’s stronger than me, I either run away or succumb to them. Only those two options.” (Gengu)

“However, Reni and Helen are different”, Gengu remembers the time when he met those two for the first time.

“Reni-san lowered the amount of enemies by increasing her friends. Turning them into allies, she tried to create an even better livelihood. She showed us a method to get benefits by making friends without fighting.” (Gengu)

“... That is, wasn’t she taught that by that man?” (Malfas)

“You idiot. Don’t you use your head properly?” (Gengu)

Drinking one more sip of water, he puts the flask back into the bundle of luggages.

“I don’t think that a *person who advances everything by using fighting strength* to the degree of Hifumi-san exists. Whether it’s humans or beastmen, he will kill them if they become his enemies and he will use them as bait if they are his allies. What makes Reni-san amazing is that she only used the good parts

of what she was taught by such guy. That ain't normal. In a good meaning.”
(Gengu)

Even Gengu thinks that Viine's reaction towards Hifumi as female beastman is more befitting than Reni's. Thinking that she wants his children if he's a strong male is a natural response for a female beastman. It's her instinct telling her that it's necessary to leave behind descendants.

“Once we return to the slums, try to look a bit more precisely at the things Reni-san does. And, maybe with what feelings the surroundings get in contact with Reni-san, I guess. Surviving and fighting one's enemy aren't necessarily the same thing. I think you know that.” (Gengu)

He quietly looked in the direction of the approaching sound from within the shade of the rock.

A group of demons is walking through the wastelands while scuttling.

A single one-armed demon, who was the only one on a mount, was advancing in the lead. Apparently for the sake of closing the arm's injury, many bandages were tightly wrapped around his chest.

His expression is a mixture of pain and rage.

All of the soldiers had tired expressions. They were silent while having postures looking as if they were being crushed by heavy baggages.

“... The humans repelled even the demon soldiers... eh?” (Gengu)

The things which he had to tell Reni increased.

Just how much blood will flow from now on in the wastelands? Pondering about that sickening future even if it's just a prediction, Gengu growled while baring his fangs.



“Being appointed to Earl Tohno, I'm glad to see you in good health...” (Hifumi)

“Such a greetings is good. It also means that you remember my face.”
(Phyrinion)

The former female knight Phyrinion, who's the messenger that brought the handwritten letter of the queen, gave up on Hifumi, who completely ignores the customs of nobles as usual, with a smile.

“Besides, I thought that you stopped being a knight after getting married, but I guess you are still serving the country.” (Hifumi)

“To be precise, as the family status of my household is higher than that of my husband Vaiya’s, it took the shape of him being adopted into my family, that has only a daughter, as son-in-law. With me managing the territory, my husband has kept serving as knight.” (Phyrinion)

Phyrinion’s territory, the Viscount Amazelt territory, is in-between the capital and Fokalore, in a place midway separated from the highway. Having a vast, fertile soil, it’s a famous place for being a wheat producing area from before Orsongrande became a nation.

“I see. So, why did you come here as representative of the feudal lord?” (Hifumi)

“One reason is gratitude. The things I was made to study here have been very helpful for my territory. At that time it was very difficult, but if I think back on it now, I had the privilege of indulging in a good experience.” (Phyrinion)

Phyrinion, who stopped being a knight, doesn’t wear a squad’s uniform but a dress. Lightly pinching its hem, she bows.

What she said are her true feelings. It was hard to carry out the territory’s census from the scratch, but once she finished its collation, she discovered the fraud and collusive relationships of the employed civil officials and the fief’s population’s livelihood became a bit easier as well.

Given that the pointless expenses vanished, she was able to get some financial surplus. *I will be able to lead a perfectly comfortable life even after my parent’s retirement*, she felt relieved.

“The other one is me bringing a letter from Her Majesty the Queen...” (Phyrinion)

“From Imeraria?” (Hifumi)

Due to Hifumi holding out his hand while saying “Please show it to me,” Phyrinion placed the letter in his stretched out left hand while wondering *formality and such is really meaningless in front of a strong person, eh?* Although it was Hifumi’s office where she was shown in, it’s originally inadequate for a feudal lord as place to receive guests. Normally there should

be a room for audiences, but Phyrinion also knows that it had been shut down and turned into a rest area for the staff members.

She looks at Hifumi scanning through the letter while thinking about such things. *His characteristic black hair and eyes. His attire that was different from any other country. The single-edged sword which gave birth to his nickname "Knight of the Slender Sword."*

Going by the parts she sees while being silent, he's a younger boy with a somewhat piercing look.

However, in fact he killed many people inside and outside the country and even killed the king in Orsongrande with his own hands. Or rather, he killed the king in the beginning when he made his appearance in history.

(I wonder, why was such person added as noble of this country...?) (Phyrinion)

It seemed like Vaiya didn't know the full details, but from the documents of the Third Knight Order he belonged to and going by Imeraria's decrees, it had been a plan to win over Hifumi, who obtained flashy achievements after he apparently came in contact with the wrong target, so that he wouldn't be taken by another country.

Whether that was successful or not; the conclusion of that hasn't become apparent yet.

Suddenly Hifumi's gaze seizes Phyrinion.

"She has written a drawn-out, forced reason, but in short she tells me to come to the capital." (Hifumi)

Throwing the letter on the desk, Hifumi grabbed a cup and drank the tea in it.

"It might be about your activities in Horant? I don't know the details, but there might be some kind of reward?" (Phyrinion)

"No chance." (Hifumi)

Hifumi easily rejected Phyrinion's assumption.

"In Horant, Imeraria and Nelgal just frantically cleaned up the mess caused by an idiot. I passed my time by rampaging around after getting angry. In the first place, she would have probably written it, if that was the case." (Hifumi)

According to Hifumi's prediction, the most likely reason is that she wants information about the demons and beastmen. Although she shouldn't be aware

that he has already gone to attack the demons.

