

戦司書 追想の魔女

Tatakau Sisho to Tsuisou no Majo

Ishio Yamagata

山形石雄

Shigeki Maeshima

Illustration 前嶋重機



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スピードダッシュ

Tatakau Shisho
vol.5 - Fighting Librarians And The Witch
Of Recollection

by Yamagata Ishio

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Characters



Photona
フォトナ

先代のバントーラ
図書館館長代行。
強く厳格な男。



Vend-Ruga
ベンド＝ルガー

神溺教団に生み出された兵器。
鉛の体を持つ人形。



Renas
レナス

武装司書モッカニアの
母親。すでに死亡して
いるが、神溺教団の手
で複製が生み出されて
いる。

Charlot
シャーロット

神溺教団に属する
大魔術師。



Photona

The previous Acting Director of Bantorra Library. A very strict man.

Vend Ruga

A weapon created by the Indulging God Cult. A doll with a body made of lead.

Renas

The Mother of Armed Librarian Mokkaia. She had already died, but was reproduced at the hands of the Indulging God Cult.

Charlot

A great Magician who belongs to the Indulging God Cult.

戦と司書と 追想の魔女

Tatakau Sisho to Tsumi no Majo

characters

武装司書

Hamyutsu
ハミユッツ

パントーラ図書館の
館長代行。冷酷で
好戦的な女性。

Vizac
ビザク

ベテランの武装司書。
ヴォルケンと親しい。

Volken
ヴォルケン

年若い武装司書。
正義感が強く、
ハミユッツに反旗を翻す。



Hamyuts

The Acting Director of Bantorra Library. A cruel and aggressive woman.

Vizac

A veteran Armed Librarian. Close to Volken.

Volken

A young Armed Librarian. Has a strong sense of justice and thus revolts against Hamyuts.

Prologue: Lamentation on the Beach

I gave up.

I gave up living a long time ago.

Hamyuts Meseta is coming to kill me. I cannot hope to avoid her gravel bullets with my slow body. I cannot hope to escape her Sensory Threads with my horribly conspicuous body.

I gave up being rewarded quite a long while ago.

It is said that happiness has a fixed quantity in the world. My happiness might have been completely robbed by some happy person somewhere in the world. Fate has always been cruel to me.

I gave up being loved the other day.

Since my body became non-human, there is no one to love me.

If there is one thing that I cannot give up, that would be the driving force moving my body. My body that became non-human is moving by my unwillingness to give up.

Only one thing. I do not want to forget... the fact that I was in this world.

I want someone to know... that I once had a heart. That I thought the moon was beautiful when I looked at it. That I was sad when I saw dead people. That I thought someone was precious to me when I looked at that person.

Nobody knows that. All the people who knew this have died.

Hamyuts Meseta is coming. She's coming to kill me. Even so, my body doesn't give up and still keeps going.

1923, autumn. It was a year before the Dragon Pneumonia Incident.

Ismo Republic, East Coast. Near the northern border was an ocean called Allow Bay. Five Armed Librarians were there.

The sea was calm. All the seagulls flew high above the Armed Librarians in

circles as if realizing that peace has returned.

There was nothing on the vast sea's surface. Basked in the northern cold sunlight, the gently shaking waves sparkled.

Up until a few hours ago, that sea was a battlefield. That seemed unbelievable now.

The sea had swallowed it all. Both the ship covered with a powerful Magic barrier as well as the human bombs that approached the Armed Librarians. It swallowed and sank everything.

This battle was later called the Allow Bay Naval Assault Incident. That was the day it began – the longstanding fight of the Armed Librarians led by Hamyuts Meseta against the Indulging God Cult.

“...Volken, stop crying.”

A single Armed Librarian crawled on the cliff and pushed his forehead against the rocks. He was crying. He was the young Armed Librarian known as Volken.

The Armed Librarian Luimon was patting his back. He comforted him as if wrapping his large body around him.

“What's wrong with Volken?”

Hamyuts inquired. She folded her arms next to the two and gazed at the sea.

“Director, please wait for a little while.”

Luimon answered. And he stroked the back of Volken who cried out in an especially loud voice.

