

柑橘ゆすら

ソード&ウィザーズ
覇剣の皇帝と七星の姫騎士

HJ文庫

HOBBY JAPAN

Sword & Wizards.

~The Emperor of Sword & Seven Lady Knights~

Illustration: Niθ
Kankitsu Yusura
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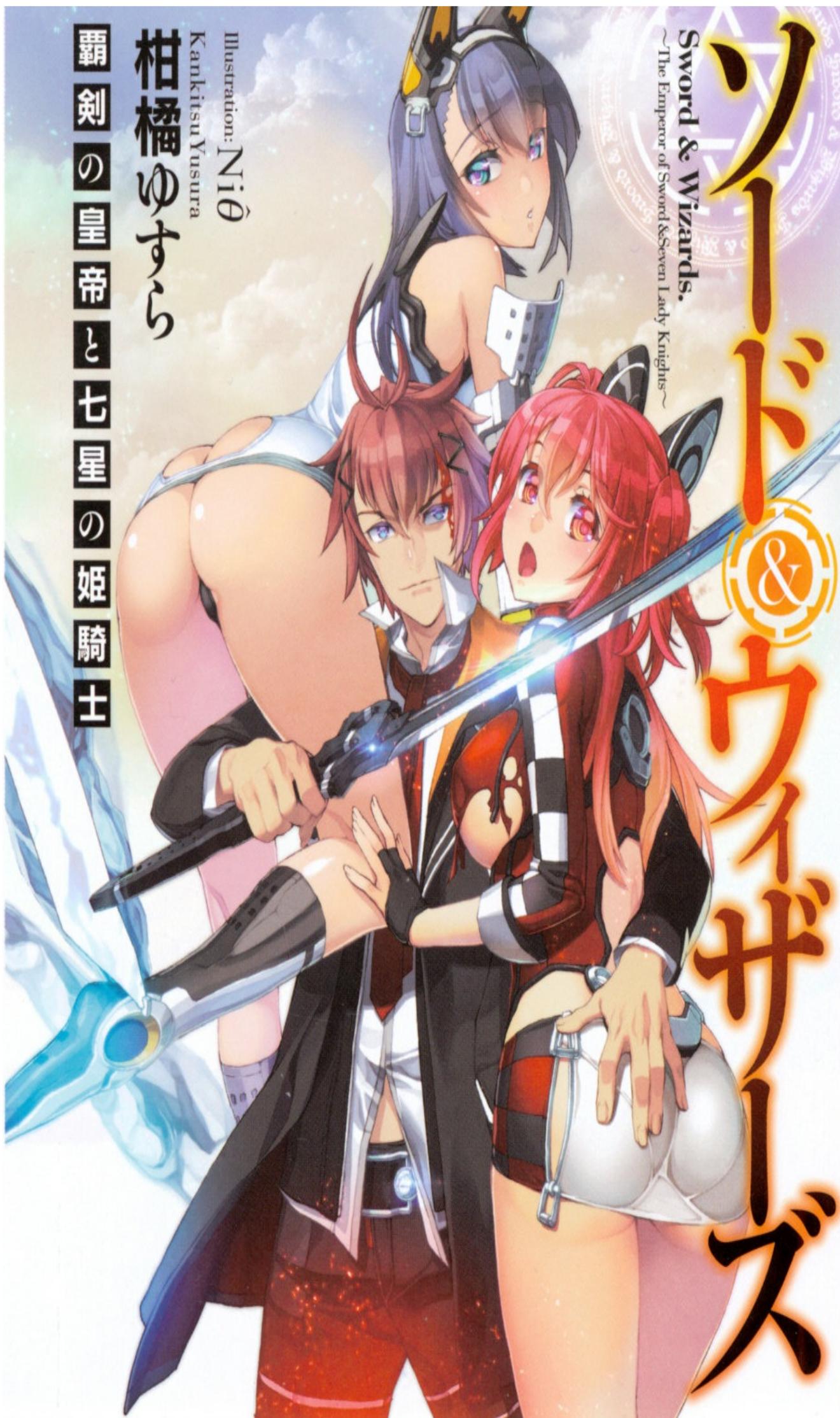


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Sword and Wizards



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Swordsman

“...Damn, I’m late.”

A boy with reddish-brown hair dashed down the maze-like hallways of the huge academy.

The boy— Satsukiba Sorata had entered high school in this spring and on a glance, his appearance was pretty much like any other normal high school boy’s.

His height was about one-hundred and seventy centimetre.

It wasn’t all that different from the average height of a Japanese male.

His face still showed traces of youth, befitting for his age of fifteen years.

Still, someone with a keen eye might be able to discern his abnormal talent.

It was hard to tell while he was wearing his school uniform, but his body was trained, so that it no longer had any unnecessary muscles— like a blade polished to the utmost limit.

It stood in contrast to his overall slender body.

The palms of his hands were tough and there were impressive calluses from handling a swords at the joints of his small and ring fingers, which you wouldn’t expect from a teen.

Satsukiba Sorata was a swordsman.

Moreover— One with a natural ability that he was evaluated as the “strongest swordsman alive” by others.

While the extra-long sword dangled on the belt of his uniform,

Sorata ran around in search for his destination: The classroom of class 1-A.

“Hey, could it be that boy is the rumoured...?”

“So it was really true that a boy enrolled in our academy...”

The nearby female students started to make a ruckus when they saw Sorata.

The reason for that was more than obvious.

This place, the Enbu Academy, was established with the goal to foster people, who fought in mechanical armours powered by magic, also known as artefacts: The [Sky Knights]. The academy was well known as a girls-only school, which never had accepted a boy until Sorata enrolled here.

Amongst the currently over three-thousand students admitted here, Sorata was the only male student.

It was human nature to gossip when the boy with such a background passed by in front of their eyes.

“Hah... What a drag. I don’t care about him being a special swordsmanship student or whatever, but I heard that he has absolutely no aptitude for magic. What’s a guy like that doing at our academy?”

“I know, right! To begin with, an outdated art like swordsmanship isn’t going to get you anyway these days!”

Some girls gave cutting comments in regards to Sorata’s enrolment.

