

# 戦司書 黒蟻の迷宮

*Tatakau Sisho to Kuroari no Meikyū*

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スフィアダッシュ

Tatakau Shisho

vol.3 - Fighting Librarians And The Black  
Ants' Labyrinth

by Yamagata Ishio

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# Illustrations



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# Characters

*Freddie*  
フリーキー

武装司書。真面目で融通の利かない性格。



*Freja*  
イレイア

最年長の武装司書。かなりの武闘派だが、普段は優しいおばさん。



*Winkers*  
ウインケニー

神溺教団の戦士。モッカニアの天敵となるべく育てられた。



*Loco*  
ロコロ

神溺教団の戦士。



## **Ireia**

The eldest Armed Librarian. A considerable martial artist. However, she's usually a kind old lady.

## **Feekee**

Armed Librarian. Has a serious and inflexible personality.

## **Winken**

A warrior who belongs to the Indulging God Cult. Was raised to become Mokka's natural enemy.

## **Locolo**

A warrior who belongs to the Indulging God Cult.

# 戦司書 黒蟻の迷宮

Tatakau Joshi to Kuroari no Meikyū

## characters

Renas  
レナス

謎の女性。モッカニアの母親を名乗るが、その正体は不明。



Hamyutsu  
ハミュッツ

パントーラ図書館館長代行。冷酷で極めて好戦的。投石器を操る。



Mokkania  
モッカニア

武装司書。ハミュッツと並ぶ戦闘力を持つ。現在は図書館迷宮の中に閉じこもって生活している。



## **Renas**

A mysterious woman. Claims to be Mokkania's mother, but her identity is unknown.

## **Hamyuts**

Acting Director of Bantorra Library. Extremely ruthless and aggressive. Uses a sling as her weapon.

## **Mokkania**

Armed Librarian. Rivals Hamyuts in battle strength. Currently lives while holed up inside the Library's Labyrinth.

# Prologue: Room Without A Heater

“Minth-san, run away!”

Hearing a woman’s voice all of a sudden, Armed Librarian Minth Chezine involuntarily stopped in his tracks. He put his thick fingers to the hatchet-like sword hanging from his waist.

Minth was at a corridor that had its walls, floor and ceiling all made out of grey stones. This stone floor upon which humans (as well as those who were not) came and went for thousands of years was worn down yet smooth. The floor and walls were stained here and there. Those stains, either colored grey, grey-brown, dark-brown or reddish-brown were all the traces of blood Armed Librarians or trainees have shed before.

Human faces have been engraved at intervals of about ten meters on both sides of the walls. They were made of blue quartz that absorbed heat from its surroundings and radiated light. The pale cold light dimly illuminated the entire corridor. The carved faces were of men and women of all ages with none of them sharing the same facial expression. All of them had one thing in common – they were the faces of dead people. It was a fitting symbol of the Library that housed all dead people of this world.

It was incredibly chilly around as if it was winter. The sword hilt touched by Minth’s fingers was as cold as ice. This was due to both the endothermic effect of the blue quartzes as well as the smell of death that dominated the area.

He was currently at the Fifth Level of Bantorra Library's underground Labyrinth. It was the so-called core of the Library created by the Overseer of the Past.

A single woman came running from far away in the long road while raising a scream. She was Armed Librarian trainee Noloty Malche.

"Noloty."

When she came running to him, Minth suddenly clutched her face. Noloty's feet now stood on empty air.

"O-ouch ouch, what's that for?!"

"Nobody's chasing you, so what are you saying about running away?"

He turned Noloty around while holding her and put her down. Looking ahead, Noloty sighed in relief.

"Thank goodness..."

Minth lightly nudged at Noloty from behind as she sighed.

"What were you doing shouting like that when you're just on the Fifth Labyrinth? Do you really plan on becoming an Armed Librarian?"

"T-that's not it."

Noloty refuted while exhaling a white breath.

“I wasn’t chased around by the Guardian Beasts. It was a human.”

“Who was it?”

Minth asked, and Noloty averted her gaze for a short while before answering.

“Mokkania-san.”

Minth went silent. He wrinkled his eyebrows with a sour expression.

“...You met Mokkania?”

He sighed. Then, he once again flicked Noloty’s head.

“If you got close to that idiot it’s your fault.”

“Come on now, that’s unreasonable...”

Noloty murmured. It really is, Minth thought to himself.

It was said that being an Armed Librarian is an occupation with lots of strange

and eccentric people in it. Even Minth couldn't deny it. He recognized the fact that he wouldn't fit as an honest citizen of society, and he also knew that there were plenty others like him.

It wasn't unthinkable. There's no way that a job that required one to skirt between life and death regularly would make someone into a decent human being. Those who spent their youth in learning combat and Magic had a harsh upbringing. Furthermore, since they possessed the techniques to depart from the world's logic using Magic, they had to grow far detached from common sense in order to perfect it.

Therefore, it was unavoidable that there would be plenty of eccentric people among them. But still, even he ended up wanting to say "cut that out" from time to time.

Minth separated from Noloty and walked for a few minutes. During that, he went up two flights of stairs and one down. He went around three corners and then passed two crossroads. Even inside this complex maze, Minth didn't hesitate even once.

It has been thousands of years since the Labyrinth was made. But although it was so extremely complex there was, to an extent, a method of moving around. He knew that there were fifty one roads breaking through the Fifth Labyrinth. He was headed towards the fifty-first of those that led to a route disconnected from all the others. That corner of the Labyrinth was a dead end.

"Mokkania."

Minth called. There was no answer.

“Mokkania, are you there?”

He called to him once again.

There was a strange door in the wall of the dead end. This small door was made of maple tree and seemed as if it suddenly appeared on the stone wall. On the center of that door was a small bell shaped like a canary. This elegant symbol of the Kingdom of Rona felt hopelessly unsuitable to the cold Labyrinth.

“Mokkania! Are you there?”

Just as he was about to touch the door knob, a loud voice came from inside.

“Here!”

“If you’re there then answer me.”

“I answered now.”

“I meant immediately.”

Speaking in a bitter tone, Minth turned the doorknob. The room behind the door was just as strange.

It wasn’t too big. Being around seven square meters, it was a bit narrow for a

person to be living alone in.

It wasn't that there was something special inside. The furniture was refined yet simple. Children's toys were scattered on the floor. An elegant drawing of apple groves and a water wheel was hung on the wall. It looked like the room of a small family who was poor yet lived happily.

Nothing was strange about the room itself. However, everything in it fitted a family living in peace at some town and not a residence at the Fifth Sealed Labyrinth of Bantorra Library.

Minth always felt dizzy when he came inside this room. A terrible feeling of the boundary between the normal and the unusual being destroyed gnawed at his mind.

“What's wrong, Minth?”

The room's owner turned his back to Minth. He sat on the floor cluttered with toys and seemed to be doing something with his hands.

“Mokkania, what did you do to Noloty?”

“I just asked her what she was doing here.”

The room's owner – Mokkania – turned around only his head.

He was a young man with blue eyes and graceful features. His white face peeked from within the gaps in his hair that reached down to his nape.

If dressed normally he could be a very handsome man. However, his deep-blue suit was wrinkled and his shirt was open up to the second button. The small knot of his refined silk necktie was loosened and went far below the larger knot. He certainly looked like a recluse.

Mokkania's eyes seemed vacant as if he just woke up.

"I'm at a very important part now. Let's talk later."

Saying that, Mokkania looked away. Then, he started playing with a squirrel doll he held in his hand.

"Then the fox said – 'winter is coming. I have to gather plenty of acorns and warm leaves'. He then went to see his friend the squirrel."

It seemed to be some fairy tale. But Minth never heard of it. Perhaps it was made up by Mokkania himself.

"'Squirrel-kun. Please give me lots of leaves'. The squirrel said – 'got it, fox-kun. I'll go get them'.

The fox thought that the squirrel was a very good boy. He would do anything for him after all.

Conversely, he thought that bear-kun was horrible."

Mokkania kept narrating as he moved the dolls.

It can't be the important part is this performance, right? Minth thought.

The man's name was Mokkania Fleur. He would become twenty three years old later that year.

He was an Armed Librarian for more than five years already. He was three years younger than Minth, but two years his senior in the job.

Originally, he was an elite among Armed Librarian and held many people's great expectations. He obtained the qualification of an Armed Librarian while he was young and was eager to work. He was so refined and courteous that no one had any doubt he would become the next Acting Director.

However, starting at a certain point, he became reluctant to come in front of people. He also avoided talking to people, and especially hated talking with women.

In addition, he never came out during daytime and never went off the island, stood out as being eccentric because of it, and eventually created a residence of his own accord inside the Labyrinth. Currently he secluded himself in the midst of the Labyrinth and only came outside when he had to procure food and water.

Even during the assault on Bantorra Library last month, while Minth and the rest were fighting the Monster, Mokkania simply ate snacks inside this room.

He continued playing with his dolls.



“Bear-kun was the scariest animal inside the forest. ‘Hey, fox. Bring lots of honey to my place’.

Because it was near winter, there was barely any honey in the forest. Also, honey was fox-kun’s favorite food. However, as bear-kun was very scary when he was mad, fox-kun always did as he told him to.

He searched for honey inside the forest and squirrel-kun talked to him. ‘Fox-kun, I came to look for leaves and honey’. And fox-kun answered, ‘oh, thank you squirrel-kun’. Fox-kun soon brought the leaves and honey to bear-kun’s place.

‘You’re a good guy’. Bear-kun said so and withdrew inside his den.

The fox thought, if only I was stronger than him, he wouldn’t be able to do as he pleased...”

Mint took a bottle of alcohol from his breast pocket and drank. Then, he sighed.

When was this going to end?

“However, during that day, fox-kun heard a voice from inside the forest. The ants were talking to him. The ants were the weakest creature in the forest.”

The fairy tale was suddenly interrupted right there. While still playing with the dolls, Mokkania fell silent.

“Mokkania. What happens then?”

“Shut up!”

Mokkania put the fox doll on the floor. It seemed to Minth as if he was suffering. But he couldn't understand why at all.

“What's wrong with you?”

“Shut up.”

Mokkania got up and walked to the corner of the room.

“What is it now?”

“It's time for snacks.”

He rummaged his cupboard. What he took from inside was a red lollipop. Mokkania started sucking it restlessly.

He took another candy from inside the cupboard and threw it to Minth.

“It's snack time, so you should eat.”

Minth threw the lollipop back.

“I don’t like sweet things.”

“What a strange guy.”

Mokkania looked at him suspiciously and put the second candy inside his mouth. He kept working as an Armed Librarian even with this kind of behavior only because of the strength of his ability. His battle strength was said to be second only to the Acting Director Hamyuts, and perhaps even above it.

Minth didn’t personally witness his true strength, but he heard stories about it.

While he was eating the lollipops, Mokkania suddenly asked a question.

“By the way Minth, who was that immodest woman?”

“...You’re talking about Noloty?”

“Who’s Noloty?”

Mokkania asked with a straight face.

“Noloty the trainee. How come you don’t know her?”

“What kind of woman is she?”

“She came from the southern frontier. She’s been a trainee for a year but she’s not too bright. She was involved in the recent Monster incident.”

“What is the Monster incident?”

Even now he seemed to be serious. Minth’s head hurt.

“The incident when Bantorra Library was attacked by the Indulging God Cult! How can you not know of this?”

“It doesn’t have anything to do with me so I don’t need to know about it.”

Minth lost all words. In order to remain calm, he decided to change the subject.

“So, what did you do to Noloty?”

Mokkania answered while still licking the candies.

“That woman brought a heater here. She ran away when I talked to her.”

“Why did you talk to her?”

“I don’t need a heater in this room. I got angry and she ran away.”

“ ... ”

“When I told her to stop she ran faster. Such a strange woman.”

Looking at it, Minth noticed a small heater placed in the corner of the room. It had been broken to pieces. Mokkania probably smashed it after Noloty ran away.

This guy... He probably behaved suspiciously and applied his weird logic while talking to Noloty. Of course it would make her run away.

“It really makes me feel bad. I’ll eat another candy.”

Minth looked at Mokkania rummaging his cupboard while trying to suppress his headache.

“By the way, what do you need?”

After being asked by Mokkania, Minth recalled his business here. He came to visit because of a certain reason but completely forgot about it.

“I came to return the winged ants I borrowed.”

He took out a small bottle from the bag hanging at his waist. Those were winged ants used for surveillance the other day during the Monster incident. He

borrowed them from Mokkania a while ago but forgot to return them.

“Put it to the side.”

Mokkania said disinterestedly.

“Hey, can I use them again for a while?”

Mokkania shook his head from side to side.

“There are other people that want to use them, and I also do. You’re not the only one I lend them to. Put them to the side like you were told.”

But where should he put them? The room was messy. He looked for a suitable location.

“It’s just that we have a mountain-load of Books to organize. Mirepoc is waiting at the Labyrinth’s entrance to give more instructions.”

“I understand. I’ll go there later.”

Why does simply returning something tires me out so much, Minth wondered.

Then, he found something on top of the table. It was a small Book fragment inside of a basket.

“...?”

All Books must be contained in the archives. Even pieces were no exception.

“What is this?”

While saying so, Minth sent his hands to the fragment. However, at that instant, his instincts as a warrior stopped him. He mustn't touch that. He didn't understand why, but he couldn't touch it.

Next to him was Mokkania, one of the world's strongest people. As long as he was there, Minth mustn't touch that Book.

“...Mokkania.”

“What?”

“That's probably important. Put it back.”

Minth said and pointed at the Book fragment.

“...Right.”

Mokkania took the Book and put it inside his breast pocket.

“Oh right, that trainee Noloty or whatever tried to touch that Book.”

“ ... ”

“What an outrageous woman, trying to touch this...”

Minth saw that Mokkania’s soul was dyed in the colors of battle. He might kill anyone who touches that book. Even Minth and Noloty. He was a man able to do that.

“If it’s that important, carry it around with you.”

“I’m doing that as much as possible.”

Saying so, Mokkania rubbed it inside his pocket.

“It can’t leave this room. This room can’t have a heater. I must have my dolls. I also must have snacks. It’s all obvious.”

Mokkania kept talking to himself.

Who does that Book belong to? Minth decided not to ask this. It probably had to do with the reason it couldn’t be touched.

Minth left the room and entered the Labyrinth again.

# Chapter 1: Red Warning Light

## Part 1

Bantorra Library was composed of six big Archives and five Labyrinths. All of it was located underground, and besides the large gate on the surface, there was no other way to intrude inside.

The Sixth Archive was the closest to the surface. From the fact that it wasn't sealed and even Librarians with no combat capabilities were allowed to enter, it was known as the Open Archive.

About four fifths of all Books were housed there. This was where ordinary people who led ordinary lives would arrive at after their death.

By opening the door at the back of the Sixth Archive, the true form of the Library – the Books Labyrinth – would be revealed. No one had ever measured it precisely, but there was about a kilometer from the surface to the deepest parts. It was said to be easily larger than a town.

The Labyrinth was further divided to six Levels, and naturally, it grew more complex as one went deeper inside.

The Books that were designated for sealing would be scattered among the Labyrinth's Archives according to their importance or danger held within them.

Those who challenged this Labyrinth as well as protected it – were called Armed Librarians.

The Fifth Book Labyrinth was silent. After Minth left her, Noloty walked there alone. She cautiously surveyed her surroundings. When she descended about fifty stairs down, as it became suddenly colder, she felt the hair at the back of her neck stand up. Noloty gently lowered the knapsack on her back. Something came walking at her from the front. It was a four-legged beast colored black as ink that looked similar to a horse.

These kinds of beasts who confronted intruders were called Guardian Beasts. They were created by the Overseer of the Past Bantorra to indiscriminately attack every living being inside the Labyrinth. Those who didn't have the strength to defeat them were not allowed to head inside.

“Alright, here we go.”

Noloty readied her fist.

In the blink of an eye, the upper body of a man grew upon the horse's back. It was a knight clad in black armor with no lower body. His right hand held a spear while his left hand held a muzzleloader-style revolver.

“So it's a Cavalryman.”

Noloty muttered.

The Cavalryman started charging. At the same time, he shot towards Noloty. She deflected the bullet using the rope on her fist. While evading the thrust spear by a hair's breadth, she kicked the horse's legs. Noloty's flank bled a little.

The Cavalryman, having lost its balance, collapsed to the side. While trampling its revolver underfoot, Noloty used her other leg to kick the Cavalryman's head.

As his head was knocked off his neck, the Cavalryman ceased all movements. The black knight's torso burrowed into the horse's flesh. The Cavalryman stood unsteadily, turned its back to Noloty and went away.

“Whew...”

Noloty sighed and relaxed her body. Even with her power, it wasn't difficult beating the Guardian Beasts of the Fifth Level.

Noloty picked up luggage and started walking again.

From then, after going up and down twelve flights of stairs, she turned around the 58th corner. When she arrived there, she passed several Armed Librarians and trainees. Climbing a long set of stairs, there was a copper-colored door in the middle of the large wall. Noloty extended her hand towards this double door which was three times the height of a human being.

“Whew.”

Noloty held her breath and pressed at the heavy door. It made a loud sound as if the ground was shaking, and the door slowly opened. Warm air came flowing inside – the fresh air of a place inhabited by the living.

Noloty came back to the huge spiral staircase at the very bottom of the Sixth Archive.

“Noloty Malche, safely returned!”

“Welcome back, Noloty.”

A voice called to her. Mirepoc Finedell put her hands on the railing and talked to her.

“Good job. You were quick this time.”

While saying so, she handed a cup of tea to Noloty. The sweet, hot tea permeated her cold body.

“You’ve grown a little, Noloty.”

Mirepoc spoke in a friendly tone. Starting from the Monster incident from a little while ago, Mirepoc seemed to get a slightly better opinion of Noloty.

“No, I don’t really feel so.”

“But you did. Feeling that will come later.”

After Noloty finished drinking and returned the cup to Mirepoc, she smiled. She was honestly happy at having been approved by her superior that was of the same age.

“After delivering the Books, even if it seems a bit early, go back and take a nap. I’m going to have you work more tomorrow, so you have to stay sharp.”

“What about you, Mirepoc-san?”

“I was entrusted with the control room until tomorrow morning. After that’s over I’ll sleep a little and then go and help Mattalast-san.”

“I see...”

Mirepoc went back to the control room. Noloty also wanted to head up, but just as she put her feet to the stairs, a woman came walking from above.

“Oh, Noloty.”

Noloty’s legs stopped. Her body shook with more tension than when she fought the Guardian Beasts.

Accompanied by footsteps of sandal-covered feet, the one who came down was the Acting Director of Bantorra Library, Hamyuts Meseta.

“So you came back, good job. Keep working hard.”

Hamyuts walked slowly while her luggage hung from her waist.

Only a handful of Armed Librarians knew what really happened the other day in Bujui during the fight against the Monster.

Hamyuts manipulated Noloty in order to revive the Monster. Nobody talked about the fact that she wanted to fight Enlike afterwards. Minth told her to forget it all. Noloty also thought she should do so, but she couldn't forget the fear of facing Hamyuts Meseta no matter how much she wanted to.

“E-even you're shelving Books, Director?”

Noloty raised a nervous voice and tried talking normally. However, even her body was frightened, let alone her mouth.

“Yeah. Because we don't have enough manpower.”

While saying so, Hamyuts caressed Noloty's head.

“You're also working hard, huh? You're almost fully qualified now.”

Hamyuts smiled while tousling the girl's hair.

“What's wrong, Noloty? You're pale.”

“It’s nothing.”

“Oh well, see ya.”

After saying so, Hamyuts left for the Labyrinth.

Noloty couldn’t understand Hamyuts at all. She was competent, but was also known as an extremely ruthless woman. Until now, even Noloty thought so. However, she had the feeling that something far more dangerous hid in her true nature.

“She’s scary but... I can’t do anything about her.”

Noloty muttered, and then began climbing the spiral staircase.

Normal librarians hurriedly went up and down the stair while holding baskets full of Books. Crossing paths with them, Noloty grew closer to the surface.

Entering a side path that was close to the topmost level, she arrived at a waiting room made for the normal visitors. It was filled by the smoke of tobacco and the sighs of people who were tired of waiting. They were many who had to withstand vexatious procedures and long waiting times so they could view certain Books.

“Ah, Noloty-san. I’ve been waiting for you.”

“Let me read it already. I can’t take it anymore.”

Those who wanted to read Books as well as the normal librarians started talking to Noloty.

“Noloty-san, here’s some water.”

A librarian passed Noloty a bottle.

“Ah, thanks. But I’m not thirsty. Rather than that, let’s hand out the Books.”

Noloty took a small wooden box from within the rucksack on her back.

“...I see.”

The librarian who held out the water bottle replied in a small voice. Noloty didn’t pay him any heed and started taking Books out.

“Umm, who requested the Book of the hunter Goul Baroque?”

“I did.”

The one who raised his hand was a bespectacled old man with a hunched back. Noloty heard that he was an expert in the research of ancient civilizations. She then began the obligatory explanation.

“I’m sure you are well aware of this, but I’ll explain it for a second time. This

Book was designated under the Fifth Seal. You are strictly forbidden from taking it outside the archive or showing it to other people. In the case of violation, your memory will be wiped off by the Fiction Obliterating Cup Argax and you will be forbidden from entering the Library ever again. Leaking information or damaging the Book will also incur punishment by law. If you acknowledge all of this, please sign here.”

“Yes yes, give it to me. Now I’ll be able to understand the lifestyle of people in the southern frontier during the year 800!”

Noloty checked the signatures on the document and then guided the old man to the reading room.

“And now, who requested the Book of the sea adventurer Bleuney Stamp?”

“I did.”

Noloty passed the Book to the man who held his hand. He was probably an adventurer just like the Book’s owner. He was a burly man with a scar on his face.

After explaining and confirming his signatures, Noloty guided the man to the reading room.

“The Book of the astronomer Honney Mashea.”

“I’ve been waiting for this forever! The Astronomy Society meeting is next month!”

The scholarly woman ran to the reading room in the middle of Noloty's explanation.

"The Book of the coal mine owner Colt Moari."

A man stood up, grinning. Although officially his goal was the reclamation of the coal mine, his true aim was to locate the whereabouts of an enormous inheritance. He received the Book, barely able to suppress his joy. However, Noloty read the Book before, so she knew – there wasn't any inheritance.

"Next is the Book of the Magician Mill Moomiton."

And thus Noloty handed over all Books. A third of the people in the waiting room received their Books and went to the reading room.

Now my work for today is over – just as Noloty thought so, a voice called to her.

"Umm..."

It was a woman about twenty three years old wearing mourning clothes.

"How can I help you?"

"Umm, I was supposed to get the Book of my husband Bleuney Stamp, but..."

“Oh, that one. Earlier I gave it to another person, so you can get it once he finishes viewing it.”

“But my husband wasn’t a sea adventurer...”

The mourning woman said in hesitation. Behind Noloty, a librarian looked at the Book list and then said to her,

“Noloty-san, that was another person with the same name.”

It seems she made a blunder. Noloty thought for a second they were tricking her. However, the librarian stared at her from behind, and at her front the mourning woman grabbed her handkerchief.

“...I’ll go bring it now!”

Noloty fled from the waiting room.

“I haven’t grown at all.”

As she muttered this, Noloty went down the spiral staircase of the Sixth Archive.

Before she dived in the Book Labyrinth again, she wanted to eat. The cold inside it made her hungry.

“You there, please wait.”

When Noloty turned around, she saw the adventurer man whom she gave the Book to before.

“What is it?”

“I’d like to ask you if I can go retrieve the Book myself?”

Noloty mentally sighed. Once in a while there were these kinds of people. Newspaper reporters that wanted to see the interior or warriors that wanted to test their own skills – there was no end to people who wanted to enter the Labyrinth.

“I have confidence in my abilities. Don’t worry about me.”

The adventurer rolled up his sleeve. He certainly seemed to be well-trained, and could be a splendid warrior if he had some discipline. But that wasn’t the issue here.

“I appreciate the offer, but you can’t do that. No one can enter except Armed Librarians or trainees.”

“I see. Thank you.”

“Yeah. Unfortunately, we have such rules.”

When Noloty said so, the adventurer made a small laugh for some reason. Then, he went further down the staircase.

“Good grief.”

Half a month passed since the Monster incident. What awaited Noloty who resolved that incident was her unchanging usual daily life.

Carrying a bag full of Books on her shoulders, going back and forth inside the Labyrinth – that same kind of daily life. She came back to the simple days of slowly grinding through her mountain-load of work.

“I wonder how you’re doing now, Enlike-san.”

Noloty recalled the face of the young man she met in battle. He was supposed to have stayed at Bantorra Library. However, ever since the incident ended, she hadn’t seen him at all.

Around the same time...

It was in the part of Bantorra Library above ground. Inside a huge room in the castle there were two men.

Once of them was the Armed Librarian Mattalast. And the other was the ex-Monster, Enlike Bishile. He left the Indulging God Cult and started cooperating

with the Armed Librarians.

Enlike closed his eyes while sitting on a chair. Mattalast stood next to him while calmly smoking his pipe. The two didn't make any sound. Enlike was focusing inside himself, and Mattalast held his breath as if to not disturb him.

"...It's no good."

Enlike opened his eyes.

"Is it impossible?"

Mattalast sat down on a chair next to him.

"The Imaginary Entrails are filled with knowledge. However, I cannot touch or read it."

"That's a problem."

Mattalast blew out smoke.

"So it's just like the Magic Agency thought. You can possess Zatoh's body, Enlike-kun, but you can't go as far as control his Magic Right."

Mattalast gazed towards the report sent by the researchers from the Magic Agency. Inside were written the research results of the Book-Eating ability conducted by the Magic Agency as well as several researchers' opinions on the

matter. As Enlike became a collaborator with the Armed Librarians, he conveyed everything he knew about the Indulging God Cult to Mattalast. However, since he was a mere Meat he barely knew anything. The only things Enlike could tell him were about the ship, about the island, and about how he overtook Zatoh.

The one who should have deep knowledge about the Indulging God Cult was the Monster Zatoh Rondohone. Just now, Enlike tried pulling out his memories from inside the Imaginary Entrails.

“Most probably, both the act of using the abilities of eaten Books as well as accessing their memories is part of Zatoh’s Magic Right. In fact, right now I can’t eat any Books, nor can I control cloth.”

Enlike said while emitting small sparks from his fingers.

“But you still have your regeneration, don’t you?”

“That seems to be the exception. It might be because it’s an automatic ability or because Kayas is letting me use it.”