“She might be troubled over her treatment of the elf Puuse.” (Phyrinion)

“That one is a honour student-chan, so that will hardly be the case.” (Hifumi)

“What’s that about?” (Phyrinion)

“It’s something private”, Hifumi shook the hand with the glove on it.

“That hand... did it get injured?” (Phyrinion)

Even though she believes that to be improbable, Phyrinion still asks.

“Ah, this is the result of me cutting it off myself. It’s no big deal.” (Hifumi)

“Cut...” (Phyrinion)

“So, what will you do with me who received this?” (Hifumi)

Phyrinion fixed her posture which fell apart due to her getting surprised and glossed it over with the expression of a lady, but even if she changed her make-up, she still had some masculine traces of her time as knight remaining.

“As it’s written. Please go to the capital and meet with Her Majesty the Queen. You will be probably told the full details over there.” (Phyrinion)

“Good grief, even though I just came back... so, will you serve as my escort on the trip, Phyrinion?” (Hifumi)

“You jest... I will return to my territory. Before that, I’d like you to allow me to stay in the Tohno Earldom for a while. Do I have your permission?” (Phyrinion)

“Do as you like. Do you want to study something again?” (Hifumi)

“No, I planned to learn about Vichy’s movements... and in addition to that, about the movements of the demons I heard about on the way here.”

(Phyrinion)

“Hmm.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi reacted disinterestedly, but in his mind he praised her. He highly regards those gathering intelligence, and on top of that properly grasping the place where the important movements happen.

It will be great if a lot more of such people appear. Once that happens, this

world's battles will become even more complex and unpredictable.

“If it’s about that, it’s best to go to the border city Rhone. A temporary public office has been set up there. You probably know Miyukare and Paryu. If you listen to their story, you will probably find out various things. About the demons as well. Doelgar is there as well, but that one is a guy people won’t understand even if they understand the matter at hand. If it’s about hearing the story, Paryu would be the best.” (Hifumi)

“It might as well be fine for you to go together with the relief soldiers”, due to Hifumi calling Caim, Phyrinion couldn’t calm down as she felt like she was entrapped in some snare.

“I will, right... depart in around three days.” (Hifumi)

“I appreciate your efforts on delivering the letter”, tapping Phyrinion’s shoulder, Hifumi informed Caim, who finally arrived, about his task and quickly left the room.

Chapter 162 – Holiday

The apparent excitement of Origa, who directly heard about her and Hifumi departing for the capital from him, made her to some extent unapproachable for those who knew and those who didn't know about the circumstances.

Origa spent the few days until the departure going full throttle with her troublesome character, feeling several times more jealous than a normal woman and having a desire to monopolize him at the level of a normal woman. Even while preparing the luggage, she did so with a rough nasal breathing as if completely threatening her surroundings or saying that she doesn't want anyone to attend to her.

Going by Hifumi's character, Origa knew that if she told him "I want to go together with you", he would give her permission to do as she likes as long as there are no special circumstances. She also understood how to act so that his decision didn't change.

The person concerned, Hifumi, spent his time until the day of the travel by going to buy food and suitable magic tools in Fokalore and tossing them into his darkness storage, developing new weapons with Prufilas and training with Caim and the other soldiers.

Snuggling up to his side, Origa accompanied him on his shopping in the city, participated in the training and made sure to not separate from Hifumi as much as possible.

"Lord and his wife have a really nice relationship."

"Isn't that a good thing? It seems like some uproar is once again happening in Vichy, but thanks to Lord, there's not the slightest danger to our side."

And so on. Hifumi, who eats in the same restaurant as the commoners and wanders aimlessly around the town without any guards although he's an appointed noble, and Origa, who can be seen to gently nestle close to him, were warmly watched by the people of the city of Fokalore.

However, the people, who know Origa well since they are serving in the feudal lord's mansion, cannot take such carefree attitude.

That's because Origa is fixedly staring at them from close-by while they are

talking with Hifumi. Although nothing happens as long as they don't talk about the trip or the capital, they are immediately glared at and pressured with blood thirst as soon as the topic of going to the capital comes up.

“In the end, for a number of reasons, they haven't done many things befitting newly-weds, have they?” (Alyssa)

“Haa... newly-weds, is it?” (Viine)

Inside the study room, Alyssa started to talk to Viine, who's studying opposite of her, while waving her quill pen around, once Caim stepped outside for work. With that subject being brought up without prior warning, Viine lifts her eyes from the textbook and gives a half-hearted reply.

“In the beginning, you know, Origa-san, who was a slave at that time, and another person accompanied Hifumi-san. Even when I joined them, we were just four people.” (Alyssa)

Looking up at the ceiling, Alyssa seemed as if she was watching a distant place. Viine didn't know who the **other person** she talked about was. *However, her deliberately not mentioning the name has probably some kind of reason, she thought.*

“That means master had a lover and wife who was a slave?” (Viine)

Since Viine heard about Origa originally being a slave, she wasn't surprised about that, but she can't imagine Hifumi and Origa acting like lovers.

“Lover... yea... Achoo!” (Alyssa)

The tip of the quill pen, she swung with her fingers, tickled Alyssa's nose causing her to sneeze.

“Uuh... rather than lover, it resembled more the relation of a pupil or a retainer. As a matter of fact, her way of fighting was mostly fixed and trained by Hifumi. It looks like she ended up changing her weapon back then, too. I guess it was around that time when she stopped using a wand?” (Alyssa)

“At the time when I met them I didn't have much leeway either”, Alyssa laughs.

And, she was at least able to change it into a funny story. As soon as she

thought of what happened in the past, she felt slightly lonely.

“If you consider it like that, various people got in contact with Hifumi and became his friends or enemies, but the one who thought first of getting close to him was Origa, right? There are many people who serve him like Caim and the others, but the one who is planning to do the same things he does while standing shoulder-to-shoulder with him is only Origa, isn’t she?”