However, that was only natural as well.

It would be no exaggeration to claim the present age as the golden age of [magic].

It had been seventy years, since the extremely convenient energy source known as [magical power] appeared in public and replaced the previous society based on science.

No matter how much talent you were born with for [swordsmanship] or [martial arts], it proved to be absolutely worthless in this age,

where the talent for [magic] meant everything.
And Sorata understood that better than anyone.

“...Fuh. I somehow made it in time.”

He had managed to find his classroom somehow or other while slipping through the gazes aimed at him from all directions, and made a sigh of relief.

The present time was 8:27.

Three minutes before class started.

It came in handy to have left for class early, expecting to get

lost within the academy from the beginning.

He was already standing out enough due to his status and it would

be unbearable if he were to get labelled as a troublemaker for

coming in late for his first class on top of that.

While thinking about such things, he stepped into the

classroom—

For some reason, there was skin as far as he could see.

Sorata's vision fell onto the unbecoming appearance of over

thirty or so girls.

Almost all of the girls had taken off their uniform and only wore

their underwear, but a few of them were even topless.

In face of the all too sudden happening, Sorata just stood there

with his mouth gaping half-open.

However.

The girls were reacting the same way.

In preparation for the class, which trained their basic physical

strength necessary for wearing an artefact, the girls had been in

the middle of changing into their sportswear, but with Sorata's

sudden appearance, they partly froze in a daze.

As a side note: Sorata would come to know about this later, but the

students of Enbu Academy never had to be careful about peepers when “undressing in the changing room”, because the girls had been among themselves for a long time.

Thus, the female students of the academy unhesitatingly changed clothes in the classroom, too, when necessary.

And then.

The girl with black hair, standing the closest to Sorata, broke the silence from both sides.

“KYAAAAAAAAA! A pervert! There’s a pervert!”

After that hell broke loose.

Sorata truly experienced a ride from heaven to hell right now.

“A boy!? Wh-What’s a boy doing here!?”

“Oh my god! Not even my dad has seen me like this!”

Some desperately tried to cover their body with their arms and legs in shame.

Some were raising hell over the impossible appearance of a boy inside the academy.

And some ended up crying from the shock of being seen in their underwear by a boy.

(Argh, this is... pretty bad, isn’t it...?)

Sorata finally comprehended the situation he was in, but it was already too late.

The odds to escape from the classroom without punishment was infinitely close to zero.

“Excuse me. I think you’re... called Satsukiba Sorata?”

Before he noticed it, a girl had come to in front of him.

Sorata would later learn that her name was Felicia von Flamberge.

With beautiful hair in a flaming red colour and a strong-willed look that oddly charmed the viewer, she was a pretty girl with a bewitching sex-appeal that make you mistake her for a Goddess from some legend.

The pink underwear she was wearing accelerated Sorata's heartbeat.

"Th-That's our Felicia-sama! She behaves so confident even in such an unforeseen situation... Wonderful! I'm deeply moved!"

"Good thing that we've one of the Seven Star Knights with the nickname [Purgatory], given to her by the Ministry of Magic, here!

"....."

How could this girl act so unashamed in her underwear?

Sorata's brain brought such a stupid doubt into question that right away, but he asked a different question first.

"I am Satsukiba Sorata, but... how do you know my name?"

The red-haired girl laughed while scrunching her nose for a bit.

"Of course I know it... There's no one, who doesn't know your name, here by now. After all... you're the one and only male Knight in this city and famous for enrolling into our academy under the unusual condition of being an unparalleled 'swordsmen'. Any more question?"

"....."

Oh boy!

He had been prepared to some extent when he moved here, but it even came as a surprise to him that his name had already spread so far.

"By the way, Sorata-kun, this comes out of nowhere, but how do you

like your steak grilled? Grilling it well-done to the core is simple and appealing by itself, but you can't ignore the medium rare variant either, as it torments the steak while it barely keeps its consciousness."

Sorata was often teased for his slow-wittedness by others, but even he understood that she wasn't talking about grilling a mere steak.

(A wrong answer and I'll be burnt to the ground!?)

Felicia approached him step by step with her rapier regalia in hand, which was equipped with the core method of the fire domain.

What to do?

How could he soothe the angry girl?

Compared to other high school kids at his age, Sorata had painfully few experiences with girls, so he was blindly searching for a method to solve this pinch.

"C-Come on! Don't get so angry! It ruins your cute face."

"Wha... C-Cute!?"

Felicia blushed her cheeks from the unexpected utterance.

—Based on his past experience, the best way to lift a girl's mood was by praising her.

Or at least, that method had a hundred percent chance of success for his little sister Airi.

And his action just now had definitely been effective against the girl, who had been raised in the Sky City [Octavia], where most of the residents were female, and was inexperienced about being praised by a boy.

"Yep. You're cute. And quite beautiful."

"C-Ca- Calling me beautiful... Th-That's going too..."