Enlike said with a downcast gaze. He was probably reminded of his comrade that would never return.

“Well then, Enlike-kun. What are you going to do from now on?”

“I’ll undergo Magic Deliberation and acquire a new Right. I’ll get one that’ll allow me to retrieve Zatoh’s memories.”

That would be difficult, Mattalast thought. Acquiring an inborn ability such as Book-Eating through normal means is next to impossible. However, Mattalast couldn't tell him to quit.

Enlike was sincere more than Mattalast expected. He couldn't tread upon his efforts like that.

"...Sorry, Mattalast. I can't offer much cooperation after all."

"Don't mind it. We once tried to kill each other after all."

Mattalast smiled. Strictly speaking, that wasn't Enlike-kun though, he added in his mind.

"Also, you can still be plenty of use even in your current state. For example, we've found plenty of goods on the island you came from. That alone is a big progress."

Then, the door opened without even a knock.

"Mattalast. A report came from Guinbex government."

The one who came inside was a man wearing a dark-green military uniform. He had a medium build and height, with a physique that didn't stand out at all. His hair was slicked backwards as if he attempted to erase any and all of his features.

His symbol as an Armed Librarian was on a medal attached to the chest of his uniform. He had several documents in his hand.

“From Guinbex? Why?”

“This is about the manufacturer of the food found on the Indulging God Cult’s island. That was unmistakably food made for the use of the Guinbex army.”

“As we thought. Where did the manufacturer lead us to?”

“I don’t know. I’m going to issue instructions on that matter now.”

The man put the documents on the table. He turned his eyes to Enlike, and then snorted.

“I am First Class Armed Librarian Feekiee Quinn.”

He introduced himself in a cold voice.

“We’ve met once before, so I know you. I also heard your name at that time.”

Feekiee averted his gaze from Enlike.

“I see. I don’t have time to remember dogs abandoned by the Indulging God Cult one-by-one.”

“Hey, Feekiee. Try to get along with him.”

Mattalast chided in while smoking his pipe.

“Mattalast, be careful around him.”

Feekee left those words and then left. Mattalast shrugged as if giving up. Enlike saw Feekee off with a discouraged expression.

“Sorry, Enlike-kun. Don’t be offended. He’s just a bit too serious.”

“Yeah. I don’t mind.”

“Good grief, everyone from Guinbex is too serious that it’s troubling.”

Mattalast removed the ashes from his pipe. He put another leaf, lit it with a match, and then suddenly changed the topic.

“Hey, Enlike-kun. Do you know why I’ve been assigned to you?”

Enlike raised an eyebrow.

“I don’t.”

“It’s because I’m the best against surprise attacks.”

“What do you mean?”

“If I were in the Indulging God Cult, I would, without any doubt, want to erase you.”

“...Really?”

“The biggest strength of the Indulging God Cult is the fact that nothing is known about it. They should be afraid of information leaking first and foremost. Am I wrong?”

“That might be true, but...”

“To tell you the truth, I’m expecting you to play the role of bait.”

Mattalast brought the index finger on his right hand close to Enlike’s face.

“When those insolent guys come near you...”

He grabbed his finger using his left hand.

“Chomp.”

Mattalast twisted his fingers.

“I don’t like the way of doing it.”

“No, it’ll be fine.”

Enlike emitted small sparks from his body. Mattalast smiled as he thought about how reliable he was.

Two weeks have passed since the incident. It’s about time for something to happen, Mattalast thought to himself. I wonder where it’ll come from.

## Part 2

Noloty was eating her meal inside a break room for Armed Librarians located in the Sixth Archive. She stuffed herself with smoked salmon and onions sandwiched inside rye bread with nothing to drink.

“Are you going inside the Labyrinth again, Noloty-san?”

Ireia talked as she placed freshly baked bread on top of the tray. Since Noloty’s mouth was full, she answered by moving her head.

“You’re working quite enthusiastically. You’re a good girl, Noloty-san. Please work and eat a lot.”

Noloty received the tray. The fourth bread became her dessert. It was soaked in plenty of butter and honey. It made a sweet smell all the way to the finger she used to pinch it.

The break room in the Sixth Archive was also commonly called old Ireia’s room. Ireia was a master in baking and she worked here for the Librarians roaming around.

“Mm.”

*By the way, I need some water.* With her cheeks stuffed full of bread, Noloty looked for water.

“ ... ”

She picked up a water bottle. However, it was too light. Her mouth still full, Noloty looked here and there searching for a drink. Suddenly, a cup full of water was placed into her hand.

Without hesitating, Noloty drank the water.

“Oh, thanks.”

The man who gave her this seemed to be a normal librarian. He didn’t even look at Noloty who thanked him and exited the room.

At that moment, Noloty felt slight discomfort. She stopped her hand and thought for a bit. But she soon gave up.

Noloty hadn't noticed. That man was the same one who tried to make Noloty drink in the waiting room earlier. It was too trivial to notice.

After leaving the room, the man went down the spiral staircase unsteadily. His gait was shaky, as if he was drunk. He then muttered.

“Make Noloty Marche drink water. Make Noloty Marche drink water.”

He kept muttering. He said the same thing over and over like a broken gramophone.

“Make Noloty Marche drink water. Make Noloty Marche drink water.”

Some voice asked him if he was okay. The man didn't even turn his gaze. While continuing to murmur, he went to the corner of the Archive.

“Make Noloty Marche drink water. Make Noloty Marche drink water... I made... Noloty Marche... Drink water.”

The man's muttering ended. For a while, he simply stood there silently. Then, he took a small knife from his pocket. Slowly and carefully, he stabbed his own neck.

During that time, Mirepoc had just finished checking the telegraph in the control room. That room was placed next to the entrance to the Fifth Labyrinth. Its interior didn't look fitting to the old-fashioned Bantorra Library. The telegraph was connected to various places inside the Labyrinth and was intended to let Armed Librarians inside know about any unusual events.

Fifty years ago this kind of modern facility would be unthinkable. Even Bantorra Library, that prided itself on tradition, made some advancement during the wave of modernization and mechanization.

Just as she confirmed that there was nothing wrong with the device, the buzzer rang.

One of the several hundred lamps gave off a red light. It meant that something abnormal happened in the Sixth Archive. Mirepoc took the handset of the communication device and contacted the Sixth Archive's security room.

“Control room speaking. Did something happen?”

While trying to calm the upset librarian, Mirepoc listened to their story. When she heard about the incident, she instinctively raised a voice.

“Suicide? Inside the Library?”

“Yes ma'am.”

Mirepoc became worried. She might need to go there, but she can't leave this place unattended.

However, not many Armed Librarians are inside the Labyrinth right now. Only the Director ever sets foot in dangerous locations. There were low chances for trouble. It should be fine.

“I'll come soon, so call Ireia. Don't touch the scene. I understood.”

Mirepoc cut off the communication, touched the gun hanging on her waist and leaving the control room.

Noloty's surroundings seemed busy. *Did something happen?* She wondered. But rather than that, she thought it would be more important to fetch the Book and ignored the clamor around.

On her way, she peeked into the control room.

“Huh? Mirepoc-san isn't here.”

She looked around for a short while, but didn't see her. Noloty left the control room and headed for the Labyrinth entrance.

“Oh, I was waiting for you, Noloty-san.”

Noloty found two figures in front of the Labyrinth gate.

One of them seemed familiar. It was the man with a scar from his right eye to his lips – the adventurer that received the Book earlier. A jute bag

was strapped to his shoulders and he held an ice axe made of steel in his hands. It looked as if he was just departing for a new adventure.

The second person she didn't recognize. It was a young woman in her twenties with long, flaxen hair. She wore a white coat on top of an inconspicuous yet high-quality one piece dress. Noloty honestly thought that she was beautiful.

She wondered if there was something wrong with the woman's sight. She held a long cane and her eyes didn't seem focused, meekly gazing at the floor.

"Let's go immediately. I was tired of waiting."

The adventurer smiled towards Noloty. She had no clue why he was here and what he was waiting for.

"Did we make some arrangement?"

"You already told us. You're going to let us into the Labyrinth."

"Did I really say such a thing?"

Noloty placed a hand on her chin and pondered. She felt as if she could and couldn't remember that. For some reason, it seemed vague inside her head.

"You did. You thanked me when I said I wanted to accompany you."

*I did say that, Noloty thought. I definitely did. But why can't I remember what happened before and after? No, wait, there was supposed to be something important before that.*

"Time is of essence. Let us go."

The adventurer put a hand of the Labyrinth's gate while he prompted the cane wielding woman.

*Strange. Something is definitely strange.* Noloty kept thinking. She felt something was strange, but she couldn't understand what.

"Come on, quickly."

"I understand. Let us go."

Saying so, Noloty also put her hand to the door connecting to the Book Labyrinth. It felt cold to the touch. The door recognized the shape of Noloty's soul in order to confirm she was a personnel allowed to enter the Labyrinth. It was then unlocked.

"...Let us go now."

Noloty pulled the heavy door and set foot inside the cold Labyrinth.

"Noloty-san, which route are you going to take?"

"Because I'm the most accustomed to route 16, we'll go from there."

"I see. We're headed to route 51, so we're splitting here."

The adventurer urged the woman and they were both gone inside the Labyrinth.

After seeing their backs off, Noloty stood there for a short while.

*Something's strange. Something's wrong.* While unable to understand the situation, Noloty kept standing in place.

"...Nobody's coming after us, Winkeny."

The adventurer said. It was an especially small voice, so it didn't reach the young woman walking next to him.

"Yeah, nobody's coming."

The one replying wasn't the woman. Something was wriggling on the adventurer's back. That thing replied in a small voice as well.

"Our infiltration was a success, adventurer Locolo."

"Stop that already. I'm no adventurer. That's so stupid."

The man – Locolo – said. A cruel smile floated to his lips.

"By the way, that woman just now was the one who stole Ganbanzel's Monster. She was even less of a threat than I thought."

Locolo smiled while looking back.

"Let's stop the idle talk. The Monster is irrelevant right now."

The voice on his back said. Locolo didn't listen to it.

"I like that Thought Sharing woman better. She seems tough."

At that moment, the woman walking next to Locolo talked to him.

"Did you say something, Locolo-san?"

"No, nothing."

"I see..."

The woman put one hand to her cheek.

"Anyway, it's really cold in here."

"That's true. Well, you'll get used to it soon."

The woman murmured in worry.

"Mokkania has been living here for a long time. It's bad for his health, so it makes me worry."

"Right, let's go quickly to Mokkania's place."

"Yes, let's hurry up. I want to meet him. I want to meet my cute Mokkania as soon as possible."

With the sound of the cane accompanying her steps, the woman kept walking slowly.

In the part of Bantorra Library above ground, Mattalast and Enlike were still talking.

"Will that really go well?"

Enlike questioned the Armed Librarian's strategy – which was waiting for the enemy to strike under the assumption that their side has an overwhelming advantage. It was obvious that he would question the strength of Bantorra Library after they once allowed the Monster to escape.

"Don't underestimate us Armed Librarians. Our battle strength's different than what it was before."

“Just how many do we have?”

“We have five people on the same class as me or above. The Director, me, Ireia... There’s also a guy called Mokkania, but maybe we shouldn’t count him.”

“And the final one?”

“You.”

“I see.”

Enlike thought for a short while.

“Does anything in this world that can defeat all of us exist?”

“That’s being a bit reckless. If the Cult had such battle strength, the Library would have been destroyed long ago.”

Mattalast shrugged. The fighting strength of Bantorra Library surpassed an entire country’s military. Even Hamyuts wouldn’t be able to stand up against them.

At that moment, he recalled another person. It wouldn’t be impossible for him to count as the world’s strongest along with Hamyuts.

“But... if we’re talking within certain circumstances, there’s one person that can beat us all together.”

“Who is it?”

“Don’t worry. He’s an ally.”

“Which one was he?”

“You still haven’t met him. I’m talking about Mokkania whom I’ve mentioned just now.”

“What kind of person is he?”

Enlike leaned forward. Mattalast began explaining about his ability and nature.

Enlike listened to him with a facial expression that couldn’t be called calm by any means.

Noloty, who was headed towards the Fifth Archive, stopped and turned around on the way. For some reason, she was worried about the man she met before. She returned to the gate and took route 51.

Noloty remembered. After turning in the middle of this route, one can reach the room Mokkania lives in.

“Is something going on with Mokkania-san?”

Noloty muttered. That monstrous man couldn't possibly get killed, but her uneasiness grew the more she kept walking.

She arrived in front of Mokkania's room. There was no-one inside. Neither the two people from before nor Mokkania. Noloty turned back and proceeded towards the Fifth Archive through route 51.

In the middle of the Fifth Archive, there was a telegraph facility that was connected to the control room. She thought she could contact Mirepoc there and ask whether something happened outside.

“Here it is.”

Just as she thought of running to the telegraph room, she saw a person. Mokkania, whom she has been searching for, now made his way out of the room.

“Mokkania-san.”

He wasn't someone she wanted to talk with, but it was an emergency. No, it was a situation that might become an emergency now.

“...What?”

“Did two people who aren't Armed Librarian come here?”

“...Did something happen?”

“They might be enemies.”

Mokkania glanced at Noloty.

“Go away.”

“Huh?”

“I’m telling you to go away.”

She couldn’t understand him. Where should she go away to? Was he possibly telling her to go out of the Labyrinth?

At that time, another figure appeared from within the telegraph room.

“Is someone there, Mokkania?”

One of the pair, the woman holding a cane, started talking to Mokkania.

“Mokkania-san, umm...”

Who is that person? Noloty wanted to ask this, but stopped herself. A black shadow lurked at Mokkania’s feet.

The black shadow gradually increased in depth and extent. At that moment, she understood – Mokkania was going to attack her.

Noloty ran away. She didn’t think about fighting for even an instant, and ran away like a scared rabbit.

Overwhelming force came surging from behind.

Noloty screamed. The black shadow touched Noloty’s feet. She felt sharp pain in her heel as if her bones broke.

“...Well, that kind of guy.”

Mattalast finished his explanation.

“In conclusion, if he’s inside the Labyrinth, the man called Mokkania is undoubtedly the world’s strongest.”

“I see.”

Enlike thought for a while, and then suddenly spoke.

“Mattalast. Since a bit earlier, I’ve notice the Library’s weakness.”

Mattalast was slightly surprised.

“Weakness?”

“Armed Librarians are extremely vulnerable to a certain situation. It’s not like I can bring up any concrete evidence, but this is probably something that all Armed Librarians don’t even try to think about. This is only a hypothesis, but I don’t think you should leave that Mokkania guy alone.”

“...What do you mean?”

“It might be that I only think so because I myself was a traitor, but I believe that the Indulging God Cult is thoroughly prepared for this kind of situation. In that aspect, the Indulging God Cult will completely defeat you.”

“And what is that situation?”

“Betrayal of an ally.”

Enlike pronounced. At the exact same time, Mattalast rose from his seat.

Two seconds later, Bantorra Library’s alarms blared. Mattalast knew that this indicated danger of the highest priority.

After having finished investigating the suicide scene, Mirepoc returned to the control room. At the very least, it was obviously not a murder. She would leave the investigation of the motive and such for other people.

Mirepoc gasped as she returned to the control room. Another red lamp started flashing. The blinking lamp let her know that Noloty was in great danger.

“Noloty? Why is she inside?”

Mirepoc doubted the machine was at fault. She immediately used her Thought Sharing and called to Noloty.

“Noloty... Noloty... Where are you right now?”

The fact that she received no answer was bad news. Mirepoc propped up her sword and grabbed it, intending to run towards the Labyrinth. At that moment, another red lamp had been lit.

“Kalne-san?”

Mirepoc muttered the name of that Armed Librarian. He was supposed to have gone into the Fifth Archive to do some shelving, but she couldn't believe he would face trouble against the Guardian Beasts of that level there.

Then, another lamp lit up. It time it was the lamp of Bloze the trainee. Next came the lamp of Mumool the trainee. And so on, and so on.

Mirepoc then noticed that she had received a telegram.

When she saw its contents she sounded the alarm without any hesitation and shouted into the communicator.

“Revolt... there's a revolt! Mokkania Fleur is revolting in the Fifth Archive!”

The following was written in the telegram:

“Immediately order all Armed Librarian inside the Labyrinth to depart. Those who won't comply will be attacked.

Mokkania”

# Chapter 2: Black Ant-hill

## Part 1

What is the worst kind of animal?

It's not the lion. Only humans refer to it as king of the jungle.

It's also not the tiger. It isn't much different from a lion.

The elephant? A raging elephant is certainly scary, but it's mostly gentle.

What about the wolf? It is certainly strong in groups. But that is still not enough.

Humans? They might be the most frightening. But at the same time, they are also the weakest living beings.

The worst kind of animal, one that devours lions, tiger, elephants, wolves or humans, does exist in the world.

It is the animal employed by Mokkania-

The ant.

A black shadow appeared at Mokkania's feet. That black shadow looked as if someone spilled ink. Ants came crawling out of it. Ants were being created as if coming out from the entrance of a nest at Mokkania's feet.

The ants crawled. The black crawling ants began to fill Mokkania's feet and the grey floor of the Book Labyrinth.

They numbered more than a hundred million. The white floor became stained in a black, overflowing wave of ants crawling over the walls or ceiling.

Every one of them was at about the size of a human finger. Their head was unusually large, and their mandibles even more so. With their black eyes shining, they charged forward single-mindedly. They had only one goal – to satisfy their hunger.

This was Mokkania's ability – He could produce an inexhaustible amount of ants who could consume the flesh of any and all living beings.

The black invaders started attacking all living beings inside the Labyrinth. They first had to fight the Guardian Beasts. The ants faced off against Cavalryman, Entwining Serpent, Rhino and Bronze Spitting Crow.

Cavalryman crushed ants under its hooves and mowed them down using its spear. The ants' bodies were torn into shreds and their body fluids covered the spear. But that wasn't good enough. What would killing a few hundreds of them change anyway?

The ants' mandibles pierced Cavalryman's hooves. They easily ate through them with formidable force. The ants then flocked and crawled all over Cavalryman's body. It collapsed and was buried in the flood of ants.

Cavalryman's entire body was eaten without leaving any trace in less than thirty seconds.

They haven't eaten enough.

As if screaming, the ants kept on marching forward.

There was still plenty of bait left. There were other Guardian Beasts and Armed Librarians inside the Labyrinth. Searching for prey, the ants scattered about the Fifth Level of the Book Labyrinth.

Not many Armed Librarian knew what actions to take against the ants' attack.

Mirepoc stood paralyzed inside the control room.

In front of her eyes, warning lights kept flashing in red – all those except of Mokka and Hamyuts.

'A revolt? Why? What's going on?'

'Please respond, Mirepoc-san!'

'Isn't there some mistake? Nothing's happening here.'

'Who are the enemy forces? Is it just Mokkaia?'

'What's the Director doing?!'

'Please respond, Mirepoc-san, my feet are almost done for!'

Mirepoc received one thought after the other.

I must send some aid. I have to issue some orders. But what should I say? Should they fight or run away? Mirepoc was left all alone in mayhem and bewilderment.

"What are you going, Mirepoc-san?"

The one calling to her was Ireia. Mirepoc barely recomposed herself.

"W-What am I supposed to..."

"Let's have everyone withdraw. Quickly!"

Mirepoc closed her eyes and sent her thoughts to all Armed Librarians inside the Labyrinth.

‘Everyone, please withdraw. There is no need for any counterattack, everyone withdraw immediately!’

After hearing the alarm, Mattalast started running around Bantorra Library. He called out towards the fleeing people in the Sixth Archive, in the lobby and in the reading room.

Panic will just cause death. Like a domino effect, it would cause many people to lose their lives. In particular, if people were to tumble down the spiral staircase of the Sixth Archive, he had no idea how much damage would be caused.

“Don’t run! The attack will not reach here!”

Mattalast ran on top of the spiral staircase’s handrail. The stairs were full of people who strived to be the first ones to get outside. The number of people who listened to Mattalast was small, but he still had to keep yelling.

“Leave the Library by walking without any rush! Once you get outside, go to the courtyard and don’t move from there!”

Mattalast shot his gun towards the ceiling. All of the people looked at him at once.

“No reason to panic. Trust us Armed Librarians.”

The panic slightly subsided. The people started climbing the stairs a bit more calmly than before.

Mattalast looked for people who were late in escaping and jumped down.

A woman ran and her feet stumbled. She slipped on the stairs and fell behind. Mattalast, after having predicted this, sled underneath her with his bowler hat flying.

“Ahh...”

“Everything’s fine. Relax.”

Mattalast whispered as he held the woman’s back. He helped her get up and prompted her to head for the surface.

However, even Mattalast didn’t know if everything would be really fine.

No attack from the Labyrinth came outside. He would have to evacuate everyone as soon as possible.

‘Feekie-san! Blob is around the portion above the ground of route 41. Can I ask you to help him?’

‘Acknowledged.’

'Marlin here. No ants came to route 17 yet.'

'Roger that. Make all people in routes 16-27 escape through route 17.'

Inside the control room, Mirepoc shared her thoughts with the fleeing Armed Librarians.

"Hold on, that wound is shallow!"

In front of the gate, Ireia was nursing the Armed Librarians who managed to run away.

At the bottom of the Sixth Archive, there were sixteen Armed Librarians and trainees in addition to Ireia. There were almost no people without any injuries, but thankfully none of them were life-threatening.

"Mirepoc-san, who's still left inside?"

Ireia asked. Mirepoc checked the lamps and then answered.

"The remaining people are Minth, Noloty, and the Director."

Hearing this, Ireia ripped away her white apron and threw away her glasses. Her skirt waved as she ran towards the Labyrinth.

"Mirepoc-san, I'm leaving this place to you!"

While almost all Armed Librarians have already withdrawn, Minth alone refused retreat.

Once he heard the news, he headed for route 51 at full speed. There were still almost no ants in his vicinity. While crushing the sparse ants underfoot, Minth kept running ahead.

‘Minth-san. Please retreat.’

‘Mirepo, where’s Mokkaia?!’

‘I told you to retreat, didn’t I?!’

Without minding it, he was still running. As he approached route 51, the number of ants around gradually increased. His shoes were being eaten and the ants’ mandible ate his feet down to the bones. Yet he kept running.

“...!”

However, he then stopped. The sounds of crawling ants came from ahead. After turning around the next corner, there would probably be only a deluge of ants. Minth’s legs froze.

“...! Gaaahhh!”

He screamed in pain as the fear eroded his fighting spirits. Normally, he would tell himself that the chance for victory was right in front of him.

Minth leapt diagonally with his full strength. He landed on the wall and kept running like that. His speed and the friction created by his shoes shook off the power of gravity.

His body leaned ahead. Minth kicked the wall which was his foothold. He rotated his large build like a cat and landed onto the opposite wall. The floor already became a living hell. The ants, filled with hunger, all looked up towards Minth.

“Ngaahhh!!”

He jumped around from wall to wall and kept running. Then, he could see Mokkania’s figure from the distance.

“Mokkania!”

Minth shouted. The distant figure turned around.

“...You’re noisy.”

Could be faintly heard. At the very next instant, a number of ants several times more than what was seen until then were unleashed from Mokkania’s body. They colored the walls and ceiling in pitch-black, flooding towards Minth.

Minth's body fell to the ground.

His body became buried in ants. The only thing he managed to do was guard his eyes with both hands.

"Minth-san!"

Ireia arrived at the nick of time. She violently rushed towards Minth, using her stout body to scatter ants around.

Acknowledging her arrival, Mokkania turned around. The wave of ants pulled back. The bloodied Minth was left behind.

"Don't even think of it!"

Ireia lifted Minth's body.

"That bastard... What does it mean..."

Minth muttered with his bitten lips. Carried on Ireia's back, he was carried outside the Labyrinth.

Mattalast rushed over to Mirepoc who used up all bandages and alcohol for medical first-aid.

"Mattalast-san. How's outside?"

“They’ve all evacuated. I’ve left them to the trainees. Rather than that, what about here?”

“Ireia-san saved Minth-san. Only Noloty and the Director are left inside.”

“The Director?”

Mattalast slightly paled.

At that moment, a man ran past them as if shot from a gun. With his transparent hair fluttering around and sparks scattering from his body, Enlike went inside the Labyrinth.

“Wait, Enlike!”

“Please wait, Enlike-san!”

He was another man who didn’t know of the evacuation.

Enlike paid no heed to the two calling him. He simply ran inside the ant-infested Labyrinth.

The ants started climbing his body. Enlike casually roasted them with lightning. The pale-blue light wrapped around his whole body. The burnt ants fell down.

He then shot a huge lightning strike forwards. The road Enlike was running

into was filled with the corpses of ants.

Of course, he wasn't safe even though he could shoot lightning. His body became covered in blisters and his transparent hair was burning.

However, he was a man used to be in fights to the death while risking himself. If he succumbed to just this, he would have already died twenty times over.

As Enlike kept running, he found the figure of a man.

“ ... ”

It was probably the man called Mokkania. At that man's feet there was a shadow – different than ants – that resembled oil. For some reason, ants couldn't penetrate that shadow. The man stood calmly in the hell-like Labyrinth.

And Noloty was also there. She was limply carried over the man's shoulder. Both of her feet were bloody lumps after having been eaten by ants.

“So you're the guy called Enlike.”

The man said.

“You're the one called Mokkania?”

Enlike asked while using his lightning to repel ants.

“No. I’m Locolo. A proud warrior of the Indulging God Cult.”

The man – Locolo – identified himself without being asked. Enlike inquired further while examining the other’s behavior.

“Release that girl. I’m your target, aren’t I?”

“My target?”

Locolo smiled mockingly.

“Didn’t you come here to protect the secrets of the Indulging God Cult by killing me?”

“What are you talking about?”

Enlike once again repelled ants with his lightning. Even against Enlike, who was in pain, Locolo stood calmly without being attacked by ants. The black shadow underneath him was probably like some sort of barrier that protected him.

“Don’t be so conceited, you mere Meat. We have no value in erasing you.”



Once again Locolo smiled in mockery.

“You have no value anymore. Neither to the Cult nor to the Armed Librarians.”

Enlike turned to attack. He fired an attack as to mow through the ants without hitting Noloty and rushed ahead. Then, Locolo threw the girl’s body away. Enlike stopped his lightning strike. Just before she fell on the ant-filled floor, Enlike caught her with one arm.

Enlike put himself on guard against an oncoming attack, but Locolo ran away deeper into the Labyrinth.