People like Kasha and Pajou who died after becoming hostile to him, people like Sabnak who hasn’t become his comrade but still cooperates with him and people like Imeraria who get manipulated; the faces of all the people Alyssa knows float in her mind.

“Are you different, Alyssa-sama?” (Viine)

“Yeah?” (Alyssa)

Alyssa couldn’t understand Viine’s question well.

“Umm, in other words, didn’t you consider wanting to become just like his wife?” (Viine)

“Ah~, I see...” (Alyssa)

The former Vichy territory, Arosel, that has now become a part of Tohno Earldom. Alyssa clearly remembers the events at the time when she was rescued by Hifumi from the violence she suffered there. The memories of the pain have faded, but the fear, that made her want to die due to the helplessness she intensely felt at that time, was deeply carved into Alyssa without having vanished yet.

If it’s now, she knows that her emotions at that time were yearning and the awakening of a love she wasn’t aware of herself.

“... It’s different, I think. I like Hifumi-san, but that’s respect towards a strong person. Therefore... therefore I will become Hifumi’s adopted child, the responsibility is heavy, but I’m happy, is what I believe...” (Alyssa)

The tears that overflow gradually, spill down along her cheeks finally.

“Geeze, how embarrassing... I wonder why...” (Alyssa)

Viine quietly approached Alyssa, who had laid her face on the desk with her

shoulders trembling, and gently stroke her back.

“I know. I’m not able to do the same things as Origa-san... that’s why...”
(Alyssa)

Viine continued to stroke Alyssa who at last burst into tears after raising her voice.



The day before the departure to the capital.
Early morning. Origa participated in the training carried out by Hifumi.
Inside the forest slightly off the highway once one leaves the city of Fokalore.
Though monsters appear here often as well, it doesn’t matter to Hifumi at all.

This place that lacked the hustle and bustle of people and had the aroma of trees and greenery was the favourite place of Hifumi.

Origa and him sit in seiza next to each other on the grass with closed eyes. Besides the presence of Origa who's next to him, he can feel weak monsters discovering the presence of people and running away.

While calming down his mind with the scent of nature hitting his nostrils, he digs up the memories of his battles in Horant and Vichy. He reproduces the fighting inside his head. Although he has a feeling of satisfaction towards all his moves, there's also introspection.

Couldn't I have killed them faster? Wasn't it possible to take their lives in a more efficient way?

And, in order to make use of that in the coming battles, he closely inspects his movements. All of it is for the sake of realizing the perfect slaughtering. Even now his desire to murder is gushing out like an endless spring. For the sake of letting it out at any time.

A tree towers in front of Hifumi who quietly opened his eyes.

The trunk that has a thickness of several arms, grows directly into the sky and the lush leaves expand towards the sun.

One blow of drawing the katana and attacking in the same stroke, the katana's point is turned towards the trunk and stops. Leaving less than a millimeter distance, it barely doesn't scratch the rind. It's an act he occasionally does for the sake of confirming his own sensation and the length of his own weapon. He knows the length of his own katana better than anyone else, but just because of that it doesn't necessarily mean that the length of his own arms won't change at all. There's also the possibility that the state of the rivet on the sword hilt slightly shifts. This was also a ritual to check that.

“Well then, let's begin?” (Hifumi)

“Yes. Please treat me well.” (Origa)

Standing up in concord with Hifumi, Origa held the iron-ribbed fan in her left hand and bowed.

Opposite of her, Hifumi places both hands at the base of his legs and naturally bows in a smooth manner.

Lifting their faces at the same time, they readied their weapons.

The iron-ribbed fan, grasped by Origa in her left hand is still closed.

Hifumi draws the katana and takes a seigan stance.

There's nothing like encouraging yells.

The footsteps from Hifumi, who steps in silently, are inaudible.

Origa shows absolutely no nervousness towards Hifumi who is approaching as if gliding. She firmly turns the iron-ribbed fan's tip at Hifumi's middle forehead.

Hifumi's attack comes directly from the front being swung down from above.

Origa steps diagonally forward, slips below his arm and blade, and wields her iron-ribbed fan with a side sweep.

At the time when Hifumi stopped the katana at the height of his waist, the iron-ribbed fan came to a stop at a distance where it's unclear whether it touches his neck or not.

After several seconds, they separate in silence while remaining on guard.

The distance at the time when they returned and the distance at the time when they prepared while facing each other in the beginning is completely the same.

“Next.” (Hifumi)

“Yes.” (Origa)

They don't talk about what has to be done.

They are already at a stage where explaining such things is unnecessary.

Origa loosens her mouth that was tightly closed a bit and slowly exhales through her faintly opened lips.

The next slash unexpectedly comes to sever her knee from the side.

Pulling back her right leg, she advances her left leg into the space where the katana passed through.

She lowers her iron-ribbed fan at the head of Hifumi who went down on his kness.

And stops just before it.

After taking several seconds, they separate.



From then on Origa strikes back against Hifumi, who repeatedly comes at her with attacks that included kicks and consecutive slashes and thrusts, with the movements she had her body master.

Hifumi's movements are far slower than at the time of normal combat, but

there are no useless motions and there's not a splinter of hesitation as he smoothly performs his footwork. His skilled movements, unrelated to something like speed, made it difficult for the person facing him to react. Even so, Origa deals with the attacks that are released randomly. She properly moves to unleash counter-attacks that can cause a fatal wound.

Origa, who was frozen stiff due to tension in the past because of the attacks where she didn't know what will come next as there was no prior arrangement, became now able to move naturally as she got used to her weapon and piled up real combat experience.

However, the movements of Hifumi, who gradually raised the speed, became untrackable for Origa's eyes. She barely handles them by relying on the initial motion from his stance.

With her return attacks being avoided as well, the number of attacks increases to two then three without it finishing at one attack as before.

Even while evading the dangerous thrust towards her face as second attack, she fails to deal with the diagonal slash and is also unable to counter-attack. At the second time she was unable to dodge the thrust coming to pierce her chest.