“...Volken.”

The Armed Librarian Mirepoc was watching their backs. And she then sighed for the umpteenth time.

The battle of Allow Bay ended in the Armed Librarians' victory. All those affiliated with the Indulging God Cult have died without any exception.

But no one was pleased with that victory.

It was not only the followers of the Indulging God Cult who have died. All the people that were kept on the ship by them were also dead. Hamyuts's rescue

team has failed.

That fact dropped a shadow of melancholy on the Armed Librarians' expression.

“So, Mirepo. What about the seized goods?”

Asked Hamyuts. Mirepoc counted and checked the Books, documents and such items that they have brought from the ship.

“I've found something unexpected – a fragment of Shiron Booyacornish's Book. I've found the pathogens of Dragon Pneumonia as well. There is also one of the Memorial Weapons – the Spinning Doll Ücküek – and a matter transferring magic circle. To be frank, it's quite the treasure trove.”

“They seem to have stockpiled quite a lot.”

“Also, that ship was probably not the Indulging God Cult's headquarters. Looking at the documents, I am led to believe that there are many other Indulging God Cult facilities.”

“Hmm, not bad.”

Hamyuts mouthed her thoughts in a flat voice. Mirepoc spoke from behind her.

“Frankly, I cannot believe that the Indulging God Cult still exists in the world now.”

“Well, I can understand how you feel. It's been 500 years since they last appeared, after all.”

She scratched her hair that was wet with sea-water.

500 years ago, the Indulging God Cult was destroyed along with the Ever-Laughing Witch. All Armed Librarians have thought so. It was understandable that Mirepoc would be surprised.

“But, Mirepo. When the Ever-Laughing Witch revealed herself, the same thing had been said. That 300 years back the Indulging God Cult had been destroyed by the Great Kingdom Uprising. Yet the Cult survived.

These people are tenacious. You kill them and you kill them but they

resurrect.”

“That’s right...”

Mirepoc spoke in a melancholic tone.

“Besides, I wonder why those people ended up like that.”

She changed the subject. She was talking about the people kept inside the ship. The Armed Librarians found people smeared with dirt and grime that were robbed of their memories and reasoning power.

“That was probably human experimentation, or for example human bombs, something like that. That seems to be useful for plenty of other things though.”

Hamyuts said calmly.

“Unbelievable. How could humans do this?”

In contrast to Mirepoc whose voice roughened up, Hamyuts spoke without any emotion. She seemed to be frustrated but still had a bored expression.

“Oh well. Let’s keep our thoughts on winning the battle. Seems like it’s going to be long.”

“...Yes. Seems like it’ll be long.”

Mirepoc once again sighed. Given the battles with the Indulging God Cult in the past, no amount of sighs was enough. 500 years ago, the rampant Dragon Pneumonia had killed millions of people. 800 years ago, in the battles that took five years, four Acting Directors were killed in action.

Thinking about it, it might be said that the damage sustained in this battle was trivial.

Unexpectedly, Hamyuts chuckled.

“Well, the one silver lining is that we had this battle while I was here.”

What is that supposed to mean? Thought Mirepoc. Well, it certainly was fortunate that the Armed Librarian had Hamyuts, whose battle strength was prominent even in their whole history. However, she had a feeling this wasn’t all she meant.

Perhaps this allowed her to alleviate some of her boredom... that sort of

meaning was hidden in Hamyuts's words.

Mirepoc had the feeling that there was another ominous thing other than the existence of the Indulging God Cult.

"Even so!"

Said Hamyuts, sounding upset.

"How long are you going to cry, Volken. C'mon, Mirepo, say something."

"...Yes ma'am."

Mirepoc approached Volken. She knew him well. They became trainees during the same time and graduated as Armed Librarians during the same time – they were classmates.

He was a gentle man with a strong sense of justice. He was strong and honorable.

"Volken... this is no time for you to cry."

She put a hand on Volken's shoulder.

"...We were supposed to save them."

He moaned while pressing his forehead against the cliff.

"We had no choice. We couldn't save them. You shouldn't feel responsible."

"No!"

Volken banged his head against the rocks.