“...Uhh...”

Noloty moaned in his arm. She had severe bleeding. Enlike wanted to chase after Locolo, but she wasn’t in any state to walk.

“It hurts just a bit, Noloty. Bear with it.”

Enlike whispered to Noloty while holding her and retreated.

The ants’ amount increased every second. The entire Fifth Labyrinth would probably soon be full of ants to the brim.

Enlike returned while carrying Noloty. Mirepoc immediately received her and started treatment. Her wounds were deep. Her feet were eaten beyond her shoes and her bones became exposed.

“...Can she be healed?”

Enlike asked Mirepoc.

“This isn’t a wound that can’t be treated in the Library. However, restoring her will take some time.”

Enlike appeared slightly relieved. Mirepoc also felt the same.

“So that’s everyone except the Director. Mirepoc-san, is she still alive?”

Ireia said.

“Her warning light is still on, so she is. But I don’t know if she’s safe. Are you going to save her?”

Ireia shook her head.

“The Director must have gone way deep. It will be difficult sending help to her. There is a high chance that it will cause double the victims.”

Mattalast spoke to Mirepoc who was obviously anxious.

“The Director’ll be fine. She’s not the kind of person to die so easily.”

“...Right.”

Ireia spoke as she grew closer to them.

“There’s something more important than the Director right now. Why did Mokkania betray us?”

Not a single person there had an answer.

No-one there could understand his goals and motivation.

Around the same time...

Just as Mattalast proclaimed, Hamyuts was still alive. Near the exit of the Fifth Labyrinth, at a place where no ants came to yet, she extended her Sensory Threads.

First, she explored the inside of the Labyrinth. She searched for routes that had insufficient ant forces in them. However, she couldn’t find any. Clearly, Mokkania formed his lineup in order to target Hamyuts. The attacks on other Armed Librarians were probably only made so he could isolate her. She determined it impossible to retreat.

“Hmm... that’s pretty bad.”

Hamyuts mumbled. Inside the Labyrinth, she couldn’t use long-range attack which was her greatest weapon. The Labyrinth itself became like an invincible barrier that protected Mokkania. At the same time it disabled

Hamyuts's defense of attacking from afar. She was at her strongest when she could fight without any of the opponent's attacks reaching her.

He took away her range. This meant that Mokkania overcame the very first obstacle of trying to kill Hamyuts without any hitch. She didn't know if this was by chance or planned, but it was far smarter than what Cigal tried before.

"...Huhuhu."

Hamyuts laughed.

"Great, Mokkania. You're great. You might be able to kill me."

Hamyuts sent further Sensory Threads to explore the entire Labyrinth.

There were three other people inside the Labyrinth in addition to her.

One was Mokkania. Next to him was a woman walking with a cane. She was a bespectacled beauty.

"Oh my, is she blind?"

Hamyuts said to herself. The two of them were slowly walking through route 51. She checked around them using her Sensory Threads.

"Be careful in your step."

Mokkania said.

"Yes. I'm fine, Mokkania."

"Good. Tell me when you're tired of walking."

"I'm fine. You're such a worrywart."

The woman faintly smiled.

"What're you doing, you're finally trying to kill me but then you're messing around with a woman instead?"

Hamyuts muttered as she listened on the pair's intimate conversation.

Another person was walking at a place far from route 51. He was man dressed like an adventurer. She heard him introduce himself as Locolo

earlier with her Sensory Threads. For some reason, he wasn't attacked by any ants.

"...You will probably hear me soon, Hamyuts Meseta."

Locolo said.

"I'm listening."

Hamyuts answered, although Locolo couldn't hear her.

"I have a proposal. If you will give me the Book of Haiza Meeken, I'll spare your life."

"Oh my, that's quite the suggestion."

Hamyuts said to herself.

"Well, I know you're not a person who will do so obediently."

Locolo said and began laughing.

"If you understand me, you don't have to say anything."

Hamyuts said and looked at the Book inside her luggage. She was carrying that Book towards the Third Labyrinth.

The Book's owner was Haiza Meeken. He once fought Hamyuts and was defeated. The Book was long missing, but it was found the other day on the island used by the Indulging God Cult. Enlike told them that it was used to document Hamyuts's battle prowess. She didn't think it was such an important Book that would require them to start this large scale attack.

However, the matter with Haiza's Book will have to come later. Taking care of Mokkaania was more important right now.

"Wasn't Mokkaania probably betraying us for a long time?"

Mirepoc said. Ireia shook her head.

"That can't be. Minth would have noticed it."

Mirepoc thought about Minth who was already carried to the surface for medical treatment.

With his ability that allowed him to see people's souls, he could tell at a glance if a man thought of betrayal. Minth visited Mokkania's place a few hours ago. There was no trace of any betrayal at the time.

"So it means he probably found some reason to revolt."

Said Mattalast.

"Something like a hostage?"

Enlike inquired. However, Mirepoc shook her head.

"Enlike-san. We Armed Librarians don't succumb to anything like hostages. If such a situation occurs, we will kill the hostages. It has always been that way."

"Mokkania isn't necessarily like that."

"In the case that there is a person that we must not let die no matter what, we always file in a report first and then act. If one doesn't do that, it is the same as declaring they gave up on the people in question if they were to become hostages."

"How heartless."

"Yes."

Mirepoc bluntly said and Enlike fell silent. Ireia and Mattalast didn't say anything. They probably didn't know what to say.

"I have one hypothesis."

Mirepoc decided to try suggesting a thing she had been thinking about from awhile back.

"I think that, most likely, Mokkania's mother is involved in his betrayal."

"...His mother?"

"I once heard about it from Minth-san. Mokkania's soul is very similar to that of a child. He said it especially resembled the soul of a child clinging to his mother."

"And?"

“I don’t know how much presence does Mokkania’s mother have in his life, but if she were to join the Indulging God Cult and then order him to switch sides...”

## Part 2

Hamyuts sent many more Sensory Threads to monitor Mokkania. The conversation of the two people came directly to her ears.

The reason Mokkania betrayed them had to do with that woman without any doubt. However, who was she? Hamyuts concentrated on listening to them.

“Almost all of our enemies are gone. There is only one person left.”

“...Is that so.”

Mokkania kept walking while holding the woman’s hand.

“You’re strong, Mokkania.”

“Yeah. I’m probably the world’s strongest.”

“...Right.”

The voice of the woman who responded to Mokkania’s words sounded strangely sad.

“What’s wrong?”

“What kind of person is our current enemy?”

“She’s a woman called Hamyuts Meseta. A terrible villain.”

“Hamyuts...”

“Don’t worry. I’ll definitely beat her.”

Mokkania seemed to be guiding the woman. So it didn’t look like the woman gave him any orders.

“What’s wrong? From a while ago you have a bad complexion. Are you feeling bad?”

“No.”

“So are you cold?”

The woman strongly grabbed Mokkania’s hand. They both stopped.

“I’m scared, Mokkania. I don’t know this Hamyuts person, but... she sounds scary.”

“It’s all right. I’m the strongest in the world. And this isn’t bragging.”

“...No, that’s not it.”

The woman snuggled up to Mokkania.

“Mokkania. As you are my son, it’s scary to think of you fighting another person to the death.”

Hamyuts, who was listening to their conversation, failed to grasp the meaning of her words at that instant.

“No matter how strong you are, I don’t want you to fight. You’re my only son after all.”

Son? What is this woman saying. She’s talking as if she’s Mokkania’s mother.

“However, mom, if I won’t fight, I will get killed.”

He called her ‘mom’. No matter how you look at it, he called a woman around the same age his mom. I don’t understand this.

“I know how you feel. I’m also scared about putting you at risk.”

“I’m sorry, Mokkania. I understand this. I do, but...”

The woman that he called his mom stopped her words there.

“Let’s go, mom.”

His so-called mom nodded. And they kept walking.

Hamyuts couldn't understand anything. Why would he call a woman not much above twenty years old his mother?

"...What is that supposed to mean..."

After thinking for a short while, Hamyuts headed to the telegraph room.

"Maybe the old lady and the rest will know."

"That's an interesting idea, Mirepoc."

Mattalast said.

"However, it's wrong."

"Why?!"

Mirepoc asked back.

At that time, mechanical sounds were heard from the direction of the control room. This meant the telegraph machine received contact. Without replying to Mirepoc, Mattalast went there.

He quickly came back holding a single stamp.

“It’s from the Director.”

“What?”

Mattalast showed the stamp to Mirepoc and the rest.

“Mokkania is accompanied by a woman he refers to as his mother

She’s probably the reason for his betrayal

Hamyuts”

Looking at it, Mirepoc nodded approvingly.

“As I thought, his mother made him betray us.”

However, Mattalast shook his head.

“No, that’s wrong, Mirepoc.”

“Why?”

Mattalast rolled up the stamp and threw it to Mirepoc.

“If the one next to Mokkania was his mother, she wouldn’t have written ‘refers to as his mother’.”

“ ... ”

Mattalast sighed and kept talking.

“Mokkania mother actually died. It was nearly two decades ago.”

Mirepoc lost her words.

“So who is that woman?”

This time, it was Mattalast to lose his words.

“If we knew it wouldn't be this hard.”

They both sighed. Why did Mokkania betray them? The discussion couldn't even move past this first step.

They couldn't just stand around and do nothing. However, they had no idea what to do.

At that time, a normal librarian came walking down the spiral staircase. He supported Noloty with his arms.

“...Mirepoc-san.”

Noloty frowned in pain.

“What is it?”

“She woke up a little while ago. She seems to have something she must talk with you about.”

The normal librarian answered instead of Noloty.

“Sorry, it’s my fault.”

Noloty said while frowning. Pain and regret oozed out of her voice.

“What do you mean?”

“I was the one to let them in.”

“What do you mean let them in?”

“I had brought the Indulging God Cult to meet Mokkania-san.”

Mirepoc’s face changed colors.

Noloty started explaining – she talked about those two in the waiting room, about their looks and physiques, and how she guided them to the Labyrinth.

“...Those two were enemies. If I knew that, I wouldn't-”

“Wait a minute, Noloty-san.”

Ireia stopped her.

“Why did you let those two inside?”

“Huh? I just explained it now... the adventurer wanted to explore the Labyrinth.”

“Did you break the rules just for that?”

“...What rules?”

Mirepoc tilted her head in confusion.

Everyone was thinking that the story didn't seem right. At that moment, Enlike who was silent thus far opened his mouth.

“Noloty. Aren't normal people forbidden from entering the Fifth Labyrinth?”

“Huh?”

“Even I know that.”

“What are you saying? There’s no such rule.”

Everyone stared at Noloty, stunned.

“...Argax.”

Ireia muttered.

“It’s because of the Fiction Obliterating Cup Argax. Noloty’s memories were erased!”

This time, Noloty paled.

Fiction Obliterating Cup Argax – one of the seven remaining Memorial Weapons in this world.

It was a silver cup slightly larger than one’s palm. At times it was shaped like a monkey’s head, at other times like a bean pod, at times like a twelve-sided die; it had dozens of different forms.

Its power was erasing people’s memories. You pour water inside, whisper the memories you want to forget inside the goblet, and then drink.

This was used in Bantorra Library when someone accidentally reads a prohibited Book or to seal a criminal’s memories. It was managed inside the Third Sealed Archive and shouldn’t have had any chance to be brought out.

“We heard a while ago that even the Indulging God Cult have gotten an Argax. For example, Enlike-san’s and all the other Meats’ memories were probably taken away by one.

Until now there was no conclusive evidence, but it seems we have some now.”

Ireia stared at Noloty. Enlike patted her back as if to comfort her.

“But now I understand the enemy’s plan.”

Ireia said.

“What do you mean?”

“They first tricked Noloty and infiltrated the Labyrinth. And then, I don’t know how, but they made Mokkania drink the water of Argax.

They erased two of Mokkania’s memories – his mother’s appearance as well as the fact that she died.

Then, after making him meet an impostor that was prepared in advance, they became freely able to control Mokkania. The Indulging God Cult has achieved quite the elaborate plan.”

Ireia talked to Noloty.

“You don’t have to feel responsible. Having allowed intruders is everyone’s responsibility. You also couldn’t do anything against a Memorial Weapon.”

Ireia next looked at Mirepoc.

“This was quite the anticlimactic strategy. Right, Mirepoc-san?”

“Yes.”

“Once we let him know his mother is a fake it will end.”

Mirepoc nodded. She closed her eyes and sent her thoughts to Mokkaia. She told him of Ireia’s reasoning.

“But...”

Noloty muttered.

“Isn’t that woman too young to be posing as his mother...?”

At the same time, a single man was going through the Labyrinth. The Guardian Beasts he had eliminated already became ant-food.

His name was Locolo Bobuts. He was a warrior under the command of the Indulging God Cult. He was the man who tricked Noloty, went inside the Labyrinth and delivered Mokkaia’s mother to him.

The ants, which were supposed to eat every living being, didn't prey upon him for some reason. There was a pool of black oil three meters around him. It was petroleum. Each time Locolo moved his feet, the petroleum also moved on the floor accordingly.

Once they were past the middle of the Fifth Archive, there were barely any more ants. As Locolo noticed that, he raised a voice towards the floor.

"Hey, Winkeny. Isn't it time we separate?"

"That's right."

The petroleum at his feet talked. Just as it said, the petroleum left Locolo's feet.

Then, it started rising up and swelling next to the man.

"Locolo. I'll only escort you this far."

The swelling petroleum began changing color and shape. Its upper part became skin-colored and the lower part a dull shade of khaki.

The pool of petroleum disappeared and instead there was a man there. He was wearing plain khaki clothes and had no hair on his head. He took a pair of glasses from inside his pockets.

His name was Winkeny Bize.

“You’ll have to protect yourself from now. Defeat the Guardian Beasts by yourself. Just be careful not to get chased by ants.”

“I understand, Winkeney.”

Locolo answered.

The two of them were warriors devoted to the Indulging God Cult. They received the Cult’s teachings ever since their childhood, and polished their Magic and power so they could become of use to it. They didn’t serve under any True Man such as Cigal or Ganbanzel. They were simply warriors who reported to the Cult’s leaders and acted under their own wills and judgment for the Cult’s sake.

The fact that Locolo hadn’t been attacked by ants so far wasn’t by his own power. It was the ability of Winkeney that protected him until now.

Winkeney’s Magic allowed him turning his body to petroleum. The ants couldn’t eat anything that wasn’t alive. By changing his body to petroleum, Winkeney managed to disable the ants’ attacks.

“But will it really go well, Winkeney?”

Locolo said. Winkeney’s expression seemed to indicate that it was natural.

“Of course. My plan has no holes in it.”

“When I first heard of it, it seemed to have plenty of holes, though.”

Locolo laughed. The one to plan everything was Winkeny. Mokkania's mother, Argax, tricking Noloty – all of those have been prepared by Winkeny.

Winkeny pushed up his glasses with an unhappy face.

“I'll say this again, but my plan has no holes. You are to simply do as I say.”

He affirmed. Locolo shrugged as if saying 'yeah, yeah'.

Even among the warrior of the Indulging God Cult, Winkeny was eccentric. His ability had been acquired only so it could counter Mokkania.

His offensive capabilities were near zero. If he were to fight directly, he couldn't beat even Noloty. He would become a trump card only when facing against Mokkania.

“But that guy's weird. He's still a momma's boy even at his age.”

“Thinking about this is pointless. The only thing that matters is his value for our mission's success.”

“But I still have one concern. Or rather, there are a lot of concerns, but that is the most important one.”

“What?”

“Isn’t it bad we haven’t gotten rid of that Mirepoc Finedell?”

Winkeney fixed the position of his glasses.

“It’s unnecessary.”

“Is it really?”

“There’s nothing I don’t understand about Mokkania Fleur. That includes everything until now and even how that guy will act from now on.”

“I’m not so sure.”

“Your worries will not help the plan in any way.”

“Yeah yeah.”

Locolo said and started walking.

After seeing Locolo off, Winkeney started walking in the opposite direction.

“Everything is going according to plan.”

Winkeney muttered while walking.

It was about time the Armed Librarians would notice the existence of Argax

and Mokkania's mother. Since Hamyuts and Noloty were alive, they would immediately find this out.

The Armed Librarians probably thought that Mokkania's memories were taken by Argax and made him forget his mother's appearance and death. Thus, by preparing an impostor, he could be controlled. That would probably be the extent of their reasoning.

But it was truly worthless. He didn't even kill Mirepoc despite the danger. The Armed Librarians would never be able to guess even one part of his plan.

"...Huhu."

The back of his throat slightly trembled.

Winkeny dug inside his breast pocket and took out a chess pawn. It was a terribly worn black queen. He stared at it for a while, and put it back inside his pocket.

"But still, he really betrayed us just because his mother told him to..."

Ireia said. Her clenched fist slightly shook with anger.

"It means there are many kinds of people in the world, Ireia-san."

"That's not the issue here."

Ireia chided at Mattalast's jest.

"Anyway, Mirepoc-san."

"Yes?"

"Did you contact him?"

Mirepoc nodded. She certainly sent her thoughts to him, and she also felt he received them. She told Mokkania that his mother was an impostor many times.

Already more than ten minutes have passed since she first contacted him. During that time, there were no changes inside the Labyrinth. If Mokkania knew about Cult's plan, he should have withdrawn his ants immediately.

Mirepoc and the rest started getting impatient. Was their reasoning wrong?

"Did he really receive it?"

"No doubt about it. I've explained about his mother countless of times."

"And what did Mokkania-san reply?"

"He can't send his thoughts back, just like the Director."

Ireia sighed. At that time, the telegraph in the control room made a mechanical sound.

Mattalast went there.

“...It’s from Mokkania.”

He had a rigid expression as he came back. This meant the end of this fight was still far away.

“Did he acknowledge that woman as an impostor?”

“...If he did it would be best, but...”

Mattalast said and showed the stamp to Ireia. The following was written inside:

“I know that my mom isn’t real. You’re annoying, so stop.”

Ireia and the rest lost their words. The situation was far more complex than what Ireia reasoned.

“Good grief, I don’t understand this at all.”

Mattalast threw up his hands.

“If Mokkania knows his mother is a fake, does that mean he follows the Cult?”

Mirepoc muttered.

“Maybe he can’t go against her even if she’s a fake?”

“That’s probably it.”

Mattalast said and put out the fire inside his pipe.

“We should probably give up on persuading him, Ireia-san.”

“Naturally.”

Ireia pronounced. Her words asserted the fact that Mokkania was their enemy.

Winkeny transformed to petroleum and slipped through the Labyrinth.

The battle will soon begin. From here on was the crucial part of his plan. Winkeny once again sorted the situation inside his head. He kept checking whether the uncertainties in his plan have been eliminated one-by-one.

He thought about Mokkania. About Hamyuts. About the other Armed Librarians. About the mother snuggling close to Mokkania. About Locolo. He was confident none of his plan was leaked.

At that instant, he recalled a small fact.

“ ... ”

Mokkania should have had a Book fragment in his room. Winkeny hadn't seen it but he wanted to check it.

The Book fragment should have been left in his room. But he might be walking with it.

If Winkeny wasn't in the form of petroleum, his face would have probably lost all color. It was a small hole, yet enough to collapse his entire plan.

He must not have that Book. If Mokkania's mother would see that Book, the whole plan will fall apart.

Slipping on the floor, Winkeny rushed towards Mokkania.

Mokkania was walking inside the Labyrinth with his mother. He held her hands as they carefully went down a flight of stairs.

“Kya!”

His mother stumbled. Her cane went tumbling down the stairs. Mokkania promptly caught her body with both arms.

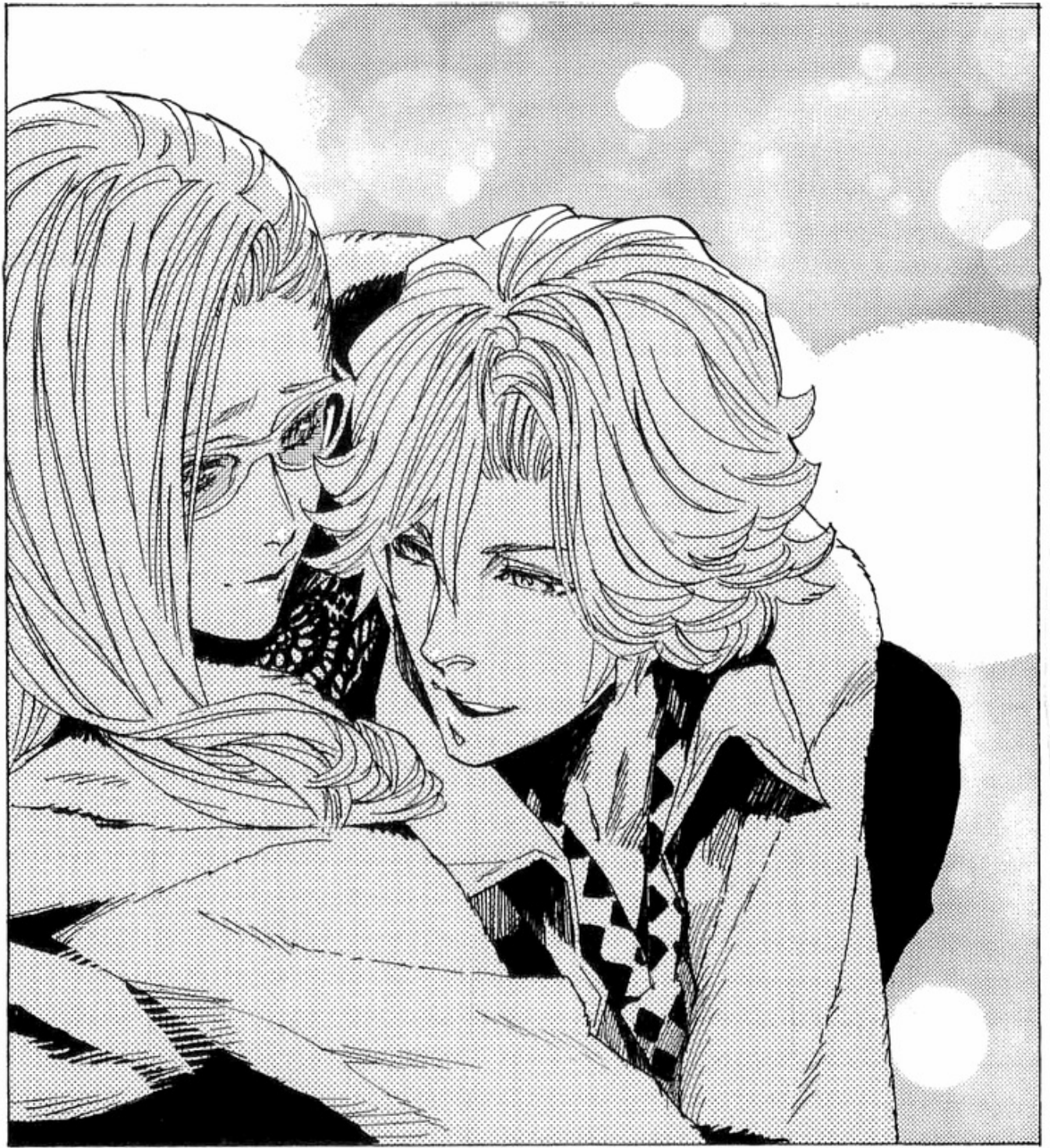
“I'm sorry, Mokkania.”

“Mom, are you fine?”

“...I’m fine.”

While being held by him, Mokkaia’s mother felt around her legs. However, her cane was at the bottom of the stairs. Mokkaia decided – he couldn’t walk with his mother like this. There were also places with worse footings ahead.

“Mom, I’ll carry you.”



Saying this, Mokkania lifted up his mother's body. Even while confused, she wrapped her hand around his neck.

"Mom, I'll start walking now. Is that fine?"

"Yes."

Feeling the weight and body temperature of his mother, Mokkania began walking. It was his first time carrying a person, so he couldn't walk very well. However, it was very enjoyable.

"...I can't believe this, Mokkania."

"Huh?"

"I'm being carried by on your back. Even though you were once so little..."

Mokkania's mother giggled while atop his back. He then replied,

"...I also can't believe this."

"Huh?"

"I can't believe that I'm able to carry you like this, mom."

Both Mokkania and his mother then made a small, joyful laugh together.

When he got off the bottom of the stairway, Mokkania bent over to pick up the cane. At that time, a small Book fragment slipped from his breast pocket and fell to the floor.

“...Did you drop something?”

His mother said.

“It’s just your imagination.”

Mokkania answered while becoming pale. He forgot that he possessed that Book.

It was dangerous. If mom were to touch that Book fragment, everything would be over. I’m glad I noticed this in time, Mokkania thought.

“...What’s wrong, Mokkania?”

“It’s nothing.”

Saying so, Mokkania picked up the cane and gave it to his mother.

“...Let’s go, mom.”

After saying this, Mokkania started walking again.

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Mokkania thought to himself – that’s the fragment of an important Book.

He couldn’t just leave it on the floor. Mokkania used his Magic Right and produced ants. Those weren’t the carnivorous ants that filled the Labyrinth; they were smaller worker ants.

Mokkania gave his ants a command. He told them to carry off the Book to some faraway place. Outside the Labyrinth if they could. If possible, it should be a warm place.

The several hundred ants received the orders, swarmed together and began carrying the Book fragment. They started walking in the opposite direction of Mokkania. After seeing them off, he started walking again.

“That’s a relief.”

Winkeny muttered after seeing that scene.

# Chapter 3: Indecision Of The Diving Warrior

## Part 1

Mokkania's mother was on his back. He could feel her thin fingers and small hands. So as to not let them freeze, Mokkania tightly held her hands.

Suddenly, he remembered his childhood. Why did he recall that right now? While creating more and more ants, Mokkania kept walking through the Labyrinth.

“ ... ”

Right. It was ever since that day. The day when he activated his power to its fullest.

That was four years ago. He fought with the Guinbex Army at the border of the Rona Kingdom. Mokkania recalled the day when he sank 6,500 soldiers in a sea of blood.

His first order was to monitor the ceasefire. Responding to a request by the Modern Management Agency, the entire main force of the Armed Librarians confronted the invaders from Guinbex. Both nations' leaders tried to arrange the end of hostilities together with the Modern Management Agency.

The mission that was initially supposed to end in one month extended to two months, and then to three months, and then indefinitely. Both countries claimed to be parallel, leading to a fall in authority of the Modern Management Agency which tried to arbitrate between them. The public opinion was swayed

against the Modern Management Agency and the Armed Librarians because of their perceived weakness and believed them to be wasting their time.

