

悠島蘭

[イラスト] teffish

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てられた
勇者は魔王となりて
死に帰る

Suterareta Yuusha no Eiyuutan

Arc 4 - Forest of the Demonic Dragon

by Yujima Ran

[Novel Updates](#)

Translation Group: [Ziru's Musings](#)

Epub: [Trollo WN/LN EPUB](#)

A small reminder for those who did not know about it. WN Suterareta Yuusha no Eiyuutan was discontinued. From what I know, the first 3 Arc's were included in LN, but the fourth one was to be rewritten, so you read it at your own risk;)

Chapter 1: Sleeping Beauty

I got up around daybreak. The light from the window woke me up.

I rubbed my eyes to wake up my sleepy mind, and my blurry vision gradually cleared.

“... Did we overdo it...?” (Daichi)

I looked around the disastrous scene of the room and felt regret. It’s messy.

Scattered sake bottles and food dishes. Everyone sleeping huddled on the floor.

This is too unreasonable.

I want to clean. The impulse to clean right now urged me to move. However, it was still early in the morning. Since I thought it would be bad to wake everyone up after staying up so late, I endured.

... Maybe I should go for a change of pace and take a stroll...?

For the time being, I closed the window curtains and quickly changed my clothes in another room before gently leaving through the entrance way.

“... Ah, Katsuragi-kun. Good morning.” (Nanami)

“... What’s up, Sajima. Were you taking a walk too?” (Daichi)

I had been walking along the road that went from the house to Gandarosu when I encountered Sajima Nanami from up ahead.

“Yeah, something like that. You also woke up at an unexpected time... Katsuragi-kun?” (Nanami)

“Well, something like that.” (Daichi)

“Hmm, well, can I follow you? I also want to deepen my friendship with Katsuragi-kun... is that okay?” (Nanami)

“Yeah.” (Daichi)

I agreed with Sajima without resisting and she stood next to me.

... So close, so close. At a distance that I could feel her shoulder.

She held no prejudice against anyone. I am witnessing part of the reason the human named Sajima Nanami is popular.

I started walking even though I was in wonder. Sajima also matched her pace to mine and followed.

“... Between Shuri-chan and Yui-chan, who does Katsuragi-kun like?” (Nanami)

This woman, so abrupt. No privacy at all.

“... That’s sudden. Isn’t there another subject?” (Daichi)

“Ah, sorry. Yesterday, I heard talk about love affairs...” (Nanami)

“To what extent did you hear?” (Daichi)

“... I-it’s a secret...” (Nanami)

Sajima didn’t tell me the contents of the conversation. Though since her face reddened, it seems like the source was her close friends.

... Rather, to what extent do they talk about others...

Yuina is going to be punished when I get back. I cleared my throat to clear away the awkward atmosphere that was beginning to appear.

“This might answer the question... it’s imprudent, but I like those two about the same. They are the most important people in the world to me.” (Daichi)

“... You love them huh.” (Nanami)

“Only good children would love someone such as me. It’s natural.” (Daichi)

... Although it’s true that saying it is embarrassing.

Saying that they even 『Love』 my ugly side. For Shuri, it will be like that from here on.

“Everyone... everyone is important.” (Daichi)

I clearly said it.

Sajima looked down and said something.

“... Me as well?” (Nanami)

“Hmm?” (Daichi)

“Am I also... included in that『Everyone』?” (Nanami)

“Sajima... what are you saying...” (Daichi)

My words were interrupted.

Suddenly, Sajima came with a kiss that I did not expect.

—However, I blocked it by putting my hand between us.

“Muu...” (Nanami)

Probably because Sajima didn't succeed, she angrily flailed at my head two, three times.

“... What are you doing...?” (Daichi)

“I wanted to kiss Katsuragi-kun.” (Nanami)

“Why did you want to do something like that, didn't you listen?” (Daichi)

“Didn't you say it first? That I was also one of the important『Everyone』?” (Nanami)

“... Haaah.” (Daichi)

Therefore, I wonder where the idiots that want to kiss me are. Though I thought Sajima to be a person with common sense... I may be forced to change my impression of her.

This person is misunderstanding something.

“You know... You are also included in my important『Everyone』.” (Daichi)

“—Eh?” (Nanami)

“... Well, to be precise, you are an important close friend to Shuri and Yuina. I also think of you as important.” (Daichi)

“... Katsuragi-kun, are you coming on to me?” (Nanami)

“No. There was a time when I was charmed by you. Rather, the you of now became like this?” (Daichi)

“... Being denied to that extent... is frustrating. Even though I'm like this, I can

still feel pain you know?” (Nanami)

Well, even though we have almost no connection, if I keep receiving so many affectionate smiles from her there may be misunderstanding and end up falling in love, and then Maji LOVE 1000%. [TN: Uta no Prince-sama reference.]

However, I’m different. I’m surrounded by Shuri on the right, Yuina on the left, and Fuuko in the back... oh, the front is vacant. I didn’t add Sajima... but damn, a person that likes me...

The pink-haired Slut came to mind but flicked that thought away.

... Hmm, three people is plenty. Surrounded, I’m surrounded.

“Unfortunately, I already have girls more attractive than Sajima.” (Daichi)

“Uuu... the obstacle is high...” (Nanami)

... However, she continued.

“... If I’m important to you... I’m happy with that.” (Nanami)

Sajima was naturally feminine, being bashful.



After returning from the strange stroll with Sajima, everyone had already gotten up and we had breakfast.

After that, when I tried to go to Leadred for some sword training in the garden, I was stopped in the living room by Lily.

In addition, Shuri, Yuina, Fuuko, and Sajima were sitting there. Arriane and Selen had left with Yuuma and Leadred to go shopping.

Since Yuuma invited them, it’s probably a topic that they shouldn’t hear.

“... Well then, there is a reason why I gathered you all. However, I want to say something before getting down to business.” (Lily)

Lily began to talk.

“Do you know why Gandarusu is enclosed in walls? (Lily)

“Because the forest that surrounds Gandarusu contains demons... right?”
(Fuuko)

Fuuko answered. Nothing unusual for her. While we waited she probably examined the area.

Because of the artificially created ten meter high walls that tower around the city, Gandarusu is called a walled city.

Although the walls ruin the view, Gandarusu is surrounded by a thick, lush forest anyways.

If it were an ordinary forest, it would be no problem. However, there are many kinds of demons that live there.

Demons continue to invade and lay waste to towns. Even if it is cut down, it doesn't diminish. The next day, the deforested areas will grow new trees. The cause was still unknown.

So the wall was built as a last resort countermeasure.

"So, this is the important thing—demons don't leave dungeons." (Lily)

"Eh-..." (Fuuko)

Fuuko was so surprised, her voice leaked out. For even Fuuko to not know meant that human beings don't know that information.

Of course, we were hearing this for the first time. Demons don't leave dungeons. The places that demons appear are all dungeons.

Linking this to the previous conversation, this means that...

"The forest that surrounds Gandarusu... is a dungeon?" (Daichi)

"Bingo! That is correct, Hero-sama. This is the dungeon of the Dragonmen's chief, Garfunkel Arthnight. Its name is the Forest of the Demonic Dragon. It's unique as a dungeon in that it is already overflowing with demons from its entrance." (Lily)

"... Wait a minute. Isn't it strange? It feels like this house is definitely at the entrance to the forest..." (Tamaki)

Yuina raised red flags one by one with her explanation.

Her guess is reasonable. I also remember, when I took that stroll I confirmed that.

The mansion is near the forest.

“In the case of Lily’s story, doesn’t that mean demons will come here? However, no attacks have happened yet. If I had to guess, demons lived here from the start. Is there a case where demons don’t attack humans?” (Tamaki)

“Hmph. It’s as Shield said. Since that war, demons have been able to attack humans.” (Lily)

“Then—” (Tamaki)

“Wait for a moment. Don’t be impatient.” (Lily)

Lily stopped Yuina, breathing deeply once. Because of that the air that had been disturbed by the new information was reset.

Yuina also seemed to regain her composure.

“... Shield. Once again, you hit the nail on the head. There is in fact, a single exception. When that goddess gives us an order. And so, this means that Messiah-sama knows that we are here.” (Lily)

『Then——』

Not only Fuuko this time, all of the voices overlapped. It was like an earthquake.

Lily temporarily cut everyone off, clearly saying what will be the main subject on the agenda.

“Here, in the Forest of the Demonic Dragon——Messiah-sama is sleeping.” (Lily)

Chapter 2: Demon King

The Demon Goddess Messiah sleeps in the Forest of the Demonic Dragon.

It would be simple for her to throw this world into chaos.

People remembered the disaster of the past with fear, and would immediately desperately hunt that person down.

It was information dangerous enough to shake the world.

“... How do you know something like that, Lily? Weren't you sealed up until the other day?” (Daichi)

“That's right. However, I knew it beforehand. The fact that Garfunkel hid Messiah-sama in this dungeon.” (Lily)

She began to talk more about the events from those days.

“Remember when I originally spoke about betraying humans for the demon's side in【Scorching Execution Ground】? This is a continuation of that.” (Lily)

“When I became a demon I immediately brought information related to Claria. She had Transfer Gates that connected the world we lived in to this one in various places. Because of that it seemed that she could replenish her dead. Messiah-sama understood the reason why the amount of human soldiers didn't decrease even when they were killed and placed Akina as a commanding officer, forming a special attack unit. The role of the unit was to destruct the Transfer Gates. With the Transfer Gates destroyed one by one, Claria began having trouble replenishing her forces and the situation tilted in the demons' favor. It was enough that we thought we could win by continuing as we had been... However, that didn't go well. Claria summoned the strongest human ever—Terias.” (Lily)

“It became a tragedy from there. Terias was a monster. With a single swing of his sword he'd kill tens, hundreds of demons. Akina lost, with Fantra also beaten, the demi-human tribe entirely annihilated. We were the last ones remaining. It was a fierce battle. Even if us three from the Six Demon Generals grouped up, we were no match. In the end, Messiah-sama strained her own

power to bury that guy... her injuries were not normal. Messiah-sama weakened, and we also didn't have the energy to fight. Therefore, in the hopes of someday restoring the demon's side, we each were sealed in dungeons. It was Garfunkel that was to take responsibility for hiding Messiah-sama. Therefore, that's how I know... Satisfactory, Hero-sama?" (Lily)

"Y-yeah... That was more than I imagined." (Daichi)

... Yeah. Much more.

Terias' power from the past war. The story was different from what I read from the books in the library.

"Well then, I have another. Want to hear it?" (Lily)

"By all means." (Daichi)

"... In her last moments Messiah-sama constructed a ritual for us to summon a hero as a countermeasure against Terias for the sake of the demons. Not to be summoned that time, but in the future. The one summoned by that—" (Lily)

Lily pointed her sharp nail towards me.

"... Me?" (Daichi)

At first, I was the only one to manifest a Unique Ability, 『Revenge of the Resented』. Since Fuuko and Yuina also gained 『Crimson Eyes of Destruction』 and 『Chant Substitution』 later, it was probably from Messiah falling in love at first sight.

Then, that means I was under Messiah's watch since the time that I came to this world... the moment I was completely discarded from Claria's hands in【Rigal's Den】, my hidden power arose.

As the hero summoned by Messiah.

Therefore, the Hero of Demons. The demon's hero is not on the side of humanity. Then, I... I am definitely—

"However, Claria is not a fool. It is conjecture on my part from here... but she probably sensed it in advance. Therefore, when she summoned Samejima and the others, her reason was to kill the Demon King. To kill the hero that Messiah-sama summoned... In other words, Hero-sama. You are—the Demon King."

(Lily)

—the enemy of mankind.



We finished with that shocking story and decided to go to Gandarusu to procure weapons and equipment, piece together a strategy, and adjust our fighting method. Noticing that it had become night, we decided would leave early the next day, and before long we had already each departed to our rooms.

Demon King. The king that stood at the apex of evil, controlling fiends and demons. A symbol of fear that threatened the human race.

I had vaguely guessed it. Also not engaging with Leadred, it became logical thinking about it. Considering my situation as well, it was plenty possible. That being the case, hearing it unexpectedly just then caused my chest to tighten and thump.

First of all, I am an enemy to mankind. I've become an existence that should be destroyed...

"... That said, nothing's changed." (Daichi)

I said as I collapsed onto the bed.

I am the Demon King for certain.

However, I am me and that is just a title. I am Katsuragi Daichi. Then, I can decide what to do. Obliterate the cowards who frightened and living in the Royal Palace.

We've already considered things about that. Everyone talked together about it.

We will wake Messiah up first. She was just exhausted, not dead, and according has been storing up magic. Although Messiah instructed the monsters in the dungeons until now attack me in order to increase my strength, it seems the treatment I'll have in the Forest of the Demonic Dragon will be different. There will be no attacks at all.

However, the entrance that hid Messiah was even designed by humans that so that it wouldn't be known. This also seemed to be effective against Claria, so

that even that f*cking goddess couldn't make a move.

By now, she should be upset by losing Samejima that was her greatest strength. She may soon replace him like back then.

Then now was our best chance. As soon as we find the entrance, we'll all embark. We'll head to Messiah and add her to our group.

Then... we'll crush the remaining classmates as well as Claria.

"... Well then, could you cut it out already, Fuuko..." (Daichi)

"Aww." (Fuuko)

I who had changed my decision lightly flicked the forehead of the red-eyed girl that always clung to me. A pleasant *Pechin* sounded out.

The room assignments on the third floor of the mansion were me and Fuuko, Leadred and Miare, Shuri and Yuina, with Sajima, Selen, and Arianne each having their own room. The Shuraham couple were in the remaining room on the first floor.

By the way, the rights for sharing rooms with me seems to have been decided by a game of rock paper scissors. They seem to do it every night. It is... amusing. Anyway, for now I'm passing time with the Literature Girl Fuuko-san.

... I wonder, can I survive the night...?

Although such a thing might be impolite to the girl... the only thing I see in the future is getting attacked when I fall asleep.

"W-what is it K-Katsuragi-kun... I went through great pains to enjoy this smell..." (Fuuko)

"I think a statement like that is reason enough to—" (Daichi)

"What's bad about smelling the fragrance of your beloved person!?" (Fuuko)

It's no good, this girl. I have to do something quickly.

I turned towards Fuuko who was breathing roughly and looked at her with cold eyes. Reacting to that she embraced my body.

"K-Katsuragi-kun... Please, don't look at me with such cold eyes... I may awake to a whole new world." (Fuuko)

I wanted Fuuko to learn by example and be positive, or perhaps I should say I wanted to challenge her. Although she's always so docile, I wondered what kind of character she has always hidden away in her chest. When thinking that, I was glad to see a new side to my important comrade.

“Ah, an opening! Katsuragi-kun!” (Fuuko)

Fuuko jumped at my opening and attached to me, it was a pleasant feeling. In the blink of an eye she had me in a hold and buried her face into my chest.

“Mm~... After all, I love this scent. It calms me down...” (Fuuko)

“Are you willing to go to sleep after calming down? We have to get up early in the morning.” (Daichi)

“That's not allowed. Because it's... painful being away from Katsuragi-kun...” (Fuuko)

Fuuko raised her face, and kissed me for a split second. A bit of the soft feeling remained.

“... Ehehe. A kiss... I did it.” (Fuuko)

She said that with a smiling face. However, she noticed for the first time that she was face to face with him. Her expression and tone changed slightly.

She gave the feeling of fragility, of loneliness. Her words trembled slightly.

『... What's wrong, Fuuko?』would be simple to ask. However, she would try to deny it. She would keep it to herself.

Then, what is the right thing to do?

The correct answer would be『Show through actions』.

“Eh-ah-katsuragiku...” (Fuuko)

I placed my lips on hers. My tongue invaded and entwined with hers. Messily, to indulge in it.

“... Haah... Katsuragi...kun...?” (Fuuko)

When our lips separated, there was a clear thread stretched between us. Her glossy lips rapidly increased my desire. Her cheeks were flushed. Her broken breathing was captivating, her power escaping by her defenseless exposed

body. I peeked down into the cleavage of her projected breasts.

“... Fuuko... There has never once been a time where I have lost interest in you.” (Daichi)

“—...” (Fuuko)

Fuuko’s expression trembled. Her eyes shook.

“Is that... the truth?” (Fuuko)

“Yeah. I think Fuuko is also cute... above all I find you attractive... Unfortunately I’m the kind of man that is particularly honest about that...” (Daichi)

“... Ah... Katsuragi-kun... that’s...” (Fuuko)

“... Since it is embarrassing, please don’t say any more... However, with this do you understand? I also think of you as precious. I also love Fuuko. However, it’s shameful that I cannot say you are the only one.” (Daichi)

“... No. It’s not like that. I mean, right now, I am so happy...” (Fuuko)

And so even though Fuuko had stashed it away, it overflowed all at once. I caught her, and embraced her.

Fuuko spoke while crying.

... She was afraid. Even though she tried her hardest to appeal I treated her lightly and didn’t lay hands on her, yet the girls around her received my affection.

Despite that she would put on a smiling face to not worry me, hiding herself as always. Due to that when just the two of them were alone together she’d reached her limit.