“Uuh...” (Origa)

She stepped forward with a foot to support her crumbling posture. Believing that she would be definitely pierced in the chest by the thrust, Origa unconsciously closed her eyes.

However, the pain she resolved herself for doesn't come.

“Don't shut your eyes. Do it with the intention of accepting the outcome no matter what happens.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi matched the staggering Origa and drew back the katana. When she looks down at her chest with a face that's dripping with sweat, the katana's point has stopped at a distance where it barely won't reach her body though it touches her clothes.

Looking at her face being reflected on the sword's blade that's glittering in the morning sun, Origa tightly bit her back teeth.

“Let's stop at this place today?” (Hifumi)

“No, with this it won't become training for you, Hifumi-sama. Please let me

help you.” (Origa)

Due to Origa requesting a continuation with an imploring stare while the sweat gushes out from her face, Hifumi tossed a cloth at her for the sake of wiping away the sweat.

“In that case, first adjust your breathing and wipe the sweat away. Remove your sluggishness by drinking water.” (Hifumi)

“Yes...” (Origa)

Hifumi held out the apple-like fruit he picked up in the wastelands to Origa who is wiping her face and neck briskly.

“Your movements aren’t bad. It will become better once your body gets used to not having its movements disturbed even if faigue appears.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi also eats a mouthful of another fruit he took out. Plenty of bittersweet juice passes through his throat and moistens it.

“After you stopped being wielded by your weapon, all of importance that’s left is repetition...” (Hifumi)

It’s Hifumi’s pet theory that technique is something that will permeate into the body after watching it and getting familiar with it. Though it’s something he put into practice, he also knows that it’s difficult. There are many reasons why young students stop coming to a dojo, but one of them was “I got tired of repeatedly doing the same boring movements.”

“Yes. Please treat me well from now on as well!” (Origa)

Even Origa, who replied with a smile, savoured the fruit while looking happy as she ate it.

Finishing the short break, both of them stand up once again and face each other.

“Well then, we will change the attacker and defender. Any kind of attack is fair. It’s also fine for you to use magic. Come at me with everything you’ve got.” (Hifumi)

“Yes! I will!” (Origa)

Origa, who had readied her iron-ribbed fan, clashes with Hifumi using all her

power.

I have a partner to whom I can direct my wholehearted trust and good will. He will receive my full power. What happiness! Just how blessed am I?

I might not catch up to him even if I use all my life. Thus I will follow him until the end of my life.

A thrust that avoids a thrust. In exchange for that, she performs a side sweep at his feet, but jumping up a hit comes down at her. Even while evading that by rolling over, she kicks towards his flank, but the pommel of his katana thwarts that.

The rendezvous where sparks scatter between just the two of them, continued until Origa couldn't move anymore due to fatigue. Given the situation, Hifumi carries her to the feudal lord's mansion. It's a fact that she had the ulterior motive of aiming for that, but showing her exhausted state, Origa gently places her head against Hifumi's shoulder while breathing roughly.

“... You are a strange one.” (Hifumi)

In Origa's case, she had the intention to appeal to Hifumi by showing an erotic, flushed face, but since her mouth slackens with a grin, it didn't look to Hifumi as anything but getting high due to being too exhausted.

The best effort of Origa, who has little experience in love, doesn't reach Hifumi.

Chapter 163 – Fragile

Letting the remnants of the defeated demon army pass, Gengu and Malfas traverse the wastelands while keeping a distance so that they don't catch up with them. Gengu wondered whether they will deviate towards another direction sooner or later, but, no matter how much time passes, they follow the same path.

“What's this about? Are those guys possibly heading towards the slums...?”
(Gengu)

They don't have an aura as if they are about to head into battle from now on, however it's not entirely impossible that they changed their target to the beastmen living in the slums after having lost to the humans.

“Gengu-san...” (Malfas)

Looking at Malfas who watches him uneasily, Gengu decides to change their planned route towards advancing through the forests as much as possible. *I'm afraid of the possibility of being attacked by other beastmen, but if it's just running away, we will manage somehow.*

“We will enter the forest. It might get difficult, but we haven't any other choice but to hurry in order to inform Reni.” (Gengu)

“Got it.” (Malfas)

Closing in on the demon group a bit, he confirmed that they are definitely heading in the direction of Swordland. The two of them got off the path quietly and went into the forest.

Once they have entered a depth where Gengu judges that they aren't visible by the demons, they advance at a quick pace.

“Hifumi is currently in the human cities. As you could see from him following us, that person travels quickly as well. He won't hesitate to go towards a battlefield. If he sees the demons coming to attack, he will likely repel them quickly... maybe those demons were actually repelled by Hifumi.” (Gengu)

Listening to Gengu's talk, Malfas fell into silence.

Malfas somehow manages to accompany Gengu who is fast on his feet as should be expected of a wolf beastman. After listening to Gengu's predictions, Malfas, who pondered about it while running to an extent that it's more than enough, opened his mouth as he is following Gengu,

“Do the demons still intend to fight against the humans?” (Malfas)

“If I ponder about what they are planning... I've no idea. They might have learned their lesson this time. Likewise they might attack once again after having finished their preparations. Or...” (Gengu)

The worst possibility of Gengu's predictions is that they could come to the conclusion to bolster their insufficient **numbers**, compared to the humans, by having the beastmen obey to them as subordinates. *If the destination of the of the demon soldiers we saw just now is Swordland as expected, and if they are planning to attack that place, their target will likely be the beastmen living in that city.*

“Unfortunately my head can't process things so far ahead. Since I've always left the thinking part to others, there's no other option but to spend our time on preparing as much as possible so that we are able to fight.” (Gengu)

“Reni-san and the others don't have any intention to fight with anyone, I think?” (Malfas)

Gengu snorted due to Malfas' remark.

“There are parts where I want to say... 'not like I would know', but there's one thing that's definite.” (Gengu)

Gengu stops and looks at Malfas' face.