When the Guinbex Army ignored orders more than ten times, Mokkaia received new instructions.

The strategy had been changed from simply monitoring the ceasefire to a massacre.

Avoiding bombardment from the air and escaping the advancing tank corps, Mokkaia released his ants. The power of his ants which were born and released exceeded even their creator's expectations.

Soldiers were eaten alive. Mokkaia kept killing them – those soldiers who waited for the day they would return to their hometown and reunite with their families.

“ ... ”

The base became dreadfully silent. Clothes-wearing skeletons were scattered all around it. Not even an ounce of their meat was left uneaten.

“ ... ”

There were traces of rooms having been sealed in order to defend against the ants. There were traces of people having tried to run away by vehicle.

The base was swarmed by skeletons, and there were clusters of small bones.

A violin, a trumpet, a drum and a small conductor's baton were lying around. On a musical score that fell to the ground the following had been written:

“The Boys’ and Girls’ Consolation Music Corps”

Mokkania started vomiting. The entire contents of his stomach were quickly gone. With his face covered in his own vomit, he kept spitting air and gastric juices.

Hamyuts Meseta greeted Mokkania as he returned to Bantorra Library. Mokkania believed he was going to be punished. He tried imagining what sort of penalty he will incur.

However, Hamyuts Meseta said only two words.

“Great work.”

She said this with a wide smile.

She didn't voice any condemnation of the Armed Librarian's actions according to the public opinion. Her decisive judgment, that didn't allow the oppression by the Guinbex Army, was highly evaluated.

Thus, Mokkania's slaughter had been hidden in the shadows of these circumstances.

Ireia said to Mokkania,

“Mokkania-san, you are not at fault. If you hadn’t defeated them, they would have hurt many more people.”

Wrong. That wasn’t true.

“Mokkania-san. You should certainly feel responsible for having lost restraint. The fact that even you couldn’t control yourself when you went all-out is certainly your fault.

However, you are not a God. If you feel responsible, then try becoming stronger; try making your power more precise. Then, aim to defeat enemies without having unnecessary victims.”

Wrong. That wasn’t true.

“Mokkania?”

Mokkania returned to himself after hearing that voice. He then noticed that he was standing in place. He was lost in thought for some time. His mother on his back looked at him worryingly and sent a cold hand to his cheek.

“What’s wrong, Mokkania? You stopped suddenly...”

Mokkania gripped the hand that touched his cheek.

“Sorry, Mom. I did some thinking. You don’t need to worry. I’m fine.”

Lifting the body of his mother that slightly slipped down, Mokkania started walking again.

“Mokkania, are you scared? Of fighting Hamyuts Meseta, I mean.”

“Huh?”

“As your mother I don’t want you to try anything unreasonable. If you’re scared and think you can’t win, then don’t do it. Fight along with your friends. You don’t have to fight by yourself.”

“What’re you talking about, mom? I really was just thinking about things.”

“...Mokkania.”

Mokkania’s mother touched his neck.

“Are you really not scared?”

“...Mom.”

“I’m scared. Scared enough to shiver. I don’t even want to think how you are feeling.”

Mokkania listened to his mother’s words while recalling Hamyuts’s face. He would lie if he said he wasn’t afraid. But what surged inside him wasn’t only fear.

“Fighting is scary. It always was. Even as I am today.”

“...”

“But I’m not afraid right now. I can fight for you, Mom. So I’m not scared.”

Mokkania’s mother stroked his neck.

“Why did you become an Armed Librarian even though you were such a coward?”

“I was?”

“Yeah. Whenever I would tell you a story, when the bad guys appeared you would start crying.”

“Was it like that...”

Mokkania smiled wryly. He probably really worried his mother.

“Why did you become an Armed Librarian?”

“There wasn’t any deep reason. If you wanted me to, I would quit it at any time. Armed Librarians are all pieces of shit.”

“Don’t.”

Mokkania’s mother lightly beat his back.

“You can’t use a word like ‘piece of shit’.”

“...Right. Sorry, Mom.”

But Armed Librarians really are pieces of shit. Especially Hamyuts Meseta.

Thinking this, Mokkania kept walking ahead.

At the Labyrinth’s entrance were Mirepoc, Mattalast and Enlike; only those three people.

Mattalast returned to the surface and brought a trombone case. Opening the case, there was a rifle of a large caliber inside.

“What’s that?”

Enlike asked.

“A spare weapon. My usual pistols won’t have enough firepower this time.”

Mirepoc knew that gun. It was the same one that Luimon once used. It had power comparable to a tank gun and was referred to as a “Tenor” based on its distinctive firing sound. If Mattalast had used this gun against the Monster, he

probably wouldn't have fallen behind.

“Stop that. You can't help us this time.”

Enlike said frankly.

“Your ability and Mokkania's ants have a bad affinity.”

“I'll at least provide logistic support.”

Mattalast began assembling the gun.

“Enlike-san is right. Mattalast-san, please wait behind.”

At that time, Ireia came down the spiral stairs. Following behind her was Feekiee. It seemed she went and called him down here.

“Right. You should wait quietly behind once in a while, Mattalast.”

Feekiee said. Mattalast smile wryly.

Next, Ireia spoke to Enlike.

“You should also draw back, Enlike-san.”

“I don't think our abilities have a bad affinity, though.”

Ireia shook her head to the side.

“Sorry. That’s not what I mean.”

Enlike glanced at Feekiee who stood next to her. Then, he stared at Ireia.

“Got it.”

After standing for a short while, Enlike turned around and climbed the spiral staircase. Ireia saw him off with a gloomy expression.

“So that means only Feekiee-san and you are going to fight?”

Ireia nodded.

“Challenging Mokkania-san with great numbers will only increase the number of casualties. The obvious choice is to just send a few.”

Saying this, Ireia walked towards the Labyrinth’s entrance. She raised her arm in front of the gate. She then snapped her fist.

“We’ll be going. Feekiee-san, I’m counting on you.”

Feekiee nodded. Ireia opened the door and went inside.

Ireia shook her plump body as she lumbered inside the Labyrinth. As soon as she walked in, an enemy stood in her way.

It was a Rhino. Most of the Guardian Beasts were already devoured by ants, but it was one of the only survivors. Even while its body was being eaten by ants, it bravely executed the mission given to him by the Past God.

Ireia kept walking as she had no time to stop. Rhino put out its horn and came rushing at her.

She caught its charge with one hand. The frictional heat created by her shoes on the ground raised smoke. But she didn't stop.

Her right hand squeezed the horn. Cracks ran on that stout horn.

“Huu.”

Ireia raised her left hand while snorting. She didn't make a fist. She simply slapped Rhino. She hit the base of its neck hard.

Rhino's large body flew parallel to the floor. It broke through the pale-blue quartz and was slammed inside the wall. Its head was twisted 180 degrees.

All this took less than a second. This didn't even count as a hindrance for her.

Ireia kept lumbering ahead, her body swaying as if nothing ever happened.

As she went further in, she could see ants. Initially only one or two, but then ten or twenty. Ireia went ahead and crushed those underfoot. She was also bitten by one or two. She kept walking without this even registering in her mind.

Mokkania sensed that his ants were being crushed. These aren't Guardian Beasts. Who is it? Mattalast? Or Ireia? He turned around.

"Is something the matter?"

His mother asked.

"It's nothing. Let's go."

He deployed a large amount of ants behind him. He didn't know who was coming, but it would be fine ignoring them. They would withdraw once they know it's a useless struggle.

His aim was Hamyuts Meseta. He didn't have the leisure to look behind.

At that time, the figure of a man appeared ahead. Mokkania ordered the ants ahead of him to stop their attack.

"Mokkania, Ireia Kitty is coming."

It was Winkeny of the Indulging God Cult. He was the annoying man that could avoid his attacks. Mokkania's expression darkened.

“Is that voice Winkenyan’s?”

His mother asked from his back.

“Mokkania, a pincer attack would be bad. Kill Ireia first.”

Winkenyan said while raising his glasses. Mokkania ignored it.

“There’s no problem. I have no other enemy than Hamyuts Meseta.”

“Don’t be so careless. In terms of compatibility to your ability, Ireia will be difficult.”

“You’re annoying, get away.”

“What are you saying, Mokkania?!”

His mother raised an angry voice.

“Mom...”

“Winkenyan is important to us. He got all us the way here, and yet you act like this?”

“Sorry, Mom.”

“The one you need to apologize to is Winkeny-san. I’m sorry, Winkeny-san.”

Winkeny raised the edges of his lips and smiled. Mokkania slightly lowered his head.

“However, I’ll still leave Ireia alone.”

Mokkania passed by him as he said so.

“I must settle everything before Hamyuts gets that.”

“...I see.”

Winkeny’s body melted and changed to petroleum. And then it disappeared, sliding away.

As expected I can’t rely on these Indulging God Cult guys, Mokkania thought to himself.

During that time, Hamyuts was at the telegraph room at the back of the Fifth Sealed Labyrinth. She sat down on the bed in silence.

In the control room connected to the telegraph room was a bed, food and water, a stove and such. This room was made in the Labyrinth for the case of emergency evacuation or a need to rest.

In order to prevent the intrusion of Guardian Beasts, the door was made thick

and sturdy. However, the ants came in one after another using small gaps.

Hamyuts flicked ant corpses with her fingers and killed the intruding insects. Mokkania probably still hasn't found out she came there. He should be thinking that Hamyuts went further ahead.

She kept exploring the Labyrinth with her Sensory Threads. She monitored the state of Mokkania, of Ireia, and of Feekiee and the rest who waited outside the Labyrinth.

Hamyuts had already heard about Ireia's strategy from Mirepoc. She was patiently waiting for that moment.

"It should be about 70-30."

Hamyuts analyzed their strategy. They had 70% chance for success and 30% chance of failure. If Mokkania were to take care of Ireia as the man called Winken suggested, the odds would become about 50-50.

"Well then, I wonder what's going to happen."

Hamyuts kept killing ants.

This was a battle. It was obvious they would do their very best in order to win. Therefore Hamyuts also cooperated with Ireia's strategy.

However, she had regrets. For this to end so easily was a waste. It was a precious opportunity, after all. A warrior who could kill her made her his target.

“I wonder if I want them to succeed or to fail.”

Hamyuts thought to herself. Her mind swayed between the temptation for victory and for defeat.

However, that contradiction also felt sweet.

At the entrance to the Labyrinth, Feekiee, Mirepoc and Mattalast have been waiting patiently. From time to time they would receive a report from Ireia. For now, everything could be said to be going fine.

“Thinking about it, what about Enlike?”

Feekiee, who leaned on the door, asked.

“He’s with Noloty right now.”

Mirepoc answered.

“I see.”

Feekiee replied, sounding uninterested.

“If you need to I’ll call him. He’s much more useful than me in the current state.”

The bored Mattalast cracked jokes.

“Stop. I’ll never ask for his help.”

“You really hate him, huh.”

Mattalast sighed, and Mirepoc joined the conversation.

“Mattalast-san. To tell you to truth, even I don’t really...”

Unlike Feekiee who could frankly speak of his dislike without concealing it, she seemed to have a bit of problem talking about this.

“You too? But he’s a good person.”

“No, that’s not it...”

Mirepoc stammered.

“I don’t hate him as a human.

However, speaking frankly, I was disappointed. He wasn’t of much use neither as an information provider nor as a decoy. I just thought he would be a bit more useful.”

“In that sense, I guess you’re right.”

If they couldn't even use him as bait for the Cult, Enlike had almost no value as a pawn. He was a strong and reliable man, but disappointing on that front.

“There's no use thinking about him right now.”

Feekee said.

“He really doesn't matter.”

He then made a small laugh.

## Part 2

The number of ants around gradually increased. Ireia stopped her march. Neither her brute strength nor her bulk held any meaning against them. They just made her a large bait.

The number of ants rapidly increased. They looked like a hungry, ferocious black wave. One end of the looming wave touched Ireia's feet.

At that instant, Ireia invoked her Magic Right.



The black wave's movements grew dull as if weighted down. Their six legs, their restless mandibles, and their antennae exploring the floor all grew equally slow.

Those were the kind of movements sometimes shown by pantomimes. They would perform by intentionally slowing down or stopping their normal movements. It was a bizarre phenomenon that turned every single ant on the floor to a pantomime.

Ireia's feet stomped the sea of ants. Her body also moved slowly as if she climbed stairs.

This was Ireia's ability – time manipulation. It allowed her to freely manage the flow of time of anything in her line of sight. She made the time flow at one-fifth its normal operation for the ants in front of her.

The ants became slow and were crushed underneath Ireia's feet.

“Tch...”

I can't use this like when I was young. Long ago I could even slow it down to a tenth. Thinking this, Ireia kept crushing the biting ants.

She had no time to put still. If she won't move immediately, she will get eaten to death.

“ ... ”

Once again, Mokkania turned around. Ireia wouldn't stop. Judging from the positions of the ants she was killing, she will probably catch up to him in about fifteen minutes.

“Is someone coming from behind?”

“ ... ”

Mokkania nodded, hesitating. He had to admit he was looking down on her. Although she was on the verge of retiring, Ireia was a first-class Armed Librarian. He should have made a move earlier.

Then, his mother atop his back spoke sadly.

“Sorry, Mokkania. It seems your mother is a burden for you.”

Mokkania was surprised.

“What are you saying, mom?”

“If I wasn't here, you could have run away faster.”

“Don't say that, mom.”

She didn't reply.

“Mokkania, go on. Don’t worry about me. I don’t want to think I was the one to cause you to die.”

“But mom!”

As if to deny his objection, Mokkania’s mother hit his head.

“...This might be a bit unfair of me to say this, but please listen to what your mother says.”

Mokkania worried. His mother was helpless. He had to protect her. However, he also had to admit that he wouldn’t be able to fully protect her.

“Please, Mokkania.”

His mother’s voice was sorrowful. Mokkania made a decision – he would protect his mother and trust his own ants.

He lowered his mother from his back.

“Mom, stay here. Don’t move no matter what. Don’t go anywhere.”

His mother nodded.

“Okay. Don’t worry, Mokkania. I won’t go anywhere.”

Mokkania hugged his mother once, and then went away.

Hamyuts was made aware of this with her Sensory Threads. At the moment Mokkania and his mother separated, she believed the success rate of the strategy went up to 80%.

Her fingers operated the telegraph.

“The rest depends on the old lady’s guts.”

Mokkania sent some winged ants flying. He couldn’t afford to come in front of Ireia’s line of sight. If he did, the progression of his time would be slowed down. Ireia held supreme dominance over everything in her sight.

He produced more ant forces. They weren’t the kind of soldier ants who could only receive rough orders. If compared to humans, they could be called Special Forces under his direct control.

Ireia also didn’t have it easy. “Time” was one of the most fundamental principles under the Creator’s control. Touching that domain put no small drain on her. Low endurance was Ireia’s biggest weakness. And as she aged, that weakness became more pronounced.

Ants were flying.

Winged ants came flying from behind the soldier ants. They were numbered several hundreds. They poured down on Ireia like rain.

Slowing down time would be of no use. Ireia took a silken net out of her breast pocket. She spread it in air and stopped time. It was weak silk that would break if pulled at, but at that moment it became an invincible barrier. No matter what force would be applied against an object whose time was stopped, it would not break.

Slipping underneath the net, Ireia ran ahead. She also evaded the rain of ants and arrived in front of a floor full of them. They weren't far off from covering the entire floor. The ants piled on top and each other, and then had even more ants on top of them.

Even if she stopped time for one section, other ants would climb over it and advance.

Swarms of ants were stacked in many layers. They were already at the height of Ireia's thighs. The ants underneath should have been crushed to death.

Ireia instinctively jumped high. She kicked the frozen silk thread, and swung it by raising her finger above. From there, the airborne forces of the winged ants attacked her. The ants clung to Ireia's body and began gnawing at her clothes and flesh.

"This...!"

Ireia screamed and activated her Magic Right at full power. The sound of something cracking came from inside her head. The ants clinging to her body suddenly lost their power and fell off.

Their cause of death was starvation. She accelerated their metabolism ahead

of their movements.

“...Th...is...”

Ireia became intensely exhausted. She could, without doubt, use this only three more times. Using the last bits of her energy, Ireia kicked at the ceiling.

Mokkania dodged the obscured Ireia by estimating the direction of her movement. He must avoid entering her line of sight at all costs.

He regretted being too impatient during this battle. However, it was already too late. Mokkania could sense it – the indescribable feeling that his time was stopped.

He mustered the last vestiges of his consciousness to command his ants – eliminate everything except for his mother.

Even if his time was stopped, his orders should keep going. He would beat Ireia that way.

However, mom...

He couldn't continue that thought. Mokkania's time was suspended.

Ireia succeeded at stopping Mokkania's time. But she could only stop it for less than a minute at best.

That was enough. The strategy was successful. Hamyuts should be watching this fight. And then she will take the proper course of action.

Ireia's body fell into the sea of ants.

At that moment, she stopped her own time.

Hoping that the battle would end in their victory when time will be resumed for her, Ireia's thinking had ceased.

Hamyuts watched the end of Mokkaia and Ireia's battle. The battle ended in a draw, but she should still give praise to her efforts.

"Old lady, that was perfect."

Hamyuts muttered. Her hands were already resting on the telegraph. She sent a telegraph informing Mirepoc of the strategy's conclusion about a minute ago.

A minute before Ireia stopped time, Mirepoc shouted from within the control room.

"A telegram from the director! The target is at point 251 of route 51! We have an extension of about four minutes!"

"As expected from the Director!"

Feekee threw off his jacket. He already shed off his shoes, pants and shirt. He

was dressed in one-piece underclothes, and only held a knife in his mouth. He jumped in air and made a somersault. Just when it seemed he would crash headfirst unto the floor, it received Feekiee's body inside as if it was made of liquid.

This was his ability. Even amongst the Armed Librarian who had a variety of powers, he could be said to possess one of the more eccentric ones.

It was named Steel Diving. It allowed him to dive either inside steel like its name or in any sort of ground, treating them as a sea.

He was an expert at infiltration, while at the same time being an expert at searching within the Labyrinth. Despite his battle prowess being on the low side among Armed Librarians, he had mastery of the Labyrinth. Feekiee began advancing in a straight line towards the mother standing in the Labyrinth's midst.

After a minute of silence, Mokkania's time resumed.

"Dammit! Mom!"

Ireia was a decoy. Mokkania felt ashamed. He should have realized they would send other people when Ireia came alone to him.

"Mom!"

Mokkania started running. His goal was his mother. Who's coming? Hamyuts? No, Feekiee.

“You’re a coward, Hamyuts! Aim for me!”

He shouted. Hamyuts should be hearing his voice with her Sensory Threads. And she was probably gloating. Mokkaia kept running with anger that threatened to pop a vein.

Feekee kept swimming in his shortcut of the complex Labyrinth. In order to focus on speed, his only equipment was a single knife.

Traversing the Labyrinth on foot would normally take half a day, but with his speed, he could reach the target specified by Hamyuts in less than five minutes.

He surfaced once to take a breath. In the instant Feekee exhaled, the dreadful ants flocked his face.

They ripped his lips to shreds. He immediately dove inside the stone again.

‘Mirepoc! What’s the situation of the target?’

Feekee asked Mirepoc as their thoughts were connected. Mirepoc, who was in the control room, told him of the situation.

‘Contact from the Director... incoming! The target made no moves!’

‘What about the time?’

'The grace period is extended! Three more minutes!'

'This will be an easy victory, Mirepoc.'

Feekiee sent his thoughts from within the sea of ground.

While swimming, he suddenly thought of Enlike Bishile.

He had great fighting capabilities, but was useless as an information provider. It wasn't what the Armed Librarians had wanted. What they needed were people who knew the truth about the Cult.

He next thought of the person who controlled Mokkania – his fake mother. She should probably know about the Cult. She wasn't just an underling like Enlike. She deceived Mokkania and manipulated him to fight – making her a central figure of this incident.

It makes no sense to kill her.

She should be captured. She could be used as a hostage against Mokkania. Afterwards, she will give them information. If she were to be captured, the fight with the Cult would come to a conclusion.

He didn't tell Mirepoc, Mattalast or the rest about this idea. Since they were too careful, they would obviously oppose him.

Just a little bit more. Feekiee brought his face out of the ceiling. He found the woman while she was guarded by ants around her. She was undoubtedly the

impostor mother.

“Don’t move.”

Feekiee started talking to her. He first had to check that she couldn’t fight.

Mokkania’s mother raised an alarmed voice. Since her eyes were impaired, she couldn’t tell who was talking to her.

“Who... are you? Where are you talking from?”

The fake mother spoke in confusion. Feekiee became convinced – she was weak. He will capture her.

He will find an opening, make her lose consciousness and dive together with her. It would be a bit heavy to swim with someone in his arms, but he should be able to reach the Labyrinth’s entrance.

Feekiee started speaking to affirm the situation.

“I am Armed Librarian Feekiee Quinn. Do not resist. I ask you to provide me information.”

The fake mother answered Feekiee’s words.

Her reply was unthinkable.

'...Huh?'

Feekiee's thoughts were transmitted to Mirepoc. He should have already arrived at his target.

'Feekiee-san! What are you doing?!'

Their strategy was for him to return immediately after killing her. However, Feekiee took no action even after arriving. He seemed to be talking. What was he trying to do?

'Mirepoc, there's something strange about her.'

Feekiee sent his thoughts. Just as she thought of replying, feelings of pain resounded in her head.

'Feekiee-san!'

Feekiee was attacked. Mirepoc screamed.

Hamyuts muttered while monitoring Feekiee with her Sensory Threads.

"Feekiee's such an idiot."

He wouldn't be able to hear her voice. She heard his death throes through her Sensory Threads.

While breathing roughly, Mokkania looked down at Feekiee's corpse. He sent his ants to his neck, targeting his carotid artery in one bite. He was distracted by something, and thus Mokkania was able to deal a fatal wound with a single blow.

"Mom!"

Mokkania clung to his mother.

"So you're safe."

He embraced his mother's body. He hugged her so tight that it seemed her body was about to break.

"...Mokkania, you're hurting me."

His mother groaned in his arms. However, he couldn't separate from her. Mokkania's tears wet his mother's ears.

"I made a mistake. I shouldn't have left you. I'm sorry, mom. I won't do it ever again."

"..."

"I thought that everything would be over when I'm back. I thought you would be gone. I thought that everything would become a dream once I come back.

I won't ever leave you again."

"Mokkania..."

Mokkania relaxed his hold and raised her on his back again.

"Let's go. We only have a little bit left, so hang on, mom."

"Wait a second, Mokkania. That person right now..."

"Forget about him, mom."

Saying this, Mokkania began walking.

Hamyuts, upon realizing the strategy had failed, left the telegraph room. She broke through the Labyrinth by moving on the walls and ceiling. Since the strategy failed, it would become a stalemate if she stayed inside there.

And then she thought back upon the conversation between Feekee and Mokkania's mother.

It was unbelievable and hard to understand even for Hamyuts who actually heard it.

"What the heck is going on?"

Hamyuts thought while running. But she couldn't understand it. Just who is

that mother? And why did Mokkania revolt?

She couldn't see through the Indulging God Cult's scheme at all.

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At that time, a small incident occurred in a corner of the Labyrinth.

Neither Winkeney, Hamyuts nor Mokkania knew of it. It was too trivial of an incident.

At the middle of route 51, ants were carrying a Book fragment. Faithful to their owner's orders, they kept bravely carrying it ahead. They wanted to take that Book fragment out of the Labyrinth.

No-one inside the Labyrinth took any heed of them. Neither the other ants, Guardian Beasts, Ireia nor Hamyuts knew of them. Without anyone noticing them, they passed by Ireia during her advance. Ireia's time manipulation affected them as well.

Because of her power, they proceeded slowly. They became so slow they nearly stopped while carrying that fragment.

# Chapter 4: Spider's Outrage

## Part 1

Mokkania reminisced. It was another old memory.

He was once seeing a woman. She took personal care of him ever since he became an Armed Librarian. He couldn't even remember her name now.

One day, he ate a meal with her. She was the one to invite him. This happened after the battle with Guinbex, when Bantorra Library was peaceful once again.

"You've been acting strange lately, so it made me wonder."

The woman said as they finished drinking their aperitif. Yes, it was from the time that Mokkania frequently skipped on work.

"This is a nice place. This island is pretty small, but it still has lots of nice places like this."

Working made him nauseous. He felt nauseous when seeing the faces of Hamyuts, Mattalast and Ireia. He even hated contacting them.

"Oh right, Acting Director Hamyuts gave me a day off. We can leave the island and go travel."

If he didn't go to work, everything should have been fine. But he still felt nauseous even now. Was the aperitif bad? Couldn't be. Still, he felt terribly nauseous.

"How about theatre-going in Fulbeck? Heard of it? Fulbeck, in Ismo. It's a street lined up with theatres and cinema, and since there're also film studios nearby, many famous actors and singers gather there."

Mokkania noticed something. He understood the too-obvious fact that everyone around him knew. This fact, which everyone took for granted, gnawed at his mind.

"You hate the theatre? Then let's go relax in some Rona summer resort. I thought about visiting your hometown.

Or should we be adventurous and go to the southern frontier?"

He could kill himself. The same goes for the woman in front of him, the waiter nearby, the cook, and everyone else. He could do it effortlessly and painlessly, just like twisting the arm of a newborn.

Mokkania began vomiting in front of her.

While groveling on the floor, he thought of many things. For example, how did he endure until now? He also thought of the many people walking in front of him... will one of them be able to kill him?

A while after this, Mokkania couldn't go outside.

His ants were scraping the walls. They dug through soil and shaped it. This happened inside the dead-end of the Fifth Labyrinth. Mokkania built his own base there. He attached the door to the cave opened in the wall. As he installed the hinges, he heard a voice from behind.

“...Mokkania-san.”

It was Ireia.

“Are you really going to live here? Why?”

“Go back. Don’t mind me.”

“I can’t do that. What will the Acting Director say?”

Hamyuts appeared from behind her.

“Let’s leave him alone, old lady.”

“What are you saying as the Director of Bantorra Library?”

“I’m staying silent as always. If he has any complaints he’ll let me know.”

Hamyuts beckoned Ireia. She turned around and moved away from Mokkania.

“See ya, Mokkaia. Try not to catch a cold.”

Books that people wanted to read were brought out from the Archive, while Books that came from the mines or Books that people finished reading were carried inside. Days like these passed in the exact same way inside the cold Labyrinth.