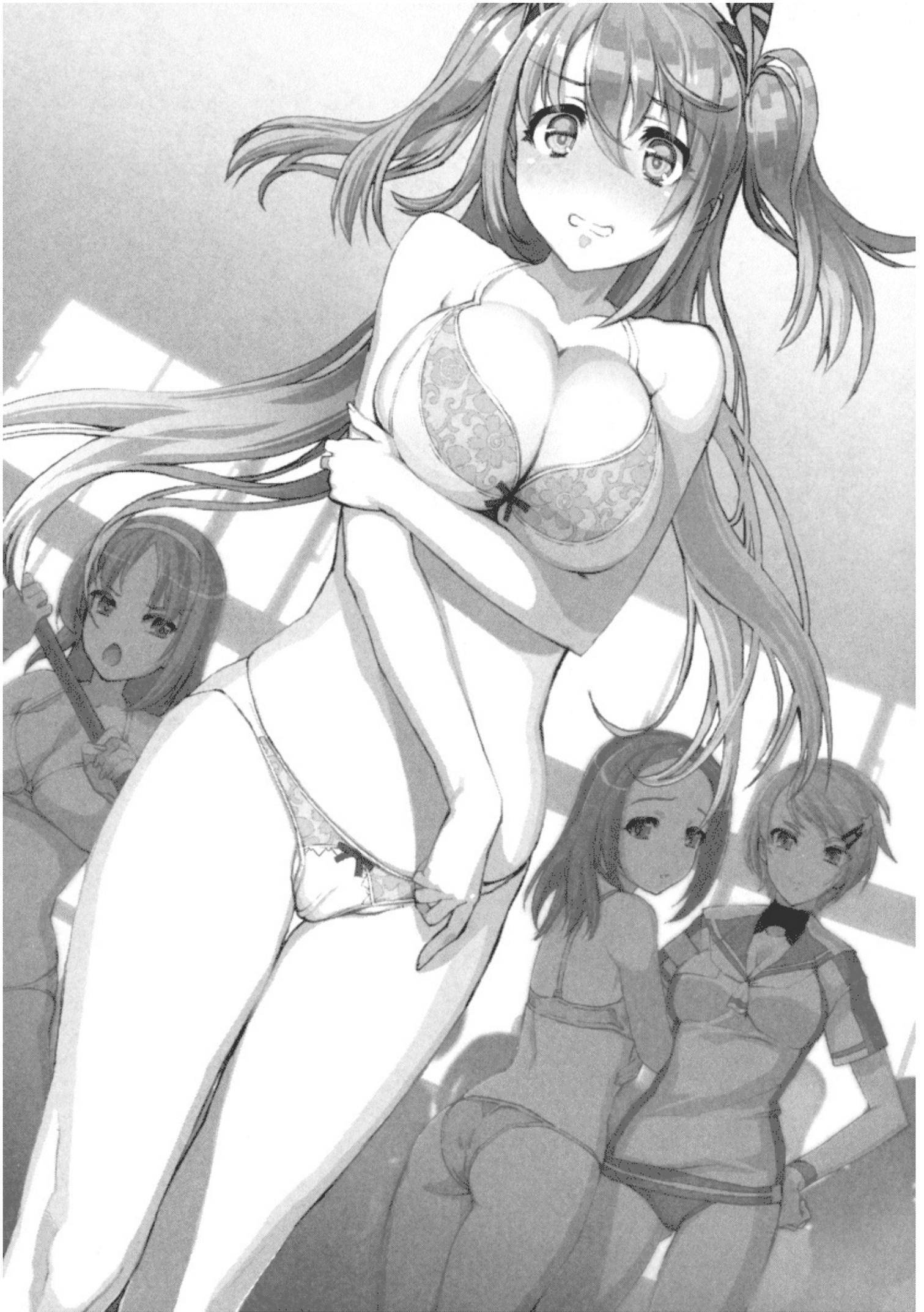
Felicia's cheeks reddened like a boiled octopus when the stranger boy, who had suddenly showed up in the classroom, showered her with praise.

It was the completely opposite from her usual flawless and dignified attitude.

The other girls couldn't hide their surprise as they saw Felicia act like a girl their age.

“No way!? Our Felicia-sama is on the defence...”

“That transfer student... can't be normal...”



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Sorata sensed a favourable reaction from the girl in front of him

and pressed Felicia with more powerful praises.

“I never thought I would come across a girl as beautiful as

yourself on this Earth. On a personal note, your healthy and

well-fleshed body impressed me the most! It’s practically picking a

fight with the recent diet boom.”

“ ... ”

At the moment, Sorata failed to notice it.

That Felicia’s temple twitched in regards to his “well-fleshed”

remark.

“To begin with, the models on TV these days are way too skinny. Men

are originally more attracted to women with an appropriate amount

of meat on the bones than the skinny types!”

“

“You’re perfect in that regard! My personal favourite is your ass!

These plump and child-bearing hips instinctively make me want to

borrow my face into them... Truly the ideal shape for a man. I dare

to say your body is rather wonderf...!?”

In the middle of his sentence, he suddenly realized.

The girl in front of him was giving him a ruthless look like a

cattle being sent to the butcher.

“

If there was a flaw with Sorata’s strategy, it would be that his

little sister had a particular inclination unlike a normal

girl.

His little sister Aira was the kind of girl, who would be brought

to tears from joy when her brother told her: “Your plump and

child-bearing hips instinctively make me want to borrow my face into them.”.

“...Have some shame, you damn pervert.”

While mumbling that in a bass voice filled with bloodlust,

Felicia let her rapier regalia shine in her hands.

In the next moment.

The regalia in her hand produced a spherical light and Sorata’s

vision instantly was engulfed by crimson flames.

The magic from the girl activated so insanely fast that it couldn’t

be measured in seconds.

Due to that, everyone present thought the boy would suffer burns so

grave that he would have to be brought to the hospital at once.

“... Whew, close call.”

But that didn’t happen.

When the white smoke cleared from their vision, the body of the boy

showed not the slightest, visible harm.

Felicia realized the absurdity first and showed a doubtful

expression.

(What’s going on...!? The speed and accuracy of my magic should’ve

been perfect!)

So, how did this happen?

Why was the boy in front of her unharmed?

The only clue she got was the mysterious movement the boy had shown

right before the magic hit him.

In face of the approaching flame, the boy in front of her had

neither backed off, nor flinched— He merely had loosened the sword

from its sheath hanging on his waist for a bit, with an abnormal

serenity.

However, that was no real reason as to why he overcame this pinch

unharméd just now.

After all, magic was essentially outside of the laws of this world.

Therefore swordsmanship, which was bound to the laws of this world, had no way to oppose magic, even if it was performed by a heretic [swordsmán], who enrolled in the previously girls-only academy with flying colours.

For that reason, Felicia just couldn't comprehend the current situation.

She wracked her brain over various possibilities regarding this event, but her thoughts were interrupted by the voice of one classmate.

"KYAAAA! Th-That man... has my... underwear...!?"

"Nuh! D-Don't get the wrong idea!"

"Wrong idea about what? You damn underwear thief!!"

"No! This underwear... coincidentally reached me from the blast, so I caught it in the spur of the moment... I wasn't aiming for it or anything!"

Faced with such obvious circumstantial evidence, his claim was a futile struggle.

The underwear girls surrounded Sorata at once with their regalia equipped.