"We did have a choice..."

It was certainly true. She couldn't say they didn't. Not saving them was the Armed Librarians' failure. However, saying so will bring no comfort.

"Forget about it. Our fight's only just begun."

Luimon also said the same.

"Right. We have to fight. Both me and Mirepo are relying on you."

Even so, Volken kept crying for a while. Eventually, his crying voice faded and he rose up.

“Right. I have to fight.”

Saying so, he used his sleeve to wipe off the sand and tears from his face.

“But I won’t forget. I’ll never forget the fact we weren’t able to save these people. I’ll never forget we caused them to die.”

“That’s right. Those who kept these people in that state and those who killed them are the Indulging God Cult.”

“You should point all of your hatred at the Indulging God Cult. This isn’t the time to cry.”

They both encouraged Volken. He wiped his face again.

“...pff.”

Three young Armed Librarians were encouraging each other. Seeing this, Hamyuts let out a faint voice. It was the voice of her desperately trying to suppress her urge to laugh.

Airplanes from Bantorra came to pick them up and they headed back home.

Feekiee and the three novices rode the airplane in the front, while the plane in the back had Mattalast and Hamyuts.

“So it was the Indulging God Cult as we thought, Director.”

Mattalast said.

“Yeah. They were quite flashy.”

“So the Overseer of Paradise deceived me after all. Damn it, I should’ve killed that bastard.”

He applied strength into his hand holding the steering wheel.

“That’s right, that man’s quite something. His thinking is more heretical than I thought.”

Hamyuts said with a merry voice.

“You sound like you’re having fun, Hammy.”

Mattalast’s expression wasn’t cheerful. He didn’t like fighting that much in the first place.

She laughed louder this time.

“Yeah, I’m having fun. I wonder how much entertainment they’re going to provide me.”

Mattalast looked at the airplane in front of them.

“Volken’s been crying, huh. This was quite the painful first job for him.”

“Yeah, even those people on the ship ended poorly.”

On the surface, Hamyuts’s words seemed to be grieving their deaths. But those weren’t her true feelings.

Mattalast turned around.

“...Say, Hammy.”

His words sounded a bit angry.

“Yes?”

“You’re the one who probably killed all these people.”

The smile disappeared from Hamyuts’s face.

“...How did you find out?”

Mattalast held his forehead as if saying she’s hopeless.

“I just happened to think about it. Good grief, my intuition works only on bad things.”

Hamyuts scratched her head, attempting to dodge the question.

“I blew it. What will we do?”

“It’s fine. I’ll manage somehow.”

Mattalast sighed. His expression told of the fact that his troubles increased yet again.

“So, why did you kill them?”

He said in a cold voice. His tone indicated that he was not about to allow her to dodge or joke around.

“It’s just that there was a person that I had to kill no matter what on that

ship.”

“...And?”

“I had to kill that person as soon as possible. And I also had to hide the fact that I killed them.”

“And that’s why you killed them all?”

“To hide a tree use a forest. To hide a murder use a massacre. That’s how it was.”

Mattalast couldn’t hide his displeasure. Innocent people were mixed up in that and died. Even he had the conscience to resent this result.

“So, were you able to kill them?”

“Probably. If they were on that ship, they died.”

Meaning that if that person wasn’t there, all these deaths were meaningless.

“So, who was the person you wanted to kill?”

“...A woman. Her name was Olivia Littolet.

I only know her name. I know neither her face nor age. She might not have been alive in the first place.”

“And who was she?”

“Right... she was probably a common enemy of us and the Indulging God Cult.”

Hamyuts started talking. She explained about the woman called Olivia Littolet. She explained about the other bloody side of the Armed Librarian that she couldn’t talk to anyone but Mattalast about.

He kept listening to her story while suppressing his discomfort.

A year later, the Armed Librarians clashed with Cigal Crukessa. After that was the Monster Incident. Then Mokka’s rebellion, and then the hunt for Lascall Othello.

Olivia Littolet was completely unrelated to any of these incidents. Throughout these battles and busy times, her name had been forgotten.