However, as long as Mokkaia stayed inside, he didn't feel nauseous.

The coldness was nothing compared to the fear induced by that nausea.

He received Books from the normal librarians at the Library's entrance and went back to his room.

“I'm back.”

Mokkaia muttered as he returned to his room.

“I'm back.”

He muttered once more. There was obviously no answer.

Mokkaia kept living by himself inside that cold room.

He decided on asking people to buy things for him. He bought dirt-cheap paintings of landscape and small toys; he collected a variety of things.

The room was a copy of the one Mokkania used to live in long ago. He collected the exact items that were in in that long-gone room. He never got anything he didn't have before. He didn't want even things like a heater only because he didn't use to have it.

Mokkania collected many things in his room.

However, there was one thing he lacked. A single important thing he couldn't get no matter what.

"I'm back."

Mokkania returned to his room even today. He had plenty of important memorabilia. But those didn't provide any stability to his mind.

He could only notice the absence – the overwhelming absence of the most important person to him.

"I'm back."

Mokkania said. No reply came back.

"I'm back."

He said once again. No reply came back.

Only the small Book fragment on top of the table coldly greeted Mokkania.

Mirepoc and Mattalast were left in front of the Labyrinth. Mirepoc held her head.

“Feekiee-san... why...”

She shook her head.

They only had one conclusive chance of victory. They already had no other means. Even if they were to gather up all their remaining forces and commence an attack on Mokkania, they doubted it would have any effect. It would only unnecessarily increase the damage.

They could only entrust it all for Hamyuts.

“Hey, Mirepoc.”

At that moment, Mattalast suddenly opened his mouth.

“Since we can’t do anything here, why don’t you contact the Present Management Agency?”

“Huh?”

Mirepoc was confused at this out-of-place order. What good will the Present Management Agency do in this situation?

“Why?”

“I just need a permission. From both the Past Overseer and the Present Overseer.”

“Mattalast-san...”

Mirepoc tried to ask him what kind of permission he’s asking for.

“We’re going to seal the Book Labyrinth.”

“...Is such a thing possible?”

“It is. Look.”

Saying so, Mattalast put his hand on the Labyrinth’s door. And through the door, he called to Past God Bantorra who was sealed in the depths of the Labyrinth.

“To the Past God Bantorra. Mattalast Ballory, with the authority of a first-class Armed Librarian, requests for the sealing of the large gate as well as the 89 barriers inside the Fifth Level. I implore to receive permission and immediate execution of this.”

The door shone for a moment. They received permission from the Past God. At the same time, its shape changed. The hinges and door knob disappeared, and it all became just a part of the wall.

“So such a thing is truly possible...”

“Originally this is a breach of my authority, but I’ll just get ex-post-facto approval afterwards.”

“But why? The battle isn’t over yet...”

“...About that.”

Mattalast’s voice wasn’t aloof like usual.

“...We will starve everyone inside to death.”

“But...!”

“If the Director loses this is our only chance.”

“But the Director will win!”

Mirepoc said, but Mattalast shook his head to the side.

“It might not be so this time.”

“Oh my, they sealed the Labyrinth.”

Hamyuts muttered as she used her full speed to run through the Fourth

Labyrinth.

“Well, that’s fine. It seems like something Matt would do.”

Hamyuts, who had already set foot inside the Fourth Level, proceeded further in while killing the remaining Guardian Beasts. The ants didn’t reach there yet.

The situation was bad indeed. Currently Hamyuts had no way to win against Mokkania. If she wouldn’t be able to get that weapon, her defeat will be certain.

Mokkania slowly progressed. He was walking much slower than Hamyuts. Hamyuts already went deep inside the Fourth Labyrinth, but Mokkania just now passed through the Fifth Level.

Hamyuts ran ahead without stop. But that didn’t mean Mokkania was in a better position.

Run away from enemies, hide yourself, wait for a chance of victory – this was Hamyuts’s strategy for a certain victory. Mokkania could be said to be inferior to her from the moment he let her escape.

Mokkania was thinking to himself – the thing that made Hamyuts the strongest wasn’t the power of her sling or the information-gathering capabilities of her Sensory Threads, but that shameless strategy.

In fact, Cigal Crukessa of the Indulging God Cult whom Hamyuts once beat was the only person able to prevent her from running away.

While fearing for his mother that swayed on his back, Mokkania kept walking inside the Fourth Labyrinth.

I won't let her escape. I'll definitely defeat her before she gets that weapon.

Winkeny gloated in his heart while sliding about in his petroleum form.

He was helped by the enemy making some blunders, but overall the plan kept going just as he thought it would.

Both the eliminated Armed Librarian as well as the Book which was a cause for concern were already taken far away. All of it was expected. Mokkania, Hamyuts, the rest of the Armed Librarians and even the Guardian Beasts all acted according to what Winkeny thought.

Except for Mokkania's mother, Winkeny was without any doubt the weakest person in the Labyrinth. Him not being affected by Mokkania attacks didn't mean he could beat him. He couldn't defeat neither Hamyuts nor the foolish Noloty – no, he couldn't even beat a single Guardian Beast.

Yet everyone in the Labyrinth moved the way he pleased. Was there anything more delightful than that in the world?

The incident was comparable to chess. Hamyuts was the white queen. Mokkania was the black queen. The rest of the Armed Librarians were the white bishops, knights and pawns. Locolo was a black pawn. Finally, Winkeny himself wasn't a chess piece. He was the guiding hand playing the match.

But even so, he couldn't control everything on the board. There were game pieces that didn't necessarily listen to their instructions; Feekiee was such an example.

Winkeny thought of Locolo – will his pawn really listen to the player's instructions?

“Please, Locolo. Keep it up until Hamyuts's last breath, just a little bit.”

Locolo fell to his knees. His body was wounded here and there and he barely had any bullets left in his gun. In front of his eyes were the corpses of Guardian Beasts.

“Goddamn. Winkeny gave me quite the bothersome job.”

He was at the Fourth Level. Further down were three more levels with even stronger Guardian Beasts within them. No, because it seems that no human can enter the First Level, were they actually only two more? It was still tough nonetheless. Armed Librarians really were all monsters.

“...Just a little bit more.”

He wondered if their scheme went as planned. If he wasn't successful in keeping Hamyuts at bay, he would have been chased by her without any doubt.

Locolo tried cheering up himself. Just a bit more. When he would get his hands on that weapon, he wouldn't have to fear the Guardian Beasts, and he should be even able to beat Hamyuts Meseta.

If he would defeat her, he could ascend. He would definitely ascend – ascend to Heaven.

He would become a Book and then, together with the great True Men, ascend to the place the Supreme God brought forth – to Heaven.

Locolo Bobuts was a warrior from the Indulging God Cult. This plan was an unexpected chance for him.

Even among the Indulging God Cult, his battle prowess wasn't that high. If he were to fight an Armed Librarian up front he wouldn't be able to win. As a warrior, he was below third-rate.

One day, Winkeny contacted him all of a sudden. He said he had to have another warrior who would cooperate with his plan.

Locolo had always looked down on Winkeny. He could only turn his body to Petroleum. He didn't have any means of attack. He would burn out if a single matchstick was thrown at him. He was the weakest in the Indulging God Cult.

However, he had some chance of success. Winkeny said that he could manipulate Mokkaia.

“How will you do that?”

Winkeny answered,

“I can’t discuss the entirety of my plan. In general, I plan on creating an impostor of Mokkania’s mother and control him like that.”

“Will that really work?”

“If you act according to my plan, it is possible.”

Locolo was hesitant. However, if he would simply follow orders from those above, ascending to Heaven would be difficult. He thought that going for a full reversal wouldn’t be so bad.

Winkeney did not reveal his plan to Locolo. He just sent him instructions. He snuck inside Bantorra Library dressed as an adventurer and kept in touch with Noloty as he was told to.

And he was then ordered to take a single woman along with him and bring her to meet with Mokkania.

“This is Mokkania’s mother, Renas Fleur. Until you reach Mokkania’s place, protect her from the Guardian Beasts.”

“...Is that the impostor? Isn’t she too young?”

“It’s fine. His real mother died while young. The mother in Mokkania’s heart should still be of that age.”

The large man wondered if that woman would betray them to the Armed Librarians. However, he couldn’t draw things any longer. While still anxious, he

infiltrated the Labyrinth.

“Escorting her this far is fine. Wait right here.”

Saying so, Winkeny took Renas along with him. Locolo didn't know what sort of conversation occurred between them and Mokkania. As he didn't speak to Renas he also didn't know what she was thinking.

Soon after, Mokkania's revolt began.

“Unbelievable. He really betrayed them.”

“It was obvious.”

Winkeny said calmly. Locolo burst with laughter.

“Unbelievable. A grown man still obeys his mother. And she's not even his real one. Tell me, what kind of magic have you used?”

“Let's head to the back. Your job starts from here.”

Without answering his question, Winkeny urged Locolo to continue ahead.

Locolo was thinking – at the end of the day they probably seduced him. He had no idea what kind of guy Mokkania was, but there's no reason that he wouldn't be swayed by such a beautiful woman. Making her introduce herself as his mother was the most effective against a momma's boy like him.

But perhaps Winkeny was the one being seduced by Renas to betray the Indulging God Cult? That Renas woman and Winkeny... well, it would be quite the accomplishment.

Locolo rose up. I have to do my job. Only then I can defeat Hamyuts Meseta and go to Heaven.

Locolo was fleeing from the herd of Guardian Beasts coming from behind. Passing through the entrance to the Fourth Labyrinth, he reached the Fourth Archive. It was meant to store Books on the level of state secrets.

Just before they caught up to him, Locolo passed the gate. Guardian Beasts couldn't fight inside the Archives. They were barking regretfully as they watched Locolo escape their clutches.

“Serves you right...”

Locolo sighed and closed the door of the Archive.

The Books housed inside were of a level that a single copy of them would grab a fortune, such as those of people who breached the mysteries of Magic; all of them were precious Books. However, without any of them interesting Locolo, he kept looking for his objective.

It should be in this Archive. It was one of the world's treasures that was taken away from the Indulging God Cult.

He thought it would be hidden somewhere, but surprisingly it was carelessly placed on top one of the bookshelves. Locolo touched it.

It was a realistic stone statue made in the form of a spider. Putting it on the back of his hand, the eight legs opened up and bit into Locolo. A blade as thin as yarn extended from the spider's rear.

The Ever-Laughing Magic Blade Shlamuffen began laughing in Locolo's hand.

This was the most important job handed to him by Winkeny.

He was to not let Hamyuts get her hands on the Ever-Laughing Magic Blade Shlamuffen. It was a weapon essential for her to oppose Mokkania. Winkeny's side would win if they could get it.

Locolo started smiling. The laughter of both Shlamuffen and his overlapped. He was convinced in his victory.

## Part 2

“I’ve waited for you, Hamyuts Meseta.”

Hamyuts stopped running in the middle of the Fourth Labyrinth. The corpses of Guardian Beasts were strewn around. Locolo trembled at his weapon’s incredible power. Rather than describing it as slashing without passing through, it was an attack that erased the cause-and-effect of “having been slashed”. It didn’t literally slash anything.

Hamyuts stared at Locolo while gently swinging around her sling with a stone already set within. Her expression wasn’t fitting for a battle that already began. It was the face of amazement, of surprise, of one who found her lost ring in some crazy unexpected place.

As Locolo thought the color of her face would change and she would flee from the blade that once defeated her, he flinched.

“Hey, I have a question.”

“What is it?”

Locolo answered as he tried maintaining his superiority.

“Did the person who made this plan tell you to fight me?”

“ ... ”

“He didn’t, right?”

Locolo was startled. She was absolutely correct.

Hamyuts was to be killed by Mokkania – thus Winkeny said. He had reminded Locolo that he was to just grab Shlamuffen and run away.

Locolo had told him there was no need to escape.

“Then the plan will be ruined.”

Winkeny had replied to him.

“As I thought you’ve been told to run away. By that, umm, bald oil called Winkeny. He told you to take that and run away for your victory, right?”

“ ... ”

Don’t be overwhelmed. The situation hadn’t changed. You will kill Hamyuts here and ascend to Heaven.

“Defile, Shlamuffen.”

Innumerable cracks started forming on the stones around them.

“Well, that’s fine. This isn’t a boast, but I’m not honorable myself.”

Hamyuts smiled.

“Even if it’s a trivial man like you approaching me, it still makes me shiver.”

Shlamuffen’s invisible blade struck Hamyuts. She evaded by making a huge leap.

Hamyuts was being chased. However, she was faster. As soon as Locolo saw her stop, she ran away again. Shlamuffen’s blade cut through the Labyrinth. But Hamyuts wasn’t in range. At that moment, gravel bullets shot from her sling. These projectiles that were assaulting Locolo instantly disappeared.

Hamyuts once again disappeared around the corner. Gravel bullets ricocheted off the walls like billiard balls and assaulted Locolo.

However, they were yet again cut off by Shlamuffen. Locolo was disturbed by Hamyuts’s conduct, but he gradually regained his composure.

“What is it?”

She has a big mouth but she’s just running away, isn’t she? Rebounded shots fell upon him like rain, but all of them were repelled by the invincible defense created by Shlamuffen.

It was the same when she fought Cigal Crukessa. Hamyuts’s attacks couldn’t hit. It would take time and effort to chase after Hamyuts as she ran around, but

it wasn't a big deal.

Struggle with all you've got, Hamyuts Meseta. Locolo ran while thinking this.

He found Hamyuts's figure in the other side of the Labyrinth. The instant he did, an impact passed through him as if his face was pierced.



An attack that surpassed cause-and-effect – this power that could erase the relationship between an action and its result would surely be the ultimate power in this world. It was the very power of the Creator Deity and couldn't be used either by humans or by the foolish World Overseers.

However, Locolo didn't know that, among the objects created by the Creator Deity, this weapon was at the bottom tier. Even the lowest-grade soldiers among the Librarian Angels could use it.

There were two drawbacks to using Shlamuffen.

The first one – even if it could “cut the space Hamyuts was occupying”, it couldn't “cut Hamyuts herself”. It was because the erasure of cause-and-effect was incomplete. If it was complete, regardless of which evasive actions Hamyuts tried, her body would be bisected.

And it had one more drawback-

Shlamuffen could only “cut”.

Did some attack get me? Locolo pressed a hand to his face. His eye was hurt.

Another blow came. This time he was shot in his stomach. He did not bleed. However, the hurt spot began swelling. As he pressed his hand against it his skin burst open and the blood that accumulated underneath it rushed out like a fountain.

“...!”

Did Shlamuffen’s defense not work? No, that’s wrong. The blade in his hand was still laughing. However, that laughter sounded as if it was ridiculing its incompetent wielder.

From underneath his aching eyelids, Locolo could see – the form of Hamyuts’s sling had changed. The pouch used to hold the stones changed from being net-like to a leather bag. Did she replace it or could she freely change its form?

She prepared something in the cloth. What is she doing? What is she throwing at me? Locolo stared at her, forgetting to wield Shlamuffen.

Hamyuts then threw something. Three shots hit him in the face once again. The moment he felt it on his face, he understood.

It was an attack that couldn’t be cut off.

It was water.

Locolo recklessly swung Shlamuffen. However, its range was less than fifty meters. He couldn’t get Hamyuts within range.

He lost sight of her again. Locolo started running while he held his head. He hadn’t noticed that, by fighting Hamyuts while she escaped, he entered her pattern of certain victory.

Unbelievable. It was a water gun. Just like a child’s toy. Even when Hamyuts

used such a thing it became the strongest attack.

Armed Librarians are no fools. Think of some countermeasure. It seemed to him as if Shlamuffen in his hands said such a thing.

Winkeny immediately understood that the sounds echoing from a distance signified a setback to his plans. The black pawn went against the player's orders.

However, there was still time. Until Mokkaania arrives, if Shlamuffen will not be taken away from them, they would be able to perform a pincer attack.

Winkeny headed towards Mokkaania.

"...What do you want, Winkeny. You shouldn't have any more business with me."

"My plan failed. Locolo is fighting Hamyuts."

Mokkaania's expression became one of contempt. Winkeny looked resigned. It was completely his side's fault.

"...You shouldn't have relied on him in the first place."

"Mokkaania, Winkeny-san, did something happen?"

Renas was agitated.

“Mokkania, leave Renas-san here and hurry ahead. With your speed you should be able to make it.”

“...He’s right, Mokkania. I don’t want to become any more of a burden to you.”

Renas and Winkeny said.

However, Mokkania shook his head in silence.

“Mokkania!”

Renas raised a sad voice.

Winkeny knew none of his words held any meaning. He already knew how Mokkania would answer. It was because he was the only one to understand Mokkania’s mind except for the man himself.

“I won’t separate from mom.”

He predicted Mokkania’s response word for word. Winkeny sighed. His pieces started fighting and deviating from their player’s orders.

It was absurd. All of his enemies moved exactly as he expected them to, yet his allies didn’t.

What a dimwit, Hamyuts thought. Even if she used her full strength in the Fourth Labyrinth, dodging shouldn't be impossible for him.

However, at the moment Shlamuffen's defense was penetrated, Locolo completely lost his fighting spirit. It was amusing seeing him receive the attacks by the water gun in the timing that could be used to evade.

Hamyuts threw away the water bottle that became empty. Just as she thought of pulling out another one, she stopped.

It would be easy to kill him like that.

"...But there's still Mokkania."

It was probably a good idea to finish this first.

Hamyuts stopped her attack and started running. She connected a Sensory Thread to Locolo and ran through the Labyrinth.

Hamyuts's attack was interrupted. Locolo thought that she succeeded escaping.

He admitted his failure long ago. He couldn't think of anything to do now but run away.

Locolo stopped. Hamyuts was standing at the other side of the corner. She looped around.

Locolo kept running and approached a crossroad. Hamyuts's water gun hit his right arm hard. He instinctively turned to the left.

She was obviously leading him on, but Locolo was no longer composed enough to consider this.

“Well then. Is this place fine?”

Hamyuts said and stood. She was in the middle of a large corridor that extended 200 meters behind and ahead of her. It took a little time, but her induction was successful. Locolo turned at about ten meters ahead from Hamyuts.

A single wall separated Hamyuts and Locolo. When she knocked the corridor's wall down, she reached Locolo's spot.

Just as Locolo put both hands on the wall, the sling shot. It bore a hole in the wall. Shlamuffen defended against the sudden attack.

“Uwaah!”

Locolo screamed.

It happened in a fraction of a second.

Shlamuffen's defenses had a perfect hole that just one person like Hamyuts could bypass. She grabbed Locolo's right hand at that instant. As if accepting defeat, Shlamuffen's legs opened, it separated from Locolo's hand and fell to

the floor.

“Well then, found you at last.”

Hamyuts picked up Shlamuffen. She didn't even look at Locolo anymore.

She placed it on her left hand and Shlamuffen bit into her as if satisfied with its new master. Shlamuffen, which was said to be the cruelest Memorial Weapon, rejoiced in being equipped to the most suitable owner.

Hamyuts suddenly saw Locolo.

“Oh, you can go back already.”

She lightly said. Locolo raised his injured body and ran away listlessly.

“See ya.”

Hamyuts waved her hand. The Indulging God Cult sure has some problems with their manpower, she thought in her heart.

Locolo ran. As he was wounded and lost Shlamuffen, he couldn't even stand up to the Guardian Beasts of the Fourth Level.

He kept running towards the Fourth Labyrinth's entrance while set on evading them.

He would earnestly apologize. He would try to apologize to Winkeny and to that Renas woman. Mokkania might be mad at him, but if he could get Winkeny and Renas to forgive him, Mokkania would follow her step and say nothing about it.

Locolo set foot in an area dominated by ants. There were already corpses of Guardian Beasts lying around. The ants attacked not only them but Locolo as well.

“Shit!”

Is Renas stupid? They can't attack Locolo, otherwise he wouldn't be able to inform Mokkania.

“It's Locolo! Stop the attack!”

He shouted. Fortunately Mokkania and the rest were nearby. The ants' assault ceased.

“That was close...”

While saying so, he headed towards the place where Mokkania was. Mokkania looked hostile, Renas looked worried, and they were heading towards Locolo.

“...Locolo-san. Are you injured?”

“Yeah. I've been defeated by Hamyuts Meseta.”

“Oh dear...”

Renas seemed to forgive him. It seemed he didn't have to worry about Mokkania killing him. Just as he felt relieved, Mokkania turned to him while carrying Renas and said an unbelievable thing.

“Mom, be careful. This man's our enemy.”

Locolo and Renas raised a startled cry at the same time.

“Why?!”

“What are you saying, Mokkania?”

Mokkania produced ants.

“But, Mokkania, this person brought me here.”

“He pretended to be our ally so he could trick you, mom.”

Saying so, Mokkania sent his ants towards Locolo. He screamed.

“No, Renas! I'm from the Indulging God Cult! I'm not an Armed Librarian!”

No answer came from Renas. Mokkania replied instead of her.

“Here, mom, you heard him. He’s from the Indulging God Cult.”

What is he saying...? Locolo lost his words.

“Oh no... then Locolo really is...”

“Yes. He was our enemy.”

Mokkania nodded.

“Really, I can never be too careful.”

What are you saying? What the hell are you two saying?!

“Renas... You’re...!”

Not the Cult’s ally...? He wanted to say. But, as if shutting him up, ants bits on his lips and tongue. Locolo continued to question them even while being eaten apart.

Inside the hell of pain, he reached a single conclusion.

Perhaps Renas doesn’t know anything. Neither about the Indulging God Cult, Winkeny and Locolo’s identity, and not even the reason they are fighting.

Then why did Mokkania revolt?

Without reaching any answer, the ants invaded through the holes in his mouth and bit his brain.

Mokkania was thinking as he looked down upon Locolo becoming a skeleton.

Why didn't this man know of the plan?

He tried thinking back. At the beginning of the incident, Mirepoc sent a message to Mokkania. She did it many times.

'That woman is an impostor. The Indulging God Cult brought a fake of your mother so they could manipulate you.'

Mokkania replied that he already knew.

Mirepoc had misunderstood and thought he was being manipulated by his mother.

That was wrong. Mokkania fought by his own volition.

And then, Feekiee attacked his mother.

"I'm the Armed Librarian Feekiee."

Hearing those words, his mother raised a relieved voice and answered this:

“Since you’re an Armed Librarian, that means you’re Mokkaia’s ally, right?”

Feekee had also misunderstood and thought Mokkaia’s mother was on the side of the Indulging God Cult.

Who would have imagined? She, who was the cause of that fight, didn’t even know the cause herself.

His mother didn’t know anything. Neither the fact she is fake, nor the fact she was created by the Indulging God Cult, nor that Mokkaia currently fought against the Armed Librarians. She simply and wholeheartedly believed she was Renas Fleur and thought only about Mokkaia.

This is why he had to fight. No matter who he talked to about this, they couldn’t possibly understand his reasons.

“Hey, Mokkaia.”

Mom said.

“I was taken away by the Indulging God Cult and my memories were erased by the tool known as Argax... right?”

“Yeah.”

“Then, Armed Librarian Winkeney rescued me and brought me to meet you... right?”

“Yeah.”

“And right now, the warriors of the Indulging God Cult are chasing Hamyuts Meseta who’s taken an important Book. Is that it?”

“...Yes, it is.”

Yes, it has become this way. That was what Winkeney had told her.

“If that’s really true, then it’s fine.”

She tightened the grip of her hands on Mokkaania’s collar. That weak feeling told Mokkaania of her anxiety.

“Mokkaania. Do you really have to fight?”

“...Mom?”

“I don’t want to see you killing any more people.”

“But...”

“No matter what kind of bad people they are, you might be able to talk to them. Do you really have to fight no matter what?”

His eyes became moist with nostalgia. Right, that's the kind of person mom was. She was kind and gentle and hated fighting.

"...But mom. There are times when this is the only way to do things. This is one of them."

"Mokkania..."

It was painful. He hurt his mom right now. He felt like he wanted to cut open his chest and die. But right now he could only fight. Both for the sake of his mother and for himself.

Mokkania squeezed her hand. He was trying to warm her frozen hands.

He couldn't talk to his mother. He couldn't tell her about the fight against the Armed Librarians. He couldn't tell her about the reason for his betrayal.

The man called Winkenzy Bize was an unbelievable person. How did he even manage to think up this plan?

He even thought about killing him and then peeking inside his mind by reading his Book.

Mokkania started walking. The decisive battle against Hamyuts was imminent.

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During that time, the ants carrying the Book fragment were in the middle of the Fifth Labyrinth. According to Mokkania's estimations, they should have exited the Labyrinth long ago and went somewhere, yet they were still inside.

Ireia's curse of time had not worn off. The ants were slowly, slowly walking through the Labyrinth.

There was no one to give any attention to them.

# Chapter 5: Queen's Move

## Part 1

Mokkania carried Renas on his back as he headed for battle. Winkeny saw him off. He couldn't do anything else at this stage. The only pieces left were the white and black queen. He couldn't believe in Mokkania's victory even when he was the one to control him.

Their chances for success were slim. Hamyuts obtained Shlamuffen, thereby gaining a mean to oppose the ants. Mokkania's advantage over her was the fact she couldn't protect against them. As long as a miracle doesn't occur, Mokkania will lose.

But still, he couldn't give up. Winkeny bet his life on this plan. No, not just his life. Winkeny himself was living for this plan. He only existed so he could manipulate Mokkania.

Winkenny thought to himself – please, Mokkania. Defeat her. Prove that my life wasn't in vain.

Winkeny Bize – a child born to an extremely normal household in the Ismo Republic. His father was a railway engineer and his mother a shoe polisher at the station. He was the youngest of three siblings, with his brother and sister far removed from him in age.

The young Winkeny never found out what happened. One day, when he returned home his mother simply told him that his father, brother and sister will not return anymore.

She also mentioned something about the Indulging God Cult. She said that his father and the rest opposed joining that Cult.

His mother asked him to come along with her. Winkeny nodded.

He didn't know anything about the organization known as the Indulging God Cult. He just thought that his mother would become lonely. Winkeny swore together with her that he would dedicate his entire life to the Cult.

“Welcome to the Indulging God Cult, Winkeny Bize. The Cult sincerely welcomes you.”

In front of his eyes was the leader of the Cult. His title was the Overseer of Paradise.

This was the man who found those fitting to be True Men, managed the False Men, and employed the Meats – he was the Cult's leader in every sense of the word. While sitting inside a small hotel room in Ismo Republic, he calmly played with chess pieces with his hands.