“Reni-san won't emotionally choose an option that seems like it'll expose her comrades to danger. If there's nothing she has to protect by all means or no way to definitely win, she won't drag her comrades into an unreasonable battle, I'm sure.” (Gengu)

At the time when Gengu became a slave, the leader of the village had decided to fight. As a result of that, half of his friends had been pointlessly killed and the remaining survivors had all been turned into slaves. Though he had just recently heard of it, but half of his friends that had been turned into slaves have already

died.

If their leader was someone capable of making decisions like Reni, he might have at least considered to retreat temporarily to reorganize.

No, if we had been a group that decided its leader by judging their accomplishments and not just a savage group that settles on a leader simply going by their strength...

After half-heartedly getting to know Reni's methods, this popped up in Gengu's head many times, but, as it's something that can't be helped even if he broods over it now after such long time, he pushed back those thoughts inside his memories.

"Anyway, for now we have to hurry to return to the slums... Hide!" (Gengu)

He grabs the luggage Malfas is carrying and forcibly pulls it behind a tree. After telling Malfas to conceal himself, Gengu silently checked their front from within the shade of the tree. It looked as if several figures of people moved about.

"I don't know what kind of beastmen live around here, but I pray that they are a gentle lot..." (Gengu)

He watches fixedly for several seconds. Gengu felt relieved when he saw the ears of a rabbit atop a distant thicket. *If it's a rabbit beastman, they probably won't come attacking us all of a sudden. If it's a human, it's quite unlikely for them to have brought along a rabbit beastman that has no combat strength despite having entered a forest in the wastelands area.*

"Stand up, Malfas. It's a rabbit-san." (Gengu)

Gengu quickly picked up his dropped luggage and, once Malfas had also fixed all the luggage that had been thrown into disarray due to him lying down, they approached the rabbit ears.

The face that appeared after roughly pushing its way through the grass with a rustling was that of Helen. Leading several beastmen, she draws nears to in front of Gengu at a fast pace.

"... Gengu-san?" (Helen)

"Helen-san!? What are you doing in this place!?" (Gengu)

“That’s my line. Haven’t you gone to meet Hifumi-san? Did you get lost?”
(Helen)

Gengu burst out in laughter due to Helen’s joke, but Malfas had a bitter expression.

“Your numbers have decreased as well... What did actually happen?” (Helen)

“It’s a long story ~ssu”, Gengu explained as simple as possible that Viine and Puuse remained in the human country and about Malfas’ relationship with Hifumi.

Hearing that, Helen looks curious and says 「Puuse-san, too, eh...?» Since Helen knows that Puuse herself only went there with the intention of accompanying Viine, she never expected her to actually stay behind, too.

“I just went on patrol to check the surrounding area and to search for food, but you are just right in time.” (Helen)

“In what way?” (Gengu)

“That is, you know...” (Helen)

After Helen mumbled under her breath as if it was difficult to say while fiddling with one of her long ears with her fingers, she said “I have to tell you, don’t I?” and continued,

“Since the demons came to attack us, we abandoned the slums with everyone and entered the forest. And so we built a simple village ahead of here.” (Helen)

It took a bit time until Gengu understood what Helen had told him. That’s because he didn’t actually expect Reni to completely realize the evacuation he had pondered about until some time ago.

“So, a little problem has cropped up...” (Helen)

“It’s about them not wanting to return to the forest after all, isn’t it?” (Gengu)

Helen shakes her head at Gengu’s question.
Even her ears that are slowly shaking looked somewhat dejected.

“We ended up splitting into a group, which accepted Reni’s opinion of letting the strife go past inside the forest, and one that wants to take back the slums by mounting a counter-attack.” (Helen)

At that moment Malfas came to one decision, but none of those present noticed that.



On the travel of Hifumi towards the capital, his only attendant was his wife, Origa, which was also a result of her great efforts towards that effect.

Everyone knows that there was no need for an escort to begin with, and many people were also aware that Hifumi could use storage magic.

Therefore there wasn't a single person that considered it odd for the two of them mounting a horse each and leaving the city without using a carriage.

The setting-off that hadn't been particularly announced was only seen off by Caim, Viine and Alyssa at the mansion. The citizens, seeing the two of them wearing lightweight equipment, let them pass by while probably thinking that they were just going for a walk.

Of course they weren't stopped at the time they left the city of Fokalore. While being warmly showered with the looks of the soldiers, the feudal lord couple passed through the gate while slowly swaying on their horses.

"Have a good trip!"

"Please take care!"

Hifumi replied to the voices of the soldiers with a light wave of his left hand and even Origa quietly waved her hands.

Two horses leisurely advanced on the highway below a slightly cloudy sky. Since the merchants and, of course, the soldiers patrolling the highway in the vicinity of Fokalore know Hifumi's face, they greet him or salute to him upon sight. That's probably because the story that he isn't as moody as other nobles has sunk into the people's mind.

A while passed since he had been summoned to this world, but Hifumi has no intention to return to something as worthless as a class system. *It will be troublesome if there's no money. And I know that war costs money. If there's money, people can operate based on their grasp of gains and losses.*

If it's the first generation that obtained that social status, it's probably fine as it shows the value of that person, he thinks. But if you talk about social status that was handed over due to succession, there's no value to it above "it's a system for the sake of not allowing chaos to spread in the social structure", if one

evaluates it as favourably as possible.

That's why I have no hesitation to abandon my social status of Earl, seeing that Alyssa accepted it reliably.

Although it was out of convenience, I feel like conflict won't come around to my place, if I end up in a strange position that employs others. It was an irritating feeling.

Even if there's resentment and jealousy, those won't be able to approach me as long as I have a certain social standing. If the opportunities to expose myself to enemies decreases, won't the chances to kill others vanish in accordance? Aren't there possibly some people who gave up on their revenge because their opponent is a noble while I was staying in the feudal lord's mansion? If I consider it like that, I feel like it's something far too wasteful after finally having come to a different world.