Chapter 1: Chance Meeting at Night

Part 1

Renas Fleur opened her eyes.

“...A dream.”

She muttered while holding her chin at her desk. She seemed to have dozed off for a while. Customers have stopped coming since afternoon. This kind of free day was rare lately.

Renas Fleur was sitting by herself at the front of the tailor shop, where the warm autumn setting sun shone on her.

Inside the shop various clothes for men and women were densely hanging together or stacked folded atop the shelves. The sharp scent of insect-repellent camphor drifted about. She could see the “open” sign hung on the other side of the glass door. The main street in front of the shop continued all the way to Bantorra Library. This was the tailor shop that supplied the Armed Librarians.

“...Today makes it exactly five months.”

Renas muttered. She saw a dream of a long time ago. She dreamt of Mokkaia’s rebellion that shook Bantorra Library five months ago. A dream of when she was lost within the darkness and carried on the back of her grown-up son who walked along Bantorra Library.

Five months passed since then. In the meanwhile, peaceful days have continued for both Bantorra Library and Renas Fleur. Although she was a central figure of the incident, Renas had no abilities. She knew nothing to do with the Indulging God Cult. There were no benefits to restraining her, and there was no harm in releasing her.

Hamyuts and the rest have decided so and left Renas to her own devices. She got a job with Hamyuts’s referral and even had a small room. Although she was a person connected to an incident that remained in the Library’s history, Renas

had an unbelievably peaceful life there.

“Excuse me.”

The door opened with a woman’s voice. Inside came a girl with tanned skin and straw-rope wrapped around her fists. She held a paper bag to her chest. Renas recalled her name should be Noloty Malche.

“Welcome. Are you here for shopping?”

“No, I’d like to ask for a little repair.”

Saying so, Noloty put the paper bag on the desk. Inside were several clothes of the same design as the one she wore. All of them had tears and burn marks.

“Understood, I will estimate the price, so please wait for a bit.”

Renas checked every torn part one by one and calculated the price.

“Your eyes have been getting better, huh.”

“Yeah. Lately I’ve been able to see clearly even far.”

She said and smiled. Her smile was beautiful. The shape of her narrow eyes that gave a cold impression, along with the gentle light expressed by her pupils brought about a somewhat unbalanced charm.

Her long flaxen hair was tied by a white ribbon and was flung over the left shoulder and on her chest. She wore a pale-blue one-piece dress. Her thin, bewitching body was surrounded by some plain and frugal sort of air.

“Great to hear that!”

“Yeah. I was told I was given a drug that only made me temporarily unable to see, though. Here’s the price.”

After receiving payment from Noloty, Renas looked for the patched clothes.

Both Renas and Noloty haven’t noticed that at the time, someone was observing Renas. While she nimbly moved her hands to operate the scissors, hatred and murderous intention were directed at her.

She was gazing at Renas.

Her goal was to kill. *She* looked for a chance to kill her.

If *she* were to be asked if Renas had any sins she should be killed for, *she* could only answer no. However, *her* murderous intent never hesitated.

She has been living until now with an unbelievable amount of things deprived from her.

There were countless people who've lost their lives in this world. Everyone will have their lives taken away by time one day.

There were also plenty of people who've lost important things. After all everyone in the world was in competition with one another.

But was there another person who's been deprived as much as *her*? Was there anyone who kept living after being deprived of their important things as much as *her*? Was there anyone in the world who was deprived of something that was absolutely not supposed to be able to be taken?

This was revenge. *She* was taking revenge against that world that kept on taking from *her*.

That woman – Renas Fleur – was more than one of the world's residents; she was also a subject of her revenge.

And Renas Fleur was but the start. *She* had the determination to keep on fighting even after killing Renas.

In order to recover what was taken from her.

Renas spoke while threading the needle.

“At any rate, seems like you tear your clothes a lot on the job.”

“Well, it's that kinda job after all.”

Noloty replied while sighing. There were small cuts and burns all over her body.

“Training has been especially tough lately. All the trainees are already worn out.”