No-one was allowed to see his face. No-one was allowed to know his name.

“Being able to greet young people like you into the Cult is fortunate for us. We at the Cult wish to raise good people.”

Winkeny was able to see his face right in front of his eyes. However, by the effect of some sort of magic, as soon as he diverted his eyes he couldn't recall

the man's face any longer. No matter how many times he had seen him, he couldn't remember his features.

From his voice he could understand it was a man. But that voice might also not be the real thing.

“Unfortunately, you do not seem to possess “the entirety”. People who do not have “the entirety” do not have the qualifications to become True Men. From now on you will support those who will become True Men, a game piece that will accompany their very lives.”

The voice of the Overseer of Paradise was calm and gentle. Winkeny felt as if he was wrapped in heat.

“As a piece, when you make any achievement, Lascall Othello will come and carry your Book to Heaven. Until that day comes, dedicate yourself to the Cult.”

Lascall Othello. Winkeny did not know the meaning of that name. However, he didn't ask back. There were things in the Cult that mustn't be questioned.

“Be not afraid of death. Do not avoid hardships. Your life is transient. Your only happiness is the happiness of True Men.”

Winkeny nodded. The Overseer of Paradise seemed to like his attitude.

He gave Winkeny a single photograph.

“His name is Mokkania Fleur. Presently he is attending an Armed Librarian

school. He's not even a trainee yet."

Winkeny took the photo. He stared at the boy's face. Nothing came to his mind.

"And what about him?"

"A Magician who infiltrated the Predictive Magic Committee made a prediction about him. Within ten years, he will become one of the world's strongest."

"..."

"We cannot avoid our battle against the Armed Librarians. Within ten years, the Armed Librarians will certainly sniff us out and attempt to annihilate us. As we are anticipating this, we must take some measures."

"Right."

"We cannot surpass the Armed Librarians in our military capabilities. We are vastly outnumbered. But we will also not be easily annihilated."

While saying so, the Overseer of Paradise began to nimbly move the chess pieces. Seemingly the black side was dominant.

"In the case of a stalemate, the Armed Librarians will move their strongest piece, Mokkania Fleur."

The Overseer of Paradise moved the black queen. Winkeny had no deep knowledge in chess, but he understood that the queen is used to determine the victor.

“When that happens, the piece that will decide the outcome would be the natural enemy of this one. A piece that will kill the queen without paying any heed to the pawns or knights.”

“ ... ”

“You will become that piece.”

Winkeny nodded.

The Overseer of Paradise tipped over the black queen with his fingers and it rolled away. It fell from the board into Winkeny’s hands.

As soon as he was brought in, Winkeny was separated from his mother. In this secretive cult, there were almost no relationships between fellow believers. They were forbidden to meet, and even letters or messages of any kind were not allowed.

Days of tough training were waiting for Winkeny. He did nothing but work on his Magic Deliberation from day till night. Furthermore he learned about disguises, infiltration and even ways to lie; he was trained as a spy.

He looked for ways to oppose Mokkania based on the ability he was taught. He imagined an ability that will allow him to withstand the attacks of ants, repeating his Magic Deliberation again and again. He didn’t have any battle

training whatsoever. He even ignored bodily reinforcement Magic which was essential for warriors. He did nothing but acquire the ability needed to counteract Mokkania.

Gaining a Magic Right was only possible at the stage when a person's spirit was still immature – no earlier than the teens and no later than the early twenties. Past this, the common sense and clear vision characteristic to adults that grew within one's mind will hinder the growth of Magic.

Winkeney's growth was slow. He didn't have anything called a talent.

When he approached his twenties, the only thing he was able to get was the ability to change his body to petroleum.

"...This would certainly avoid attacks by Mokkania."

His Magic teacher said.

"However, how are you going to attack?"

He didn't have an answer. In the end Winkeney couldn't get the ability to kill a person. His ability only allowed him to withstand Mokkania's attacks. It wasn't enough to become his natural enemy.

"There is no need for disappointment."

The Overseer of Paradise said during their second meeting.

“Everyone has their own field. You can work on something else that fits you.”

He wasn't trying to console Winkeny. It was a verdict that he held no expectations of him.

Winkeny kept carrying the black queen he received from the Overseer of Paradise close to him. It was an old piece, symbolizing half of his lifetime.

He now clasped it tightly.

Starting that day, Winkeny conducted an investigation independent of the Cult's orders.

Up till then, the only thing he knew about Mokkania was his ability. He began to gather data on him. Sometimes even putting himself in danger, Winkeny started investigating everything about Mokkania – his personality, his career, not to mention information about his family and interpersonal relationship, and even things such as his favorite color or food.

Before long, his comrades in the Cult started ridiculing him without understanding any of his actions.

Ignoring them, Winkeny examined the entirety of Mokkania.

It happened a few years after Winkeny was released from his duties as a warrior.

He went and visited Mokkania's hometown.

It was a small town situated in the northern part of Rona Kingdom. The town was surrounded by apple groves and forests of beech trees, and Winkeny walked along a road lined up with poplar trees. It was a warm town with a short winter. The time flowed gently, making spending time there pleasant.

Mokkania was raised there from his birth until he was thirteen. It was a place Winkeny simply had to visit.

Winkeny stopped in the middle of the poplar tree-lined road. He looked around him and muttered to himself.

“...I am Mokkania Fleur. I was born and raised in this town.”

The quiet landscape of the town reflected in his eyes. What did Mokkania think, see and feel here? Winkeny worked his imagination.

“This is a pleasant town. A beautiful town that wouldn’t lose to Bantorra. I think that I should keep living in this town.

However, I haven’t returned to this town in over a decade.”

His words were interrupted there.

“Why...?”

Winkeny started walking again.

First, he went to the house Mokkania grew up in. It was the house of the feudal lord, located in the center of town. In this kingdom, which had nothing to do with Democracy or Capitalism, the lord's authority was absolute.

"I welcome you. I have heard you are working for a newspaper in Ismo Republic...?"

Winkeney showed the identification from a certain newspaper, one of the several fake IDs he possessed.

"Thank you for allowing me to interview you today."

The lord, while being confused because of Winkeney's unusual appearance, led him to the drawing room.

He conducted his interview there. He inquired about the diplomatic relations between Rona Kingdom and the Present Management Agency under the pretext of asking the opinions of well-informed man. The interview itself wasn't fake. In fact, after the article was written it was published. It was a newspaper under the patronage of the Cult.

He asked the lord's opinion on their diplomatic relations. While he didn't hear anything new, Winkeney kept patient.

Concluding the conversation in a reasonable spot, Winkeney went to the real issue in hand under the guise of idle talk. Naturally, it was about Mokkania.

“By the way, I heard that Armed Librarian Mokkania Fleur was born here.”

Hearing Mokkania’s name, the expression of the lord who was in a good mood until then suddenly changed.

“That person is indeed my child.”

The lord said without even attempting to hide his discomfort. A father calling his son “that person”. These words let Winkeny know he was narrow-minded.

“I don’t think of him as having any connection to me.

No, it’s not since he became an Armed Librarian. That person was unworthy of my family since he was a child. Even if he were to return, I will not let him inherit my property. Only a commoner’s child would become something common like an Armed Librarian.”

The lord repeated the word “common” many times. He kept holding to the old-fashioned notion that noble children must not acquire professions such as an Armed Librarian.

Prepared to offend him even more, Winkeny asked further.

“What do you think of the Guinbex massacre done by Mokkania-shi?”

“What does that have to do with me? How unpleasant. Get out.”

He answered as expected. Winkeny stood up and thanked him.

“I am Mokkania. I don’t wish to return to this house. This isn’t my house.”

Winkeny muttered as he passed the gate.

“I grew up in this house from when I was five till thirteen. Living in this uncomfortable house probably left me with some mental scars. Getting out of town was undoubtedly in order to run away from this house... I am...”

Winkeny stopped speaking there. There wasn’t any meaning in investigating those kinds of superficial emotions. He must arrive at the very core and depth of Mokkania’s mind.

What kind of child had Mokkania been as he lived in this town? Winkeny thought about hearing other people’s stories.

Guided by hearsay, Winkeny walked through the town. He was looking for the other house Mokkania lived in.

The town was beautiful when viewed from outside, but he noticed it wasn’t so when you entered inside.

Ten-year old children were helping with farming as a matter of course. Based on their social position, it was natural that only a limited number would go to things like schools.

Certainly, for people of this town, a method for a commoner to get into a

higher position would be only by becoming an Armed Librarian. For them, your origin did not matter. As long as they have the ability, they would also accept people with an unknown background.

Why did Mokkania become an Armed Librarian? Was it the position he wanted? Or did he have another reason?

“I am Mokkania. I will become an Armed Librarian... do I want power? Do I want status? Do I love fighting? ...I don't know.”

“Mokkania? I remember him.”

An old woman busy with grinding flour answered. Winkeny was taking notes in the back of a bakery in one corner of the town.

“What kind of child was he?”

“He was very quiet... very kind and gentle, much like a girl.”

Right. Winkeny had already found out that fundamentally, Mokkania was a very kind person. Almost all of the people who knew Mokkania said so.

Winkeny wanted to know the substance of that kindness. Did he adjoin his weakness with kindness, or was it a strong sort of kindness? How did he form it?

Winkeny asked further questions.

“Did he have any friends?”

“No specific children that come to mind. But, you see, my grandson used to bully him.”

“He was bullied?”

That was surprising to hear. This child, who became one of the world’s strongest, was once bullied.

“Yeah, that’s right, it was awful. He did things like dropping him in water or stealing his candy as a daily occurrence. Isn’t that right, you foolish grandson?”

The voice of a youth came from the front of the bakery.

“Grandma, please forgive me already. I know I did bad things.”

“What is this brat even saying...”

Winkeny became interested. This bullying might have influenced Mokkania’s personality.

“Whenever Mokkania would come home crying, his mother would come yelling at me. Do you know her? Renas-san.”

“His mother?”

Mokkania lived without his father since he was five years old. After that, he was taken care of by his father.

“What kind of person was Renas Fleur?”

“Although she was quiet, she had a strong heart. We’ve lost a good person.”

The old woman sighed.

“Even so, this is unbelievable. I’ve never seen Mokkania engage in any fights. Did he really become an Armed Librarian?”

She was talking while still grinding flour.

“I would never have imagined him protecting us all back then.”

The old woman spoke about the battle against Guinbex. A year ago, the Armed Librarian fought against the invading army of Guinbex and destroyed it. Many of the people in Rona Kingdom were grateful.

The old woman called the youth who was at the store’s front. Winkeny asked him further questions.

“Mokkania, huh? I remember him.”

The young baker said.

“It’s not like everyone especially bullied him. It’s just that... I was a bully, and I bullied everyone. It’s from long ago, though.”

Talking with shame, the youth scratched his head. He didn’t look like a bad person. He was probably a typical neighborhood bully back then.

“I would bully him and make Renas-san angry. You know her? She was Mokkania’s mother.”

Of course he did.

“She was kind. And also pretty. When I think about it, it was Renas who left a larger impression in my memories.”

“What kind of person was she?”

“A good person. She would round up the kids and tell them fairy tales.

But she was scary when angry. She would scold without giving the other party any chance to explain, asking us why we were doing bad things, and then look at us with sad eyes. I had to endure that.”

Saying this, the youth smiled.

“She really hated violence. If she was still alive, she would have probably been extremely angry at Mokkania. I think she wouldn’t have let him become an Armed Librarian in the first place.”

The youth directed a distant look up to the sky.

“Mokkania did protect Rona Kingdom, but I believe he would have pained Renas-san.”

Winkeney went away.

## Part 2

He heard about Mokkania from various people. But he always heard more about his mother than about him.

Renas Fleur was a normal girl who grew up in that town. The fact that she gave birth to child of the feudal lord was nothing more than a whim of his one day.

She probably faced many hardships while raising a child by herself.

Winkeny tried imagining the life of this woman who was bound to the lord's selfishness.

She probably hated weak people being bullied because she herself was weak. That personality would have also affected Mokkania. Mokkania's kindness and hatred for oppression of the weak probably came from that.

“Then why did Mokkania become an Armed Librarian?”

What was Mokkania's mother to him? And what has her death meant to him?

Winkeny thought about it. However, he didn't know.

He visited the house Mokkania was born in. There were only ruins left. He couldn't feel any signs of the life mother and child used to have in there.

“I am Mokkania. One day, as I returned to my house, it was no longer my home.”

Walking through the abandoned place, Winkeny thought about Mokkania’s feelings. He stroked the floor and murmured.

“As I come home, I greet “I’m home”. However, at that instant I notice that mom is on the floor, dead.”

He touched the floor, thinking about the figure of the mother who was there.

“There’s no reply. “I’m home” – I say this once again. But there is no reply.”

Winkeny kept muttering.

“I’m home... I’m home... I’m home.”

At that instant, Winkeny received a message inside of his head in the form of Thought Sharing.

‘What are you doing, Winkeny? Return at once.’

Just when I got to the critical part? Winkeny gritted his teeth. But he could not go against the instructions of his superior.

Winkeny left Mokkania’s hometown, and went back to the Cult’s base.

Upon return to the ship, Winkeny took out the black queen from his pocket. It was the same one the Overseer of Paradise gave him during that day. He clenched it in his hand.

Winkeny was a failed piece, raised in order to kill the black queen. However, the piece that had been discarded by the player was now going to move outside the player's intentions.

No, he wasn't a piece anymore. By freely manipulating the black queen, he will become a player himself.

Winkeny investigated Mokkania's heart so that he could control the black queen.

When he throws certain words at Mokkania, what will he think? When Mokkania faces certain circumstances, what will he think? When Mokkania has a certain goal in mind, how will he act?

Winkeny wanted to understand Mokkania completely just as a wife who was close to her husband knew everything about him after forty years together.

When Mokkania would act that way, he will become Winkeny's puppet. While acting under his own will, even that very will would be controlled by Winkeny.

Each time a chess master moved his hand, he could envision and predict the actions of hundreds of pawns. An outstanding warrior could predict a battle's outcome before it even began.

Winkeny aimed for that level. He tried to become an expert on the single man

known as Mokkania.

“...You’re late. What were you doing?”

Winkeny’s immediate superior welcomed him as he returned from Rona Kingdom. As always, he rebuked Winkeny’s negligence of duty.

Winkeny worked as a contact that would convey orders from the higher-ups to their subordinates. He knew nothing about the encrypted information or the orders themselves. He was doing a job that only consisted of following the instructions of those above him and flying around the world. No-one remembered his role as a trump card against Mokkania. The fact that he secluded himself in the Labyrinth and was no longer a useful warrior was already well-known within the Indulging God Cult. A trump card aimed to defeat a useless piece was good for nothing.

“...I visited Mokkania’s hometown.”

“What for?”

His superior asked. Winkeny tried to explain, but his superior shook his hand as if telling him it was too annoying.

“Just go away.”

The superior said.

Nobody could understand Winkeny’s actions. Everyone told him it was

useless, and many of them laughed at him. He was accustomed to humiliation, so he didn't feel anything.

He clutched the black queen inside his pocket.

Winkeney returned to his hideout.

On his desk and floor were piles of documents that were all about Mokkania – his background; his evaluation from when he was a trainee, as well a report card from when he was a student; his interviews for newspapers; and the notes retaining to his personality that Winkeney heard about from people who knew him.

There were also large quantities of Books belonging to people who've met Mokkania placed on his shelves.

Many pictures of Mokkania were adhered to the walls. One valuable photo of him as a boy; pictures of him as a trainee, as an Armed Librarian, of him during the war, and pictures of him activating his ability.

Furthermore, there were investigation notes written by Winkeney hanging on the walls.

“Dissension with Hamyuts” “Loneliness” “Kind to his core->will he quit being an Armed Librarian?” “Guilt->where will he go?” “He might be considering suicide” “He parted with his lover. Was he really good with women?” “I definitely need Minth Chezine's opinion->should I go and meet with him? Or is that unreasonable?”

Everything he knew about Mokkania was collected there. He even stole Mokkania's psychological and psychiatric records from the Science Agency and read them over and over again until their seams were torn.

But despite all this, there were still many things he didn't understand about Mokkania's heart.

He could understand his surface feelings, but that was far from enough. In order to truly see through him, he had to become Mokkania himself. If Winkeny wouldn't be able to reach that domain, there's no way he could manipulate Mokkania.

"Shit!"

Winkeny hit the desk with his fist.

He didn't want to admit that such a thing was impossible. If he will, it would be one and the same as admitting his whole life was meaningless. He couldn't stand it. He feared that far more than dying or not ascending to Heaven.

Winkeny held his head and kept worrying.

One day, the Overseer of Paradise called for him. He hadn't met him for who knows how many years. For him, who was doing only odd jobs for a long time, it was like meeting a god-like existence.

He went to the same hotel he was in before. That hotel wasn't under the Cult's control. How and by which means he could stay here? Winkeny couldn't even imagine.

He was reading a newspaper placed on the table by the window. It seemed to be just an ordinary newspaper sold everywhere.

“Winkeny. Are you aware that just the other day there was an assault on the Meats’ ship at Allow bay?”

He said while folding the newspaper. Winkeny nodded.

“There seems to have been a leak from the inside. Our intelligence will have to work with maximum vigilance, but it is a pity. Naturally, the more people we have, the more they will be harder to supervise.”

It didn’t seem like he suspected Winkeny. The Overseer of Paradise kept talking.

“Winkeny. Do you not think that we allowed just a little too many people inside?”

“I don’t really know.”

“From now on, we’re going to be a bit more selective. Not only in terms of ability but also in loyalty.”

Saying so, the Overseer of Paradise tossed the folded newspaper onto the rack. Winkeny only then noticed it was the newspaper that he was officially employed for.

“What does this mean?”

The Overseer of Paradise took a cup placed on the table to his hand. He slid it towards Winkeny.

“Winkeny. If you drink this water, you will be able to live as a simple newspaper reporter from now on.”

Without him saying anything, he could understand. The cup contained the water of Argax.

“Overseer of Paradise, I’m...”

“The article you’ve written the other day – it was just an editorial about the contradictions between Rona’s diplomacy and its politic philosophy, but it was very interesting. Why don’t you sit down and write a proper continuation?”

Winkeny took the cup with trembling hands.

He recalled everything until now – his everyday life where he was referred to as useless. No matter how much thought about it, he wasn’t able to reach inside Mokka’s mind.

His heart was inclined to give up. He brought the cup’s edge to his mouth while still trembling.

However, he returned it to the table while spilling some water.

“I’m not planning to become a journalist.”

“I see.”

Without any hesitation, the Overseer of Paradise spilled the water out of the window.

Drinking the water or not was probably some kind of test. Winkeny didn’t know what would happen if he drank it. Would he have been sent to the Meats’ ship? Or would he really and unexpectedly become a normal journalist?

The Overseer of Paradise rose from his chair and leaned his back on the window’s edge. There was no longer the air of tension from before.

“I have one question.”

“Yes sir?”

“Why didn’t you drink it? ...I was sure that you were going to drink.”

Winkeny thought for a while. When he wanted to give up, a nostalgic face surfaced in his memory.

“I was reminded of my mother, the one I entered the Cult together with.”

The Overseer of Paradise smiled.

“I see now. Family ties are important.”

The Overseer of Paradise tore a portion of the newspaper and drew a map there. He then showed it to Winkeny.

“To reward your loyalty, I’ll allow you to meet her. Your mother should be following Cigal right now.”

After receiving the map, Winkeny headed for Toatt Mining Town in Ismo Republic. His mother was supposedly there.

He was now reminded of her. Winkeny was surprised of the changes to his own mind. He made such an effort to understand Mokkania but couldn’t even understand himself.

He hadn’t met his mother in more than ten years. He thought he forgot everything, but now that he was allowed to meet her, it all felt incredibly nostalgic.

“Mokkania will never enjoy these feelings again.”

Winkeny murmured. No matter how much Mokkania wants to, he couldn’t ever meet his mother again. He felt a bit of pity for him.

His mother stayed at an inn in Toatt Mining Town. She was working undercover there from a while back.

After walking under the ash-clouded sky, as he set foot inside the dirty inn,

Winkeny muttered in a low voice.

“I’m home.”

It was strange. He called this home despite being far away from his house. However, no matter the location, as long as he had some family there, it would become his home.

“...Oh, a customer.”

“I’m Winkeny.”

“Really, are you going to lodge here? Are you by yourself?”

His mother spoke as the innkeeper. When Winkeny used the Indulging God Cult’s watchword, she led him to his room. She was terribly aged. She looked like more than twenty years have passed.

Several pictures were spread on the table inside the room. Winkeny took them to his hand. He saw Meat-looking people there.

“What is this?”

“These are the photos of Bombs who will soon come here. I had to memorize their faces and names... It’s already been a year.”

Their names were written on the backside. His mother seemed to be recalling

their names as she looked at the photos.

“Umm, that’s Milly. She’s useless so I put her in the abandoned house. This is Relia. This is Hyoue... no no, it’s actually Colio.”

Saying so, Winkeny’s mother flipped through the photos. She didn’t seem to care about him at all.

Winkeny was troubled. He wanted to talk to her not as fellow Cult members, but as mother and child. He should start by talking to her then. Should he start with “how are you”? Or perhaps “how nostalgic”? He considered his opening words.

But, before Winkeny got to say something, his mother talked to him.

“By the way, what are you doing here? You probably have some orders from the Indulging God Cult, right?”

She said. Winkeny was a bit surprised. Doesn’t she realize he’s her son?

“...Umm, it’s me, Winkeny.”

“So, what are you here for, Winkeny-san?”

“It’s me, Winkeny!”

His mother placed her hand on her cheek as if trying to recall something.

Winkeny almost burst out laughing.

If her memories were erased by the water of Argax, there was still salvation.

She didn't look like she could remember. She truly forgot it all. She forgot everything about her one and only child, Winkeny. Even his face and name. No, she forgot his very existence.

Winkeny turned his back to her.

"...Uh, where are you going? What do you need?"

Staying silent, Winkeny left the inn.

He walked around the mining town alone. Laughter welled up inside him and leaked out. And he couldn't stop. He laughed so much tears came out. He couldn't stop crying. Even after he stopped laughing, his tears still wouldn't stop for some reason.

Ah, I see. He felt like he finally understood.

This is what it means to lose your mother.

## Part 3

Winkeny left Toatt Mining Town and prowled around without doing anything. After he couldn't drink any more alcohol, he finally returned to his hideout. It was the same one that contained all the material on Mokkania.

Winkeny looked at the wall with the photos of Mokkania hanged to it.

“Mokkania, I'm the same.”

He took down one photograph and called to it.

“I also lost my mom. Just like you.”

Suddenly, his mind felt clear. He understood everything as if struck by lightning.

These feeling were the same as Mokkania's. When he was young, at the day he lost Renas, he felt the same way.

Words came out flowing from Winkeny's mouth. Both his mouth and mind could now naturally act the part of Mokkania.

“I am Mokkania. When I was young, I thought the same as everyone – my life will continue the same way on and on, forever. The day I will become an adult will never arrive. I was supposed to keep living together with my mother in that town forever.

I believed that no matter what else in the world may change, only the relationship with my mother will stay the same.”

While acting as Mokkania, he saw the landscape of his hometown in the back of his mind. It was his first place.

“The strongest and also most kind person in this world was mom. She also thought she would continue protecting me forever. One day, as I realized that mom is in fact a very weak and sad person, my time began moving.

I wanted to help mom. Oh, an Armed Librarian! If I become that, I will be able to make more money and make it easier for mom. It was a splendid dream. Thus a small wish far removed from reality was born.”

Right – Winkeny joined the Indulging God Cult for his mother’s sake. Mokkania ended up as an Armed Librarian for his mother’s sake. They both possessed the same feelings.

What did this mean? Mokkania’s heart, which was once far from Winkeny, now felt close to him. He felt like he was his best friend – no, as if they were the same person.

“However, the moving future was stopped. One day, as if the thread of her life was cut off, mom passed away. My dream stopped there, and my time did as well.”

Winkeny tore a photo off the wall. It was a picture of Mokkania as a teenager.

“Taken back by my father’s house, I started living a different life than before. I received advanced education and training fitting for a noble. However, my dream was frozen and always stayed inside me. Without being able to make it come true or give up on it, that dream remained frozen inside of me.”

He looked at the teen Mokkania’s photo. Through his noble-like appearance of elegance and innocence, one could take a peek at his loneliness. Winkeney could also understand his feelings at that time. Even if he and his mother were apart, he thought only about her. This was, again, the same as Winkeney.

“I became an Armed Librarian. It was inevitable. First because it was my dream. Also, so I could meet mom. I could read mom’s Book in Bantorra Library.

I was unexpectedly excellent. But I wasn’t happy. Talents are not given to those who wish for them.”

Mokkania was given what he didn’t wish for. Winkeney wished for it but wasn’t given. They were the same, simply on opposite sides.

“At the beginning it wasn’t a big deal. I only worked at cataloguing the Labyrinth or managing the mines. Bantorra Library was still peaceful then.

However, peace did not last for long. The time for battle appeared. The massacre of the Guinbex Imperial Army.

I killed a lot of people just as ordered. I couldn’t do anything else. No-one in the world would forgive me if I ran away.”

Winkeney picked up a photograph of Renas and looked at it. He started

imagining her personality he heard about and Mokkania's feelings of her.

“However, the mom inside my heart didn't forgive me for killing them. Mom, who hated violence and the oppression of weak people more than anyone, didn't forgive me. Even if there was some legitimate reason, using violence was absolutely unforgivable.

I felt it for the first time... the fear of working as an Armed Librarian.

And I regretted it – becoming an Armed Librarian.

I hoped to be judged! But! Nobody blamed me. On the contrary, I was even thanked. Thank you for killing the bad guys, people said.

I wasn't even allowed to atone...”

Winkeny took a photo of Mokkania from the time he confined himself in the Labyrinth.

“Since then, I became unable to control myself. I stopped coming outside. I was afraid of meeting people. I was afraid of normal, powerless people. That's why I dived underground.

I became a laughingstock. I, who abhorred the powers of the Armed Librarian, could only conduct the job of an Armed Librarian. I was completely cornered.”

Winkeny started thinking. What was Mokkania thinking about while inside his room?

“...I ran away. I threw the present away and ran into the past. I wished I could return to that day when my mom was there.

Ever since the day my “I’m home” didn’t receive the answer of “welcome back”, my time had stopped.

I wanted to return. To that day.