“Someone like me has no good points. At that time... I felt that I had returned to being someone that didn’t stand out at all... I... I was scared.” (Fuuko)

“.... I am sorry. Fuuko went through a painful experience because of me...” (Daichi)

“It’s... already okay. I understand that Katsuragi-kun likes me... ... And—” (Fuuko)

Fuuko's hand extended towards my lower abdomen, putting on a smile.

"... From now on... I will... experience your love as well you know?" (Fuuko)

"... As you command, plenty of it." (Daichi)

By the third kiss, she pushed me down in order to sit on top of and embrace me.

Chapter 3: The First Couple

“Fuwah...” (Daichi)

“... You seem awful sleepy, Katsuragi-kun.” (Shuri)

“... I guess. I didn’t get to sleep till late from hearing those things yesterday.”
(Daichi)

“... Hmm.” (Shuri)

I’ll just pretend to be convinced. Katsuragi-kun may be skilled at deception but I can tell when he’s lying.

Katsuragi-kun’s lack of sleep, and Hayase-san’s skin shining one and a half times more than normal.

There can only be one conclusion drawn from these.

Those two cross that line last night.

Katsuragi-kun lacked sleep because of the act.

... Uuu... this is bad... Even though it was just me I had almost completely finished besieging Katsuragi-kun.

A substantial three people became Katsuragi-kun’s brides. Nanamin also said she was interested in Katsuragi-kun...

... No. Losing your nerves is no good. Because we are now alone together at last.

To search efficiently, we divided the Forest of the Demonic Dragon into north, south, east, and west. We decided to search one direction each day.

Additionally, we partitioned it into four segments to search for the entrance faster. Since it can only be discovered by demons (since Katsuragi-kun is the hero of demons, he’s an exception), we put together four teams in total. The members were evenly distributed into 『Katsuragi-kun, me』 『Leadred-san, Arianne-san, Hayase-san』 『Miare-san, Yui-chan, Nanamin』 『Lily-san, Yuuma-san, Selen-san』. The person who finds the entrance would inform the others by launching a red smoke bomb into the sky.

This layout was created by Yui-chan considering the power balance of the members... Although I say that, demons won't come to attack us...

This fact was legitimized by us encountering demons several times and us passing through them without stopping. Nevertheless that doesn't mean that we should lower our guard.

"There's no reaction here... It would be good if the other three teams found it though." (Daichi)

Katsuragi-kun shrugged and shook his head.

Although he said that, he didn't seem to expect much. Each team was divided approximately evenly. Given that we finished examining the area we were in charge of today, it would be reasonable to think that the other teams have already finished as well.

The first day was a failure huh... Unfortunate. There isn't much time left. We have to unfasten the seal on the goddess while Claria is preoccupied with replenishing her forces.

We needed to carefully and quickly handle this. It was nerve-wracking. Actually Katsuragi-kun seemed tired as well, so we sat down and took a break.

"Are you alright, Katsuragi-kun?" (Shuri)

"Yeah, I'm just a little tired. We'll rest for a moment and return to the house." (Daichi)

"I see... Then, I'll also..." (Shuri)

I laid down next to Katsuragi-kun. Therefore, the conversation paused.

It's not that I couldn't speak exactly.

My heart was broken by Lily's trial in the【Scorching Execution Ground】, but Katsuragi-kun still knew that we were advancing closer together. At that time, I wonder just how much was I saved.

Several days have passed since then. As a friend to Katsuragi-kun, I could only be in contact with him as a friend. I stopped using keigo to start with. Although until now I could simply tell him my feelings in my usual tone, I stopped that as well.

After that I had lost the housework to someone else.

It became a rotation system, so that I could also have days off.

Or more precisely, Arianne-san is amazing. She has many dishes in her repertoire, her skill is... although it's frustrating, better than mine. Her other housekeeping abilities were also amazing. She even cleaned the rooms that weren't being used, finishing so that there wasn't even a speck of dust. I thought that I would ask for her to teach me her skills, but was too embarrassed to ask.

So then I asked Selen-san who was together with Arianne-san from the start and it seemed she was the daughter of a high-class family. However, she didn't know any more than that. Although she was a perfect superwoman, it felt wasted because of her personality. A disappointing beautiful girl.

Be that as it may, thanks to her I could relax and spend that time mingling with Katsuragi-kun. Thanks to that, I could even notice the small changes. For example, that he dislikes that foodstuff that looks like a tomato or that he has a chuunibyouto-ish side to him. That, once in a while, he unconsciously mutters "... How cool, those eyes" when looking at Hayase-san's red eyes is my well-kept secret.

Even on the way to Gandarosu, I thought now that we had a base I would be sure to find out more about him. I was genuinely happy.

I thought that it was good to try over again from as a friend. Because I understood that I failed that time.

... However, I felt that this relationship is frustrating as well.

"... Hey, Katsuragi-kun." (Shuri)

"What's up?" (Daichi)

"If you're tired... do you want... a lap pillow?" (Shuri)

"... An attractive offer, but we should wait a bit more." (Daichi)

Ever since that day, it turned into me being evaded like this. According to him, that is, there would be no point if he gets spoiled... So he says.

I understood what he wanted to say. Although I understood... is it selfish for

me to think this isn't good? Girls would be anxious at all times after all.

Especially Yui-chan's recent amazing 'dere' style. She even called Katsuragi-kun『Daichi』.

I'm a little bit envious. I told myself sorry excuses like that we also had a special connection... Excuses notwithstanding, since they exude a happy aura, it made me clench my fists a bit, though.

“... Haah.” (Shuri)

There are many rivals around me.

I was just the first... they've increased.

... Thinking about it, maybe Katsuragi-kun is a womanizer... But the weird thing is that seeing everyone's attentions only makes me feel happy.

... I thought about the small things too much. My emotions were welling up endlessly.

... Let's calm down. I closed my eyes as I thought so.



“Uu... n...?” (Shuri)

The scenery had changed when I opened my eyes. I was looking up at the open sky, not the numerous lush trees that were spread throughout my vision. My viewpoint was higher than usual as well, and I was swaying back and forth.

“Ah, you woke up, Shuri.” (Daichi)

I understood what kind of situation I was in without words. I am... on Katsuragi-kun... a piggyback ride.

“Eh.... What, why...?” (Shuri)

“Oh. Since Shuri looked too comfortable sleeping there, I carried you without waking you up.” (Daichi)

Suddenly waking up, I was embarrassed.

Though since I can snuggle with his body, I can endure it. Because I have the experience from up till now.

My sleeping face was seen by the boy I love. Both when we had our love affairs and when we were inside 【Rigal's Den】, I went to sleep later than Katsuragi-kun and woke up earlier. This is very embarrassing.

You might say so what. But I don't like it. My untidy side was seen.

Even though I had been careful until now... I was even seen in such a place...

“Uwah...” (Shuri)

I was embarrassed and reflexively buried my face into his neck to hide.

“... What's wrong?” (Daichi)

“... I don't want you to know, probably.” (Shuri)

“... Now I want to know. But... well, it's fine. I was even able to see Shuri's cute sleeping face again.” (Daichi)

“Eh...? Again?” (Shuri)

“Yeah. The day before yesterday, when you celebrated with everyone. At that time you were drooling.”

“—!?” (Shuri)

My face turned bright red from it coming out.

D-drool...!? Something like that was seen...!

I want to a hole and bury myself in it right now. I want to go hide. I can't make eye contact with Katsuragi-kun for at least three days.

“Uuu... uuu....” (Shuri)

“... What are you moaning about, Shuri-san?” (Daichi)

“I-if you see drool wake me up! Even if a gentleman saw it they wouldn't say it!” (Shuri)

“... Perhaps, are you worried that I saw your sleeping face?” (Daichi)

“Uuu...” (Shuri)

I felt my response was straightforward. Bulls-eye. Katsuragi-kun had on a wry smile looking at me with such a face.

“You shouldn’t mind something like your sleeping face you know?” (Daichi)

“I mind!” (Shuri)

My beloved person saw my goofy drooling face. He saw an uncool image. Katsuragi-kun wouldn’t understand how embarrassing it was. Of all the things that he could say, he said that. I’m sure only girls would understand.

“I’ve seen more embarrassing things. We both have.” (Daichi)

“Wha-!? T-that’s a different issue! In the first place, Katsuragi-kun should have more decency—” (Shuri)

“But such a careless Shuri is also cute, I like her.” (Daichi)

—My heart thumped with a great *Dokun*. At the same time, my chest felt as though it were suddenly attacked by a cold feeling. There’s none of the heat from before. Instead, this time was different from before... What came was a heat that had a warmth that gently spread throughout my body.

... In spite of having placed a prohibition for things like that on myself, that surprise attack was sly, me.

Thanks to that, the anger I felt from my sleeping face flew away somewhere.

... Come on. I have to hide my face for a different reason now. Do you believe that if you say that you like me everything will be forgiven, Katsuragi-kun?

Idiot. Idiot. Idiot. Idiotic Katsuragi-kun.

I love you.

Chapter 4: Claria's Religion

The search for the Forest of the Demonic Dragon, day two.

In the end, there were no qualifying locations found yesterday. We exchanged opinions of what we realized—for instance, how we should react if we encountered an adventurer intruding the forest—and things like that.

Last time, Yuina's group seemed to have encountered adventurers. Because the members were not a problem, they pretended to be like adventurers of the same guild, but that excuse couldn't be used many times.

Therefore, I feel regretful but to conclude, when we encounter a group of adventurers... they will have to die.

I don't know where information could leak from. Given that, it was necessary to plug every source... according to Miare's speech. The group of demons—Lily and Leadred—were in favor of it.

Although Sajima expressed her disapproval until the end, she had to accept the requirements. If she wants to be together with us, she'll have to get used to things like this.

Reluctantly, Sajima consented.

Therefore Shuri and I were walking around a different region today as well. The teams weren't changed.

"I hope we get a clue today." (Daichi)

"We're past halfway, there haven't been places that looked like it so it's only a faint hope." (Shuri)

"Don't... say negative things." (Daichi)

"... That's right. Let's work hard." (Shuri)

It's good to think positively. Now that we've finished half, the rest has a higher probability. That is, there's only half to go.

... Huh? Of course it's like that... I can't seem to get my head around it.

That's a strange thought.

We advanced towards the interior like this, with decreasing amounts of peaceful conversation. The amount of light gradually decreased and it became dark.

This is a suitable location for people who doesn't want to be seen to hide.

"I wonder if such a place...?" (Shuri)

"Be vigilant. Pay attention and advance." (Daichi)

"Roger!" (Shuri)

Shuri saluted with a snap. Such a childish scene. So cute.

That's probably why she was the class mascot.

While reconfirming her charm, we walked for another thirty minutes.

My body feels a bit off here. I can't calm down. I don't feel bad. I've experienced something like this feeling before; and yet not quite.

"... Shuri." (Daichi)

"Wha~t?" (Shuri)

"Would you say... it's a little cold?" (Daichi)

"Ah, you too?" (Shuri)

Her answer told me she felt the same sense of discomfort as me. We know this feeling. The reason is, it was useful in the last dungeon.

『Icy Wind』

Magic that lowers the surrounding's temperature by releasing cold air. This feels too similar to Shield's favorite magic to use at that time. Shuri wouldn't go out of her way to do something like that.

Since it's already good in the forest to begin with.

It's hard to think that the dungeon's guardian, Garfunkel, did this.

... Which leaves the possibility of it being a third party.

"... Shuri. Take out your dagger. In the worst case, there might be a battle."

(Daichi)

“Y-yeah. I wonder if it is an assassin from Claria...?” (Shuri)

“It’s probably a ninety-nine percent chance. Let’s bring ‘em to light first. I’ll start it from here. Shuri, the flare!” (Daichi)

I pulled out the sword from its sheath at my waist, thrust it into the ground and chanted a spell.

“Ground Wave!” (Daichi)

The tip of the sword submerged into the ground and produced a big wave that shook the ground at its epicenter. The sudden isolated attack should probably lure them.

Verifying that the 『Icy Wind』 had dispersed, Shuri used the signal to gather their comrades.

They might be in a similar situation. If so we’ll crush them all in one place.

Or if the opposition noticed and took advantage of this, I wouldn’t mind it.

“White Blizzard!” (—)

Ice arrows that froze whoever they pierced came flying in after the magic’s name was shouted.

“Flamethrower!” (Shuri)

Shuri struggled to repulse it by using the magic Lily had used before, melting everything. I returned the gift two times over towards the direction the arrows came from.

“Berserk Tempest!” (Daichi)

I shot off the Emperor-class magic, mowing the trees down. Several screams were heard mixed in with the sounds of the wind. I ran over to the collapsed people.

The bodies all around had died. Strangely, every one of them had identical white hooded robes. It had a silhouette of a woman praying embroidered on to the chest. They had crosses hanging from their necks, too.

They had books in their hands that were bulky like dictionaries, probably to

recite the spell from. Definitely Claria's minions.

"Looks like they came to obstruct us." (Shuri)

"Yeah. It's as Shuri said." (Daichi)

Picking the book up, I turned its pages. The words in it were devoted to the adoration of the goddess Claria.

With this the evidence was all here. Our opposition got involved.

Probably... from their clothes, they were people that believed in Claria.

Although I don't know by what process they were manipulated, the fact is that the end result were those men and women were being cooked by us.

That f*cking goddess needs to study up and understand that ordinary people won't be able to defeat us. Stalling. They were probably sacrificial pawns.

"What do we do, Katsuragi-kun? Go to help everyone? Or wait here?" (Shuri)

"... That's right. Judging by these guys' ability it seems there's no problem but... just in case, let's. I'll go to Yuina, you go to Leadred." (Daichi)

"What do we do afterwards? ... Since they found us here they've probably also attacked our home..." (Shuri)

"We'll think about that when the time comes. For now, the sign to group up will be when I use the flare. Okay?" (Daichi)

"Yeah, then, be careful!" (Shuri)

"Good luck!"

After briefly making the arrangements, ran to our jobs in a hurry.



"Hmmm... I feel something out of place... There's a great magic coming from that way." (Lily)

Change of location; searching area of Team Lily-Yuuma-Selen. This relatively open space was left in charge of these girls who mostly conformed a member roster of people with good eyesight who, in the case of an emergency situation, are experts in clashes of power against power.

Standing in those three's way, in the center of the clearing, there was a single man wrapped about in unblemished pure white robes. The first thing he said was the line from before.

“Those guys from the Claria Religion...? This will be an annoying encounter.”
(Lily)

Lily spat out her bothered thoughts, glaring at the man's face.

She said that the Claria Religion that worshiped the goddess Claria was the most popular religious sect in the world. They had even participated in the past war.

This man was probably at the bishop level judging by the Claria Religion scripture in his hand.

“Those words. I return them to you in their entirety. Nevertheless, we who heed Claria-sama's wonderful voice, shall consign monsters like you to hell!”
(—)

The bishop proudly pushed the scriptures high towards the sky.

That scripture is a nuisance as it allows Claria to assist him with sufficient magic for up to the King-class. Lily remembered dreadful items like that from the past war. She immediately entered attack mode as well.

“Your motivation is good, but you are no match for me—Woam—Bishop of the Claria Church's Gandarusu Branch! You are a monster, after all! You are unsightly! By my faith in the goddess, I will win!” (Woam) [TL: The lettering used for Woam can be read as the word for Worm.]

The bishop raised his voice in a guffaw and smiled.

The one to get angry from seeing him wasn't Lily... but another.

Right now, the angry person was the man who loved the insulted woman.

“... Lily. Could you leave this to me? I want to confirm that my skills haven't dulled.” (Yuuma)

Yuuma put his hand on Lily's shoulder and asked. Lily accepted the request with a sarcastic laugh at the easy to understand lie and stepped back.

Her fighting spirit had already went away. Since she already knew the outcome.

“... With this, I am your opponent.” (Yuuma)

“Hmph... it’s just the likes of a betrayer that hangs out with a monster. Do you think you can defeat me, who has receives Claria-sama’s favor!?” (Woam)

“That’s right. I wonder about that.” (Yuuma)

Yuuma, calmly dealing with Woam’s speech and conduct, each of which got on his nerves, conversely stirred him up. If one speaks of inner beauty, it would be the demons rather than Woam. Such a filthy heart.

“... Making a fool of me here... don’t you understand that you’re going to get hurt!? Execution! Execute the heretic!!” (Woam)

“Those are the words. I’m also a little angry. You’re treating Lily as a monster. You don’t know anything about her. Humans and Demons. Do you even know which is evil?” (Yuuma)

Yuuma put on a black open fingered-glove from his inside pocket onto his hand, thrusting a finger towards Bishop Woam.

“I am not husband to a Six Demon General just for show.” (Yuuma)

Saying so, he faced Woam with a smiling face and eyes that contained a great amount of fury.

Chapter 5: Break Through:

As Daichi's group ran through the forest, Claria adherents would suddenly fight them in various places. In one of them, the most intense battle was about to unfold in the area that Team Lily-Yuuma-Selen was responsible for.

Yuuma confronted Bishop Woam.

There was an overwhelming difference.

The presence of a Special Ability. By Rostalgia's common sense, Yuuma that had not received Claria's divine protection was at a disadvantage.

With arms outstretched, Woam laughed loudly.