“It would probably be great if I could simple-mindedly kill without having to ponder about unnecessary things.” (Hifumi)

However, in the end it's quite likely for that to become a repetitive, empty and simple work just like spending time on mowing grass. Even now I remember the dismay at the time I learned of the battles of this country after meeting Origa.

『Are there by chance only people who can't fight decently in this world?』

I killed knights, kings, adventurers and monsters.

All of them were people where you couldn't even call it a fight.

I asked Origa afterwards, but it seems that the adventurer I cut into two halves in the guild belonged to a reasonably strong category. Even the adventurer I killed in Arosel was called the top adventurer in that area. I should enforce my plan to spread fighting after all, he ascertained his own way of thinking.

“Once I do so, it will soon enter the final stages of the plan depending on what Imeraria and the demons are planning to do, won't it?” (Hifumi)

Those were words he had only murmured for some reason or another, but Origa tightly grasped the reins with her shoulders trembling.

“Hifumi-sama...” (Origa)

“What's up?” (Hifumi)

Origa produced a smile due to Hifumi answering her in his usual way.

“Can we drop by a village famous for its hot baths along the way since we are in no hurry? I’m certain that they will have delicious food as well.” (Origa)

“Yeah, that’s a nice idea. Let’s do that since various developments will likely become apparent by moving slowly. Or rather, I will leave the path to the royal capital to you, Origa. Please make a short visit at any place you want to go to.” (Hifumi)

Suddenly being assigned an important task, Origa stiffened while staring in wonder.

“Really, my travels until now weren’t calm and went this way and that way in my pursuit of the battlefield. Since it’s a long-awaited occasion, let’s proceed while eating delicious stuff and enjoying some proper sightseeing. You were busy as well, Origa, weren’t you? I think this way of handling things is fine once in a while. After all I don’t know whether there will be such opportunity after this.” (Hifumi)

“Y-Yes.” (Origa)

Origa spilled tears before realizing it while eagerly recalling inside her head where there are sightseeing spots and famous local products along the highway towards the capital and at places slightly away from it.

Hifumi’s kindness ended up being perceived as apology towards her by Origa. *His objective is peace down a long, long road. In reality he continues to move without the time to rest due to battles and duties. In the end the word peaceful is nowhere to be found among the objectives of Hifumi.*

Having accepted that, and on top of that, having decided to stay at his side despite that, she hasn’t the slightest intention to complain about it. And although that’s the case, doesn’t Hifumi still feel a slight indebtedness towards Origa for having involved her in his plans?

The back of Hifumi, who is slightly ahead, is no different from usual.

On the day I was bought as slave, at the time when he rampaged around with Vichy as opponent, in the battle with Horant and even at the time he spent actively as feudal lord after obtaining territory; his back always advances straight ahead without any hesitation.

“Dear.” (Origa)

Bringing her horse close, Origa lined up next to him and gently placed her hand on the left hand of Hifumi that was covered by a glove.

Origa heard how the other side of that thin monster skin became as it is now during a pillow talk the other day.

Hifumi will die sooner or later, too. He himself said so as well. There were also situations where he got injured. In reality, the contents of that glove aren't flesh anymore.

“I heard that there's interesting food in the city we will reach by the end of the day. Very likely it's a city you never visited even once, but apparently the vegetables are heartily enveloped by meat and then grilled while using special herbs. I believe that it will suit your taste, dear.” (Origa)

“That sounds great. I got hungry by just hearing you talk about it. Let's lodge in that city today.” (Hifumi)

“Yes, let's do that.” (Origa)

Because I'm a sly woman, I will learn about the person called Hifumi and have him learn about me to the extent that no one will be able to catch up. And I will have Hifumi understand as well: No matter what he does or what he plans to do, there's someone that will always stay close to him.

I will have him accept me as spouse in the truest meaning, in order to hear the words of his heart.

It will happen in time, before the end.

Chapter 164 – Up In The Air

At the time when Phyrinion arrived at the city of Rhone at the border with Vichy and got off the carriage, some among the people, who arrived as refugees, got quite used to the city during those few days and started to do business.

“Although it tends to be overlooked due to Earl Tohno standing out, even the processing speed of the administration in the earldom is wide apart from other territories, isn’t it...?” (Phyrinion)

Hearing it from Caim, she knew about Rhone being used for the sake of receiving the refugees, but confirming with her own eyes that the city has started to function just like a city faster than she imagined, she could only mutter with her eyes opened widely.

“Ojou-sama, where will you be headed next?” (Krinola)

Krinola, who has been following her as maid even after she got married, descended off the carriage while carrying a bag with Phyrinion’s valuables in it. Behind her menservants are waiting for instructions whether they should unload the luggage from the carriage.

“As it seems that they have been able to finish the temporary town hall, let’s visit that place first to give our greetings. Because it will likely be possible for us to get introduced to an inn there as well, take the luggage there.” (Phyrinion)

“Then, with the carriage until then...” (Krinola)

“No, let’s walk while examining the state of the city. We will leave the carriage here on standby. Once the inn has been decided, we will call the carriage over.” (Phyrinion)

Having put on boots with low heels that are easy to walk in before arriving at the city, she strolls through the city that’s enveloped in an atmosphere which is starting to get lively, despite still being chaotic, while only taking Krinola along.

“Simple stalls have been set up. Let’s grab something light to eat.” (Phyrinion)

“O-Ojou-sama, eating food from stalls, you say?” (Krinola)

It's only to be expected for Krinola to be surprised. A noble's daughter eating the rustic food of stalls is rare, or rather it's something that's almost impossible to happen. However, there are exceptions.

“You should know that I'm also a former knight of the Third Knight Order. Living normally inside a city and visiting bars and stalls was ordinary. It's different from food made by our chefs, but such things do possess a different kind of deliciousness.” (Phyrinion)

“It seems they are grilling meat, so let's get that”, Phyrinion walks swiftly and Krinola chases after her in a rush.