To the time my mom was alive...”

Winkeny’s solo performance came to a close. He placed his hand on the chest to sooth his throbbing heart. His whole body was shaking with the excitement of his understanding Mokkania’s heart.

At that moment, he heard the sound of applause. Winkeny looked back in surprise. A single man stood inside the room for who knows how long. He didn’t sneak inside. He simply opened the door and came in. Winkeny just didn’t notice him.

“Wonderful. I was completely captivated, Winkeny.”

The man said. Winkeny then called the name of the applauding man.

“The Overseer of Paradise...”

The Overseer of Paradise kept the applause. Winkeny was confused. As soon as he stopped the applause, the man started talking.

“You can also become an actor.”

Why did he come here? Winkeny wondered. He then saw a gun hanging at his waist. His goal then became clear.

“You might still be useful for a while.”

However, the Overseer of Paradise didn't touch his gun. Instead, he took a pen in his hand and scribbled a note.

“Please go there. There is something that might be useful for you.”

The note contained an address and a simple map. It was the location of an Indulging God Cult's laboratory that was a secret even for Winkeny.

Leaving only that behind, the Overseer of Paradise left with a smile on his face.

Shortly thereafter was a battle between the Indulging God Cult and the Armed Librarians. Mokkania didn't make any appearance there, so of course Winkeny also didn't.

In the meanwhile Winkeny visited the lab. There were always Meats' corpses piled inside. The research topics were insane. Even looking in the researchers' eyes brought one deep nausea.

Winkeny only loaned one technique which was being researched there.

Responding to the request for cooperation, the researchers explained it to him.

“This technique had its hints in the very existence of Book-Eater monsters. When a person dies to become a Book which is then eaten by a Book-Eater, he can then be revived through the Book-Eater’s body. This is a study of whether or not we can cause that artificially. Ahahaha.”

Winkeny asked them to omit the full details of the research and only heard the method.

“First, we prepare a single Meat. It doesn’t even have to be a Meat, though. Then, we let them drink the water of Argax and rob all of their memories. No memories must remain. Not even how to eat or breathe. But Meats would soon die like that. Life-sustaining measures are required. Hahahaha. Ehahahaha.”

“And then?”

“Then, you make them read the Book of the person you wish to revive. You make them read it many times. Using drugs and hypnotism, you imprint into them that the memories from the Book are their own memories. The human mind has a function to work around any inconsistencies, so it is a surprisingly easy work.”

“And after that?”

“You make the subject drink from Argax again to erase all their inconvenient memories. And that’s it hahahahaha.”

After Winkeny finished hearing the explanation, he brought a Book fragment

out of his pocket. While collecting material on Mokkania, it was something he found after looking all around – the Book of Renas Fleur.

“Is it still fine if I only have a fragment?”

“Absolutely fine. Leave it to us.”

Bursting with laughter, the researcher received the Book.

The plan was simple. By preparing a fake Renas, Mokkania could be persuaded to revolt. The success rate of this persuasion would depend on the performance of the fake Renas. Winkeny might also have to use any possible means to make the persuasion succeed.

He waited until he could complete making various plans. In about one month, the fake Renas was created.

“You’re a False Man from the Cult, right?”

Given Mokkania’s age, he chose a woman in her mid-forties as the fake Renas. When she looked at Winkeny, she grinned.

“We have given her flawless training. Hahaha, no matter what happens, she will not betray the Cult.”

The researcher laughed.

“Of course.”

Renas also laughed.

“I understand what I need to do even without you explaining. I will persuade Mokkania.”

Renas said, her face full of confidence.

“So you don’t mind it? Mokkania is fundamentally a very serious man. If he was asked to betray it will pain him.”

The fake Renas looked at him dubiously, not understanding what he says.

“The Cult’s teachings take precedence over anything else. I don’t care about such a trivial thing.”

She really was thoroughly educated. It was troublesome. He couldn’t find any similarities to the gentle Renas no matter how he looked at her.

“Is there a gun somewhere around here?”

Winkeney asked the researchers.

“Yes, here you go.”

Renas handed Winkeney a gun that was used to dispose of useless Meats.

Receiving it, he shot and killed her.

“Remake her.”

After saying this to the researchers, Winkeny left the room.

“...Isn't she too young?”

The second fake Renas was lying down in front of them. The researcher asked him. This time Winkeny himself chose the Meat.

“She's good enough.”

Winkeny concluded.

“Is it really fine not to subject her to the Cult's teachings?”

“Absolutely nothing is required.”

Winkeny affirmed again.

“But like this she would be a mere copy. What are you going to do with that?”

“...It doesn't matter. I'm simply going to give Mokkania a present.”

“...”

The researcher looked at Winkeny with unbelieving eyes. He couldn't possibly understand what Winkeny was thinking about.



Before long came the promised time came. Accompanied by Renas, Winkeny headed for Bantorra Library on a boat. He claimed to be Mokkania's friend and someone who cooperated with the Armed Librarians.

Locolo should have landed earlier. They were going to meet again after the beginning of the operation.

"Winkeny-san. Why is Mokkania inside the Labyrinth?"

Renas asked them during their journey. Winkeny put his finger to her lips and whispered in her ears.

"Please don't lower your guard. There's still danger. For the Library, for Mokkania, and for us. Speak of the fact you are Mokkania's mother only when with him."

If he would talk of the plan with Renas it will all be for nothing. He didn't even tell the plan to his ally. He wouldn't be able to understand even if he told him. Only Winkeny, who continually chased after Mokkania, could understand it.

Infiltrating into the Library was hard. If Noloty Malche hadn't drunk from Argax, or if another person had seen them infiltrating, it would all be over. Almost the entire plan was left for luck, and they succeeded.

Winkeny was convinced luck was on their side.

He brought Renas, and knocked on Mokkania's door.

Although he met Mokkania for the first time, he felt nostalgic seeing his face. He started talking to him.

"I'm Winkeny, a warrior from the Indulging God Cult. I came here to give you your mother."

Mokkania's face was contorted in surprise. Rather than in response to hearing the name of the Indulging God Cult, that facial expression came about by the astonishment of hearing about his mother and seeing the form of Renas standing behind Winkeny.

Winkeny understood Mokkania's feelings as if they were in his hands. While confused, he was also drawn to her. On the one hand she didn't have his mother's features that he could never forget, and on the other hand was the expression of joy on Renas's face at their reunion. It couldn't be helped that they both overlapped.

Winkeny waited for Mokkania's response. It was expected to an unbelievable degree.

"Mom is... supposed to be dead."

Winkeny immediately said,

"She didn't die. Until now, she was held captive by the Indulging God Cult."

“That can’t be.”

Just when Mokkania was trying to say something, Renas dropped her cane and ran up to him.

She put her hand around his stomach. Then, she raised it to his chest, and finally to his face.

“I can’t believe you’ve grown this big...”

“...Mom?”

“I can’t believe it. You really are Mokkania... Unbelievable. My little Mokkania has...”

“Mom... I...”

Mokkania referred to Renas as “mom”. These were already involuntary words. Winkeny immediately spoke.

“Renas-san lost her memories because of Argax. She only remembers you as a child.”

“...Mokkania. This is just unbelievable. Hey, Mokkania. Do you still think of me as your mother even now?”

While still confused, Mokkania nodded.

“I can’t tell like that, Mokkania. Say it with words.”

“...Yes, mom.”

Winken stopped himself from laughing. He endured the urge to dance around in happiness.

“I’ll wait here for a while. Rena-san, Mokkania, go inside.”

“...Winken-san?”

“I don’t want to interrupt the reunion between mother and child.”

He said toward Mokkania.

“Yeah, you can talk to your heart’s content. You’ve been waiting to meet her again since forever, right?”

Mokkania took Renas’s hand and led her inside the room.

Mokkania and Renas conversed for a while.

When he came outside there were tears on his face.

“What are your demands, Indulging God Cult?”

“Before that, I have one question.”

“What is it?”

Winkeny then asked him. It was an astounding question beyond common sense.

“About that fairy tale – the one with the squirrel and the rest in the forest. How does it end?”

How much does this man know? Mokkania was surprised. It was a fairy tale created by Renas, and its ending was lost along with her death. And, in order to check whether she is real, Mokkania asked her about that ending.

Winkeny had expected it all. He was asking to confirm his expectations.

“The fox apologizes to the squirrel and the bear apologizes to the fox. Everyone gathers at the bear’s lair and passes the winter together.”

“What a nice fairy tale.”

Winkeny said and smiled.

“State your demands, Indulging God Cult.”

“I won’t make any demands. Think of it as returning the favor.”

“What?”

“Hamyuts Meseta’s life and Haiza’s Book should be enough.”

At that moment, Mokkania’s face changed from that of a child reunited with his mother to that of a warrior.

“...Is anything else not good enough?”

He produced ants at his feet. When they tried reaching Winkeney, he transformed his body to petroleum.

Mokkania was surprised at his attack not working.

“There’s no use in anything else. Don’t underestimate the Indulging God Cult, Mokkania.”

Mokkania should understand in an instant that attacking him was useless. Then, he would think about taking Renas, retreating and bringing his allies to defeat him. He was a serious man after all.

“If I refuse, what will you do?”

“Not much. I will simply reveal the secret... tell Renas-san that she is fake.”

Winkeney said while surrounded by ants.

“Even if you defeat me it will be useless, Mokkania. Everyone knows that your mother is dead and therefore that one is an impostor.”

“...So what?”

“Don’t forget, Mokkania. She is and isn’t Renas. Does she really have nothing to do with you?”

“...So what. She’s my mom.”

“What will she think when she knows the truth? First of all would come hatred. She would hate the ones who took her memory and made her into the person known as Renas. Obviously, she would hate me and the Indulging God Cult.”

Winkeny glided on the floor.

“And who will she hate then?”

Winkeny got around Mokkania and said with a whisper.

“You, Mokkania.”

“Why?!”

“You don’t know, Mokkania? For whom was this done for? Everything was

done for your sake.”

“But...”

“If you don’t believe me it’s fine. Call your comrades and kill me. You will know what happens after that.”

Mokkania hesitated. Winkeny then dealt a final blow.

“If you want to remain with your mother, follow me. If you want to let your mother remain as she is.”

This was Winkeny’s plan. In exchange for Hamyuts’s life, he would give Mokkania time to spend with his mother.

It was an unlikely plan. He got too little in return compared to the demands. However, Winkeny believed in his plan. Only he, who exhaustively examined Mokkania, could understand. Even if no-one else would believe in it, only he would understand. The plan was successful.

Mokkania should have wished for it – to throw everything away.

To retrieve his lost past.

To once again hear “welcome back” in reply to his “I’m home”.

“Do you want to lose your mother again?”

A long silence passed between them.

Eventually, Mokkaia spoke in a voice that sounded like he was moaning in agony.

“Where’s Hamyuts Meseta right now?”

Winken’s life had bloomed at that instant. He grabbed the black queen in his hands.

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Ants were still carrying the Book fragment around. Still afflicted by Ireia’s curse of time, they were walking slowly as if frozen.

Then, the ant walking at the front stopped. In front of its eyes stood a large steel wall. Their master didn’t let them know about the existence of this wall. They touched around it with their small bodies. They wasted their efforts trying to find a path.

This was the partition wall activated by Mattalast to shut in the Labyrinth. There wasn’t any gap for the ants to pass through.

Their feet have stopped in a corner of the Labyrinth no-one knew about.

# Chapter 6: Destination Of The Virtuous One

## Part 1

What about the fight? Is it still going on or did it end? If it did, what is the result?

There was no way for Mirepoc and Mattalast to know the answer for any of these questions. The two of them were standing with their back to the closed gate. Mattalast seemed to have already run out of leaves for his pipe.

“...The Director probably won, right?”

Mirepoc muttered. She did so for the umpteenth time. Without answering her, Mattalast blew out the lasts of his smoke.

After a while of silence, Mattalast suddenly spoke.

“In my opinion, Mokkania is too virtuous.”

“Huh?”

Mirepoc replied.

Mattalast put the pipe back in its case. His expression seemed to be resigned.

“He should have been more evil, like the Director, Ireia-san and me.”

Mirepoc couldn't understand him.

“What do you mean?”

“Eventually you will understand. We have to be evil.”

Thinking about it, it was often discussed – who is stronger, Mokkania or Hamyuts? Hamyuts on ground level and Mokkania in the Labyrinth. Mokkania in Magic and Hamyuts in martial arts. Mokkania in total strength and Hamyuts in tactics.

That was a good conversation topic. Were both of them the world's strongest?

But it no longer had any meaning. Strength was meaningless. The only important thing was who won and stayed alive. Using every possible means, using everything around them, simply killing and thus simply winning. That was all.

Mokkania was thinking to himself.

I threw everything away. My position as an Armed Librarian, my life, my future – everything. I have no regrets. Because I've been dead as a person from long ago. Was it since the day he massacred Guinbex's soldiers? Or since the day he became an Armed Librarian? Or since the day his mother died? He was already stopped in time.

He had no regrets of throwing everything away.

In exchange for that he got a little time to spend with his fake mother. This would seem laughable for any person. If they want to laugh, let them laugh.

It was important for him. Even spending one second with his mother was far more important than everything else combined.

“ ... ”

Suddenly he thought of Feekiee. He did something bad only to that man. He actually didn't want to kill anyone. But it was pointless thinking about him. Right now he only had to fight.

“ ... ”

When the fight is over, he will return to his room. And he will live there with his mother.

How much time will he be able to spend with her? A few days? A single day? He wouldn't mind even an hour. As long as he was with his mother, it didn't matter how short that time would be.

After that's done, he will die. Together with her.

“Come, Hamyuts Meseta.”

He called for Hamyuts, thinking she probably heard him through her Sensory Threads.

“Looking good there, Mokkania.”

Hamyuts muttered. Despite being stronger than anyone, he was a man who still hated oppression of the weak. He was now coming towards Hamyuts with all of his power.

Shlamuffen was on her left hand. And her sling was on her right hand. After having run away all this time, Hamyuts set foot in the ocean of ants for the first time.

Hamyuts casually swung Shlamuffen. Without waiting for its owner's instructions, it began defensive actions. The ants swarming around were torn to shreds till none were left.

The ever-going laughter of the magical blade resounded in a range of ten meters around Hamyuts. All that were cut were killed without exception. Not even a single ant remained.

Having received its ideal owner, the brutal blade demonstrated more precision in its ability than before. Its killing power became completely different from how it was when wielded by the virtuous Shiron or the inexperienced Cigal. The ants, who dominated the Labyrinth, had their throne taken away by the spider of the Magic Blade.

Mokkania stopped in his tracks. Sensing that his ants were all being killed

simultaneously, he started preparing for an ambush. Hamyuts was at about the middle of the Fourth Labyrinth. She was still at quite some distance from Mokkania.

He gritted his teeth. He clasped his mother's hand.

Mustering the greatest power he could until now, Mokkania began releasing his ants.

The ants scattered around the Labyrinth began a large movement in accordance to Mokkania's orders. Their target was a single person – Hamyuts Meseta. Willful ants that were busy devouring the corpses of Guardian Beasts now passed the Fifth Labyrinth and gathered in the Fourth.

The Magic Blade cut through the endless supply of ants.

The floor became stacked with corpses of ants, turning into a black pool. In a minute or so, the amount of corpses almost made it up to Hamyuts's knees.

The ants were crawling on the walls, flying in the air, or falling from the ceiling as they attacked Hamyuts. They tried defeating Shlamuffen's slashing attacks by using numbers.

One ant bit Hamyuts's foot even as its torso was torn apart. She shot it down with a pebble held in her right hand.

"...So it can't completely defend me huh?"

Hamyuts muttered. It was natural. She won't beat Mokkania with just Shlamuffen.

Within the rain of shells and body fluids of ants, Hamyuts started swinging her sling around.

Hamyuts should still be far enough. He will have to face her while he wasn't in range.

Thinking this, Mokkania kept releasing his ants. Their echoing march sounded like the noise of a broken radio. He could also hear the dry sound of stones knocking them down.

Mokkania reflexively twisted his body. A gravel bullet grazed his face. His mother clung to his back and raised a shriek.

The second shot came flying. The gravel bullet rebounded on the walls and floor. As he couldn't dodge that attack, Mokkania protected against it with his arms. It gouged down to his bones, making him scream in pain.

"Mokkania!"

"Don't speak, you'll bite your tongue!"

Mokkania said while retreating. It was then that one more gravel bullet hit him.

He realized that he couldn't afford to show his back. If he turned around, he

would up using his mother as a shield. He would do the opposite – become a shield himself.

The fourth shot struck. He heard it rebound more than ten times. Most probably Hamyuts was at an area five corners around. She should be about five hundred meters away. Nevertheless, she was far too close.

The fifth ricocheting sniper shot came. Mokkaia evaded it relying on sound. The moment he thought he successfully escaped, he heard a shriek from his back.

“Mom!!!”

Mokkaia looked back.

“My, shoulder...”

He transferred his mom from his back to his arms. She frowned in pain as she held her right shoulder.

It seemed the evaded bullet rebounded and hit his back. He didn't know if this was intended or happened by chance.

There was no blood. Her bones probably didn't break either. It lost its power after rebounding, so it didn't cause any bloodshed. However, if it didn't hit the shoulder but her spine or back of her head it would've still been dangerous.

She wasn't like Mokkaia, who wouldn't die from wounds like these. His mom

couldn't use any bodily reinforcement Magic.

“...Shit!”

Protecting his mother, Mokkaia went past the sixth sniper shot. It was a mistake. He put his mother within Hamyuts's range.

Should he retreat? No, Hamyuts was faster. He wouldn't be able to protect his mom by running away.

“Wait! Hamyuts!”

Mokkaia called for her. She undoubtedly could hear him. At the same time he commanded the ants to cease their attack on her.

He heard no reply. However, Hamyuts's attacks stopped.

“I want to face you with my full power. Give mom time to escape.”

No shots came.

The silent reply was agreement.

Mokkaia recalled his fight with Ireia. By leaving his mother behind he risked her. He didn't want a repeat of that. But, if this went on...

“...Mom, I'll let the ants guide you. Go back to my room in the Fifth

Labyrinth.”

She looked at Mokkania with her unseeing eyes.

“Mokkania...”

Feeling as if he was being torn apart from the inside, Mokkania lowered his mom. No, he was literally being torn apart. His mother already became something more important than his bowels.

“Mom, stay safe.”

“...Mokkania. If you can't win, it's fine to surrender. Forget about me. Live on. Please. Don't die before your mom.”

“...”

He gently let go of her. Holding her aching shoulder, she used her cane to start walking.

Mokkania clenched his fist so hard it started bleeding. If only he were stronger he wouldn't expose his mother to danger.

This man, who used to abhor his own power, lamented his powerlessness for the first time.

Hamyuts had seen this all with her Sensory Threads. She realized that she

could take a detour towards the place Renas was heading to. Mokkania was slow. If she were to use all of her strength, it wouldn't be difficult to catch up to Renas.

Now then, I wonder what I should do. Should I just defeat him or should I first kill Renas?

“Which one's better...?”

At that moment, she noticed a pool of petroleum approaching her. She knew it was the man called Winkeny.

“Can I help you?”

Hamyuts asked.

“Hamyuts. If you wish for a battle, you shouldn't kill Renas. If Mokkania would lose his reason to fight, the fight will end.”

Hamyuts smiled.

“Thanks for the advice. I like you.”

Winkeny left without saying anything.

Mokkania's mom should have been far enough by now. Hamyuts's thirst for blood came from further still, changing the atmosphere.

Thinking about it, Hamyuts was the one who probably wanted this situation more than anyone. She was a woman who wished to fight with strong people and people who had a chance of killing her.

She might have been waiting for the day she could battle Mokkania from long ago.

“In the end everything goes as you wanted, Hamyuts.”

‘That’s right’, was what he felt as if she answered.

“I won’t allow everything to go as you please.”

Mokkania activated his Magic Right. At the same time, he could hear the sounds of the seventh shot rebounding on the walls.

“Ugh!”

Mokkania repelled the gravel bullet using his own arm. He counted it as the fourteenth shot. Mokkania only had the leeway to block that much.

Since they hit the walls many times, the shots truly lost some of their killing power.

He could protect against it. At the very least, a single shot wouldn’t become a fatal wound.

The fifteenth shot approached. Mokkania created a large number of ants in midair to block it. The gravel bullet scattered the ants about, but they were able to slightly change its trajectory.

Mokkania now understood the timing for avoiding it.

The sixteenth shot hit the floor at Mokkania's feet. It flew backwards in vain. He didn't take any evasive action.

"Did you miss, Hamyuts?!"

Mokkania shouted.

"I missed!"

Although she followed the trajectory aimed by her Sensory Threads, Hamyuts cried in surprise. When was the last time she ever missed?

The walls, ceiling, and air that were all teeming with ants subtly distorted the trajectories. If she will try focusing on aim, the bullets will lose power and won't be able to be rapid-fired.

Should I get closer? Thought Hamyuts. But it was hard walking around in the Labyrinth now filled with a pool of ants' corpses.

The ants attacked Hamyuts from the front, from the rear, from left and right. She then realized Mokkania's aim.

His goal wasn't to let her be devoured. He wanted to bury her alive in ant corpses.

The mass of ants filling the Labyrinth was already close to that of a castle. Even Hamyuts didn't know what would happen if she got hit by that kind of mass.

Mokkania fully invoked his Magic Right. The quantity created by him was enough for the ants he produced to be crushed by their own mass. It was no longer an attack. It was a huge disaster aiming to destroy the Labyrinth.

“Drown to death, Hamyuts!!!”

At the exact same time, Hamyuts loaded a bullet into her sling and rotated it. She wasn't aiming for Mokkania. She shot the walls and ceiling.

Simultaneously she ordered Shlamuffen's attack. She changed aim from the ants to the wall.

Mokkania and Hamyuts both destroyed the Labyrinth at the same time.

The ants' mass, the stone-slinging, and Shlamuffen's slashes running amok, all made the walls of the Labyrinth collapse.

Renas was walking in the Labyrinth. Tracing the walls with her right hand and leaving the tip of her cane to the ants crawling on the ground, she kept walking.

A little while ago they passed a location that wasn't inside the Labyrinth. She didn't check the surroundings, but it was probably an Archive. Judging from what Mokkania said, it was probably the place called the Fifth Archive.

Her cane touched a step. Putting her hand to the floor, Renas climbed the stairs as if crawling. Considering the location, she thought those were the stairs they passed earlier.

Why was she here? Why did she have to enter this Labyrinth that allowed no intruders?

Winkeny said it was to protect her. But was that really true? Her shoulder hit by the bullet ached. She couldn't think of this as the safest place.

The vibrations and sounds coming from behind were probably from the fight between Mokkania and Hamyuts. Is Mokkania safe? She was worried and wanted him to come back. Perhaps he would return if she could see.

“...Mokkania.”

Renas muttered. What is my child hiding from me? No, it's also Winkeny-san and the person who turned out to be really our enemy, Locolo-san. And Feekiee, the person who presented himself as an Armed Librarian. What are they hiding from me?

She didn't inquire about this. If Mokkania hid things from her, she believed that they were things that must be hidden. He will definitely tell her when the time comes. If Mokkania hid it from her, she will not probe into it.

However, if Mokkania is doing bad things... Renas's heart ached and quivered thinking about that. Even though she believed him to be a good boy.

I want to believe in Mokkania, Renas thought. No, I have to believe in him. After all, in her memories there was nothing other than Mokkania.

Then, the ground shook.

## Part 2

The floor and walls have collapsed. The central part of the Fourth Labyrinth collapsed in a radius of 200 meters. A huge cavity opened up inside the complex maze. Below it was a swamp made of ant corpses. Rubble could be seen poking around here and there on it. Mokka's created ants were almost wiped out by Shlamuffen's attack and the Labyrinth's collapse.

However, the clash of the duo who were the world's strongest didn't end.

At the center of the cavity, Hamyuts was standing atop a mountain of rubble. At the start of the cavity, Mokka was standing on the edge of a crumbling corridor.

For the first time since they started fighting, they could see each other.

"...Ufufufu."

Hamyuts laughed. They both looked at each other.

Both of them had injuries in spots that would kill any normal person. Mokka's entire body was dyed in blood after getting hit by gravel bullets. Caught up in the collapse, Hamyuts wasn't able to keep the device on her left hand. Shlamuffen was mounted on it but flew around somewhere during the collapse.

Mokka released his ants. Hamyuts started rotating the sling held in her right hand.

This next round will be the last – thus Mokkania felt. No matter who of them wins, it will be settled with this next attack.

Mokkania lost his greatest shield, which was the Labyrinth itself. Hamyuts could now hit him with a direct attack instead of rebounded shots. He will not be able to defend against a full-powered attack.

And as for Hamyuts, she no longer had Shlamuffen on her hand. She had no way to prevent Mokkania's attack.

“ ... ”

Mokkania gasped. Hamyuts was aiming for an opening when he would attack next. The moment he produces his ants, he won't be able to evade.

If they were to attack simultaneously, he will lose. Mokkania will lag behind for just one moment.



He had to find something. Something that would divert Hamyuts's attention, even if for a second.

Will something so convenient appear? If it will, it would be a miracle.

Mokkania wished for it.

Stop Hamyuts's attack. Mom is waiting for me. My mom, who replied "welcome back" to my "I'm home", is waiting for me.

I just need another miracle like the one that let me reunite with her.

Just one more miracle.

The shaking subsided. However, small vibrations could be felt with one's feet. Renas endured her urge to return to Mokkania's side. What could she do? She couldn't fight. She could only go back as Mokkania told her to.

Renas thought to herself – that boy changed. Though, it was natural he would change, seeing as he was twenty years removed from the Mokkania in my memories.

But she suddenly thought...

Is that boy really my Mokkania?

“...!”

Renas shook her head. She was deeply ashamed at herself for thinking such a thing. Mokkania certainly changed. He became a stronger and scarier person. But he was also lonely and pampered, so nothing really changed. Besides, Mokkania’s feelings for her were transmitted through his words, actions and skin. He could be no-one other than Mokkania.

“...”

Then why did she feel uncomfortable? What was the hollowness in her heart? She felt there was some gap between her and Mokkania that couldn’t be filled.

There’s no way that... a single flash of insight was born inside Renas’s mind.

Then, her cane hit something with a clank.

“...What?”

She moved the cane towards the stairs. Even raising the cane up to her waist, the obstacle was still there. She timidly touched it with her hand and felt a cold metal texture.

“...A wall?”