Thanks to that, Renas's business was flourishing. More than half of her customers were Armed Librarians and trainees. Using bodily reinforcement Magic, their wounds soon healed, but that didn't work for clothes. They would

suffer damage somewhere every day. No matter how high their salary was, tailor fees were nothing to sneeze at.



“I have always wondered, why do all of you fight in casual wear?

When heading to battle, wouldn't it be better to use clothes that are easy to move in?”

Noloty answered.

“Armed Librarians never know when they will have to fight. We have to train every day so we can fight even in our casual wear.”

“Being an Armed Librarian seems tough.”

Renas spoke frankly. At that moment, a few customers entered the shop. They seemed to be about as young as Noloty. All of them had bandages wrapped around their bodies.

“Oh, did you all finish training?”

Noloty asked. Renas remembered seeing them before. They were Armed Librarian trainees.

“Hey Noloty. We'll talk to you for sure today. You have to do something about that guy.”

A boy pointed at Noloty with a snap.

“By that guy, you mean Enlike?”

Noloty answered. The trainee held his head.

“Aah I don't want to hear his name. Don't use it. Call him 'that guy'.”

Another one said while stroking the bandage on his head.

“That guy doesn't know how to hold back.”

“No matter how you look at it, he seems like he wants to kill us. Is it fine letting him massacre us? He'll do it even if we tell him not to. Or rather it's impossible, we can't beat him.”

“This isn't combat *training*. It's *actual* combat.”

The trainees all shot their complaints. Noloty seemed troubled.

“You know, even if you complain to me about Enlike I can't do anything.”

“If we don't tell you that who are we going to talk with?”

“But it still bothers me that you do. I mean, Enlike is just holding back in his Enlike-ish way. It’s just that his standards are a bit strange.”

“Those standards are the issue here!”

The trainees kept complaining. Even Renas knew about the man they were talking about, Enlike Bishile. He was once a member of the Indulging God Cult but was now collaborating with the Armed Librarians. He was a powerful man who could control lightning, and he seemed to be mainly working with the trainees.

“Also, he’s soft on Noloty.”

“Huh?”

Caught by surprise, Noloty raised a voice.

“Yeah. Really soft.”

“That’s not true. He zaps even me.”

“No, he’s definitely soft on you. As soft as silk.”

“No no no, you’re misunderstanding.”

“No. You just haven’t noticed it.”

The trainees all spoke loudly at the store’s front. They seemed to have forgotten that Renas was there.

It was somewhat annoying, but not completely unpleasant. Their appearance that reflected the productive days they passed seemed very attractive to Renas’s eyes. Their bodies seemed to be brimming with youthful energy.

“More importantly, what about you two?”

“What about what?”

“Dense! You’re so dense! I’m asking how did your relationship progress!”

“Progress? What are you talking about?”

Noloty was flustered. The other trainees sighed.

“Hey now, he’ll get stolen like that. Only his face is good so there are plenty of girls aiming for him.”

“I-I-is that what you meant?”

Renas giggled without thinking. Hearing her, the trainees had their eyes focused on her.

“Oh, were we bothering you?”

“No, I don’t mind. It’s been fun.”

Renas said while smiling.

“I wonder if Mokkania was like you guys.”

“ ... ”

The trainees sank into silence. It was probably awkward hearing Mokkania’s name.

“He was a good person. You would’ve liked him.”

Noloty said. Although the subject was almost taboo, she spoke without worrying about it. It was one of her good points.

“Did you know each other?”

“It wasn’t like that, but he’s a person who’s made us worried. We had to make sure he didn’t catch a cold and such.”

“...Thank you, Noloty-san.”

“No, there’s nothing to thank me about.”

The sun started setting. It seemed like all the trainees finally noticed the time.

“Well, we have to go back now. Goodbye.”

Saying so, Noloty and the rest left.

“This is quite the amusing place.”

Renas said while seeing them off.

“I wonder why did she say that?”

No reply came. Renas kept sewing clothes by herself.

She was intently looking at Renas. She was sitting in the tailor shop and working bravely.

I hate her, She thought. After all, Renas was living peacefully even after taking *her* important thing away. Wasn't she just a pawn brought forth by the Indulging God Cult? Renas was revived only so she could be used for Mokka's rebellion. Since her role has ended, why is she still alive?