(...Guess I was over thinking it. This happy-go-lucky guy could never break my magic.)

Felicia heaved a short sigh in light of this ridiculous development.

She had a conjecture.

Namely, that her own inexperience must have brought about this incident.

When the spell caster messed up the script of the magic, a phenomena called Coding Error took place, which made the magic end up as a dud.

She didn't think that there had been a mistake in her formulated script, but she couldn't think of another reason to explain this outcome, so she settled for that conclusion for now (For some reason... I am feeling rather disappointed now. I guess I was stupid to cherish any expectations of this guy for even a moment.)

As a matter of fact.

Felicia have had a little bit of expectations towards the boy in front of her, who had enrolled here under the unusual credit of being an unprecedented [swordsman].

Suppose for a moment that there was a secret [sword skill] that could defeat the almighty concept of [magic], which now controlled the world instead of [science]—

If someone appeared, who had mastered such a skill, she would have finally found the long-desired person worthy to be her partner.

Other people would surely sneer at her if they were to hear this—

But she had expectation for such an impossible future.

“W-Wait. Hear me ouuuuuuaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhh!?”

His desperate plead was in vain too, and Sorata screamed unheard inside the classroom.

Afterwards.

The news that the first male students since the establishment of the academy turned out to be a pervert, who peeped on the girls changing and rifled through their underwear on his first day,

spread throughout the whole academy in a relatively short time.

Good grief... How did things end up like this?

Sorata lamented his own misfortune.

Everything had started roughly one week ago.

[Chapter 01: The Last Successor to](#)

[the Satsukiba Swordsmanship School](#)

Satsukiba Sorata lived in a Dojo deep in the mountains. As it took more than an hour to the nearest convenience store by foot, you could call it the middle of nowhere in the Kanto area.

His father, Satsukiba Tetsushin, was an instructor for

swordsmanship called the [Satsukiba School].

The Satsukiba School was one of the old martial art schools that

were passed on all over Japan even now.

With its origins in the Muramachi period, the Satsukiba School

undertook the dirty jobs for the government for generations. In the world of swordsmanship, it was an extremely unusual school focussing on “assassinations”.

Since the Satsukiba School took assassinations, a job that couldn't

be made public, onto itself, its existence had been hidden from the world for a long time, so not many knew about it, not even by those that belonged to the world of swords.

The Dojo was aloof from the world for the same reason.

Nonetheless, Sorata didn't hate this place, which offered nothing

but rich nature and sword training.

*

The time was 6:35.

Every day at this time, the TV in Sorata's room was programmed to

show the morning news in place of an alarm clock.

“Now for the morning news. Today before dawn, eight ‘murder class’ Baleful Devils in beast form suddenly appeared in Hachioji, but the Sky Knight dispatched from the Sky City Octavia, Felicia von Flamberge, quickly repelled them. Following we have a quick interview with the person herself. Felicia-san, what do you say about your performance today?”

“...Nothing. I merely fulfilled the mission I was given. I do not believe that I have done anything special.”

“...No, I mean, you already work in the knight corps of the Ministry of Magic despite being still a student, and lead their attack... I guess you wanted to express your rivalry towards the other Seven Star Knights?”

“Sigh... That again? I am repeating myself here, but I have no attachment to the title of the Seven Star Knight. Let me be frank now: My current interest... or more precisely, my current goal is directed at something entirely different.”

“And what would that be?”

“Hmm, I cannot tell you all the details, of course, but... what I can say is: I am looking for a partner.”

“.....!?”

The reporters started to whisper all together upon Felicia’s answer.

“OHH! Felicia-san has dropped a bombshell! Who would have thought! The nicknamed [Sky Goddess] with a lot of male fans is currently seeking a partner to become her lover! I would say that are good news for our audience all over the country!”

“Say what!? Wait a minute... Why are you causing a misunderstanding!?”

I was not saying it with the intent of...”

*

BUZZ.

The TV got too noisy, so Sorata, lying on the bed, naturally reached out for the remote control.

“Mmm, gotta get up...”

The sunlight shone pleasantly through the window after it was filtered by the treetops.

The rustling of the leaves from the nearby tree sounded almost like a melody.

(The perfect weather for training...)

A normal middle school student would laze around a bit longer at this time, but Sorata had the habit to train with the sword in the early morning.

Sorata grabbed his extra-long sword that he had lain under the pillow as a matter of routine.

Then he sat up, turning over the blanket.

All of a sudden, he could hear the comfortable breathing of a sleeping person.

Satsukiba Airi.

The one sleeping next to him was his blood-related younger sister.

By the way, she was stark naked.

Her auburn hair reached till her waist. Her almond eyes had double-edged eyelids and garnished extremely finely chiselled features. And her proportions were as distinctive as those of a gravure idol.

The important parts were covered by the blanket at the bottom and by her hair at the top, but one wrong step and it would turn into a

scandal that couldn't be broadcasted on a public channel.

(...Oh, right. She was coming back from the Sky City today.)

Sky Cities.

That were the flourishing emblems of the present magic society that had replaced the scientific society, the former foundation stone of the world.

The cities were floating in the sky through gravity magic and had originally been set up as a kind of aircraft carrier from where the knights were dispatched to the ground in emergencies.

However, nowadays they were also often used as a facilities for training the students, who wanted to become Sky Knights, so that they quickly became accustomed to the environment of the city.

The Sky City Octavia, where his sister lived, fell into the latter category. Sorata was living separated from Aira for years now as she lived in the student dormitory of Octavia.

Turning his back to the naked body of his blood-related sister, Sorata recalled the content of the mail she had sent him last weekend while a complicated feeling boiled up in his heart.

To my beloved Brother.

Dear Brother,

Your Airi will finally return home to Saitama from the Sky City Octavia.

The last time I have seen you was on New Year's Day this year, so we have grown away from each other for 85 days already. During that time, your Airi has always felt a yawning void in her chest.

I cannot express how lonely I have been.

Although I did stitch a pillow cover from your underwear that I

have secretly borrowed from the laundry, and comforted myself with it, it could not stop the loneliness from surging up within me night after night.

...Wait, oh my god!!