Was there such a thing before? No, more importantly, she couldn’t move forward like that.

“...Mokkania. What am I supposed to do?”

The two people’s standoff lasted not even ten seconds. The sling’s trajectory changed. Since Hamyuts was convinced he wouldn’t attack, she shot at Mokkania without waiting for any counter.

Suddenly, the silence was broken by a single intruder. Both of their gazes were directed there.

“Oops!”

Mokkania heard Hamyuts’s cry. Something came rushing, sweeping away rubble and ant corpses. Both Mokkania and Hamyuts looked at it at the same time.

Mokkania felt it was the return of a miracle. What appeared was a single Guardian Beast. It wasn’t fully killed by his ants. The Guardian Beast that appeared was the one that, based on its large body and appearance, was known as Elephant Soldier. Shaking the Labyrinth with its violent footsteps, Elephant Soldier rushed at Hamyuts.

Hamyuts’s sling crushed its head. It was a natural action to take. Even Hamyuts would be killed if hit by that large body.

But it was enough. It gave Mokkania time to invoke his Magic Right.

A large amount of ants was created inside the cavity. They poured down on

Hamyuts. At the same time Mokkania turned his body to avoid the sling attack.

However, the simultaneous attack he thought would occur didn't. Hamyuts's body sank in the sea of ants.

"Did I... win?"

He was suddenly covered in cold sweat. His feet couldn't move. Sitting on the floor, Mokkania exhaled. He didn't even have enough power left to raise a cry of victory.

"...I won."

Mokkania weakly muttered. The tension that felt like it would stop his heart melted down, even made him smile, and Mokkania sank down to the floor.

Renas put the cane at her feet. Then, she used both hands to explore the wall. There were no gaps in the metal barrier. There were no hinges on the edges. When she tried banging on it she heard a dull noise. It was a pretty thick wall.

"...We're blocked, but why..."

Renas muttered while checking the wall.

She got on her knees and checked the floor. There might be something there. She felt ants with the tips of her hands.

“What am I supposed to do...”

She explored further still. Her hand then touched something.

At that moment, a scene that she shouldn't be able to see was opened in front of her. Memories flowed into her head like surging waves. Renas thought – what I touched was a Book.

But why is there a Book here?

And whose Book is this?

If he were to think calmly, he should have confirmed Hamyuts's death. However, Mokkaia no longer had the energy to do even that. Winkeney will take care of Hamyuts's death and Haiza's Book one way or the other. It had nothing to do with him.

He rose up and started walking towards his mother.

He felt strange. Even though he got his hands on everything he lost, he felt a tinge of loneliness.

Mokkaia's mom should have returned to his room. If he'll go back there, she will be waiting for him.

That room was no longer a replica of that joyous time period. It would now be that time period itself.

It would become a room that would reply “welcome back” to his “I’m home”. Mokkania dragged along his aching body. Just a bit more, just a bit more, he muttered.

He passed through the Fifth Sealed Archive and walked to route 51. On the way, he found something unfamiliar. Part of the Labyrinth was blocked by a copper-colored barrier.

“What’s that...”

He has heard about it. The Labyrinth could be closed by the Acting Director or anyone receiving the authority from her. He thought it was a rumor, though.

“What about mom?”

His happy feeling was suddenly blown away by anxiety. Encouraging his aching body, he rushed through the part of route 51 that hasn’t been sealed.

Mokkania found yet another barrier. Route 51 was also blocked. Also, his mom was in front of the wall. Her cane was thrown aside and she was lying on the ground.

“What’s wrong, mom?”

He rushed to her and helped her sit up.

She was acting strange. She seemed stunned. Also, she flinched away from Mokkania’s touch.

“Mom, what’s wrong? It’s me...”

“You’re... Mokkania...”

His mother raised her pale face towards him. Did something happen? Mokkania looked at her and then surveyed the surroundings.

Then, he found it.

It was a herd of small ants, different from his carnivorous ones. They were the working ants that should have taken the Book away and were now in front of the wall.

“Why are they still here...”

Then, he also noticed the item lying on his mother’s lap.

It was the Book fragment that was carried away because he couldn’t allow his mother to see it.

“...W...hy...”

Mokkania muttered. Why is this still here? All the people who might have uncovered the secret – the Armed Librarians, Locolo and Hamyuts have been eliminated.

Why was the most crucial item still here?

“You call me your mom?”

Still pale, his mother questioned him.

“Wasn’t she your mother?”

She pointed to the Book on her lap.

“Isn’t this your mother’s Book? It’s not mine.”

Even though he came so far, this...

“Hey, who am I supposed to be?”

Mokkania’s body lost all power. His knees buckled and he fell to the floor. His mother’s hands clung to him, shaking him violently.

“Who am I, Mokkania? Where am I, who are you, who am I, Mokkania!!!”

Mokkania fought so he could regain the days he lost.

He sided with his enemies, killed his allies, and kept fighting while throwing everything away.

And now, what he sought to obtain was going to slip away from him: Mokkania's fictional relationship that he built up and the far-past days that should have returned. All were gone in the blink of an eye.

"...This can't, be."

Mokkania looked up above.

However, those were long-past days that became a Book and were included in the Library.

No matter how strongly he would wish for it, no matter what he would offer as sacrifice, and even if a miracle occurred...

Days gone by will not return. Whatever happens, they will not return.

"Why, why is this..."

He asked, and received no answer. Mokkania stared above at empty space while Renas cast down her eyes and cried.

A little while before that...

It was in the sea of ant corpses after Mokkania left the scene. Hamyuts Meseta's corpse was supposed to be buried inside, but suddenly, Shlamuffen started laughing loudly. Ants that crawled around were killed all at once, and rubble burst away.

And then Hamyuts appeared from within the sea of corpses.

She smiled, her face covered with blood and remains. The conclusion hadn't been reached yet.

One minute earlier than that, Hamyuts confronted Mokkania. Just when she was going to shoot the gravel bullet and stop any counterattack...

Her attention was suddenly obstructed by an intruder.

She looked away from Mokkania at Elephant Soldier. Hamyuts realized her fatal mistake at that moment. She missed her greatest chance of attacking Mokkania.

“Oops!”

She didn't even need to confirm it by sight. The swarm of ants started covering her head.

Now, it would be a mutual kill if she could shoot Mokkania. But Hamyuts did not choose to do that.

She swung around two gravel bullets in her sling. She hit Elephant Soldier with one of them.

Ants came showering down on her. Amid that, Hamyuts shot again. Using rotation, she lifted Elephant Soldier from the side.

Its body floated, and then started falling.

Hamyuts ran. Just before Elephant Soldier fell, she slipped under its giant body.

She could hear the bones in her body creaking. Crushed by Elephant Soldier, Hamyuts sunk her own body down the sea of ants.

Running away was part of Hamyuts's tactics for certain victory. She once again applied that here.

That was also Mokka's mistake. He had prepared Hamyuts's last refuge – the sea of ants – by himself.

Hamyuts's shot used Elephant Soldier's bulk in order to take refuge.

“ ... ”

She was suffocating.

The ants were eating Elephant Soldier's body to arrive to Hamyuts. At this rate, she would be killed in a minute.

Inside the sea of ants, Hamyuts extended her uninjured right hand. It didn't hold the sling anymore. Prior to her sinking down, she removed it with her mouth and threw it away. She had never done something like throwing her weapon away in the midst of battle before.

Around her were ant corpses and the weight of Elephant Soldier's bulk. Even moving a finger wasn't easy. Hamyuts desperately extended her right hand. She breathed in pain. Her whole body creaked.

Thirty seconds have passed. Elephant Soldier's body was being devoured overhead.

At that time, her fingertips touched the thing buried within the rubble.

The second shot that hit Elephant Soldier was also a strategic move for her counterattack. Directly below the place she blew it to, the Ever-Laughing Magic Blade Shlamuffen was buried.

Shlamuffen bit into Hamyuts's fingers. The sea of ants burst apart with loud laughter.

Hamyuts crawled out of it.

"...gh...a...ha..."

Climbing on top of the rubble protruding from the sea, she threw up vomit and blood.

Upon finishing that, she laid down her limp body on top of the rubble.

"This isn't, over, Mokkania. Our fight to the death will, keep going."

Hamyuts rested there for a while, and then rose up. Her eyes looked more disarrayed than usual. She already wouldn't make any distinction between friend and foe. She would probably attack even unrelated persons without hesitating.

“Mokkania. Who am I?”

Renas asked. No, should she even be called Renas? But because no one knew her real name any longer, there was no choice but calling her Renas even now.

There were no longer any mother and child there. They were merely a reckless traitor and an empty doll who didn't know her own name.

“You're...”

He didn't want to speak. Even now, Mokkania wanted to keep clinging to his mother's illusion. However, he couldn't do anything but speak of it all.

His mother's death, the Indulging God Cult's plan, and his battle and wish. Without sparing any detail, Mokkania told her of the foolish, foolish plan.

He thought back on Winkeney's words. She probably hated him now. He wanted to die. He couldn't bear the agony of being hated by the person he wanted to be loved by the most.

“So that's how it went...”

Saying only this, Renas went silent. Mokkania couldn't even guess her

feelings. How much has she suffered from the pain of having found out she wasn't herself and the pain of having so much blood shed for her sake?

Mokkania had to face her properly. Everything was his fault.

"I'm sorry, mom."

Mokkania apologized. However, it was meaningless.

Hearing his reply, Renas started laughing.

Clenching her fist, she hit Mokkania's head.

Just as Mokkania's real mother did long ago.

"Don't keep secrets from your mother."

Renas smiled a little, but then spoke with a crying face.

"...But I'm not even your mother."

## Part 3

Hamyuts picked up her sling. Holding Shlamuffen in her mouth, she stood up. She looked up the path Mokkania used to leave and leaped ahead – but didn't jump high enough. Hamyuts fell down and hit the floor. The wounds in her thinking process were deep.

Yet she didn't stop. She rose and jumped again. She gripped the ceiling using her right arm and both legs to climb up. She understood her opponents' location using her Sensory Threads.

I'll punch out Mokkania's skull with one blow. That would probably satisfy him.

"Wait for me, Mokkania. I'm coming."

Hamyuts started walking, blood dripping from her entire body.

"Don't you hate me?"

Mokkania asked.

"What is there to hate about you?"

Renas stroked Mokkania's body.

“How horrible, you’re so tattered. You fought for my sake and became like this, and yet you say I hate you?”

Renas started smiling. But Mokkania thought to himself – did I really fight for her sake?

No. If he truly was acting for her, he would have told her the truth without betraying the Armed Librarians. Since he didn’t, it was for his own sake. It was to retrieve his lost days, for his own desire.

“You’re wrong, mom.”

“About what?”

“...I didn’t do it for you, mom. In the end everything is for me. I fought for my own selfishness.”

Renas gently extended her hand to Mokkania’s cheek that was wet from blood and tears and stroked it.

“Even so, I don’t mind. You love me, don’t you? If you do, it’s fine.”

Renas kept smiling while shedding tears.

“But, Mokkania. What do you think we should do? I can’t be anyone other than Renas Fleur. Even now when I know it’s a lie, I have nothing else.”

“...Mom.”

Renas leaned on Mokkania.

“Say it, Mokkania. Call me your mother. I have nothing else.”

Winkeny once said that if Renas knew the truth, she would come to hate Mokkania. His prediction was wrong. The despair she was thrown into was far deeper than either Mokkania or Winkeny imagined.

Even if she knew it was a lie, her despair was deep to the extent she could do nothing else but cling to him.

While walking and holding Shlamuffen in her mouth, Hamyuts ordered it to attack.

The invisible blade cut through the nearby wall. It wasn't an attack – but a declaration of war. It was a single blow letting Mokkania know the battle wasn't over.

Thinking calmly about it, she was at a disadvantage. This wasn't her usual tactic of a surprise attack. But right now, she was anything but calm.

She trembled in joy thinking about their struggle to kill each other which will now resume.

Mokkania felt a vibration while holding Renas's body.

“So you’re alive... Hamyuts.”

Rather than fear, he somehow felt relieved. For some reason, he felt relief at finding out his superior – the one he could never cooperate with, the one he grew to hate, the one he battled to death with – was still alive.

Hamyuts came to kill him. She would probably also kill Renas who was in his arms.

He will die along with his mother. Thinking about it, this was the exact conclusion he hoped for.

“ ... ”

Mokkania suddenly recalled the past.

Why did he want to flee from the present and return to that day?

His father who abused his mother, the old friend who bullied him, the fight against Guinbex... And finally, his escape to the past.

Right. Mokkania both hated and feared the fact that the strong could trample upon the weak at their mercy. It was an important thing his mother taught him.

He felt his mother’s body within his arms. She was cold and trembling.

“What...”

What a stupid thing I've been doing. Once again I only did as I pleased. I was going to repeat my mistakes.

I shouldn't have thought about having us both die.

"Mom."

Mokkania said.

"I'm sorry."

And he strongly embraced her.

Hamyuts stopped in her tracks. She felt with her Sensory Threads that Mokkania rose up and started heading in her direction.

He wasn't producing ants from his body. Hamyuts's excitement completely chilled down at seeing Mokkania walking defenselessly. She could see that he no longer had any intention of fighting.

"What."

Hamyuts sighed. Mokkania approached the spot where he became visible.

"Are we already done?"

Mokkania nodded.

“I see.”

Hamyuts replied in a terribly pained voice.

The conversation was over with that. For a while, the two merely locked gazes.

“Hey, didn’t you want to die along with her?”

Hamyuts said.

“I’m going to kill you, but I’ll allow you to choose how I do that.”

“...”

“Return to that room and die with her. I don’t mind granting you that much. Since you’re not going to fight anymore, I don’t mind allowing you your desires.”

Mokkania shook his head.

“No, I will die here.”

“...Is that your wish?”

“Yes.”

“Liar.”

Hamyuts said. There was no reply.

“Please, Hamyuts. Let her live.”

Hamyuts instinctively sighed.

“What a foolish man. You can’t even die together with the person you love?”

Mokkania cast down his gaze.

“If you wish so, go ahead. You can do that. You want that, right, Mokkania?”

Mokkania answered her words without hesitating.



“I can’t do such a thing. I can’t just kill people as I please.”

“A fool to the very end.”

Hamyuts sighed. Then, Mokkania created his ants.

“I was attempting a foolish thing. I’m really glad I was able to give it up.”

The ants climbed on Mokkania’s body. And they started gnawing at him.

“Hamyuts. Don’t let her die. She is a person who should not be killed.”

“...Are those your final words?”

Mokkania’s body was blanketed by ants.

“That, and tell everyone I’m sorry.”

Leaving behind his final words, he collapsed. After a moment, the ants disappeared. Not even a droplet of blood was left behind.

If he was just a bit more evil, he would have died together with Renas inside their happy times. Mokkania wanted that but was unable to fulfill it – it couldn’t be helped, because he was virtuous after all.

It was the foolish death of the person who couldn't kill a single woman even though he possessed the power of the world's strongest.

“Mokkania. You shouldn't have become an Armed Librarian.”

Hamyuts left these words and went away.

“A telegram from the Director!”

Mirepoc cried.

“I won. Open the seal and all barriers at once. Hamyuts”

Mattalast went to open the barrier. And he made a small sigh.

“So you lived through again, Hammy.”

He muttered.

Having sent the telegram, Hamyuts sat down on the floor. She was bleeding too much. Her pain, that was numbed by excitement, now returned to her.

She leaned on the wall and breathed. She could sense the actions Mattalast took outside the Labyrinth.

At that moment, she noticed that Winkeny came into the room and transformed into petroleum.

“Oh, you’re still here?”

Hamyuts called to him.

“...Before I die, I have one question for you.”

Winkeny said, still in the form of petroleum.

“How was Mokkania?”

“He looked happy.”

“I see.”

The pool of petroleum shook. While he was in that form, his feelings couldn’t be guessed.

“Is that all you came to ask me?”

“Yes.”

Winkeny tried leaving the telegraph room. He would probably be killed by a Guardian Beast or some Armed Librarian. He had no way to survive.

“Hey, I also have something to ask you.”

“What?”

The petroleum stopped.

“Why did you prepare a real imposter? Couldn’t you think of a better idea even with such a dangerous method?”

“...”

“For example, you could have caused Renas to join the Cult and let her persuade him to betray us.”

Winkeny stayed silent. It was impossible to know what he was thinking about.

“...I wonder why. Now that I think about it, I don’t know.”

That might be because... Hamyuts thought.

“It’s just that, when I brought Renas to visit Mokkaia’s room... when he saw her, he looked so happy...”

Winkeny couldn’t continue talking there. After a while of silence, he kept talking with some difficulty.

“I felt very good. Perhaps it’s because of that.”

“...I see.”

Hamyuts took a matchstick from next to the heater.

“I lived so I could manipulate Mokkania. In a sense, I was living for Mokkania.”

Hamyuts rubbed the match, and threw it when she saw it lit up.

“I might have simply wanted to make Mokkania happy.”

Winken was ignited by the match. Without leaving any ashes behind, he turned into smoke and disappeared.

“Well then.”

Hamyuts rose up and left the telegraph room.

Hamyuts found Renas standing still in the Labyrinth. There was no longer any one to protect her. Hamyuts walked closer.

“Hello, I’m the Acting Director, Hamyuts. I will ask you to promptly accompany me as it is very dangerous around here.”

“Hamyuts-san... so you were a woman.”

Renas quietly muttered. Hamyuts judged from her facial expression that she might burst in tears if told careless words.

She couldn't guess Renas's feelings. How will she, who lost Mokkania and had no-one else to rely on, keep living from now?

Letting her die with Mokkania would be bad, but letting her live would also be.

“...”

It would possibly be an act of kindness to let her die here.

“Why are you silent? Let us go outside.”

Her hand that was about to reach a gravel bullet had stopped. Hamyuts smiled bitterly at her foolish thoughts.

“That's right...”

She reached out for Renas.

“Do you need a hand?”

Renas shook her head to the side. Searching on the floor, she picked up her cane.

“No. I’ll walk alone.”

She rose up, squeezing the cane with her thin fingers. She then started walking.

There was a Book fragment in Renas’s breast pocket. It was the Book of the real Renas Fleur that Mokkania tried keeping away from her. Renas probed her pocket and touched that Book once more.

Engraved inside were the Renas and young Mokkania of days past.

It was a sunny day in a road lined with poplar trees. Mokkania was in a good mood, and Renas was a bit tired.

“Wait!”

She pulled at Mokkania’s hand. The boy was surprised and looked at his mother’s face.

“Look here.”

She pointed at the ground. There was a line of small ants there.

“You mustn’t step on them.”

“...Okay.”

Mokkania nodded, and then used his small legs to leap over the line of ants.

“Hey, Mokkania. When you’re grown up, remember what I’ve told you.”

“?”

“Never oppress those weaker than yourself. Make a promise with me.”

The young Mokkania didn’t really understand what his mother was saying. Yet Renas continued. Even if he couldn’t understand her now, she believed that he would recall this day when he was older.

“Small things and weak things are all the same. These ants, you, and me, are all the same.”

Renas turned around and gazed down at the line of ants.

“Because we’re alive, we’re all the same. Never forget this.”

At that time she was already sick. It was a short while before the real Renas had died.

The fake Renas was thinking as she walked through the Labyrinth. Mokkania protected these words until the very end.

‘Never oppress those who are weaker than yourself’.

Perhaps I was happy... after all, despite being an empty doll, I was able to obtain a son who thought of his mother.

# Fragment: Napping In The Hospital Room

“Whatever you say, the Director’s also a Librarian. Even though she fought so hard, so didn’t destroy even a single Book. But just in case, we should re-examine everything.”

Minth said to Mirepoc who was walking next to him. The two of them were on their way back after checking the damage to the Archives and Labyrinths. They were walking together in the collapsed Fourth Labyrinth.

“Right...”

Mirepoc’s voice was glum.

“With this our job’s done. There are still some worrying matters, though.”

It is true that they were able to fight off the Indulging God Cult. However, the damage they received wasn’t small.

Due to the collapse, all routes from 22 to 45 became inaccessible. Although the Labyrinth was able to repair itself, it will take several years until it returns to normal.

The Labyrinth will be eventually restored. However, their two comrades will never return. They will never be able to fight alongside Mokkania and Feekiee again. Both of them were valuable combat assets, and they were both important comrades. Although Mokkania betrayed them, he was still important to them nonetheless.

The man called Winkeney was born so he could defeat Mokkaia. In short, it meant that their side lost from the very beginning.

Once again I wasn't able to do anything, Mirepoc thought.

"Minth-san, why do you think the Cult wanted Haiza's Book?"

"I dunno. We're investigating it right now."

"I never knew him, what kind of a person was he?"

"I never met him either. It was about ten years ago."

I see, Mirepoc thought.

Although he was Mirepoc's senior, his career only started about three years ago. He wasn't a veteran at all.

"Did he belong to the Indulging God Cult?"

"...If it was so, we would have known before putting him in the Archive. Since no important information was found, the Director shelved him."

"But they aimed for his Book..."

“I have no idea about that, but there was probably something important written inside.”

It will need to be investigated from hereafter. How closer were they getting to the Cult’s truth?

“What kind of a job did this Haiza have?”

“Same as me. He was a second grade Armed Librarian and not really strong.”

“More specifically, what did he do?”

Minth smiled as if telling her ‘look for yourself if you want to know’.

“Probably the regular stuff – shelving Books and managing the mines. Also... what was it? I can’t remember the name...”

Minth started thinking.

“Ah right. He investigated the Book-seller called Lascall Othello.”

Mirepoc stopped in her tracks.

“Lascall Othello?”

“What’s wrong, Mirepoc?”

It was a name that rose during Mirepoc's reasoning once before. A name that she gave up on investigating once she was unable to find any clues or relevance to matters on hand. It was unbelievable that she would hear it again.

"Lascal Othello..."

Mirepoc had a premonition – that name could become a turning point in the long battle.

In Bantorra Library's downtown hospital, Hamyuts was breathing as she slept. It was a room where one could see the sea dyed by the setting sun from the window.

Even Hamyuts's robust body needed some time to recover. Even compared to the various generations of Acting Directors, she bore grievous wounds many times.

"Mm..."

Hamyuts opened her eyes. At the same time the door to the room opened and Mattalast peeked inside.

"Were you sleeping?"

"A little."

Hamyuts rubbed her eyes as she said that.

“I had a good dream, Mattalast.”

“Was it about Mokkania?”

Hamyuts nodded. Mattalast knew about it – Hamyuts’s good dreams were mostly the same. She would dream of someone she had fought before killing her.

She often dreamed about the bombs, Cigal, or Enlike killing her.

“I wasn’t able to find Shlamuffen and my sling was also lost somewhere. I was at my wits’ end.”

She said while smiling. How many times had she dreamed about Mokkania killing her so far?

Hamyuts turned around in bed. Her laughter suddenly became a worried voice.

“Hey, Matt. I’m really worried. I defeated the one who is the world’s strongest in the Labyrinth while fighting him there.”

“You did.”

“Will I be even able to meet others like him from now on? I feel like there aren’t any other people in this world that can kill me.”

Hamyuts spoke anxiously. It was a tone Mattalast didn't hear in a long time. He smiled as if thinking it was cute.

"One will definitely come. There are a lot of men. You will be able to meet a splendid one."

While raising her body, Hamyuts looked at Mattalast's face.

"Like you?"

Mattalast shrugged.

"Stop."

Hamyuts giggled.

"I just came to see you today. The Library's hectic, so I have to return soon."

"Yeah, do that. I'll feel bad if you have a mountain of work to do when I return."

Despite her saying this, Mattalast stayed there for a while and watched the sea from the window. They didn't talk. Before long, Mattalast started speaking again.

"Hey, Hammy."

Hamyuts didn't reply.

“You're strange. You desire a battle more than anyone else, but never initiate that battle yourself. You are always, always patiently waiting for someone to kill you.”

No reply.

“It's as if...”

Hamyuts already fell asleep again. Mattalast smiled wryly.

Without continuing his words, Mattalast left the hospital room.

“As if... what?”

Listening to the sound of the door being closed, Hamyuts quietly muttered.

# Afterword

Hello everyone. This is Yamagata Ishio. I thus deliver “Tatakau Shisho to Kuroari no Meikyu” to you. It came out fast, and we’re now at the third installment of the “Tatakau Shisho” series. Since I’ll keep going, let me be in your care.

Allow me to tell you a somewhat useless story.

I think it was about a year ago. I was heading back home from the night shift of my part-time job at around 1:00 AM. That starry night was cold enough to make my hands shiver despite wearing gloves.

At times like these, I have to be grateful for the convenience of vending machines – or rather that of civilization. Immediately after getting off the train, while thinking about stuff like “should I get coffee or green tea? No no, at times like these things like corn pottage or oden warm up your body more”, 120 yen were inserted from my wallet into the vending machine.

At that instant, my eyes were caught on one item.

“Sweet red-bean soup”

It really is a great invention. When it arrived here it was said to be an evil product, but now it was simply an item in the vending machine’s lineup. The only problem was the word written underneath it.

“Co~ld”

What a good joke – thinking this, I pressed the button. Of course, I acted like this because I thought the inscription was wrong.

When I took the sweet red-bean soup that fell out, I muttered to myself,

“How come it’s actually cold?”

When I arrived back home, I dumped the can’s contents into a pot, boiled it and then drank it. It wasn’t really good.

During this year’s summer, when I passed by that vending machine, I found out that sweet red-bean soup was still there. Normally thinking its notation would have changed to “wa~rm”, but unfortunately nothing like that happened, and the sweet red-bean soup was still enshrined above “co~ld”.

I see. That is the idea of drinking cold sweet red-bean soup in the summer. What a new sensation. I bought it without hesitation.

It was horrible.

Yesterday, when I saw that vending machine once more, the sweet red-bean soup was gone.

Just what happened to it? Was it the owner’s carelessness? Was there some other deep reason? Perhaps something bad was involved? What am I, after spending 240 yen for that incomprehensible taste two times already, supposed to do?

But with this, I was able to tell a story in the afterword. Besides, I can't deny the possibility of me using this experience as an idea for a novel one day.

So it was a good thing. It was good... probably. Telling this to myself, I left the vending machine.

This time I was also able to complete the book due to the help of various people. There's Maeshima Shigeki-sama, who drew the beautiful illustrations, the editor who gave me advice, everyone in the editorial department backing me up, and my family who have supported me my whole life; I use this opportunity to thank you all.

Let us meet again in my next work. Thank you very much.

Yamagata Ishio