"Kuhahaha! There's no way a fiend like you could be a match for me, a bishop!" (Woam)

Woam spat out those words while glaring at Yuuma with an unseemly face.

"With flesh and blood, how could a fiend like you even win against me, who has received the goddess' blessing!?" (Woam)

Having flesh and blood, in this case, meant that he had not received Claria's divine protection. By the way, he also hadn't received Messiah's divine protection either.

He is a human being because in those days a special method was used on transferred people to prevent them from leaving and betraying Claria. This time, Yuina and Fuuko received Messiah's blessing due to the mistake of Claria's arrogance.

"... We won't know without trying it out." (Yuuma)

"Such nonsense! Oh, our Lord! Please entrust your power to this one to cut this sinful fiend down and punish him...!!" (Moan)

Woam began praying towards the heavens, ignoring Yuuma's words.

『... Watching him is a bit like seeing Fantra...』 The person fighting him muttered.

However, the fact is that as mentioned earlier, Yuuma was at a disadvantage.

It was obvious—however, for those who knew his secret, it was a different story.

Lily Shuraham looked forward to the appearance of her husband fighting after such a long time. There was no anxiety on her face. She believed in him and did not doubt that Yuuma would win. Because she believed in him more than anything else.

“... Lily-san, is it okay? Not helping?” (Selen)

Although she prepared to fight, she stopped next to his wife, Lily, after seeing that she did not move. Lily was an unusual demon and did not repel the humans Arianne and Selen—rather, they didn’t mind and she had even left the rough impression of having a good personality on them.

“Oh, just take a look. He’ll win without even using magic.” (Lily)

“Eh, without magic? What do—“ (Selen)

Selen was suddenly cut off by the resounding sound of an explosion. She hurriedly looked the two.

Yuuma wore a self-satisfied look as he saw the bishop’s unmoving and shocked face.

“... Why!? My magic!? Was it offset!?” (Woam)

“Isn’t it because you are weak?” (Yuuma)

“—!? Don’t get carried away, you damn fiend!” (Woam)

Woam took the disguise off of his tone, jumped high into the sky using wind magic, then opened the scripture.

“We have received more from Claria-sama, the great King-class magic! King of the ground! Shoot down your natural enemy that flutters through the air! Meteor Shower!” (Woam)

Dozens of rocks rained down incessantly.

Although the amount was surprising, Yuuma displayed his superhuman skill.

“... Still so shoddy.” (Yuuma)

He was walking. Using the gaps between the falling rocks, he used the minimal effort to gracefully walk through them.

Selen rubbed her eyes, doubting them.

However, the scene was still the same.

“Normally, you don’t have enough magic to handle a King-class magic. You could only use it to that level at best with the help of that book’s power.”
(Yuuma)

He pulverized a rock in front of him with his fist without chanting.

“Therefore, these are much too brittle.” (Yuuma)

“Wha-...!?” (Woam)

Woam’s mouth was agape. Lily laughed at how comical it was. Although Selen stood next to Lily, she had doubted her.

As far as the fight between the bishop and Yuuma was concerned, this was the first time an event like this was displayed in front of her.

After all, just look at it.

It was broken. The rock created by magic was taken on bare-handed.

She couldn’t understand these two people that broke common sense.

Accordingly, she remembered that their owner was an influential person that overwhelmed the hero, and came to the conclusion that everyone was probably enormously strong.

“Damn... it! What did you do!?” (Woam)

“As you saw, I merely punched it.” (Yuuma)

“What kind of reason is that!? That can’t be!? It was King-class!?” (Woam)

Woam was in a disturbed state. Even his strongest magic was easily destroyed by that guy.

It was the same as Yuuma speaking ill of Claria’s strength.

With his emotions swallowing his thoughts, Woam was no longer able to think correctly.

“Since your King-class magic is not effective, your loss has been decided. You should quietly resign.” (Yuuma)

“What kind of joke is that!? Again! Let’s see you try and undo it this time!” (Woam)

Woam rose into the sky and prepared to shoot his magic. However, this time was a little different than the one from before, and he had continued to stay in the air without firing off the rocks. The number continued to increase.

Yuuma guessed that Woam was trying to finish the fight in one go, and decided to use the technique he was most skilled at.

“Well, let me show you something more interesting.” (Yuuma)

Yuuma drew his fist to his side, exhaling deeply. Magic gathered on his fist.

Then, Yuuma’s skill began to shine red light.

“... ..—!” (Woam)

Woam shed cold sweat from seeing the amount of magic coming from the heretic in front of him. He shook his head to drive away his sudden bad premonition.

For him, the power of the goddess Claria was absolute.

“I won’t be defeateeeed!! Face our goddess’ judgement, you unholy soul!!” (Woam)

The scattered rocks eroded into each other and formed an enormous meteorite. It’s didn’t only cover Yuuma, but extended to the surroundings including where Lily’s group had been watching intently. Its shadow projected across the ground.

He won’t be able to stop it if it’s like this!

The confident Woam waved down his hand from overhead.

“Meteor Strike!!” (Woam)

Deprived of its control, it began to fall towards Yuuma and the others in a straight line. At this rate it would crush them.

Yuuma also raised his voice to oppose it.

“Haaaaaah!!” (Yuuma)

Yuuma cannot use magic.

Even if there was magic, he became an ordinary person from another world when he lost Claria’s divine protection. Any ordinary person could generally use magic in Rostalgia.

He wasn’t part of the norm.

He must have been frustrated and felt hopeless for the future.

However, he was not depressed. Since there was a person he wanted to defend. He had a beloved woman who encouraged him and smiled at his side.

It was no use even if it was asking for too much. Accordingly, he learned earnestly.

He even went through the Six Demon General’s deadly training. And it culminated into—

“Break Through!!” (Yuuma) [TN: The kanji for this, ‘魔殺弾’, is something along the lines of ‘Magic Killing Bullet’.]

—this『Break Through』.

This is magic, and not magic.

It is just a mass of pure magic.

Therefore, the power is dependent on the amount of magic. So, Yuuma poured all of his own magic into this one blow.

A plain and simple contest of strength against Woam.

A genuine skill built on hard work clashed head on against the given counterfeit.

Which won?

The answer was simple and could be seen by anyone.

“M-my magic is-gahhh!?” (Woam)

The meteorite was outmatched by『Break Through』and was annihilated, and furthermore the huge amount of magic aimed at the caster behind it.

Worm turned the pages of the scripture hurriedly, sending words and wishes to the beautiful goddess he worshiped.

If it's Claria-sama, she will definitely help!

If it's Claria-sama, she will definitely save me, who has faith in her!!

The bishop clung to his eccentric faith until the end.

However, the goddess did not answer his prayers.

"N-no way-!? Why did something like that happen—!?" (Woam)

Woam's voice was interrupted in the middle of his words. Since his upper body was gone from the magic.

Swallowed up by the power, the Bishop was easily and all too quickly consigned to oblivion by the heretic.

And then, the three saw red smoke rising into the sky immediately after the situation ended.

Chapter 6: Outbreak of War

Red smoke rose in the west direction. Judging from the distance it was probably one area away.

“That’s where Miare is.” (Yuuma)

The battle from a moment ago—you could call it a one-sided trample—was over and Yuuma guessed.

“Was the entrance found, or... possibly, they may have been attacked by the adherents like we were.” (Yuuma)

“It’d be good to rush there.” (Selen)

All of the members agreed to Selen’s opinion.

“Selen! Get on my back!” (Lily)

“... Roger.” (Selen)

Selen was obedient towards Lily and understood that her speed would be a hindrance for them.

“Hold on tight! I’m going all out!” (Lily)

“Kay.” (Selen)

The short answer was assumed to be the starting signal and the Shuraham couple kicked powerfully against the ground.

According to Selen, the two were like the wind.



“This is... the last one!!” (Daichi)

I threw my fist into the last adherent.

The bad feeling hit the mark and the underlings that worshiped Claria showed up where Miare was.

Though when I arrived it had almost entirely concluded.

“How’s it going, Yuina!” (Daichi)

“It’s no problem, since those ‘Claria, Claria’ guys are only noisy.” (Tamaki)

She pointed her finger towards a white robe that had been frozen in ice. In the next moment, Miare smashed it and definitely ended his life.

At the same time, voices came from behind the gaps in the forest.

“Sorry, did you wait!?” (Shuri)

“I’m sorry. Miare’s group! Did you have to wait!?” (Yuuma)

Two apologies reached our ears almost simultaneously. One was from Shuri, the other from Yuuma.

Neither groups had noticeable injuries.

Only, Selen’s face was pale and it looked like she might vomit at any moment. It was probably from fatigue, but I was anxious from the prediction.

I instructed Sajima to use magic to recover her, for now I’ll enjoy the reunion.

Well, it’s not like we would be defeated by a big gun from the start.

At any rate, since everyone gathered we decided to move to another place.

Lily took the lead and started to move as she knew the most information on this forest.

We’re moving to a faraway place anyhow.

That ran through my mind.

“... Phew, I wonder if it we’re safe after coming here?” (Shure)

Shuri sat on the ground and leaked that out. An air of relief spread, loosening the members’ tension.

“... That’s right. I’d wonder if we weren’t safe after coming this far. There’s no signs of pursuers from behind us.” (Miare)

Miare emphasized safety after serving as the rear guard and everyone sat down one by one.

Almost everyone was breathing heavily since their stamina was exhausted.

I saw that the demons were an exception to that and had promptly spread out a map, starting to plan our course of actions from here on out.

“Currently, we are here. And just a moment ago, there.” (Miare)

Miare used two fingers to point at two opposite directions.

“We only ran this far...” (Daichi)

Everyone was worn out. It wasn't a short distance to run in that amount of time at least.

“Now then... let's review our present state, Hero-sama.” (Lily)

“I see... For now, why don't we check things?” (Daichi)

Our opponents were without a doubt from Claria's instigation. According to Lily the religious group seemed to be called Claria's Religion. They only had people with abnormal amounts of faith. I understood that from fighting them. They're insane. Religious fanatics.

Next is personal belongings. Our food is overwhelmingly insufficient.

Let alone a day, we practically didn't bring food and drink at all since our original goal was to search for a few hours. I'm a bit worried about escaping now.

It's probably appropriate to think that we can't go back to the town now. Then we have no choice but to return our recently purchased home.

“However, I wonder if our home is also occupied.” (Yuuma)

Yuuma said that if our activities in the Forest of the Demonic Dragon was known, it was better to think that those guys knew about the house.

Which means that we would have to come into contact with Claria's adherents to be able to get food. It's unpleasant that we can't not raid the town. We don't have enough people for it.

Either way, we should have a clear-cut attitude about having no choice but to cross swords with them.

“If it's like this, we have to think that believers of Claria's Religion besides those from Gandarusu, the royal family and the summoned heroes are also in

the know.” (Yuuma)

“The entire world became our enemies huh...? The situation changed quickly.”
(Daichi)

“This peaceful world completely changed. Ahahaha, as always, Hero-sama is interesting.” (Leadred)

“Now isn’t the time to be laughing, Leadred...” (Daichi)

“... Geez, Akina doesn’t change... So? What will Hero-sama do? War?” (Miare)

At Miare’s words, even Shuri and the others that were resting joined in.

A choice was given.

Before giving my answer, the pink hair girl that didn’t understand the situation let out a loud voice.

“P-please wait a moment!? Why is Katsuragi-sama being targeted!?”
(Arianne)

“Ariane. Katsuragi-san and them are the Demon King and gang. You didn’t realize?” (Selen)

“Fue-!? D-Demon King!? What do you mean!?” (Ariane)

Arianne was like a foolish child compared to Selen who seemed as though she was vaguely aware of it. However, she digested the information quickly.

“Katsuragi-sama’s rank increased! Being employed by him, my future prospects are secure...! Oh, I am so glad I followed him!” (Arianne)

“... Pfft... Ahaha!” (Daichi)

I held my sides and laughed. The others seemed to be doing the same as well.

... At such a time, a fool like this is a blessing. From her comment... She doesn’t believe we’ll lose. She’s convinced that we’ll win.

“E-eh? Wh-what’s wrong? Everyone? Did I say something strange?” (Arianne)

“... No, I was just thinking Arianne-san was amazing.” (Shuri)

Shuri’s eyes were tearing up from laughing at Arianne’s response.

“Oh come on, Arianne-san took everything away!” (Tamaki)

Yuina clapped her back with a bang. Then, she turned her gaze towards me.

“Though continuing from a moment ago... Is Daichi going to fight against Claria? Against the world? ... Although I said that, everyone is motivated, and full of a winning spirit right?” (Tamaki)

Twenty eyes' gazes pierced through me. No one looked pessimistic, and everyone's eyes were filled with a strong will. Even if Yuina didn't say it, I understood.

I don't need to worry at times like this. In any case, whether I killed the remaining heroes (classmates) fast or slow, the result would be the same. It was time to advance. It's that simple.

Their eyes were filled with anticipation.

As the king, as the one in control, I cannot fail to live up to expectations.

After I inhaled deeply, I loudly declared.

“That's good. If that's how you feel about the opposition then do it with everything you have. We will take back the bright and glorious days where demons can live in peace! As the hero of demons, I promise it!” (Daichi)

I drew my sword, raising the shining blade to the sky.

“Lily! Leadred! You two will find the entrance to the Forest of the Demonic Dragon with me! Depending on the encounter, I don't mind killing!” (Daichi)

With that instruction, the two battle freaks grinned, showing their fangs.

“Arianne! Selen! You guys each accompany Lily's group. Support them with things like communication!” (Daichi)

Even if we haven't been acquainted for long, the two nodded without muttering a single complaint.

“Shuri! Yuina! Fuuko! Sajima! Yuuma! You five recapture our home! Wipe out the enemy!” (Daichi)

I placed immense confidence on those dear three women and their close friend. I trusted the man that was abandoned by the goddess like me.

“Miare! You disturb the area using the demons that are here!” (Daichi)

She's one of the Six Demon Generals and didn't slow it down by giving a response.

“Then, gather home when you each complete your assignments! Return home at all costs!” (Daichi)

『Yes!!』

“From here on out, the humans and demons will fight—the『Human-Demon War』begins!” (Daichi)

Chapter 7: Search for the Goddess

We used our bodies to run at full speed.

Opening our fields of view, paying close attention to everything, and looking everywhere.

It couldn't be said we were going leisurely. We couldn't stay here long to be attacked by the people from Claria's Religion. Already, we couldn't afford to stay here.

"Katsuragi-sama, did you find it!?" (Arianne)

"No, not yet! Do you still have stamina, Arianne!?" (Daichi)

"Leave it to me! This much is nothing!" (Arianne)

Arianne concealed her accumulated fatigue and acted steadfast.

Since some time ago, she has been running around to exchange information between Leadred, me, and Lily. Selen is doing the same in reverse. I'm sure the burden on the girls compared to us due to our status values is unimaginable.

Investigating this way is also almost complete. We decided that although it is hard on the two that haven't received the goddess' divine protection we'll continue on as we have been. That said, even though they have nothing to do with it they're doing really good.

I can't thank them enough.

"Alright! When we're done I'll do anything! So please do your best!" (Daichi)

"Anything!? I want Katsuragi-sama to vent his lust on me!" (Arianne)

"Hurry up and go to Lily, slut!" (Daichi)

"Oh-!? What!?" (Arianne)

I blew Arianne away with wind magic towards where I felt the presence of Lily's magic. With that she should be able to have a small rest.

By no means I was caught by my personal feelings. I was just taking care of her.

“Katsuragi-san!” (Selen)

This time I heard a delicate yet firm voice from my left. It was Selen, who came from where Lily is.

However, seeing that her cheeks were flushed and was breathing roughly, I understood she ran at her top speed.

“What’s the matter, Selen?” (Daichi)

“Lily-san! The entrance, she said she found it!” (Selen)

“What!? Seriously!?” (Daichi)

“She said there was no doubt! She said that since it would be troublesome if an enemy found it, she went in first! I know the approximate location!” (Selen)

... I’m sure that I felt Lily’s magic gradually weakening just now. Evidence that she went underground into a dungeon.

Well done, Lily!

“Then what should we do!?” (Selen)

“Selen! Go back to where Lily was at! Arianne will be there too! Be on standby one you arrive!” (Daichi)

“And Katsuragi-san!?” (Selen)

“I’m going to get Leadred! Since I’m faster!” (Daichi)

“Understood-!” (Selen)

Selen mustered the power stuffed into her small body and returned. Confirming that, I turned towards where Leadred was.

“Wind!” (Daichi)

I rushed towards the sky from the forest and began to find Leadred’s magic. Then, I found the owner of a strong magic that was moving at a speed which couldn’t be from a human.

“... There! Wind Burst!” (Daichi)

Similar to the magic from when I blew Arianne away, I pointed both hands below me at an angle. The vigorous wind erupted and indiscreetly carried me in

the airflow.

I, who had become a human missile, closed the distance to Leadred with surprising speed. In front of me, I clearly saw the form of the red oni.

“Leadreed!!” (Daichi)

“... Hm? Just now, did I hear Hero-sama’s voi-aaaah!?” (Leadred)

The girl who noticed my shout suddenly braked and turned to look over her shoulder. I spread my legs wide apart to regain my balance before landing.