What are you making a young maiden say, Brother!?

Now I am forever unfit to be a bride.

Please take responsibility with heart and soul once I return to your side.

Well then, there are admittedly a lot of other things I would like to talk about, but I will leave that for when we meet in person.

After all, I do not want you to think of me as a “clingy woman” when I write too much.

I would be more than happy if you could take the delicate feelings of a girl in regards to that into consideration.

From your Airi, with love.

“.....”

As always, the mail from his sister was a reason for worry for him.

Satsukiba Airi was not only his genuine, blood-related sister, but also a promising aspirant for the Sky Knights.

At the present time, she was attending the only educational facility on Sky City Octvia— the [Enbu Academy].

Enbu Academy.

It was the strictest school amongst all magic schools in Japan, and only allowed girls to enrol, who showed an excellent talent for magic.

Its establishment had only one goal.

To train the Sky Knights, who piloted the Artefact, which was the

world's strongest magic weapon.

In other words—

The girl sleeping soundly at his side was an elite amongst elites with a promising future as a magician.

And she had a brother complex beyond all measure.

Just this one point.

Not taking her extremely cringeworthy and distressing personality into account, she was the manifestation of the perfect younger sister that every man on Earth dreamed about...

Apparently God had given her a major flaw in exchange for her otherwise extraordinary features.

“...Hey, Airi. Can I ask you a question?”

“Good morning, my dear Brother. Yes, what is the matter?”

“Why the hell are you in my bed naked so naturally?”

Sorata asked with a genuine weary expression, whereupon Airi didn't bother covering her voluptuous body and

“Ehehe. You really have to ask? Because I then can get all intimate with you like this.”

moved behind his back in her birthday suit, pressing her breasts against it deliberately.

“...How is it, my dear Brother? Do you feel like finally crossing the line with me today?”

His little sister whispered these words into his ear and it was quite effective against him, since Sorata had trained in abstinence all the time in the mountains.

Normally he would never harbour any romantic feelings towards her, not even by mistake, because she was his real, blood-related sister.

But what an unfortunate series of events.

At some point, the little sister in front of him had grown into a beautiful woman with enough sex appeal to make him question his common sense.

“No, no. That’s just weird. Sorry, but I keep telling you: I ain’t gonna commit anything immoral!”

Regardless of his refusal, Airi throw out her large chest and started to narrate her peculiar opinion.

“It is by no means weird! Just take a look at history. At all times and places, the love between siblings was fostered amongst royalty in order to prevent losing fortune or status to other clans. In other words, what are we trying to do now is not your average act of crude and vulgar intercourse, but the royal deed of noble and graceful copulation!”



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“...Say what you want, no means no.”

Sorata remained resolute in his refusal with a cold tone.

Despite everything, Airi was a smart girl that properly obeyed what her brother told her.

Thus.

She normally decided to obediently pull back at this point, but not today.

After all, Airi was anxious.

With every passing day, Sorata grew more and more into an handsome man.

His beautiful body, slender from his training as a swordsman, but still possessing the appropriate strength for a male, was appealing to both genders.

And although his facial expressions still had a youthful tinge, the sword training had given him a wild stare whilst his cuteness and kind personality kept a delicate balance.

Airi worried that other women would not keep their hands off him when he continued to grow like that.

“Whatever! Now, dear Brother, accept the inevitable!”

The moment she said that, she ran around the almost twenty square meter big room.

“...Sheesh, resorting to force now?”

Her movement speed was befitting for a successor of the Satsukiba Swordsmanship School.

To a bystander it only looked like numerous black shadows were freely moving around the room.

Utilizing her natural keen wit, further cultivated by the

assassination swordsmanship, Airi tried to push down Sorata from behind.

Long story short:

Sorata's visual perception was practically godlike, so he had completely grasped her movements.

In the nick of time, he quickly hit his assaulting little sister.

"...Ow!"

Having her forehead flicked by his index finger, Airi lost her balance and then tossed about on the floor, still fully naked.

"...Uhh, what a surprise. You have improved once again, dear Brother."

While squeezing her slightly reddish forehead, she muttered reproachful.

"Your praise means nothing in this situation. ...Sheesh, you never change, do you... Always using our swordsmanship for silly stuff."

It was as a matter of fact.

The same reason applied to the fact that Sorata had accidentally allowed her to sneak into his bed, because she had used one skill she had mastered from the Satsukiba Swordsmanship School. Satsukiba Swordsmanship Techniques, Second Blade: [Hidden Presence].

This technique aimed at catching the opponent by surprise through erasing one's presence, and was one of the most important skills in the Satsukiba Swordsmanship School centred around "assassination".

She was nowhere near a match for her brother in terms of sword skills, but [Hidden Presence] was amplified by magic, so it was the only skill she could perform better than him.

Due to that, she had pulled a fast one on Sorata numerous times so far.

“...So, how long are you going to stay naked in my room?”

“Muh~ There you go again... We finally see each other again after 85 days, yet you are so indifferent.”

“I don’t care if it’s 85 days or 100 years, put on some clothes already!”

“No way... I would die from loneliness if I could not see you for a whole hundred years.”

“You would die a natural death before that!”

Aw.

Sorata lamented over the question why his little sister had developed such a disappointing personality.

“Anyway! I’m going to do my morning routine now, so go back to your room after you put on some clothes.”

“Muh~ Fine.”

Airi started to put on her underwear with a truly displeased expression.

In the end... today had been a failure as well.

As far as she was concerned, she had carried out this extensive attack with the resolve that she might have to give up on him if it failed, but the reaction from Sorata had been no different than usual.

Her face didn’t show it, but Airi was extremely dejected.

Sorata perceived that mood of hers and offered words of comfort.

“Ehm, well... Sorry that I haven’t prepared anything, even though it’s our long-awaited reunion.”

“...Huh?”

Hearing his words, Airi stopped her hands, which were about to hook her bra, and just stood there with a blank look.

“The genius Sky Knight cadet wouldn’t return home for no reason, right? I’ll hear you out after my morning practice if you got something to tell me.”

He scratched his head bashful and continued.

“Oh right! How about we go to the revolving sushi bar you like so much? You rarely get to eat fresh fish in the Sky City, right?”