She bit her lips impatiently. *I want to kill Renas already.*

She simply couldn't wait for it.

Another visitor came. He was a slim man wearing a black hat. Renas was pretty sure his name was Mattalast. Although he seemed aloof and not intimidating at all, he was known to be powerful among the Armed Librarians. He seemed to possess the capabilities of a first-class Armed Librarian, making him a candidate of becoming an Acting Director.

"Are the suits I requested ready?"

"Yes, here."

He calmly purchased five sets of these quite costly unique suits. He seemed to be a man who spent money on his clothes and hobbies.

"The trainees probably came here earlier. Did they disturb you?"

"It was fun. They were all lively kids."

"I see, sorry for the trouble."

Mattalast patted the brim of his hat ashamedly.

"How have you been lately?"

"I am living happily."

"No, that's not what I meant. I'm talking about your body."

"..."

Renas's body was not her own. Originally Renas Fleur became ill and died 19 years ago. The one standing there was a fake Renas that had the memories and personality from Renas's Book copied inside of her. In other words, she was merely a person who believed that she was Renas Fleur.

How long will she be Renas? No one could tell. The human spirit is delicate. They couldn't deny the possibility of it getting ill. There was also the possibility

of her original personality merging with that of Renas. Mattalast spoke about that.

“...Yeah, you don’t need to worry. I’m aware of myself and there is no change in my physical condition.”

Renas spread both hands and smiled as she answered.

“I see. That’s good then.”

Mattalast seemed relieved. The researchers from the Magic Association said that if no-one tries to destroy Renas’s personality there will be no problems.

“If anything happens please tell us. We Armed Librarians will help you.”

“Yes. But is that fine? You probably have plenty of other work.”

“It might seem a bit like meddling, but I want you to live peacefully if possible. I want you to be happy if you can.”

Mattalast lowered the brim of his hat. He was probably hiding his embarrassment.

“Yes, thank you.”

“This isn’t just my personal opinion. It’s the consensus of us Armed Librarians.

The incident with Mokkania was truly a nasty fight. Having such a flashy fight, losing comrades, and not being able to save anyone... is somewhat sad.”

“...”

“We sometimes act in vain. What we are fighting for, what did we become strong for... we think about those sorts of things.

Protecting someone’s happiness and feeling it’s not real makes us sad. That’s how it is.”

“...I see.”

“Excuse me. I ended up ranting. Please forget it.

If anything happens please call us immediately. Well then.”

Mattalast left the shop. Renas saw off his dark back with a slight sense of guilt.

While seeing Mattalast off, *she* sneered.

He seemed to be close to being one of the strongest in the world, but was foolish; no matter how much power he had, it was impossible for him to protect Renas.

I will not let anyone interfere. Neither the Armed Librarians nor anyone else.

Well then, let's start. It's almost time. She thought in her mind.

After Mattalast left, Renas changed the “open” sign to a “closed” sign. She started tidying up the shop, arranging that day's sales listing, and quickly finished up her work.

“...I'm sorry, Mattalast-san.”

Renas had lied. There was something unusual with her mind and she concealed it from Mattalast.

She began to feel the abnormality recently.

Sometimes feelings that were not hers began to well up inside her. They were always things like hatred, anger and murderous intent. These were pitch-dark emotions, completely unrelated to Renas until that point.

Sometimes she would dream of places she'd never seen. She could see a room filled with the scent of dirt and excreta.

And sometimes, words she never heard before floated in her mind.

“...ome will not come. The moon is the sun. Birds are fish. Living beings become corpses. Steel...”

She heard it again. Someone was whispering in her mind. Renas didn't know what was happening to her. The only thing she could tell was that she was turning into someone who wasn't Renas.

“...My head, hurts...”

Renas held her head. The mysterious words echoed inside of it.

“...becomes dreams, and illusions become all of reality. Existent things cease existing, nonexistent things exist, everything is defined as false...”

“What are... those words...”

The moment she said this, a memory scattered like sparks inside her mind. Unknown memories were revived within her as if she was daydreaming.

“...What is, this...”