“Wind!” (Daichi)

As I released a gale weaker than the burst from before and softened my fall, I landed without breaking a bone. I didn’t try to crouch to lower my center of gravity and to ease the friction. Of course I knew that I wouldn’t stop with just that.

“Leadred! Stop me!” (Daichi)

“Eh-ah-kay! I got it even though I don’t get it!” (Leadred)

The red oni that couldn’t cope with the absurd situation used her boastful strength to slow me, who wasn’t stopping, down.

“Earth Chain Binding!” (Daichi)

Additionally, I finished counteracting it at last by making a chain coil around my waist. Barely made it.

T-that was close...

“Th-thank you, Leadred.” (Daichi) *[TN: Says in English (Katakana Sankyuu)]*

“Y-yeah. It’s okay, but why did Hero-sama come here? Arianne also came... ah, don’t tell me...” (Leadred)

“Yeah, Lily found the entrance. We’re going there now.” (Daichi)

Telling Leadred the important information concisely, I didn’t give her any spare time to breathe and put her over my shoulders.

“Wai-, Hero-sama!? What are you doing!?” (Leadred)

“Although it’s bad to be rude, this is the best way! Every second is valuable!”

(Daichi)

“I-if that’s it I get there myself!” (Leadred)

“No, since we’re flying there.” (Daichi)

“O-oi. What you said, just now, is that how Hero-sama arrived?” (Leadred)

The blood drained from Leadred’s face. It wasn’t an exaggeration to call her a blue oni now. Although I understand that it’ll be unpleasant for her, she can take it.

“I-it’s impossible! Because I... I don’t like heights!” (Leadred)

“When fighting you jump often enough.” (Daichi)

“T-that’s because I’m focusing on the fight and don’t worry about it!”
(Leadred)

I smiled pleasantly at Leadred who was trying to escape from under my arm and gave her a thumbs up.

I pointed my empty hand directly below me, jumped, and simultaneously used magic.

“Wind Burst!” (Daichi)

“Aaaaaaaaaah!!” (Leadred)

The moment we shot upwards, the scream of an oni rang into the sky.



After confirming where Arianne and Selen were by their magic, I perfectly killed our force by using 『Wind Burst』 on the way before landing. There was almost no pain because I was prepared. Compared to when I die, it was nothing.

There’s no need to say that Leadred had completely lost consciousness. Carrying her on my shoulder is fine, and she’ll probably wake when she wants if there’s a fight anyways.

“Katsuragi-sama! I was waiting!” (Arianne)

“... Are you alright?” (Selen)

The two that arrived earlier worried about me.

“Yeah, I’m okay. More importantly tell me where the entrance is first. It’ll be troublesome if the people from Claria’s Religion find it.” (Daichi)

“Got it. Selen.” (Arianne)

“... This way.” (Selen)

Selen walked into a grassy area. Following behind her, I saw that there was a magic formation there.

“According to Lily-san it should be here... Katsuragi-san, do you see it?”
(Selen)

Saying that, Selen asked me since she wasn’t a demon and couldn’t grasp its location.

“... I’m not sure. What should I do here?” (Daichi)

“I was told you should stand in the center and drop a drop of blood.” (Selen)

“Got it. As for Selen and Arianne, what do you do?” (Daichi)

Selen shook her head left and right at the question.

“... It seems that only demons can go inside. Therefore, I’ll go to Shuri-san.”
(Selen)

“Got it. Then, that’s your order. Please tell Arianne as well.” (Daichi)

“... She’ll definitely want to show off her efforts twice with pleasure.” (Selen)

“If she’s capable of anything.” (Daichi)

“... She’ll do it, definitely. Please be careful as well, Katsuragi-san.” (Selen)

She smiled and returned the way she came from after sharing a light joke.

... Now then, I should try to do my best too, huh?

I drew my sword from its scabbard and injured my finger, dripping blood onto the magic formation.

The same was done for Leadred that had fainted.

“Uoo-!?” (Daichi)

A purple light sprung out from the geometric pattern, bathing my body in it. I

closed my eyes to the dazzling light, lasting for a few minutes. When I noticed that the light wasn't there anymore, there were none of the trees that grew in abundance but there was a savage stone wall and straight path.

We seem to have safely arrived to the place connected with the magic formation.

Then I should go along this... or something like that?

Taking a deep breath, I calmed myself and confirmed the situation. Coming from the path, I more felt Lily's magic more strongly than on the surface. It seems that I don't need to think about this any further.

"Leadred. Wake up please." (Daichi)

I shook the body of Leadred who had been fainted for a long while. Repeating myself a few times, she opened her eyes and stood up vigorously.

"... Ooh-!? ... Huh? I feel like I was flying in the sky just a moment ago... my imagination? Eh, this place it..." (Leadred)

"As you guessed, this is the cave where Messiah is sleeping. I found it while Leadred was having a bad dream. If you understand hurry up. We'll be running so please follow." (Daichi)

"Ah-, wait up!" (Leadred)

When I properly explained to the confused Leadred, I let out a small fireball to light up our surroundings and began running. When thinking that I was done running along the long straight path my field of view opened up, and a banquet hall was able to be seen. A scene that I couldn't possibly think was in a cave filled my vision.

Plants grew in abundance all over on one side of the floor, here and there fruit trees stood. There was even a basin with a waterfall inside it. If I had to say, it embodied an image of paradise.

It was a scene drastically different from that of the surface. Even if you told me that I had slipped into another parallel world, I wouldn't find it weird.

In the center of the fantastic world's scene was something giving off an overwhelming presence, a transparent crystal.

And then, there was Lily with a strange man and woman next to her.

“Lily!” (Daichi)

“Hm? Oh, you came, Hero-sama.” (Lily)

When I called her, Lily turned around. The man and woman next to her both kneeled, lowering their heads.

... Seeing that, it seems they aren't enemies.

It's rude, but I passed them without speaking. No, it may be correct to say I was at a loss for words from what I saw.

“This is...” (Daichi)

The enormous black crystal rose. The reflected profoundly deep black light penetrated my body.

Within it was a young girl in a praying pose asleep.

Disheveled black hair. A wound on her modest snow white skin. A body like a child. Above all she had the appearance of one I clearly remembered. It could be said that was natural because she's killed me many many times in my dreams since coming to this world.

I'm certain. There's no doubt.

“This person is... Messiah.” (Daichi)

This girl was our, the demons', Goddess.

Chapter 8: Twin Guards

By the three of us searching at high speeds, Leadred, Lily, and I reached the place underground where Messiah was.

Now that we've confirmed the presence of the person who rules over all demons, we were introduced to the two who went down to their knees a moment ago.

"I am the guardian of this place, Kayber. It's good to meet you, General."
(Kayber)

"I am the second apostle of the dragonmen tribe, Ninya. I am called so in this world. Pleased to meet you, My Lord." (Ninya)

"Y-yeah..." (Daichi)

In their hands, Kei Bell carried a spear and Ninya a partisan.

Although his appearance was close to a human's, there was a line of scales on his cheek, and his ears were long. He had a short tail, too.

His first impression was like an energetic youth.

Ninya wore black open-finger gloves and an eye patch on her right eye.

They looked like brother and sister... but, there's no doubt about it, this kid has chuunibyousei disease.

"... Is something wrong, My Lord? You are staring at me." (Ninya)

"N-no... I just thought your clothes looked cool." (Daichi)

"I pledge my lifelong allegiance!!" (Ninya)

Seizing my hand, Ninya shook it up and down. Since her tail was swaying left and right she was probably happy to be praised.

Because I'm a person who walked on the same road, I understood her feelings.

"You're liked a lot, Hero-sama." (Lily)

"Fuu... she's a comrade in tastes. Saying something like that was obvious."

(Daichi)

“Looord...!” (Ninya)

Watching me talk with conviction, Ninya looked at me with starry eyes.

P-please stop it! Looks of reverence only pry open old injuries!

I looked towards Kei Bell and started talking with him to avert my eyes from her face.

“K-Kayber. Although rushing is bad, how should we undo the seal on Messiah? Please tell me.” (Daichi)

“General. Messiah-sama isn’t sealed. She’s just sleeping.” (Kayber)

“Sleeping...? How is that any different?” (Daichi)

“It’s—“ (Kayber)

“Messiah-sama is storing up magic. Since she ran out.” (Ninya)

As Kayber tried to say that, Ninya stole the chance from right beside him. He slumped forward, feeling down.

“Messiah-sama used up all of the magic she had saved for the final showdown against Terias in the Human-Demon War—“ (Ninya)

“Part of her magic was to summon General, in short to mount a counterattack, which is why Messiah-sama’s magic is exhausted.” (Kayber)

This time, Kayber retaliated with an interrupt. Ninya furrowed her brow.

... I see, these two are birds of the same feather huh?

“Yeah... even though those guys look like that they’re close friends, so don’t mind them. So Messiah is accumulating her magic. Do you know of crystal stone?” (Lily)

“The stone you can store magic into?” (Daichi)

The crystal that could store large amounts of magic that Yuina used to defeat Lily in the【Scorching Execution Ground】. For us humans, the quantity stored inside was incredibly dangerous, but it’s probably just an insignificant amount for a god like her.

“That’s right. As for this black crystal, Messiah asked Fantra to make it. She probably predicted that this would happen.” (Lily)

Lily gave her point of view while staring at the girl inside the crystal whose eyes were closed.

“However, she is unable to move during it no matter what. That is why those guardians have protected her.” (Lily)

“... Wait a sec. Wasn’t Garfunkel attending to Messiah all the way to the end?” (Daichi)

When I asked about the difference in information from what I remembered, the two people who were quarreling told me the correct information.

“That’s our dad, General.” (Kayber)

“Garfunkel left the ordeal of protecting her to us when he died of old age.” (Ninya)

“Then you two are his kids huh...? Who’s the mother?” (Daichi)

“Dad regularly kidnapped humans!” (Kayber)

“Apostles born from humans and demons. We’re the proof.” (Ninya)

“Haah... So that’s why you look more like humans than demons huh...?” (Daichi)

“That’s right... Well then, what good does standing around talking do? Hero-sama’s probably grasped these two’s personalities.” (Lily)

Winking at me, Lily changed the subject.

Most likely, that mean that it’s not worth my time. Since it’s true we have a busy schedule, I decided to go along with her.

“Yeah, no problem.” (Daichi)

If anything, I’m more worried about their strength... though they are the children of a Six Demon General. Worrying about it might be useless.

“Then, I’ll bring up the main subject. Do you two know what kind of situation is happening on the surface right now?” (Lily)

“It seems quite dicey. We’ve been going around on inspections, but we had to fight against many a believer. Of course, cutting to the chase, we dealt with them.” (Kayber)

Proudly saying that, Kayber stuck out his chest. He beat the ground with the bottom of his spear.

As expected, these two had the strength befitting of being called guardians. There were no problems thinking about their war potential. Having said that, it would be bad to leave this place empty. The reality is that we don’t know what will happen.

... Then we’ll have them be relief for the surface members.

“... Kayber, Ninya. You two wait here. I will call for you later.” (Daichi)

“Roger, My Lord!” (Ninya)

“As you say, General!” (Kayber)

The two had no objections and accepted my proposal.

I was able to confirm Messiah’s circumstances.

I wonder what I should do from now on.

“... Alright. Then, we’ll also head to the surface at once. We will rejoin with Shuri’s group and recapture our home!” (Daichi)



“Good shot!!” (Tamaki)

“Uwaaaaaah!!”

I threw the Claria’s Religion follower whose arm was frozen and was unable to move. Before it landed, Yuuma pulled his fist back and waited.

“Sei-!” (Yuuma)

The force of the hit sunk into the believer’s cheek, a clean hit. The body hit the try and fell down.

“Then, I’ll go next-!” (Tamaki)

“Hii-!?”

I froze a believer behind me so they couldn't escape. Foreseeing their miserable end, the believer grew frightened; though that was of no concern to me.

Seizing their feet, they were thrown the same way as a moment ago.

"Eiyah-!" (Tamaki)

"Ogoo!?"

"Oooh, Home Run!" (Tamaki)

Throwing the new believer (ball), I pretended to look high into the sky.

Getting tired of seeing everyone do the same thing repeatedly, Shuri-chan has recently been trampling on believers to vent some stress.

"Wind Slice!" (Shuri)

"Ebu-!"

Fired from point blank, the wind blade cut through the believer's chest. Killing things at a ratio of one hit per kill.

"Emperor of the Wind! Cut through those who oppose my rule of right! The rule of the royalty that spew forth storms! Form upon! Turn everything to dust, and return them to the earth! Berserk Tempest!!" (Shuri)

This is the end. The bodies of the large amount of men and women who tried to surround her were cut to pieces by the raging wind and dropped dead.

"Nanamin! Recovery!" (Tamaki)

"Kay~" (Nanami)

Furthermore, even if we use Emperor-class magic, Nanamin could restore our magic with her special ability, Smile of the Goddess.

As you would expect of the Murdering Demon.

Looking the other way, it was pretty quiet. If Shuri-chan's style was like a steamroller, Arianne-san and Selen-san fought like skilled adventurers.

"Selen!" (Arianne)

"... Roger." (Selen)

That's all. With that alone, the two people displayed perfect combination.

"Hayah-!" (Arianne)

Going first, Arianne-san kicked upwards. At that moment, Selen stabbed a knife into the top of the believer's foot from below his line of sight.

"Ee-!?"

Now he concentrated on the ground, loosening his attention towards above.

"You're defenseless!" (Arianne)

Therefore, she easily gave him a strong axe kick. Furthermore, she rolled the man that was slouching forward and threw a dagger.

"You noticed-!?"

It stuck into another believer that was hiding their approach. Immediately rushing up to him, she pulled out her dagger and slashed his carotid artery.

"M-merciless..." (Selen)

"Of course. Since we are now on Katsuragi-sama's side!" (Arianne)

"... A straight line to rich people." (Selen)

"Honestly, you two!" (Yuuma)

Yuuma-san was probably also enjoying himself.

I threw three more believers towards him in rapid fire, which he then punched with his fist.

"... Ah, that was the end huh." (Tamaki)

When I went to replenish the amount of balls again, there was no one there anymore.

The cleaning up was over.

"I'm done over here!" (Shuri)

"We're also finished here!" (Arianne)

In other words, the three voices meant we had succeeded in recapturing our home.

“Hah... I’m worn out...” (Tamaki)

I sat down in place. Everyone else also seemed to take a break.

“Good job.” (Miare)

“Good job everyone.” (Fuuko)

Almost simultaneously, Miare and Fuuko who were keeping company with the opponents in the house came out with drink trays.

“Good job to you too. You were okay with two people?” (Tamaki)

“Yeah. Miare-san took care of most of them.” (Fuuko)

“I just disguised myself as one of them, then took them by surprise? Something like that.” (Miare)

In a flash, she suddenly turned into a Claria believer, and right after turned back into Miare.

I see... I couldn’t tell the difference at all. If it’s like that you could fool your partner’s too huh.

“Though, we have to clean up later... it’s very messy inside.” (Fuuko)

“We couldn’t do anything about it. It’s good just being able to secure a place to rest.” (Miare)

“That’s right, Miare-san. Ah, I’ll give these to everyone.” (Fuuko)

Cutting off the conversation, Fuuko walked over to Shuri-chan’s group. Miare followed after her.

Pouring water from the clear glass, I also took a gulp. A cool feeling passed through my throat, permeating through my sweaty body.

“... About this time, Daichi should be meeting...” (Tamaki)

While thinking of him, I muttered and looked up into the blue sky.

Then, Nanamin looked at me from above, interrupting the view.

“Yui-chan~, good work.” (Nanami)

“Yeah, you too.” (Tamaki)

Celebrating success with Nanamin, she sat down next to me and we lightly hit our glasses together.

“Cheers!” (Nanami)

“Even if you say that, I don’t have any left huh. I drank it all since I was tired.” (Tamaki)

“Can’t be helped. Since it was Yui-chan doing the work, I only healed people.” (Nanami)

“No, it’s nothing like that. If Nanamin weren’t here, Shuri-chan would have had a rough time... It’s really strong, your『Special Ability』. It can restore both stamina and magic?” (Tamaki)

When I asked that, Nanamin turned to smile at me.

However, it was different from normal.

Rather than smiling at me, it was like she was smiling at someone far away.

“That’s right. It can save everyone, it was wasted on me... And—” (Nanami)

“Wai-, Nanamin? You’re acting strange.” (Tamaki)

“—Terias-sama gave it to me, my only treasure.” (Nanami)

It sounded muddy, a dull voice.

At the same time I sensed a dangerous feeling from my close friend, I heard Selen-san scream.

Chapter 9: Survivor

“Shit...!”

The atmosphere became tense after I heard Selen’s high-pitched scream.

As usual, we went into gear and flew towards our home.

“Calm down, Hero-sama!”

“I know!”

In battle mode, Leadred clung to my back as she tried to calm me down, but my pulse wouldn’t settle down.

It was because when I opened Shuri’s and Yuina’s statuses to check on them, their stamina was decreasing. It’s been cut down to half from their almost complete recovery earlier.

“Hero-sama! There!”

Leadred pointed ahead to where a roaring sound tore out from as trees collapsed.

And now, Shuri’s stamina was being shaved off again. Her special ability, 『Auto Heal』, wasn’t enough...!