“....”

Oh boy.

Aira bewailed the fact that her brother was so oblivious to the feelings of a woman, yet so perceptive towards the strangest things.

In fact, she had come down all the way to the surface from the Sky City Octavia to discuss a certain something.

Moreover, it was a matter that could turn the common knowledge of this world on its head if handled wrongly...

She was going to ask for his cooperation on a state secret project, which only the involved government members and she herself knew about right now.

“...Ufufu, revolving sushi with just the two of us... Ah! That sounds so indecent and bewitching!”

“Wait a sec. How did you get to that from my suggestion!?”

“...I appreciate your offer for a dreamlike date.”

She wiped the lecherous smile off her face.

“But I have to be back on the Sky City tomorrow morning for some business... So I am afraid the sushi will have to wait for next time.”

“...That sounds rather pressing. Mh? Then... what did you come down to the surface for?”

Sorata asked with a pensive face.

Thereat Airi said with a slightly serious expression.

“Yes, to be honest, there is someone I would like you to meet.

And I came here to make that happening.”

Listening to his sister, he looked more and more perplexed.

Compared to other boys his age, Sorata had a really lonely circle of acquaintances, even though he was going to be a freshman in high school this spring.

The reason for that was rather simple.

It took him at least two hours by foot from the doujo he was living in, to get to the nearest middle school.

He lived in the middle of nowhere, so there was practically nothing convenient like busses or trains. Consequently, it was rather difficult to live a fulfilled school life.

Furthermore—

Sorata had made it his highest priority in life to “get stronger”

due to a certain incident in the past, so he would rather spend his time training instead of learning for school and such.

For these reasons, he had chosen a correspondence middle school at which he could graduate normally while staying at home.

In fact, he was dedicating the majority of his day to sword

training ever since he graduated from grade school and the only

other acquaintances besides his sister were the racoons he fed when he took a break from training.

(Guess the world has some really eccentric people when they want to meet me.)

He was completely blind to his shortcomings as he admired the diversity of the world.

*

(Reminds me... How long has it been since I last left the mountain?)

Heading to the address his sister had told him, Sorata arrived at an old office complex in a backstreet.

On its third floor he would find his destination: "Ministry of Magic D4 Branch".

But there were no signs or the like attached.

If not for map of his sister, he would have taken it for a vacant house or something and passed by.

(Why would the ministry of magic open a branch in a place like this...?)

He didn't want to be suspicious, because his sister arranged it, but he couldn't help but feel that something was fishy.

The Ministry of Magic was a large organisation that was an administrative body of Japan and had a finger in every pie, from the development of the Artefacts to the plan of the Sky Cities.

Its origin dated back to the end of the second world war.

Pre-war Germany had researched [magic] in order to use it for their army and its draft fell into the hands of America after the war was won. That subject area then underwent a rapid development.

Magic resolved problems, which were said to be impracticable by science, one after another, so it did not take long for humanity to be fascinated with the possibilities of magic.

And then.

The magic society developed at the rate of a falling flying island and was supported from the shadows by the government's large magic organisation: The Ministry of Magic.

So, why would such an important institution set up base in a back alley building like this? That question was beyond Sorata.

"...Excuse me."

He knocked on the door before him while all kind of scenarios played through in his head.

"...So you are Satsukiba Sorata."

When he entered the room, a woman wearing an ashen suit folded the newspaper in her hands and mumbled.

Her appearance matched the description from his sister, so he knew at once that she was the person in question.

"Yes. My name is Satsukiba Sorata. I came at the behest of my sister. Am I right in thinking that you are Okiura Shizuru-san?"

"Indeed, that I am. Sorry for calling out for you so suddenly."

"....."

She was obviously not being sincere.

That was the impression Sorata got from Shizuru.

He recognized a certain tension in her whole behaviour that identified her as the same kind of person as his stepfather:

Someone that was always living at danger's door.

—She was without doubt a magician with an impressive combat

training.

Overwhelmed by her presence, Sorata was about to reach out for the extra-long sword hanging at his waist, but immediately suppressed that urge.

As Shizuru noticed his restraint, she showed an awkward smile and nodded once.

“...My bad. Calling it an occupational disease may only sound like an excuse, but I do have the bad habit to be on my guard when I meet someone for the first time. I apologize if I have offended you.”

“...No, it’s alright. I’m not bothered by it. Excuse me, but... what kind of occupation do you have?”

“Clumsy of me! I forgot to introduce myself. I am a teacher at Enbu Academy on the Sky City Octavia. I had the pleasure to teach your little sister on various occasions.”

“...I see. Thank you for taking care of my sister then.”

Even though he was perplexed by her answer, he gave voice to his gratitude.

(This woman is a teacher...? I thought she was a soldier for sure...)

While such a thought crossed Sorata’s mind, Shizuru curiously eyed the sword at his waist.

“I never thought I would still see a person carrying a [Bare Sword] without a loaded Core Method these days... I could not believe it when your sister told me about you, but it seems to be true.”

“.....”

Core Method.

It was a kind of logical circuit that put together the necessary

logic to allow humans to use magic.

As far as they knew so far, the Core Method had seven different magic affinities, which were called [Domains]. For example: you needed a Core Method of the Fire Domain when you wanted to construct fire magic or a Core Method of the Water Domain when you wanted to construct water magic.

The Core Method could provide nearly endless energy by using the material called [Magic Element], which was found in the air. These days, its versatility was not only used for weapons, but also an integral component of the industry of each country.

As far as Shizuru was concerned, it was bidding defiance to common sense that Sorata carried a bare sword without any Core Method, although there were self-defence devices that allowed practically anyone to easily kill with a little bit of practice.

“...Unlike my sister, I don't have any talent for magic after all.

It can't do anything fancy, but I'm actually more comfortable with it.”

“.....”

‘Instead of a sword loaded with a Core Method that gave anyone the ability to kill easily, he was more comfortable with a chunk of metal without any special abilities.’

That utterance was crazy insomuch that anyone, who heard it, started to doubt the sanity of its speaker.

However, Shizuru immediately understood that he was not saying it for the sake of appearance or for fun.