Renas muttered.

A nauseating rotten smell came forth from her forgotten past. She recalled the sensation of grabbing dry, moldy bread crumbs.

Next to her were people covered in filth and waste.

Renas was afraid from the people in these memories. Their eyes, blankly staring at empty air, were unfocused. She could not feel a shred of intelligence in their cloudy eyes.

They weren't human. They were something with the shape of a human. Something unknown that was once human.

“What is, this... I don't want to remember...”

Her thin fingers covered her face. A small scream leaked from between their gaps. It was a small, desperate scream that sounded as if it tore her lungs. If she could escape it she would want to. However, she could not escape from her memories no matter where she ran.

Renas's body lost its balance. She extended her hand to support herself. It didn't reach the wall, so her body collapsed.

“...Haah, haah...”

Renas was on all fours and vomit scattered from her mouth. After burying her face in the polluted puddle, she once again raised a small scream.

While seeing it happen, *she* was thinking. *It's almost time. Just a bit more, when I have the chance, Renas will disappear from this world. Renas will be gone and her personality will be revived.*

Mattalast was thinking of Renas while walking throughout the town. He had no way of knowing her current condition.

Renas is a strong woman. She didn't let the fact that she lost Mokkania sadden her. She did accept that sadness, but hasn't lost her smile. It isn't

something anybody could do. It's strength of a different kind than what us Armed Librarians possess.

Mattalast thought that she was an admirable person.

“Even so, I wonder why Renas-san lied.”

When he asked her how she felt, Renas averted her gaze from him. This was a clear sign of her lying. Mattalast was walking around while thinking of why she would do so.

He suddenly stopped. He received Mirepoc's thoughts.

‘Mattalast-san. I'm sorry to ask you while you're on break, but I need to ask something.’

‘What is it?’

‘Volken is coming back to Bantorra. Will you go meet him?’

Mattalast's body became tense. He put the matter of Renas in a lower priority. He also worried about her, but his job as an Armed Librarian came first.

“I see. So he came back.”

While muttering so, Mattalast touched the pistol at his waist.

“There's no choice. I'll go greet him.”

Mirepoc severed her Thought Sharing with Mattalast. Then, she started talking to the one who sat slovenly on the chair in the Acting Director's Office, Hamyuts.

“I have three matters to report.”

“Yes?”

Hamyuts replied while sewing embroidery of a bunny on a shirt. She spent the entire day making such embroideries on her own clothes. Sewing was Hamyuts's hobby. She always did so when she had free time. Mirepoc didn't even think of reproaching her at this stage.

“The first report came from Minth who is investigating the Guinbex Army. About the officer who was suspected to be sending supplies to the Indulging God Cult... it appears that he committed suicide before getting questioned by

him.”

“Oh my. So the Indulging God Cult really were involved.”

Hamyuts didn't seem perturbed at all.

“He said that he will now start investigating the acquaintances of that officer and look for other people related to the Indulging God Cult.”

“Great, Minth. That man's better suited for jobs unrelated to combat.”

Hamyuts said while she turned over the shirt and checked her sewing.

“The second report. This came from Ireia-san who was investigating the mysterious facility she found in the Kuler Region.

This noon, she confirmed that it was a training facility for the Indulging God Cult and commenced an attack. They met resistance, but completely annihilated the facility in about three hours. Our side had no casualties.”

“Well, since it's the old lady, Bonbo and Vizac, with the three of them together, it was obvious it would end like that.”

“Your decision to send three powerful people there had not been wrong, Director.”

Of course, Hamyuts smiled. She knotted the thread she was sewing and then cut it with her canines.

“We're dominant in this fight.”

Mirepoc's expression softened into a smile without her noticing. Ever since Mokkania's rebellion, the Armed Librarians have not been under any major threat. Also, they were slowly peeling off the Indulging God Cult's veils of darkness. Mirepoc herself had also greatly contributed to that.

Of course, just because they were superior didn't mean they could relax. Nevertheless, it was also true that their day of victory was growing closer.

“That's obvious. If they attack us from the front me and the others will win, we knew that since the very beginning.”

“Yes.”