“Lily! Put me there!”

“Alright! Don’t die till I get there!”

Revolving mid-air, Lily kicked my back to send me flying.

“Wind Burst!”

Adding speed to my speed, I approached the center of the battlefield at a dash. I recognized the man in the middle of it by sight.

The person who pushed me down, who beat me up, my fated opponent that I killed in revenge.

I remember. His screams were branded into my mind. The feeling of killing him. The sensation of ripping him apart, thick and heavy.

However, that guy was standing on his own feet.

“It’s a lie...”

How, why are you here.

“Samejimaaaaaaaaaa!!”

Crying out the name of my worst enemy, I drew my sword and put force to kill into it. To take advantage of that, Leadred also rushed out.

“Line Drive!”

Tearing the sky, a slashing wave soared in a straight line from her war sword towards Samejima. Facing him, I came from below. Samejima was already in motion to drop the 『Line Drive』, he can’t stop this!

“Raaaah!”

Scattered blood came into view. Samejima’s arm went flying somewhere.

Naturally, I didn’t stay my hands.

Closing my stance, I took one hand from the handle of my blade and struck him with a back fist to his side.

“...-!”

Unable to endure the blow, Samejima was blown away, rolling away in tatters.

I took the chance to run over to Shuri’s group that was badly injured.

“Is everyone okay!?”

“Y-yeah. Since I have 『Auto Heal』. But, Selen-san is...”

Shuri looked towards the figures of Arianne and Yuina giving emergency treatment to Selen, who had been cut diagonally across her upper body.

The the opening of the wound was frozen and bandaged the pained moans didn’t abate at all.

This is bad...!

What is he doing here!

“Oi, Sajima! Hurry up and heal Selen with ma-... gic...”

I was at a loss for words from the shock of what I saw.

Our greatest recovery technique user, who we got just the other day, was healing Samejima.

The right arm that I'd cut off was slowly regenerating.

“What are you doing, Nanamin! Hurry up and come here to heal her!”

“It's futile, Shuri-chan! Whatever you say now to that girl is pointless!”

Yuina called out, but there was still no response. She continued to recover him.

It's troublesome Samejima revived, but right now healing Selen's wounds comes first.

However, ironically for us to heal Selen's wounds we had no choice but to wait and bring her back.

“Yuina. How is Selen fairing?”

“Not good. The cut is deep. Even with constant treatment it's hard to say... But, apart from that...”

“... Yeah, how is that guy here...?”

“Isn't it the same as you, Demon King-kun?”

The whisper close to my ears sent a chill down my back.

I immediately swung with my sword, but it only cut air.

“That's dangerous you know? Suddenly cutting like that.”

Facing towards the voice, Samejima that had already recovered was standing there.

Then, stranger than anything else, Sajima stood next to him.

“Thanks, Nanami. As you'd expect of healing techniques.”

“Yes, Terias-sama...”

When Samejima stroked Sajima's head, she blushed red.

No, more importantly. Just now, what did she say?

She just called Samejima 『Terias-sama』...

... Could it be? Something like that...?

“What’s troubling you, Demon King-kun?”

With a sarcastic smile glued to his face, Samejima inquired that.

He guessed my thoughts. And called me the Demon King.

Though I had trouble believing it, it happened right in front of me.

There was already no room to doubt.

“... You’re noisy. Out of everyone a f*cker like you should know the best, Terias!”

When I roared that, he laughed with a ridiculing cackle.

“Correct. My name is Terias Duke. Though it doesn’t feel like I died, it seems I’m called a legendary hero. And now, your enemy. My regards.”

Not being vulgar and with a gentlemanly behavior, he introduced himself without looking down on people like Samejima tended to.

His body was Samejima’s, but it contained something entirely different. If it’s like that, there’s just one person I could think of.

Terias Duke himself.

But how is the dead hero of legend here?

Something like that doesn’t matter. I’ve experienced the act of deviating from mankind many time too, and it wasn’t amusing to think that Claria’s side was like that too.

Until now I’d been under the impression that only this side could revive whenever.

Above all, it’s likely it’ll be settled when I kill this guy.

The troublesome problem was Sajima Nanami standing next to him.

“Nanamin? The heck are you saying... you’ve been strange since a bit ago you know?”

When our gazes of suspicion focused on her, she smiled and laughed towards Shuri who should have been her close friend.

“No, I’m the usual me. From the start, I haven’t been different since I met Shuri-chan. I’ve moved for the sake of one purpose.”

“N-not different...”

“... Yeah. Now that I think about it, I haven’t told Shuri-chan and Yuina-chan it yet.”

“... Haven’t told us? What?”

“The name of my favorite person and my identity.”

When Yuina urged her to continue, Sajima snuggled up to him, locking arms with him before saying—

“My real name is Nanami Riseia. He—my love, Terias-sama—saved me, a survivor of the demi-human tribe that the devil Messiah abandoned.”

“—”

It’s often said that one’s brain freezes when unexpected things happen one after another, but I think that the me right now fits that saying to a T. I couldn’t process the information I was being given.

Inside that, I subconsciously picked out the most striking thing from Sajima’s words.

“... Abandoned?”

“That’s right. The battlefield where the demi-human tribe was. It’s because of that person’s instructions right? It was an empty fight and everyone was killed...!”

I felt hatred from her words. To the point that I, who take pride in my desire for revenge, could sympathize with.

“Won’t you wait a moment? Messia-sama definitely sent reinforcements in order to save the demi-human tribe. The beastmen tribe’s unit was lead by Lily.”

Knowing about the time, Yuuma broke into the conversation and explained.

Sajima's anger still wasn't suppressed though.

"Yeah, that's right. I came to help. But we were obstructed. In the end, we fought Terias-sama to the last for the sake of the demi-human tribe... It had nothing to do with you guys. Since we already had mutual enemies."

"Wait a minute, Nanamin! Something like that is strange!"

"... What is?"

Her tone was terrifyingly cold. However, Shuri didn't give up and continued to talk to persuade her close friend.

"Because, in the that, that man... killed Nanamin's comrades you know? But why are you taking his side now?"

"Because I decided Messiah was the cause. Terias-sama tried to save us... Besides... Terias-sama inherited everyone's wills and mine. I vowed to walk alongside him. That alone is enough for me."

Terias stroked Sajima's head as she praised him. She seemed happy and smiled.

Completely fallen.

"... Well then, that's the reason. The time to talk seems to be over, will you obstructive demons play with me?"

"...-!"

When Terias took a step forward, everyone readied their weapons. That guy had on a fearless smile.

"... What, all of you... want to fight me?"

"Naturally. We'll defeat you, then take Sajima back."

"You two close friends don't intend on taking to heart Nanami's wish?"

"Even so. If you die, we can get back Nanamin and save her. Isn't that two birds, one stone?"

"... My my. I got it, I got it... Then, shall we have a go?"

Terias shrugged his shoulders with a sigh. Resulting in a small chance.

It was too unnatural and I understood he was provoking us.

Perhaps everyone understood that, taking it as the signal to start the fight.

『Aaaaaah!!』

Leadred, Shuri, Yuuma, and I all jumped forward at once, swinging our swords and fists.

Chapter 10: The Cost of Being Weak

“Stealth Rock!”

Terias recited a shortened chant and a series of rocks with sharp points appeared to enclose him in. However, seeing that it was induced by himself, I assume it's to defend.

“Yuuma! Leadred!”

“Leave it to me! Break Through!”

“My turn! Line Drive!”

While the two's attacks bashed against the defensive magic, I launched a fireball into the sky. Like a firework, an animal triumphantly appeared high above when it burst.

Get here soon, Lily.

“Yo, Terias! It's been a while huh!?”

“What, were you eavesdropping, Lily Shuraham?”

“Shut up! Red Knuckles!”

Her fists clad in flames, she swung downwards at Terias. However, he nonchalantly stopped the blow.

Lowering his stance, he put the jostling pure power into his body weight at his feet. Unable to hold the pressure from his feet, the ground greatly caved in.

“Vigorous as ever I see. Your bestial instincts are showing.”

“Is that so bad? I like it when I fight humans.”

Towards Lily baring her fangs in a warlike manner, Terias gave a challenging smile towards the worthy opponent.

“Even so, are that okay? Talking so leisurely that is.”

“Right back at you. You're in my range you know?”

As Terias put strength into his grip to the extent that he grimaced, Lily leaned

her chest backwards and inhaled.

“Take this! Flamethrower!”

“Oops. I’ll refrain from that.”

“I won’t let you get away! Triple Earth Layer!”

I set up walls of earth in his path needed dodge, blocking his way of retreat. Shuri fired off magic in pursuit.

“Wind Slice!”

The wind blade and flame were direct hits. His clothes burned and torn, blood gushed out.

Without paying attentions to the wounds that covered his body, Terias immediately reacted.

“Emperor of Flame, use thou purging flame. In repentance for their crimes, please give them the purifying flame.”

Instantly, I felt an enormous magic in the ground.

To the degree that its size was a circle that all of us were just barely in range of. Of course, that included Selen who was being treated and the powerless Fuuko.

Tch... bastard...!

“Yuina! Use ice magic!”

“Eh-, ah-, got it! Frozen Earth!”

The ground changed to red. The heat was transmitted to the soles of my feet. Barely one beat before the ground exploded, ice spread across the ground to prevent it.

Cooling rapidly, we used the chance the invoked magic gave us to escape from the Killing Range.

“Eeh, so you even have a child that can use ice-type huh... Troublesome...”

Terias stopped using magic and opened the distance between us. However, when he opened the distance, he became unhurt by means of Sajima’s

restoration.

... If we leave things how they are this will loop eternally. While we don't have any means to recover our magic, they can use Sajima to recover both magic and stamina.

If this becomes a prolonged fight, our overwhelming disadvantage is obvious.

If that's what happens, then our strategy has naturally been decided.

"Everyone... finish this with a single blow!"

"... Understood, Katsuragi-kun."

"It's vexing, but it seems we don't have a choice... alright."

Shuri and Lily began chanting and accumulating magic for Emperor-class magics, their strongest attacks.

"Emperor of Wind. Thou, hew down the one who obstructs this one's noble path. Blow, Storm King of Military Rule, establish here. Turn all to dust, return all to—" (Shuri)

"Emperor of Flame. Thou, burn those that hinder this one's noble path. Scream, evil and inferior species. Become food for the blackened—" (Lily)

"Emperor of Flame. Thou, judge this criminal who committed an evil unto the throne. Eminent excellency, burn tremendously, Six Flame Pillars. Extreme flames, burn them as wicks. Leave not one proof of their existence—" (Daichi)

"You think I'll give you the chance?"

"Yeah... Since that's what I'm for!"

Leadred fired off a Line Drive, slightly slowing Terias' movements. During that time there was support from the rear. As soon as we could hear the voice many daggers passed overhead.

"Don't forget me either!"

Yuina's knives, that Arianne's group had entrusted to Selen, cut through Terias's surroundings and got stuck here and there.

"Icy Wind!"

Threads of ice ran along the trajectories of the knives, transforming into a veil that stopping his movements.

“Kuh...!”

He tried to tear it apart, but since it changed into threads of ice whenever he broke it, it was practically meaningless.

He’ll be nothing but prey for our explosive firepower!

“Berserk Tempest!”

“Chaos Spiral!”

“Suicide of Ashes and Dust!”

Making sure Terias was surrounded, Shuri, Lily, and I each fired off our Emperor-class magic.

The wind blades cut off the upper part of his body, the scorching maelstrom burned his body from the front, and the world-destroying columns of flame burst him into flames from below.

Without a chance to do anything, Terias received the powerful abilities from three directions with his body.

“Guaaah-!!”

“!? Terias-sama!”

Though Sajima tried to use light magic to heal him, Yuina and Yuuma were already en route to cancel her chant.

“... Sorry, Nanamin.”

“It’ll be troublesome if we let you run loose. You’ll be observing the rest from here.”

“No...!”

She sat down feebly and glared at the two in hatred, though they weren’t concerned.

At any rate, the two’s Nice Assist stopped Sajima’s healing. Now just a little more and—

“–Huh?”

The word leaked out unintentionally.

Terias appeared from within the cloud of dust without any of the wounds that he should have had.

How? Sajima wasn't even able to use her special ability. How was he healed?

Three emperor-class magics should have hit him simultaneously.

There's no way he could be safe from that.

Despite that, why is this guy like that, wearing a smile of triumph?

“... Yeah, it seems I'm finally getting familiar with this body.”

Terias repeatedly opened and closed his fists.

I felt a sense of hopelessness from his words.

Getting used to the body? Just now we even used superhuman combat skills, and could see the overwhelming difference in power. Though we were only able to attack with this amount of people, wasn't that enough power for one person?

“What's the matter? That surprised face. How could the legendary hero fall by emperor-class magic?”

He brushed dirt off of himself as though nothing happened.

It appears that our attack amounted to nothing for this guy.

... Is such a thing possible?

“What happened? You aren't coming...? If that's so, should I put an end to this?”

He lightly snapped his finger.

I recognize that pose. It's the one Fantra had when he frequently used his brutal skill in the 【Labyrinth of Dreams】.

A moment after, Yuuma gave a grievous cry.

“Gaaah!?”

Terias' arm pierced Yuuma's chest. When he pulled it out, red liquid overflowed from the hole like a fountain that lost its plug.

Yuuma collapsed limply. Terias mercilessly stepped on his neck and broke it. He let out a weak breath. His eyes were lifeless, unmoving.

"Now, that's the first person."

Licking the sticky blood on his hand, the glint of a cold-hearted killer seized us. The fear that I'd forgotten for a long time caused a chill to run through my body.

"-!? Yuuma-sa-!"

Yuina was struck by a hand to her neck while she was still blocking Sajima as before, collapsing.

"Hey, that's the second."

His gaze was provoking us. After that, he got rid of Yuuma that had become a corpse by kicking him toward us. At last, the brute roared.

"Terias... You BASTAAAAAAAARD!!"

Enraged, Lily raised her fists and leapt towards him.

Going in by yourself like a suicide attack was a poor move. Understanding that, Leadread that had been keeping relatively calm went around to support her.

"Hero-sama! While we gain time, everyone—!"

"... I'll come back immediately!"

Help? Or escape? Immediately judging which was more probable to lead to survival, I ran over to Arianne.

"Arianne! Miare! Fuuko! You guys take refuge quickly! Do not object!"

Guys like them would instantly die if they got involved in a fight with monsters(irregulars) like us.

However, Arianne and Fuuko looked like humans, and Miare could disguise herself. Their chance at surviving would go up even a little by seeking refuge in a densely populated city.

“B-but, then Katsuragi-kun—”

“I said no objections, Fuuko.”

“I-I don’t want to! I’ll fight too—!?”

Arianne made Fuuko, who was continuing with her objection, faint with the same way that Terias used. Her ability to adapt was high, despite her normally being a pervert. She made the best judgement for right now.

“... Thanks, Arianne.”

“... No, this is all I can do... I pray for safety.”

Giving the appearance of being strained, she spoke those words with difficulty and picked up Selen. Miare also wore an expression of mental agony, following what I said.

“Shuri, you are everyone’s guard.”

“Alright... I understand.”

Shuri nodded reassuringly.

However, her eyes were shaking uneasily. I understood from a glance that she was straining herself.

When I put my hand on her head, I stroked it as gently as possible. I did so to give her peace of mind.

“... It’s alright. I won’t die, and I’ll also bring Yuina and the rest back home alive.”

“... That’s right. Katsuragi-kun revives.”

“Yeah, I can’t die. I’ll kill that guy. No matter what, I’m going to kill him. Then, I’ll come back.”

“... Then, promise me?”

Shuri took my hand and entwined her pinky around mine, humming.

“It’s a pinky swear. Lies are... deeeeeefinitely not allowed.”

Saying that, she took back her hand and turned around.

“... I’ll be waiting.”

“... Yeah.”

Exchanging those short words, we headed opposite ways from each other.

I won't look back anymore. Breathing in all at once, I exhaled.

I shifted my focus.

“... Alright.”

I analyzed the situation.

Leadred and Lily were one way or another pushed into a defensive fight. Yuuma and Yuina had collapsed, with Sajima standing nearby watching. It seems that there's no sign that she considered harming Yuina herself to use her as leverage.

In that case, I can only concentrate on beating that guy.

“... Berserk Tempest.”

I fired off magic as a replacement for greeting him. Terias stopped attacking Leadred and jumped into the air.

“I won't let you get awaaaay!”

“You finally appeared!”

If magic won't work, I can't do anything but depend on the laws of nature. In that case, commence hand to hand combat!

“Uraah!”

I aimed to hit his face with a straight right when he landed. While Terias stopped the attack with his palm, he gave a heavy kick with the opening.

“Kaha-...!”

“You don't know how do use your body. You're full of openings.”

“Same with you!”

Leadred charged into Terias' sermon with a slashing attack. Lily's face was twisted in anger as she charged in.

“Raging Flame of Iron Decapitation!”

“Red Knuckles!”

The sword and fist clad in flames came from the left and right.

“Ice Stream!”

However, the attacks were swallowed by the torrent of ice, and the two were hammered against the trees. They both hit their heads, losing consciousness. Their arms hung down loosely.