What was spreading an savoury aroma in the central part of the city that has turned into a plaza was spit-roasted meat.

Even though she chose a simple appearance for the sake of travelling, a noble daughter in a dress walking without any hesitation towards the stalls is something extremely conspicuous. If this was Fokalore, it would have ended with 「Such nobles exist as well, don't they?」, but the ones organizing this city are mostly refugees from Vichy.

While gathering many stares, Phyrinion still arrived at the stalls without feeling timid.

“Mister, what's that?” (Phyrinion)

“Oh... ah?”

Even the old man at the stall, who answered cheerfully after being addressed while focussing on the roasting, was surprised due to a woman in a dress standing in front of him.

“What's that meat on the skewers?” (Phyrinion)

“R-Right. This is **lion meat**, which was caught by the soldiers of Fokalore, on a skewer... ma'am*.” (T/N: he adds a “desu” at the end to sound more polite)

“As I'm an acquaintance of Earl Tohno, you don't have to mind your language.” (Phyrinion)

Once she mentioned the name of Earl Tohno, the old man showed an enthusiastic, bright expression.

“R-Really!? So, as for this lion meat, it’s a monster which the soldiers of Earl-sama hunt regularly. It’s delicious!”

“I see. Can you give me two of that then?” (Phyrinion)

“Wait a moment. They will be roasted well very soon!”

The old man, who explains that he ran a stall in Vichy as well, looks happy and talks about the period of several days after he came to this city. Being chased out of the city where he lived, he pulled a wagon with just a minimum of luggage after hearing the rumours of being accepted here and finally arrived in this city together with his family.

“After that, not only a home, but even this stall and the arrangements for stocking up were provided to me...”

Before anyone realizing, the old man is moved to tears. Phyrinion listened to him while throwing in agreeable responses at suitable times with the her smiling poker-face she trained during her time as knight.

“It appears that these are also sold at the city called Fokalore. You know, they even politely taught me the way of preparing these. It was my first time eating those as well, but they are delicious.”

After lightly grilling the finely cut meat, it gets thoroughly cooked. The cooked meat is pierced on skewers and gets roasted until its surface becomes crispy.

“Well, it’s finished. Here’s your two skewers.”

Plenty of meat is stuck on the long skewers. Even one skewer easily exceeds 100 grams. It’s an amount that looks like it will fill ones stomach sufficiently.

“How much do I owe you?” (Phyrinion)

“No, no, please take it for free! Seeing as I won’t be able to repay the kindness to Earl Tohno-sama in my life, please let me at least offer this to his friend!”

Due to his oppressive manner, Phyrinion accepted the grilled-meat-on-skewer and thanked him.

Handing one skewer to Krinola, Phyrinion heartily put hers into her mouth while leaving Krinola, who is biting at hers timidly with her small mouth, alone.

“There’s no way that dangerous food is normally sold at stalls”, she accepts that as fact. It’s a common attitude among the former members of the Third Knight Order that was emotionally close to the common people.

After the first crunchy texture, the fat of the meat, which contained the flavour of the vegetables that penetrated it thoroughly during the time of cooking, is overflowing with piping hot steam as it had locked up the savoury aroma during the time of getting roasted.

“It’s delicious...” (Phyrinion)

Rather than the strangely fussy noble cuisine, it allows her to experience a straightforward tastiness to an extent. It being several times tastier than the only-roasted meat skewers sold in the capital is something she slightly can’t agree with.

Once she realizes it, even Krinola is rapidly stuffing her mouth while roughly breathing through her nose.

“Anyway.” (Phyrinion)

Passing the skewer to the old man, Phyrinion gently wiped her mouth.

“There don’t seem to be any problems with Earl Tohno’s reign. It appears that you can even study here. Let’s stop the break at this point and head to the town hall.” (Phyrinion)

Once Phyrinion introduced herself at the town hall, Paryu came down from the second floor to greet her.

Although she looked exhausted, she showed a lovely smile thanks to seeing Phyrinion after a long time.

“Phyrinion-sama, it’s been a while. You are wearing a beautiful dress.” (Paryu)

“Thanks. This city seems to be in a very good state. I can’t believe at all that this city had been destroyed once.” (Phyrinion)

“Hahaha... it was difficult.” (Paryu)

Phyrinion gently places a hand on the shoulder of Paryu who casts her eyes down with a dispirited look.

“S-So, are you inspecting the national border, Phyrinion-sama?” (Paryu)

“Let’s see. Wondering whether I could be helpful to my husband, I planned to confirm the situation with Vichy and the demons since it’s a rare chance, but...”
(Phyrinion)

“In that case, we have gathered the information we heard from all the refugees. I can’t give it to you, but there’s no problem if you transcribe it. Do you wish to look over it?” (Paryu)

As expected, her orders are thorough in regards to information, Phyrinion felt. If this was a feudal lord from another city, they would have been pressed with handling the refugees and wouldn’t even be able to think of gathering information like this.

“Yes, that will be a help. So, was there some aspect that caught your fancy, Paryu? Such as the movements of the demons...” (Phyrinion)

Paryu inclined her head to the side due to Phyrinion’s question.

“If it’s the demons, they have already been repelled by Lord-sama though...?”
(Paryu)

Why don’t you know that? is the feeling of her reaction.

“What?” (Phyrinion)

Once she listens to the details, she learned that Hifumi had long ago attacked the demons who attacked Vichy and moreover snatched the arm of their general after provoking him plentifully.

“E-Earl Tohno didn’t mention that with even a single word...” (Phyrinion)

“It’s probably because he didn’t consider it as important? I heard that he talked about it as if there wasn’t much of a resistance.” (Paryu)

“That’s the problem?” (Phyrinion)

Listening to the detailed account and furthermore looking at the documents prepared by Paryu, Phyrinion was at her wits’ end.