There was no doubt.

He was truly thinking that.

In her occupation, Shizuru got to meet a lot of people that were

said to be “geniuses” or “experts” in all kinds of expertises and while they had been odd for sure, all of them had shared a certain “something” without exception.

(Maybe... he will even exceed our expectations.)

And now, she saw that “something” in the boy before her in equal measure, no, in an even higher measure.

“Interesting. So you are a pure [swordsman] that does not rely on [magic]. Excuse my personal remark, but I am starting to like you more and more.”

“Okay... Thanks, I guess. So, what did you call me here for?”

“Yes, a good question. I hate beating around the bush, so I will be straight with you.”

Starting off with that, Shizuru then said something surprising.

“I called you here for no other reason than... to scout you for our school.”

“...?”

After hearing her answer, Sorata could not comprehend the meaning of her words and froze up for a while.

“What do you say? I know it is sudden, but could you give it some thought?”

“...Say what? I, I don’t get what’s going on!”

He continued to respond to her proposal, even if reluctantly.

“Me in the same school as my sister...!? To begin with, only [women] can become Sky Knights, right!? At least I’ve never heard of a man becoming one!”

“.....”

Shizuru simply listened to Sorata’s chattiness in silence.

After all, he was making a sound argument within the scope of common knowledge.

“...I can understand your confusion. I had the same reaction as you when I heard about the plan for the first time. So let me explain things in order first.”

She continued with a calm tone.

“We call the magicians, fighting in Artefacts as humanity’s strongest soldiers, Sky Knights. And it certainly is true that these are generally only women.

The reason is that the mineral called [Spirit Stone], which enhances the magical power of the Sky Knights and serves as the raw material for the Artefacts, can only be used effectively by the magical power of women.

However, that does not mean that no man can become a Sky Knight.

There may be no precedence, but a male can very well operate an Artefact, too, albeit under worse conditions than women.”

“.....”

Because his little sister was aiming to be a Sky Knight, Sorata knew more about the Artefacts than the average person.

So it was nothing new what Shizuru told him.

“...I do understand that a man can become a Sky Knight with an handicap. But why would you choose me?

Considering that you called me over here... you probably have looked into the amount of my potential magical power beforehand, right?”

The amount of potential magical power was an index that put a number on how much Magic Elements a person could store in its body.

The index was subdivided into six tiers from [S-Rank] to [E-Rank]

Sorata's amount of potential magical power fell into the [E-Rank] category, the lowest, and signified that he would have extreme troubles with any job that involved magic.

What's more, Sorata had mainly plunged himself into the world of swords, because he had actually abdicated his talent for magic.

He desperately protested, but Shizuru kept a gentle facial expression.

"I am well aware that your amount of potential magical power is disappointing. However, that proves no problem, because we are not looking for someone talented in magic, but for a first-class [swordsman]."

"A... swordsman?"

Hearing all that from her, Sorata could finally see the reason why he was chosen.

"On with the explanations. Do you know of the [Baleful Devils], the first class calamity creatures?"

"...Of course."

The Baleful Devils.

They were an heteromorphy existence that devoured humanity. Sorata had a deep connection to them, since they caused him a trauma seven years ago.

How were they born? Unknown.

Why were they eating humans? Unknown.

The only thing that was known about the Baleful Devils was the fact that they appeared when humanity started to use magic.

Thus, no small number of people argued that they were the product of an abnormal growth in the flora and fauna, caused by a side effect of magic. So many actually that they formed a group, which

opposed the modern magic society.

“Good. As you know, the eradication of the Baleful Devils is the duty of the Sky Knights. They are the strongest magicians of humanity and have performed their duty so far by boarding the Artefacts.

The eradication process is quite simple.

They are basically just a huge lump of stupidity that cannot fly.

And since we have the air supremacy with the Artefacts, we can one-sidedly bombard them with powerful magic from above without having to worry about their attacks reaching us.

However, the Baleful Devils are evolving to counter our attack pattern in the last few years. Our ranged attack do less and less damage.”

“...And because of that you’ve started to consider close combat with [Swordsmanship].”

“Exactly. I am glad you are so perceptive.”

Shizuru was impressed by Sorata’s quick thinking and elaborated about the inner affairs of the government, which she originally had not intended to disclose.

“Just like you said, the government is desperately looking for alternative ways to defeat the Baleful Devils, not just [Swordsmanship]. However, swordsmanship seems to have declined as much as magic has grown, so we could not find a suitable female swordsman anymore.

When we started to consider male candidates as well, we came across a rumour about a boy that seemed to have mastered swordsmanship despite his young age. As a result... you are now standing here.”



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"height: auto; width: 100%;" />

“In other words, you want me to enter the academy as a guinea pig to see if the ‘swordsmanship’ can be used in eradicating the Baleful Devils.”

“That sounds a bit harsh... but if you will so, yes. To be honest, only a minority within the ministry actually thinks that [swordsmanship] will be useful. The rest considers it merely a relict of the past.”

“.....”

Sorata was pretty sure that she was not exaggerating.

Along with the prospering of magic, countless other areas declined and the various martial arts schools all around Japan were just one example of it.

Magic was just too versatile for self-defence, so all previous martial art schools, including swordsmanship, closed down one after another and were restructured into magic training facilities called Labs.

The Satsukiba School, to which Sorata belonged, was affected no different and the only enrolled student was him at the present time.

Having said that, [swords] or [katanas] did not vanish from the world.

If anything, they were manufactured steadily after the development of the Core Method, a weapon that utilized magical power.

But only because the demand for sword-shaped [Regalia], the general term for weapons with a Core Method, was so high. The actual techniques of [swordsmanship] were gradually disappearing from the

world.

“Of course I am not telling you to cooperate for free. Once you enter the academy, we will obviously cover your basic livelihood expenses... but you will also receive favourable treatment as a scholarship holder. I would say that it is a pretty sweet deal for you.”

“.....”

Except for his sword skills that he had polished in the last seven years, Sorata was a completely ordinary boy without any fortes.

But no matter how good he was with the sword, it would not carve out a bright future.

And that did not apply to his Sword School alone.