“Wind!”

“Aga-!”

However, when I noticed his attention was caught by the two I accelerated the top of my boot towards his chin.

Terias fell backwards in an arc. I hurriedly reverted my stance back to my right half.

Though he'd only given a single blow, the two were unable to fight.

“... Fufu, it seems I took you a bit too lightly.”

Terias got up calmly. He wasn't even scratched.

Compared to that, our whole bodies are wounded.

Everyone who I could call an ally had fallen.

I can't expect any more support.

I have no choice but to do something by myself. I'll cut my way through this.

“...”

I got rid of my negative thoughts.

I have to win. I schemed how to win. I looked for a possibility.

“Now then, what will you do, Demon King-kun? How will you turn this situation around?”

“Can't I just beat you up?”

“Such a boring response. That's not even something you can do. It's like you're sleep-talking.”

Terias smiled, devoid of emotion as he judged me.

“Besides, I said one thing... since I don't like dragging it out you know?”

Though unfortunate, my means of survival were on the brink of being cut off as that pronouncement reached my ears.

... It's no good. I'm cornered.

He mercilessly tore up my card.

If I don't run away immediately, I'll definitely be killed.

Dirty feelings mixed with weakness were replaced by a clear resolution to die. I'll continue as many times as I can.

A chance would arrive somewhere. Slapping my cheeks with both hands, I injected my fighting spirit and prepared myself.

“... I got this.”

Terias kicked out his feet out behind him many times, heading forward.

“So fast!”

“How about some infighting!” [TN: Err... fighting closer than arm's reach.]

“A man talks with his fists!”

“Take this!”

I was thrown into the sky by his idiotic strength. Terias attempted to draw closer to me after becoming defenseless.

“How many can you avoid?”

“All of them...!”

The barrage carried out at a point-blank range. Predicting his attacks would be aimed at my vitals, I avoided the lunge and kick that moved at a speed unable to be seen by the eye.

“Gu-... Gaah!!”

My foot hit Terias' kick with all my strength to forcibly gain some distance.

The impact of the landing shook my body and covered in hits.

“Ts...!”

The amount of bruising greatly increased.

Bones completely cracked. Every part of me was screaming.

“It’s painful isn’t it, Demon King-kun?”

“... Shut the f*ck up.”

I can’t lose my bravado. I have to bluff.

“That so...? Then, let’s give it a bit more strength.”

One breath.

Only that much time past since that, the time being almost nothing.

“Gah-...”

He seized my neck, lifting me up. In order to give pain, but not with enough strength to kill me. Yet I was unable to breath.

“... What, you’re not going to kill me?”

“You will revive if I kill you. You’d become uninjured.”

Terias quietly grasped my wrist.

I realized the nature of what he was going to do. Since I’m certain that if I were in his position I would do the same thing.

“... So, I’m going to torment you to the point just before death.”

Then, with a grin and a laugh, he crushed it.

“... .. Aaah!”

“Does it hurt?”

The torture began. Next, he touched my left ankle. With a cracking sound, my bone broke through the skin.

“...-aah!”

“Does it hurt?”

I gradually lost feeling. But I still understood that he was pinching my ribs. Crack, crack, crack, one after one they were broken.

“Uu... fuu...! Fuu...!”

“Do you want to die?”

Tossed aside, I rolled across the ground. I felt a dull pain every time a part of me touched the ground.

I couldn't even let out a cry. I covered my abdomen and huddled up.

“However, you aren't going to escape from this hell(loop). This is your fate. Though, be relieved. Because I will release you from it.”

Terias approached step by step while slowly humming to himself.

“Goddess of Light. For this one who has fallen in love with thou, use thou power to judge all. Use thou divinity to exterminate evil. Please summon into this world. –Heavenly Divine Decapitation.”

A large sword of light manifested. Other than the handle, it was insubstantial. A sword that could kill the god of death formed out of sparkling divine particles. The tip of the sword was pointed towards me.

“Get it? I am the person who receives the Goddess Claria's affection—the Hero. So to speak, I am an agent of God. In this world, I am the only one that can execute the true power bestowed by God. What God can do, us humans can not. They can freely control souls. Yes... reviving them, as well as destroy them... Saying that... do you understand?”

I know. I understand.

This guy means that he has the means to kill me for real.

This is bad. I have to escape.

“Though I don't know what kind of plan you have... If I destroy your soul, how could you struggle when you can't revive?”

“... That's a bad joke.”

“I'm not joking.”

He swung his blade horizontally. The slashing wave didn't stop even after cutting down many trees.

However, the parts cut off turned into particles of light.

“... You’re joking?”

The parts cut off 『Vanished』. A phenomenon like that is impossible. It was as though it was purified.

In other words, it was a thing like that.

“Well... will you accept death?”

Inexperienced, sharp, powerful killing intent.

Death? Am I going to die here?

I can’t revive? I won’t be able to return to this world anymore?

If that happens, I won’t be able to meet Shuri, Yuina, Fuuko, nor everyone anymore.

No, no, no, no!

Fear of dying welled up from the pit of my stomach. I filled with negative feelings.

“BERSERK TEMPEEEEEEST!!”

I kept shooting magic recklessly. All of it was mercilessly cut down, failing. It was destroyed without damaging that guy’s body even once.

Hit! Hit! Hit damn it!?

“DIIIIIIIIIE!!”

My view shook up and down. My sight wouldn’t stay straight ahead.

My consciousness dimmed. My teeth were chattering miserably and my legs shook constantly. My face spasmed, my body stiff like stone.

“... Seems like you’re already at your limit.”

My executioner was before my eyes. He looked down on me as though he was looking at trash. The only sword that could kill me in his hand.

Displaying that lethal weapon, he swung it. My thoughts stopped. I couldn’t even speak correctly.

“It appears that you’re already unable to do anything... how truly dull.”

He rose his right arm up high. I can't avoid it. I'm definitely going to die this time.

"Then—die will you?"

The godsword swung down. However, it suddenly stopped just at the tip of my nose and wide open eyes.

What happened? Looking, Terias turned his head behind him. Following his gaze, there was Yuina getting up with her hands on her knees. Her slender right arm pointed this way, her fingers imitating the form of a gun.

"What happened to Nanami?"

"I restrained her. Though, I had to get a bit rough."

Nanami's figure was nailed to the tree next to her, knives in her sleeves.

"Release Nanami. This fight is already over. There's no point in resisting."

"... It's not over yet, conceited man."

"I don't plan on killing you—"

"Bang."

An ice bullet hit Terias squarely on the face.

Barely able to stand, Yuina hurled abuse towards him in order to get his attention, resisting him. Surely, Terias lost interest in me who he could kill at any moment, focusing on her.

However, that doesn't mean anything. His target just changed from me to Yuina.

"... I'll tolerate it this time. However, you will be my opponent if you shoot aga—"

His words stopped there.

Since a small ice bullet fired from her fingertip hit Terias in the face.

Silence came. Stillness.

"... You wouldn't have died if you just behaved yourself."

He held up his sword and grasped this handle in both hands.

“Stop, Terias... If you want to kill, kill—”

“—Heavenly Divine Decapitation.”

He mercilessly fired the slash.

Not good, not good, not good...!

“Wind Je—haga-!?”

I used wind jet—however, my broken ankle couldn't endure it and I crashed into the ground. My face sunk into the ground. I reached out my hand towards Yuina, but only gripped soil.

Dazzling light soared nearby.

Then, the holy light that pierces evil handed down judgement on the innocent girl and carried out justice.

“A-... a, ah-....”

My mind clouded. My emotions didn't catch up to comprehend what happened.

I moved only on instinct.

With unsteady steps, I walked towards her as she looked this way and smiled.

Her feet were already disappearing into particles of light.

“Ahaha... that shameful face.”

While amazed, she criticized my current self.

No. Why are you laughing.

You're... disappearing...!

“Why... you...”

“... What's wrong?”

“... Why did you do something like that!?”

I shook Yuina's shoulders. However, I realized it was unreasonable for me to say that and stopped. But, but...!

I couldn't suppress these impulses, I couldn't stop my runaway emotions.

“Why... why did you do that!!”

“Well, I am Daichi’s Shield. Besides... is it bad to want to protect the one you love?”

She gripped my hand and separated it from her body. She placed a hand on my cheek. It felt like the coldness of just before death, it felt wrong.

It should be warm.

Even a little more would be fine. I want her to feel cheerful.

I fear losing her. I’d lose something important.

My body and mind, mixed together in pain, were gnawed by something.

Tears streamed down from my eyes. They flowed.

“Ah-, wa-... ..”

I embraced her strongly. I won’t separate. I won’t let her go.

Strong enough so that she would stay, I embraced her.

“... Come to think of it, this is the first time I’ve seen Daichi’s tear-stained face.”

In the middle of her own life fading, she said something as inconsequential as that.

“Daichi... didn’t cry no matter what we did. Even your complaints were transient, and you didn’t stop coming to school... I’m truly sorry for that time you know?”

“Something like that, it’s already fine! More than that, we have to do...!”

I thought of things I could possibly do one after another... but, everything just came to the conclusion that nothing would work.

Damnit... damnit, damnit-!!

“But you know, Daichi. I’ll apologize forever. But please... forgive me.”

The promise from a long time ago. She would be next to me forever until I forgive her.

She was trying to bring it to a close. To break it.

Chapter 11: Broken Heart

One day has passed since separating from Katsuragi-kun in the Forest of the Demonic Dragon. Leaving Selen-san in the town's inn, Arianne and I turned back to the battlefield.

However, our expressions were grim.

Last night, Katsuragi-kun didn't come back.

What did that mean? I didn't want to think about it.

I wanted to think it was a lie.

"... Haah."

I unintentionally sighed. Arianne-san, who had been walking next to me, reacted to it.

"What's wrong... you sound off."

"No, it's nothing... Thanks, Arianne-san. For helping me with my selfishness."

I couldn't help being anxious and suggested to everyone that I would go back by myself. Arianne-san approved of it and accompanied me.

"No, since I considered the same thing as Hamakaze-san as well. Besides..."

Arianne-san clenched her fists, frustrated.

"... I don't know if I'll be able to help even if I'm there."

Her strength was highly ranked amongst humans. However, we have power that far exceeds human beings, so-called monsters.

I was careless, Arianne-san couldn't bare just being a hindrance. She felt it keenly in that last fight.

... Still, I was honestly happy that she was vexed and not being able to be helpful for Katsuragi-kun. Since that was evidence that she hasn't given up yet.

"... Arianne-san."

"What is it, Hamakaze-san?"

“Could you please stop calling me Hamakaze-san? Shuri is fine you know?”

“... Eh?”

Probably due to my words, Arianne-san was surprised.

She'd called us all by our last names since joining us in the 【Scorching Execution Ground】. Arianne-san definitely thought it was polite to draw the line there.

Therefore, with that conduct, even Katsuragi-kun wouldn't down her attitude as usual... But more than that it's likely that he had resistance to [Forsake] someone.

“Though we met you like that... we already trust Arianne-san. Of course, Selen-san as well.”

“... Hamakaze-san...”

“So call me by my first name okay? Since we're comrades.”

“... Hamakaze-san!”

Arianne-san did an exaggerated reaction and clasped my hand, shaking it.

“I, this feeling... I was being thought of in such a way-”

“Mmhm!”

“I never thought Katsuragi-san's legal wife would include me as a partner...!”
[TN: '仲間' -> nakama -> anything from friend, to associate, to comrade, etc.]

“Yea-wait, eeh!?”

I was taken aback by the sudden rival declaration.

W-what?? The good feeling atmosphere that was here up till a moment ago quickly became awkward. That's not what I meant by comrade!? M-moreover, legal wife...

W-what a wonderful ring it has to it...

... That's right... I'm seen as Katsuragi-kun's wife...

“E-ehehe...”

“... Sh-Shuri-san?”

“What? Ah, in any event, should I call for Katsuragi-kun?”

“Too soon! I take back what I said, it’s too soon!”

Ariane tsukkomi’d loudly.

After such a silly exchange, we unintentionally smiled. We pointed at each other and laughed.

“... Mou. You’re really amusing. Have you developed any wild ideas about Katsuragi-kun yet?”

“I-it’s nothing like that!? It’ll be a reality some day!”

“How so? Since there’s both Hayase-san and Tamaki-san... is it tough?”

“N-no it’s not. Katsuragi-kun chose me you know!?”

“... Then, should we ask the person himself?”

“... Yeah, let’s! Then, I’ll try to find him around here!”

I stopped in place and looked for Katsuragi-kun’s magic again. Though in general it’s almost impossible to sense an individual’s magic, it’s a different story if they have a huge amount of magic power like him and Terias. Since there isn’t anyone as powerful as them, I’d immediately know who they are.

Though Katsuragi-kun seems to be able to specify individuals, I can’t do a feat like that. In this way, I sharpened my perception of magic in all directions.

... There. Someone with a lot of magic power.

Magic that I’ve felt before. Katsuragi-kun’s.

However, I felt uneasy. Even after searching around, I couldn’t feel Terias’ magic.

That means...!

Ariane seems to have sensed it too. Our eyes met.

“Shuri-chan, that’s...!”

“Yeah! Katsuragi-kun defeated Terias!”

Katsuragi-kun kept his promise. That must be it. I never doubted him.

He's defeated all kinds of difficult situations so far. He destroyed them.

He pulled it off this time too.

We hurried, sprinting through the trees and slipping through the rough terrain.

Now everyone can live peacefully.

Katsuragi-kun, Yui-chan, Nanamin, Hayase-san, and everyone can live.

Our future was bright.

Then our narrow field of view finally opened up.

Like our future!

“–Katsuragi-ku... n...”

–It's a lie.

I'd never imagined a scene like this, not a bit of it.

It was a sea of blood.

A picture of hell. Leadred-san and Lily-san were collapsed against a tree. Yuuma-san's body was ragged... and Yui-chan wasn't there.

Neither were Nanamin nor Terias.

“Eh... what, is this...?”

Red, red, red.

The ground was dyed in that single color.

As though this grotesque space was cut off. There was a boy in the middle of it. The only body wrapped in clothes of mourning, free of dirt.

“Wait for me, Yuina... I'll go there too.”

I heard the sound of trickling water and noticed he was ripping up his throat with his own hands as large tears overflowed from him.



After witnessing that tragic scene that I don't want to remember, we naturally confined each one in their rooms at our home, which was nearby.

No, everyone was being taken care of. Their whole bodies were so ragged that you couldn't look at them.

Katsuragi-kun was unhurt due to his ability... but his heart was wounded.

Yui-chan's death.

If she was just killed, there was still a way to rescue her.

However, according to what I heard from Katsuragi-kun there wasn't even a corpse left. She turned into particles of light and disappeared. Even her soul had disappeared.

We don't have the means to rescue Yui-chan right now.

And now, he mourns Yui-chan's death.

"... Katsuragi-kun."

Why? I don't know why I'm able to think about this so calmly.

It's probably because this doesn't feel real. I don't feel sad at all.

The impact was too big.

Terias' revival. Nanamin's betrayal. I can't swallow it.

The death of my best friend on top of that.

What kind of expression should I have to react to that...?

My inexperienced heart can't keep up. I don't have words to express this feeling.

"... Why..."

I carried on this burden alone and became depressed, sitting on a chair in the living room while moping.

Then I heard the sound of someone coming down the stairs. I lifted my head up and saw Arianne-san, who was nursing everyone, sit on the seat next to me. She put the used towel and bucket on the table and turned to face me.

"Shuri-san. Are you alright?"

"... Yeah, I'm fine."

I didn't want to increase the burden on her any more, I didn't want her to worry about me as well. I'm already a senior high school student, a worthy adventurer. Thinking that, I gave her a thumbs up and changed the topic.

"More importantly... how is everyone?"

"Fine... they're sound asleep after Shuri-san used healing magic on them. Katsuragi-sama also revived Shuraham-sama."

"That so... Thanks."

"It's nothing. This is the little I can do."

Though she acted stout-hearted, she still expressed a worrying smile. It was fleeting.

Seeing that, I remembered what I decided by myself and pinched my cheeks.

"... Shuri-san? What are you doing?"

"Let's see... Because it's my belief to always smile, I'll smile and encourage everyone."

"That face is unbecoming of a girl."

Her whisper unintentionally leaked out. Even so, Arianne-san's facial expression was still bright and beautiful. I was slightly relieved.

... I would be troubled if she went into pervert mode here.

"... You're strong, Shuri-san."

"No, I'm not something like that... However, I know that I won't advance forward if I stop here. I'd just be depressed."

Right. I am not strong.

Back in the trial in **【Scorching Execution Ground】**, I failed. Recovering from that, I have a bit of endurance. Because I thought I'd tasted the highest level of despair.

"This time, everyone, and me... it's our turn to support Katsuragi-kun."

"... Is Katsuragi-kun alright?"

"He'll definitely be okay. Because he is strong."

Even if I spoke like that, I felt unpleasantly uneasy.

... Do I really think that from the bottom of my heart?

At least... I don't think I can say it with confidence.

A few hours ago, Katsuragi-kun's eyes looked dead when he talked with us.

Even his voice was frail, like a corpse.

When he was bullied in school, his eyes had strength.

He didn't yield fighting Fantra in this world either.