“This is... doesn’t that mean that the humans, including this country, have declared war against the demons without Her Majesty knowing about it?”
(Phyrinion)

If one says it accurately, it was a provocation on the occasion of sending back the military forces that came to scout the humans' power after beating them up, but it doesn't change the result.

The demons had definitely turned into the enemies of humans.

"... I have to report this to Her Majesty through my husband." (Phyrinion)

I intended to send only simple information, but even if I have to employ adventurers, I must report this in as few days as possible.

"I resigned as knight, but that doesn't mean that I will ignore it as noble of this country... Haa, today will be an all-nighter." (Phyrinion)

"I will have Krinola keep me company as well. Tonight I will draw up a lot of documents and then send them first thing in the morning", with that Phyrinion left the room prepared by Paryu. She did so while leaving the documents behind in order to request black tea and the arrangement of adventurers from Krinola who is unpacking the luggage in the adjacent room.



"Please collect as much information about Hifumi-sama's current status as possible. To be precise, it's not just his current status. I don't mind if it's information regarding his previous movements as long as it's something that allows us to predict the situation now." (Imeraria)

At the moment the intelligence that Hifumi departed from Fokalore reached Imeraria, she gathered several people she believes she can trust.

Prime Minister Adol, Royal Guard Captain Sabnak, Vice-Captain Vaiya and Knight Captain Midas. And there's also the elf Puuse who had been officially employed as counsellor in the castle. As for Imeraria, she wanted to have the former Knight Captain Lotomago with her as well, but she felt awkward to involve someone who retired already.

"Moreover I want his abilities to be summarized and inspected once again." (Imeraria)

"That is... what is your objective, Your Majesty? If possible I'd like you to tell us..."

"You don't understand?" (Imeraria)

Due to the fact that it's a talk that mustn't be heard by others, they use the room for conferences as venue and even the maids have been kept out of the room.

In such circumstances Imeraria made Puuse sit next to her and is looking into the eyes of each of the men.

“You want to know Hifumi-san's character... is what you are saying, after such a long time?”

“Right. It's now after such long time. Having been manipulated by the things that man accomplished and did, I forgot to learn what kind of person that man is. ... Besides, it's also about Hifumi-sama's way of fighting.” (Imeraria)

“Concerning the tactics invented by Earl Tohno, it's not limited to our country, but also has been widely and openly made available to Vichy and Horant by him sending instruction units...”

Imeraria countered Vaiya, who advised her with all due respect, with a question.

“Those **tactics** and the **combat technique** Hifumi-sama uses aren't that different, are they?” (Imeraria)

Vaiya is at a loss for words.

“I realized after participating in the dispute with Horant the other day. The protection of Horant, which was trained by a unit dispatched from Fokalore, is at that level and also I heard that everyone of the instruction unit that got killed had received Hifumi-sama's guidance for a long time, but even so they still died due to Horant's attacks. I saw the strength of Hifumi and Origa-san who directly received his guidance, but do you feel as if there's a great difference between those?”

The one who deeply nodded at Imeraria's opinion was Midas.

“Certainly. Earl Tohno's movements are unique. There's no one who can compare to his unmatched strength. The character of someone that accomplishes moving with a large number of soldiers is different. It's difficult for me to express it, but isn't making use of troops as he has been teaching a motion so that one doesn't have to fight by themselves?” (Midas)

“I see. It’s surely as you say, Midas-san. That man likes to fight by himself. He hates someone else stealing his enemies.”

Sabnak agrees and Vaiya consents as well.

“Are you saying then that you wish to investigate the movements of Earl Tohno as individual, Your Majesty?”

Starting with the former Third Knight Order, Imeraria solidified her foundation through the military faction. Having said that, I wonder about him being a research subject for her as queen, Adol was worried, but her objective isn’t simple research.

“The goal is a **counter-plan** against the person called Earl Tohno.” (Imeraria)

The atmosphere of her major vassals becomes tense straight away. Although they open their eyes widely, no one tries to open their mouth. What’s filling them is fright and worry. None of those present at this place except Puuse knows someone who lived after after opposing Hifumi. Imeraria predicted that reaction.

“As everyone thinks, it’s a dangerous objective. It’s something that should be carried out carefully and discreetly. Hence, the investigation is a preparation for that.” (Imeraria)

“Umm... is that all right with you?” (Sabnak)

The one asking uneasily is Sabnak. According to his position he wants to prevent Imeraria approaching danger. He wants to stop it, but if it’s her will, that’s not going to happen. Him getting her to change her mind by herself would be the best solution, but there’s no hesitation in Imeraria’s look.

“I have already decided. For the sake of protecting not only this country but also this world, that man’s existence isn’t necessary anymore.” (Imeraria)

“I’m well aware that I’m saying something selfish”, Imeraria explains.

“As long as that man exists, he will likely continue to manipulate this country and this world. A lot of blood will flow and countless disasters will be brought forth. ... I also won’t deny that I have a personal grudge.” (Imeraria)

Imeraria didn't talk much about her family that had been killed by Hifumi. "That doesn't mean that I forgave him", she simply mutters.

"As for the method; I'm planning to use the magic sealing formula which I researched after it was discovered by Adol-san. Besides, I will have Puuse-san cooperate with us as well. As first step in order to make the sealing a success, we will use barrier magic." (Imeraria)

For the sake of obtaining this assistance, Imeraria promised Puuse protection and cooperation with the elves and the beastmen who became their friends, but since that also has merits for Orsongrande, it's close to an assistance without any compensation.

"And I have asked for the assistance of another certain person in order for the plan to definitely succeed. I have already gotten their agreement." (Imeraria)

Imeraria, who had talked for an unusually long time, suddenly felt a her throat being dry. She noticed that she had become tense without realizing it before.

She wets her throats with no more than a mouthful black tea.

"... It's Hifumi-sama's wife, Origa-san." (Imeraria)