It was an obvious run of events, since the concept of

[swordsmanship] was gradually fading into obscurity due the development of magic.

But what if—

What if he proved that the [swordsmanship] he trained could be of use to humanity? Then [swordsmanship] might raise to power again.

In Sorata’s opinion, there was no greater honour for a swordsman than to put [swordsmanship] back on the map with his own skills.

And more importantly—

(If that should ever happen, I think I can finally look Fuyuka in the eye again...)

He was undecided.

In all objectivity, the favourable conditions offered by Shizuru

were second to none.

But the matter was too important to give a rash promise.

After all, it might be the last chance to restore [swordsmanship]

to its former glory after it was declining through the overwhelming existence of [magic].

The pressure from that responsibility was not easy to shoulder.

Therefore—

“...Please let me think about it for a while.”

Sorata said this and then left the room.

*

On the way back, Sorata had a little dinner with his sister and then recalled the happenings of today.

Everything had happened so suddenly and was so unrealistic that it came across as rather unreal.

To think that from all the magicians across the country, HE was chosen as a Sky Knight Cadet for which you usually needed an extraordinary talent.

Moreover, Sorata was an exception to the exception.

He might become the first [male] Sky Knight ever.

If he were to accept the conditions and move to the Sky City, the morning news might even show his face on TV the next day.

*

At night of the same day.

Sorata was reminiscing about the reason why he actually started to learn [swordsmanship].

It was almost seven years ago when he joined the [Satsukiba Swordsmanship School].

The beginning of everything had been a single girl.

Ten years ago.

Sorata had lost his parents in an unexpected accident and lived in a facility of the country for a long time together with his sister Airi.

Back then, he had been an adventurous child, or more precisely: He liked to play pranks. Causing a ruckus at any given opportunity, he was scolded by the facility staff just as often.

However, there was one girl that considered him as her older brother.

Her name was Amamiya Fuyuka.

A girl with a plain presence and skin as white as snow. The only way to describe her was adorable.

It all started when he had chased away some kids that had bullied her.

Young boys often had the tendency to bully the girl they liked.

Her beauty made Fuyuka stand out from a young age on already, so she obviously attracted a lot of these boys.

“Uhm... Thank you.”

Even as a child, Sorata had already been physically strong. So he didn't even break a sweat when he chased off the boys of the same age.

“Don't sweat it. They just bothered my precious nap time, so you don't need to thank me.”

If anything.

Sorata asked with a sigh.

“Why aren't you fighting back? You've to speak up when you don't like it. Otherwise nothing will change.”

Hearing his words, Fuyuka dropped her gaze.

“I would like to do that, but... I am scared... when so many boys surround me...”

“.....”

Back then, Sorata didn't quite understand what she meant.

After all—

He had never felt [fear] in his life so far.

Since he lost his parents early, Sorata never experience a true scolding of a stronger adult.

The people of the facility did reprimand him when he did something bad, but for some reason it came across as businesslike and never evoked [fear] in him.

Either way, he did understand that the girl was troubled.

And he was not so heartless as to simply ignore a troubled girl.

“Okay, then let's do this.” He started with such a prologue.

“During midday break you'll play around here, because I'm usually sleeping on that tree there. If I happen to be awake, I'll chase these boys away again.”

That was his proposal, but Fuyuka still looked uneasy.

“...And what if you are sleeping?”

“...Oh.”

She pointed that out, whereupon Sorata scratched his head awkwardly.

He didn't want to sacrifice his precious nap time, but it would leave a bad aftertaste when he slept soundly while the girl in front of him was in a bind.

Therefore—

“Hmm, fine. Okay, whenever something happens to you, I'll definitely protect you from now on. I promise.”

With an embarrassed smile, he made a pinky promise with the girl

in front of him.

A promise.

Fast-forwarding back to the present time. That very promise he made with the young girl was the immediate incentive for the boy named Satsukiba Sorata to pick up the sword.

*

(...If I had been stronger back then... I might have been able to protect her.)

While lying on the bed, Sorata remembered the past.

Whenever he recalled that fateful day, a darkness crept into his heart even now.

It had happened three years after he made that promise.

On that day—

More than a million people lost their lives all around the world in a single day during the incident that was later known as the Great Disaster: An attack from humanity's worst enemy, the Baleful Devils.

The Baleful Devils attacked out of nowhere and wrecked the facility Sorata and the others were staying at, depriving them of their precious thing one after another.

At that time.

Sorata came to know the emotion [fear] for the first time in his life.

When he saw [that] for the first time, fear took over his brain and froze his thinking completely.

In front of him had been the metaphorical manifestation of all

kinds of despair from this world: A Baleful Devil.

There were various species of Baleful Devils: Animals, insects, plants and so on. But they all shared a common trait: A big mouth

to devour humans.

Even the smallest confirmed entity so far was ten metre long, so once you were attacked, you were helpless prey.

“Help me, Sora-kun!”

Someone called his name from behind him.

When he turned around— he saw his blood-smearred childhood friend with her leg caught in debris and unable to move.

—That was the last time he saw Fuyuka.

Overwhelmed by his first experience with [fear], Sorata was

paralysed and could only watch how the girl was gradually buried by debris.

After that.

He didn't know what happened to her.

The surviving children of the facility were each sent to different

psychiatric hospitals by the government without a chance to contact each other.

On that night.

Sorata renewed his resolve to grow even stronger than now in order to protect what's precious to him.

His decision was now certain.

It had been seven years since that incident.

He had spent all his time training with the sword, believing

growing stronger was the only way to atone for his mistake with the girl.

He continued to swing the sword like mad in order to become a

[strong man] that could protect the girl, from which he didn't even know if she was still alive.

Keeping that strong feeling hidden in his heart, he extended his

hand straight for the sky.

So far, he had given all his attention to his sword training, so he was rather confident in his skills now.

Strangely enough, he felt like he could even grasp the clouds in the sky now.

(...If my sword can open up a new possibilities... it might be worth trying out...)

And like that, Sorata decided to go to the Sky City.

“Just you wait, Sky City...!”

Glimpsing at the giant floating fortress in the sky beyond the window, Sorata mumbled to himself in his room.