From someone like him, his energy and vigor was gone.

In an instant, the mood that had lightened sank back down. It once again became quiet. To destroy that atmosphere, I forcibly stood up.

"Arianne-san! Do you want to go outside for a change of pace?"

"I'll come too."

Stretching greatly, I invited Arianne-san. She silently nodded her head and accepted. She actually made an 'x' with her fingers near her mouth.

Therefore, she didn't answer. However, the low voice of a man reached my ear.

I looked behind me.

He was there. Katsuragi-kun was standing there.

"... Katsuragi-kun?"

"Hm? Is something wrong, Shuri?"

When I called out to him, he walked over to me as if nothing had happened at all. He was behaving as he normally would.

However, his words felt like they had no strength, I couldn't feel his willpower... I shouldn't dwell on it. There's no way he'd become lively immediately.

I have been watching him forever. Let's have some confidence.

"Umm... wouldn't it be better for you to rest a bit longer? Physically and..."

emotionally.”

“I’m fine. It is definitely painful, but it’s not set in stone that we can’t save Yuina. In that case I have no choice but to persevere you know?”

Katsuragi-kun flexed his biceps to show his recovery.

Ah, so it’s like that.

He’s overworking himself. At this rate he’ll become like me.

... However, I don’t know what words I should say right now.

Comfort him? Encourage him? Show sympathy?

I feel as though he would dodge and run away from anything I choose. It’s unlikely to have any effect either.

So.

So, what should I do?

“... I see. Then, let’s not rush. Since we’re comrades you can tell us anything.”

“Yeah! Then would it be fine for me to ask something right away?”

“Okay! Bring it on!”

In the end, I knew that I couldn’t do anything for him.

At the very least, I will always smile. Because that is Hamakaze Shuri’s trademark as a human.

If I can save his heart even a little, I’ll be happy.

... Even so. Despite that, he—

“Because I’m going to commit suicide now, could you keep a lookout in the meantime?”

The world—is cruel.

Chapter 12: Mass Suicide

Leaving the house, Katsuragi-kun and I immediately went somewhere.

I'm glad it's just the two of us. I should be happy that he relied on me.

However, he was looking at me in a pained expression now.

“Hah...! Hah...! Aaaah!!”

How many times has it been with this? His death throes seared into my eyes. I stopped counting how many time I've seen this miserable appearance.

I don't want to see it any more, I don't want to hear it anymore.

But, since he decided to do this himself, I will do whatever it takes.

“Aah.... aah... aah...”

Katsuragi's ability rise when he dies due to 『Revenge of the Resented』. It was a very appealing thing, most people would probably envy being able to get strong easily.

What it's like to die once, you can't imagine it if you haven't died. How agonizing and painful it is. They would only say something like that since they haven't embraced those horrible sensations.

I understand, since I've died once.

Even more profoundly... Katsuragi-kun's state of mind is experiencing hell.

The pain, he's tasting the pain of dying countless times.

It's not just that.

While his consciousness fades, he suddenly appears lonely.

Katsuragi-kun is doing it with his own hands.

The effect on his mind is unfathomable.

His yells aren't at the point of language anymore.

He uses a dagger to madly stab himself in the heart.

Stabbing.

Stabbing.

With a splashing sound, blood streamed out.

A pool of blood encroached across the floor. Repeatedly killing himself, Katsuragi-kun finally collapsed before committing this suicide.

“Katsuragi-kun!”

I hastily ran over to him and held him. The smell of blood choked me. It’s not good to stay in such a harsh environment.

“I have to get you out of here...!”

Just as I tried to lend my shoulder to get him outside, he grasped my arm strongly.

“... Shuri. I’m fine... so. I can still... do it...”

“Stop it, already! You collapsed since you’re at your limit you know!? You need to rest!”

“Not yet... I haven’t even died fifty times... One hundred times. At least... wait until I reach one hundred...”

“No, that’s no good! Please listen to me!”

I shook off his arm and tried to forcibly stop him from dying. However, I couldn’t attack him.

Due to the forced restrictions, I couldn’t take any more actions.

I’d been stopped like this many times.

I can’t save him yet again. I can’t save him.

That kind of feeling overflowed.

I hate how helpless I am.

And... I can only watch him from nearby like this.

“...”

I clenched my fists. My fingernails dug in. Even if my skin tore, I didn’t care.

Compared to what Katsuragi-kun was going through, it was nothing.

At least... if I can do nothing but watch, I'll give it my all.

... I won't avoid it. I won't run away.

Telling myself that for the second time, I decided to accompany him in those acts of hell.



—She's dead because you're weak.

When Yuina was killed, that guy said that to the stupefied me.

—In praise of her (gone)spirit, I will stop hunting your life. Though that decreases my enjoyment... I do have a reason. Instead—

My sight shook. The world crumbled. My hit cheek hurt.

I was shamefully blown away and rolled. I didn't have neither the stamina nor the willpower to resist.

Terias glared and looked down at the man that had become a shadow of my past self.

—If you don't like it, get stronger. Then, come and entertain me some more.

Gouging his toes into my abdomen, Terias kicked me and left. Following after him after glancing at me with somewhat lonely eyes, Sajima must have been disappointed by my miserable state.

Even though I saw that, my consciousness blacked out.

When I next woke up, Shuri and Arianne were in front of me. It appears that I had somehow or another slept the entire day.

It didn't feel like it. Since that scene had been replaying the entire time.

It wasn't a bad joke.

It wasn't a nightmare.

Yuina died. That's reality.

Then, what should I do?

While resting in my room, I thought about that the entire time.

I will save Yuina. That is my absolute priority.

However, the war between humans and demons will start before that.

Then I have to do something, too.

What do I need to protect what's important?

Power. Such a stupidly huge power, that crushing anything would be easy.

Fortunately, I already have an easy way to gain power.

I... won't hesitate anymore.

The only concern I might have had was asking Shuri to see this.

"... Sorry, Shuri. For showing you something like this."

"... It's fine. Somebody has to watch... and besides, Katsuragi-kun is hurting the most."

I returned a bitter smile towards the gentle words. I turned around to not show her my face distorted by filth.

Throwing away the knife dulled by blood, I took out a fresh dagger from its sheath. I put the point to the center of my chest—taking it to the location of my heart.

"... Fuu... haa... ... fuu..."

I drove away my idle thoughts and breathed deeply. If I think about it I might miss.

If I have to die, taking the least amount of time would be good.

"... Alright."

The trembling tip stilled.

If I'm going to do it, now's the time.

I quickly stabbed the blade that was raised high into my heart.



"Open."

=====

Katsuragi Daichi Occupation: Hero Level 87

Stamina: 40378

Magic: 38520

Physical: 26200

Endurance: 36000

Agility: 10480

Special Abilities:

『Steel Heart』: During battle, Endurance doubles. Poison, Paralysis, Sleep, and Berserk have a 1/3 chance of failing.

『Persistent Soul』: Magic cannot be depleted below 100.

『Wight King』: Able to make contracts with living beings near death, to revive them and make them obey to your will. Every second time the user dies, increases the limit of the number of contracts. Currently, there are 53 slots.

『Absolute Command』: Appears when those bound by a contract are lower leveled than the Wight King. Any order will be accepted by the slave until cancelled.

『Magician of Slaughter』: Killed targets within a radius of ten meters will deal the same damage to all units of the same type.

『Cruel Mind』: When you kill three members of the same species, your physical attacks against that species gain a paralytic poison effect.

『Chant Omission』: When magic is invoked, the chant may be removed. However, the mana consumption increases by 50%.

Unique Ability:

『Revenge of the Resented』: No matter how many times you die, power stored in the abyss of death is taken for revival.

Current Number of Deaths → 114

=====

Resting for the time being inside my house, I checked my status.

They probably increased differently due to the way I've been fighting up till now. Since my battle style has leaned towards magic. I noticed this after continually committing suicide, but the amount of time it took before reviving lowered after dying more and more.

Now when I die, my consciousness comes back almost immediately. To the point where I doubt if I really even died.

"... Still... it's not enough."

Checking my abilities, I read further down. Shuri and Leadred also gained experience, their values rose considerably.

Of course, the two words 『Tamaki Yuina』 weren't there.

"Katsuragi-kun. Here, it's coffee."

"Aah, thanks, Fuuko."

The black-haired girl brought me a drink and took a seat.

It's Hayase Fuuko, whom I had made temporarily seek shelter.

There's a reason she's here.

Because she has troublesome news that concerns us.

Previously, I turned a knight into a spy at the royal palace when capturing the 【Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep】. The kingdom seems to also side with Claria's religion in hunting demons. It dispatched a group of knights including the heroes(classmates) to a dungeon to destroy it.

I wouldn't care about 【Rigal's Den】【Labyrinth of the Dreamless Sleep】 and the like. The problem was that their target is the [Forest of the Demonic Dragon].

It was a small blessing that the slave knight is participating as a member of the subjugation, quickly relaying the information.

Apparently, the world won't even give us free time.

As for why I stopped suiciding, it was to come up with a strategy for this crisis. When we perfect it, I want to immediately get back to it.

“That reminds me... is Arianne resting well?”

“Yeah. She left saying [If Katsuragi-sama sleeps with me, my stamina must be perfect...]”

“... That’s almost at the level of needing respect.”

Though I said that out loud, I was thankful Arianne didn’t lose her [personality].

Her perverse manners softened the dark mood.

Thanks to that, Shuri and Fuuko didn’t lose their morale either.

That why I want her to rest for now. She kept working the entire time. Fuuko and them have been running around and bringing things back till just now.

However, since we believe we can win, we will do it.

... Yeah, even Yuina.

I hope that we win. I believe that we will seize victory. That’s why I did something like that.

I won’t let her sacrifice be wasted.

And I’ll do whatever it needs to revive her.

“... I’ll win at all costs.”

I declared my determination and spread open the map of the area.

Seeing me like that, Fuuko unintentionally smiled. She understood my request and used her ability, 『Global Search』.

Chapter 13: Honey Trap

The sun set at dusk, rising at daybreak. The date changed and the following day arrived.

“... They’re rushing in tomorrow huh...”

I copied information written in a book that appeared in Fuuko’s hands.

『Global Search』. Fuuko’s ability that could be used to read anything on a paper medium. For instance, the kingdom’s strategy written on paper, it wasn’t impossible to read their military formations.

In other words, all of their information was leaked to us.

Roughly as expected, their strategy included the stereotypical blitz attack from all four entrances. The amount of soldiers the kingdom sent to each direction was approximately one hundred. Even if the heroes and adventurers join, they wouldn’t reach two hundred. It seems that foolish king was overconfident.

It was to the extent that it would be easy to disperse each place.

Even so, I can’t deny we lack people. We have a lot of noncombatants.

... However, that doesn’t mean nothing can be done.

“Katsuragi-kun! I brought the two!”

Shuri opened the door with a bang and entered. I had her go to a place with Miare last night. The purpose was to member change Miare for Ninya and Kayber.

To supplement our war potential.

“I’ve kept you waiting, My Lord.”

“Things don’t seem to be faring very well, General”

“However, don’t worry. Now that I’m here we’ll round them up. I will crush them immediately!”

Ninya was uselessly brimming with confidence. Kayber held his temple and

sighed. Apparently, it seems the two heard some of the news.

Above all, it's good they're in high spirits. The two hadn't made their debut on the stage yet. Our opponents won't think we'd have new faces added.

We'll attack while they're unprepared. With this we completed our anti-personnel group.

"Fuuko. Prepare drinks for Shuri and them. I'll wake up everyone who is asleep. When that's done—I'll let everyone know our counterattack plan."

Instantly, everyone's eyes changed. Seeing that, I chuckled in joy.



It was good weather to fight today. Today is the day the Human-Demon War begins.

【Forest of the Demonic Dragon】 west entrance. This place where the enemy's arranged people were highest was my spot. I placed everyone considering balance between the four sides of the fortification.

Shuri and Leadred in the north. Yuuma and Lily in the south. Kayber and Ninya pair in the east. Arianne, Selen and Fuuko remained at home.

Those two humans fighting in the war would be a somewhat of a problem, and Fuuko was hurrying something in the meanwhile.

It was the investigation of how to save Tamaki Yuina.

With her ability, it is possible to search through all of the materials and documents of the world. She will absolutely find a way.

However, if... if.

If nothing is written—.

"-... Stop it, stop."

Interrupting my thoughts, I shook my head.

No bad expectations.

Complete what is in front of me right now.

"Defend to the end...!"

Confirming Shuri and them's status, I held up my sword.

In front of me was a swarm of armed humans and adventurers.

People wearing full armor, a tall man shouldering a huge axe, and magicians wearing pointy hats and black coats.

The moment they saw me, their eyes lit up and attacked me.

"... Everyone is garbage."

To me, guys like these are nothing.

I won't be stopped in a place like this until I save Yuina.

"Though it's unfortunate... you will die here."

Restraining my voice to a low threat, I started chanting magic instead of hitting the gong to start combat.

"Berserk Tempest!"

The emperor-class magic swallowed the soldier's vanguard and the magic those guys used, scattering many lives and bits of debris into the sky.

I placed myself in an open area that was easy to attack on purpose.

"Hii-!?"

The following unit flinched. Hesitating, their movement stopped.

Sweet. So I can kill these people with determination then?

Having aimed at our neck to such extent—naive, so naive it was nauseating. Just like the previous me.

"Tch-..."

I faced the blockheads while being irritated at my past.

"Second wave, advance! Consolidate your defenses!!"

However, when the commander's deep voice filled with dignity sounded out, the young shoulders had just barely managed to recover their composure.

"Double Guard!"

The magician rear guard set up earth walls in front of them one after another.

Additionally, piling up many layers it became difficult to attack.

Though I don't mind them attacking directly, the risk was too high.

... However, I can prepare to breakthrough as much as I like.

“Thou. Now, I bestow a new life. I give a second life. Here, pledge a contract with me and will fulfill thy duty as my servant. Wight Back!”

I made use of the large amount of open slave slots gained from suiciding. Now, their souls were summoned and brought back to this world, put into their containers again.

I will activate 『Absolute Command』 immediately... hey, the puppets are done.

“You guys, murder the guys on the other side of that wall.”

The soldiers turned into puppets moved as ordered. I'll just help them a little.

“Hey! See ya later! Wind Burst!”

The soldiers were launched over the wall from the jets of air under their feet. Those guys will keep killing their allies until they're killed again.

Without being affected by something like their own wills.

“W-what!? They fell down!?”

“T-those guys, weren't they dead a second ago!?”

“O-oi, sto-!?”

Screams echoed. It was a one-sided massacre on the other side of the wall. The machines called humans that threw away reason and swung their weapons caused confusion.

Though it might have been fun to watch the battlefield filled with crying and metallic sounds, I should prepare during the confusion.

Everyone, get ready to be buried.

Kneeling on one knee, I closed my eyes and concentrated my senses. Circulating mana through my whole body, I concentrated it into a dot on my palm and touched the rough ground.

“Emperor of Flame. Thou, judge this criminal who committed an evil unto the

throne. Burn tremendously, Six Flame Pillars. Intensify and burn all as a wick. Leaving nothing behind that proves there was once life.”

Explode. Those who block our way. Pebbles should just roll away. Do not try to stop me.

To convey this intention—

“—Suicide of Ashes and Dust!!”

I discharged magic from my arm into the ground.

It took several seconds until it spread to their feet, burning and scorching.

Even their last testament, their proof of having lived, there was no traces they had died here. The soldiers were erased.

The Emperor of Flame’s world-destroying flames show no mercy. Overlooking appeals, it does not allow for mercy.

They became black dust blown by the wind, flying away.

“... Did I overdo it a bit?”

I have a feeling activating the same magic as before, the whole area would become a burnt ruin. I’d better be more careful from now on.

Otherwise, I would be destroying the area we’re protecting.

... Although, there was a powerful survivor after all.

In the area that became ashes. Walking without their face changing from a look of enthusiasm, it was the figure of a woman. Naturally, I recognized her face.

Because we had lived together until quite recently.

Raising my head, I welcomed her. Because the reason why I was there in the first place was because of this person.

“—Yo, I’ve been waiting, Sajima.”

The girl reacted to my voice by stopping. When our gazes crossed, she produced a big smile. It was eerie. I don’t know what’s hiding behind that Noh mask.

... However, there was a part of me that was anxious.

Her eyes when I lost to Terias.

I glimpsed a lonely feeling from her. I questioned if those were her true feelings.

But now she didn't have a particle of that at all.

Was I mistaken?

But even if it was bad I had to hear it.

In this way we faced each other. I want to ask her a question. To the person who was better at recovery than anyone.

"... Oi, Sajima. I've wanted to ask you—"

"—I can revive Yui-chan."

Seeing through my thoughts, Sajima spoke to interrupt me.

A shock ran through my mind.

I realized I had ran over to Sajima, seizing her collar.

"Speak. Otherwise, I will kill you here."

"If you kill me, how will you revive Yui-chan? And Terias will come to kill you in revenge. Can the current you... win?"

She argued in a composed manner.

... I should have known that. Calm down. Don't let get affected by her mood. Don't lose your pace.

"... Even if I don't listen to you there's Fuuko. It would be found by searching through everything. We don't need to rely on you."

"It's impossible. Because even if you find it, you won't be able to do it."

"... What?"

"Because it is impossible to use without Claria-sama's power."

"... That doesn't mean—"

"It does. Since Terias-sama used Claria-sama's power, Yui-chan's soul was

extinguished. Only Claria-sama can revive her.”

“... ..”

It was consistent so it was hard to refuse.

I don't know to what extent of what she said was true. She might just be bluffing.

However, if I assume what she said is true and Claria's power is essential... we'll never meet Yuina again. I can't let that joke happen.

I won't be able to see her smile.

Could the current me really beat Terias? The hero with such power. How much should I die? What came to mind was my head being trampled. Just like my days at school.

Affected by uneasiness, I wasn't in a hurry to give the final blow.

My clenched fists gradually loosened, giving freedom back to Sajima. Staring in order to judge me, she gave a bewitching smile.

Completely like a fiend looking at trapped prey.

“... That's right. Then, you—”

She brought her mouth close to my ears.

My body wasn't doing what it was told even though I knew it was bad.

I fell into the illusion that I was paralyzed.

I was definitely bound by greed.

My important person that loved someone like me.

I want to see Yuina. I want to touch her. I want to hear her voice.

I followed such instincts.

Ah, I'm no good. No good.

Listening to it, I, I—

“Katsuragi-kun. You———”

Was whispered a sweet temptation.

Chapter 14: Crossing Paths

“Cyclone!”

“Line Drive!”

While a tornado and extended sword slash mowed down the trees, the remaining soldiers were cut down. Corpses and red blood flew into the sky, falling down to the ground.

There were no kingdom soldiers left.

The remnants were... just slightly difficult opponents.

“H-Hamakaze? W-what are you...”

“W-why did you ally with demons!?”

Frightened, Inoma fell down in place. Horitani fainted at Nijjima’s incontinence. They were all former girl classmates.

... Which reminds me, these kids were also in the same group as Minamoto weren’t they? The same as Umahara, Minamoto was an execution target for Katsuragi-kun. That is to say, these girls injured Katsuragi-kun.

... Then it’s fine.

I approached them while playing with the dagger dyed red in the blood of the soldiers from the battle. Since her squeals were noisy, I pushed my blade to her neck.

“... Hey, have you three repented?”

“W-what are...”

“You bullied Katsuragi-kun.”

When I said that, Inoma-san’s expression looked like she wasn’t able to understand from the bottom of her heart.

“H-huh!? W-why is, something like—hyu—”

One person down.

Sticky liquid spouted and clinged to the nearby Niijima-san.

“Kyaaaaah!?”

Her face had been made a mess by the fear and the tears. As a fellow girl I couldn't bear to see any more than this. So, I had to make her at ease asap, right?

“... Leadred-san, sorry. Umm, can I ask something?”

“Sure, leave it to me. This is the role of an oni anyways.”

Passing the baton to Leadred-san who readily accepted it, I washed off the dirt that stuck to my hands and face with the towel that I brought.

It felt just a little refreshing.

“Shuri—. It's done.”

Leadred-san, who didn't particularly know them, ended it immediately and finished without hesitation.

With that, the north side's suppression had finished. Safe, no one was able to pass through and were annihilated.

I heaved a sigh of relief.

I was glad to be able to help help Katsuragi-kun. Let's report in as soon as possible.

His mood should even recover a little.

“You're smiling, Shuri.”

“Yeah, I'm happy we won after all. I could finally do my part... Since I've been useless up till now.”

“... I don't think Hero-sama thought about something like that.”

“Yeah, I know... But I've also learned that it's bad to take advantage of someone.”

Though it was painful, what I received from 【Burning Execution Ground】 was good to such a respect. It gave me a chance to step forward.

“... Then, shall we return soon? Katsuragi-kun is waiting.”

“... Hero-sama is a lucky person huh.”

Using 『Wind』, I ran.

Leadred-san shrugged, following after me.



“Eh-!? Katsuragi-kun still isn’t back?”

The house’s living room. She was surprised when Hayase-san, who was searching with 『Global Search』, told her.

Katsuragi has yet to return.

It’s been an hour since we started fighting. No matter how many there were, Katsuragi-kun who has ability values far ahead of us couldn’t have had a hard time.

In other words...

“... Some problem happened...?”

“... The possibility can’t be denied... However, it’s limited to Katsuragi-kun...”

Hayase-san hesitated saying that.

She must be thinking of something. Because she’s the same as me, we like Katsuragi-kun.

“... Hey, Hayase-san. Are you hiding something?”

“Fuhaha! This silence, we’re first! The Ninya and Kayber pair have returned, My Lord!”

A loud sound overlapped my words. Pushing the door open excitedly, our new comrades Ninya-san and Kayber-kun came back. It seems they guarded the goddess Messiah instead of their father in the [Forest of the Demonic Dragon], so they had no problems. In fact, they were practically uninjured.

However, her ears turned red when she saw us in the living room.

“Unfortunate, Ninya. You aren’t the first.”

“Ugugu...!”

“By the way, if since Lily is resting upstairs you guys are last.”

“Uuu...!”

When Leadred laughed while poking fun, Ninya-san’s eyes steadily teared up. Though I felt kind of sorry for her, I decided to watch since she disturbed us a moment ago.

My question to Hayase-san... when I thought that, a rusted metallic sound rang out.

“Welcome home, Katsuragi-kun... wait, what happened!?”

Hayase-san gave words of greeting towards her important person from behind me. Looking at the entrance, Katsuragi-kun was leaning against the wall soaking wet as though he was covered with rain.

He was also breathing shallow, he looked exhausted.

“No... It’s just raining.”

“I-is that so...? Then, come change your clothes and use a towel.”

“No, I’m fine. Other than that, Fuuko. The matter I asked about... how was it?”

“It’s...”

Hayase-san bitterly bit her lip. Without continuing to speak, she shook her head left and right.

“... You’re joking... Then...”

Katsuragi-kun muttered something and sat down. His head dropped forward into his hands, tearing at it.

What kind of meaning was there in that exchange with Hayase-san?

Because I’m not told anything.

For a long time, it’s been like that. Suffering from losing Yui-chan and from continuing to die... his feelings, he doesn’t tell us anything.

“Katsuragi... kun?”

He’s strange. Odd.

This morning, everyone was in front of the house yelling together. Everyone was brimming with motivation.

Katsuragi-kun didn't have any traces of that now.

Hey, what are you concealing in your heart? What burden are you carrying on your back?

... Don't be shy.

I won't understand if you don't tell me.

I approached him, leaning over.

"... Hey, Katsuragi-kun... Are you telling the truth?"

He looked up in reaction to my words. He looked haggard.

"... What's wrong, Shuri? You don't need to worry if it's my health."

"It's not alright you know? You don't need to endure it you know?"

"... What are you talking about...? Perhaps... are you pouting because I haven't paid attention to you recently?"

"Eh?"

"It can't be helped... here."

Misunderstanding, Katsuragi-kun pat my head.

But, there was no feeling in it all. Just his hand moved.

He's holding on to something after all. He's overworking himself.

"... That's not it. Katsuragi-kun. You're completely different."

"What's different? Is it impossible without a kiss after all?"

"I want Katsuragi-kun to tell me what he's hiding."

"... It's the day of our long-awaited victory. I want to eat Shuri's home cooking today."

"Don't change the topic!"

"Shut up!"

"...-!?"

The roar echoed through the small room.

He shouted. For the first time, Katsuragi-kun vented his anger.

The eyes looking at me weren't the usual ones filled with gentle light, they were gloomy and corrupted.

Flinching, I unintentionally fell on my backside.

The time that his switch was flipped stopped and he recovered.

"Ah-..."

An awkward air pervaded the room. Katsuragi-kun reached out his hand, confused, but withdrew it.

"... Sorry. Let's cool off for a moment... Everyone should take a properly rest their bodies."

Saying that, Katsuragi-kun left the house.

"Wai-, Hero-sama!?"

"Katsuragi-kun!?"

Leadred-san and Hayase-san chased after him.

However, they stopped chasing after he showed me a pained face.

Why.. why do you have on a look like that?

Why don't you talk to me?

Painful things, pleasant things, sad things, happy things. Don't you share those with your friends?

Like that, we can understand each other don't you think?

Don't you—-trust me?

Then, that day, Katsuragi-kun didn't return at all.

Chapter 15: Because of Love

Three days passed since Katsuragi-kun left. The rain continued to fall.

The sky was cloudy, the black clouds swirling.

There was no sign of it clearing up at all. As though the beautiful weather from before was a lie.

The leader's disappearance visibly shook the members at home.

Conversations decreased significantly. Arianne-san became busy with Selen-san's nursing, Lily-san and Yuuma-san stayed in their rooms.

There seemed to be no impact on Leadred-san, Ninya-san and Kayber-kun.

The twin brother and sister made efforts to search alternately for Katsuragi-kun.

"Haah... no results today as well huh..."

"... Sorry. Leadred-san."

"No, there's nothing to blame you for. Rather, Hero-sama who left without telling us anything is at fault."

"... But, since I'm unreliable... Katsuragi-kun didn't tell me anything..."

"... I don't think that's it at all..."

Silence descended.

Forcibly changing the topic, I handed a towel to the girl who had gone out in the bad weather to look for Katsuragi-kun and recommended her to take a bath.

"Oi oi, onis don't get things like colds you know?"

"That's not it. I just want Leadred-san to rest since she didn't sleep yesterday."

"Even if you say that didn't you also...?"

"As for me... I'm fine. It's a reward from having perfect attendance on the

other side. So, before me... 'kay?'"

I steadily pushed her sweaty back, taking her to the bathroom.

"I-I got it... Shuri will also take a rest right?"

"Hmm, I have to help Hayase-san change clothes."

"Huh!? You're joking!? You haven't had a wink of sleep since Hero-sama left!
... Ah, I can't stand it any longer!"

Leadred-san suddenly turned around and secretly put her hands around my side, picking me up before I knew it.

... Wait, eh?

"L-Leadred-san!? What are you doing!?"

"What you ask, I'm taking you. To make you rest even a bit."

"E-eeh!?"

I struggled for her to release me but she didn't even mind it, easily arriving in the changing room.

"Clothes... tch-... troublesome."

"Right? Right? You'll let me go because I'll take off my own clothes?"

"Rejected. You'd run away... Preferably, I'll strip them off."

"Fueee-!?"

Arguing was useless. She wouldn't listen to my comments. Leadred-san prepared to rip off my clothes by hand. As she said, she began to strip off my clothes.

"W-wai-!? Leadred-san!? It's embarrassi-!?"

"We're both women so don't worry about it... You still have a huge chest as ever..."

"Ah-, wai-, sto-! Don't rub..."

"Then be obedient."

"Uuu... unfair..."

Still, I reluctantly followed what she said since I didn't like her massaging my chest.

The bathroom... it was too large to call it that. It was a bathhouse.

Originally, this house was owned by a millionaire, and the size was necessary for us all to live here.

In the first place it was so big there would be room for two people to get in next to each other and still have surplus room.

"Hah~... I'm revived~"

"... You old man."

I complained in a tiny voice as a revenge for a moment ago.

"No, the other day, when I went into the bath with Hero-sama he said such a thing... So I imitated him."

"Hey, when was-!? When did you go in!?"

"Scary! For now, calm down! I was joking! Don't pinch my cheek-, ow ow ow!"

What, a lie...? I'm relieved...

With relief, I stopped pinching her cheek and sank my body into the tub.

"Ow... Just how much strength did you use, Shuri..."

"It's because Leadred-san said a joke that wasn't funny."

"... Well, I never thought you would take me seriously..."

"Stop it, already. Even though Leadred-san knows that I've known him the longest."

"... Yeah, that's right. I know how much you like Hero-sama."

Her playful tone until a moment ago unbelievably became serious. But, it only lasted a moment as she pulled my shoulders and screwed her fists into my head.

"Ouch! That really hurts!"

"Shaddup, it's revenge... Rather, I do have something I want to tell. If you like Hero-sama that much, you should honestly tell him your feelings."

“... Well, that’s...”

“Worrying is necessary. With a liking like love, you want your partner to also love you. Even I’m the same. Because of love, you want to tell them. Because of love, you want them to know. That’s a good thing. There doesn’t need to be a difficult reason. Not relied on? Not trusted? Just thinking about it is useless, useless. Because you love him. It can be settled with a single phrase. Step by step, your thinking has gone in a strange direction. Once in a while, you need to just act according to what you feel. Above all, for a more simple and clean reason, 『Love』 doesn’t happen often.”

Just as I thought I’d been released from her strong fists in my hair, she poked my forehead.

“Therefore, when Shuri meets Hero-sama, you need to tell him. It’s fine to clash against each other. Confess everything you’re thinking. Otherwise, he won’t be able to understand. Then, Hero-sama will also respond... yeah?”

“... Leadred-san...”

“... Tch. I’m done saying everything... Sorry. I’m getting out first.”

She got up from the tub scratching her cheek bashfully, disappearing into the dressing area.

Alone, I put my hand to my chest and thought.

... I wonder why. That pessimism from before left, my mood lightened.

It was a strange feeling.

“... Because I love him, huh...”

Again, I muttered it.

“I... love Katsuragi-kun.”

His defenseless side in the mornings, different from normal. His figure that stuffs home cooking into his mouth with a smile as if to say it’s delicious. His spirit that would never succumb. His dignified face as he gives orders. His gentleness towards comrades. The light in his eyes that never give up hope. All of him, all of him.

Therefore, I don't need to think deeply about it.

That he doesn't trust me. That he won't bring me close. On my own, I was under the wrong impression and took a strange direction... I am an idiot.

But the basis hasn't changed.

I only need to move with this simple motive.

Because I love him. Nothing more and nothing less, that's my one and only driving force.

"... Alright! I've decided, I will immediately look for Katsuragi-kun!"

With the gloomy feeling she'd had removed, she felt refreshed and got out of the bath triumphantly.



"Hayase-san, I'll give you a hand!"

I, who was able to break through something in my heart, decided to collaborate with Hayase-san who was continuously staring at the magic she was using in the living room.

She was also looking for Katsuragi-kun's position the entire time, as well as looking for a way to revive Yui-chan, as well as checking on the kingdom's situation. She was using her ability to its fullest.

Apparently, she was asked by Katsuragi-kun to investigate a means to revive Yui-chan, and it seems she told him she hadn't found a way when they were talking at that time.

Therefore, I felt responsible for him leaving by lacking ability.

Of course, no one else thought that at all... she also went through the same thing as me.

"Ah, Hamakaze-san... I'm fine. This is all I can do after all. Other than that I want to show you something..."

"Nn, what is it?"

Handing it over, Hayase-san gave me the book that appeared from her 『Global Search』. On it was the details of the kingdom's war progress.

『Yesterday. The dungeon 【Rigal's Den】 fell.
Few were injured. Armor's damage was intense.
As soon as new armor is secured, we will set out to capture 【Labyrinth of the
Dreamless Sleep】.』

“No way... it already fell?”

That's fast. Too fast. We, somehow or other, were heroes, so the kingdom's
forces...

“Yes... It's hard to believe. But, there's something more serious written below
that.”

After she said that, I looked further down.

Then, there was a sentence obviously out of place there.

『Tomorrow night. I'll be waiting at the western entrance, Shuri-chan. By
Sajima Nanami』

“... That's...”

A message from Nanamin was recorded in the book Hayase-san showed. To
use 『Global Search』's ability to make us read the letter... I didn't even think of
that.

... Perhaps she exposed the tactics from the previous war to us on purpose...
there's no way...?

... But it was convincing seeing Katsuragi-kun's sudden change.

That's right. She knows about Hayase-san's unique ability.

Normally the amount of people and outline of strategy wouldn't be written
down on paper.

It was guidance.

If it's Nanamin she should have predicted that Katsuragi-kun would feel
himself responsible for Yui-chan dying from heading into his tough battle. Then
she could induce him to some extent into being in charge of the west entrance
using the battlefield information.

Then it's very likely that she talked one on one to Katsuragi-kun.

What did she tell Katsuragi-kun?

Causing his determination to shake, some upsetting fact...

For instance... 'only I know the method of how to revive Yui-chan'...

According to Hayase-san, Katsuragi-kun had her look for a way to revive Yui-chan. But she wasn't able to find any helpful information.

So he left here.

... Probably to find out information by questioning Nanamin. He didn't involve us, going alone.

However, it's strange. It probably isn't just that.

Because there was no advantage to Nanamin.

... Just one. Just one, I had a hypothesis.

Though I don't want to consider it, though I don't want to believe it... I looked at the letter about 『【Rigal's Den】's fall』.

Only we knew the method to escape that dungeon.

... And to demonstrate that fact...

Everything connected.

"... Hayase-san... I figured it out. Where Katsuragi-kun is."

"-! Really!?"

"Yeah. If my hypothesis is correct... that is. I think I'm almost definitely right."

"If so, let's go immediately! To get Katsuragi-kun!"

"I don't think that's possible. Because, Katsuragi-kun is... where Nanamin is."

"Eh...? With Sajima-san...? Why...?"

"I'll explain now. So can we call everyone first?"

Flexing my biceps, I laughed full of confidence.

"It's our chance to get Katsuragi-kun back."