“Anyway, what about the third report?”

Hamyuts looked at the sewn embroidery, seemingly satisfied.

“Yes ma’am. It seems that in about ten minutes from now, Volken-san will return. I asked Mattalast to go greet him.”

At that moment, Hamyuts’s hand stopped. She threw the shirt on the desk. Her eyes were shining coldly.

“I see, so that guy’s back.”

Her expression was like a carnivorous beast smiling.

“That’s quite unexpected. So he returned just as he said. I wonder if that kid’s aware of what’s going to happen to him now.”

Mirepoc faintly shivered at her words and expression. Volken became an Armed Librarian the same time as her and was her friend. She couldn’t help but fear for his future.

Part 2

A single flying boat landed in the port of the Past God's Island. It was an old, small aircraft.

A young man came out from the flying boat slowly rocking on the waves. Mattalast came to greet him. The sun was already setting. A quiet air of intimidation came from Mattalast as his figure blended in the darkness.

"It's been a while, Volken."

"Long time no see, Mattalast-san."

Volken said and bowed.

His age was barely below twenty. He was a slender and tall youth.

His hair was bright green. His expression gave the impression of an iceberg floating in the northern sea. It was cold, hard and unwavering. One glance at that face told both himself and others that he was a rigid individual.

He wore a black and brown colored cassock. The emblem of a lock was on his sleeve. It was the uniform of an Armed Librarian inherited from ancient times. Armed Librarians recently had a free dress code though; No-one wore such old-fashioned clothes nowadays.

However, because it was so old-fashioned, it truly suited him.

His name was Volken Macmani.

"We haven't met since the Allow Bay Incident, I think?"

Saying this, Mattalast drew his gun. He aimed its muzzle at Volken's heart. It was a gun that hit its target and brought certain death. Even with that muzzle in front of him, Volken was unperturbed. Neither his eyebrows nor fingers moved. Perhaps even his heart rate kept steady.

"Indeed."

"Volken, let me just say this. The Armed Librarians have become nervous since Mokka's rebellion. Especially when it has to do with traitors."

“I am not a traitor.”

“That’s easy for you to say.”

Mattalast’s finger touched the trigger.

“Will you kill me?”

“Well then, what shall I do...”

In contrast to Mattalast’s faint smile, Volken’s expression hasn’t changed at all. He wasn’t bothered by Mattalast’s bloodlust at all. He just had that much nerve and fighting ability.

“If you kill me, the truth will be revealed when my Book is read. If that is what the entire Armed Librarian body has decided I will comply. However, if that is your personal decision...”

Volken’s fingers moved. His fingertips touched the sword at his waist.

It was a strange sword. No, was it even a sword? Two short blades were contained within a hoop. Twelve pairs of these loops were hanging from Volken’s waist. From their function, these twelve rings were named Macmani’s Dancing Blades.

“I will resist with all of my power.”

The twelve Dancing Blades started swaying at the same time. Seeing that, Mattalast lowered his gun.

“It was my judgment. Please don’t think bad of me. I was just trying to make you confess.”

“Understood.”

Mattalast started walking, keeping his back defenseless. Volken followed him.

Volken Macmani had been charged with serious felony. He was charged with assisting their enemy, the Indulging God Cult.

Two years ago, the Armed Librarians destroyed an Indulging God Cult ship at Allow Bay. They have seized the treasures kept inside the ship by the Cult. Among those was one of the Memorial Weapons, the Spinning Doll Ückück. It was then contained in the Fourth Sealed Archive of the Book Labyrinth and

closely monitored.

The fact that the Spinning Doll had been replaced with a fake was confirmed lately. Although some have wondered if this was the work of Mokkaia, the investigation led to them figuring out that someone else was behind this criminal act. And it was then confirmed that the criminal was Volken.

It wasn't mere theft. The stolen object was a weapon kept by the Indulging God Cult. The charges shifted from theft to acting in the interest of the Indulging God Cult.

"You have already been notified, but your trial is to be held tomorrow. Attending it will be the Director and all of the first-class Armed Librarians. Also, as per regulations, more than twenty five Armed Librarians as well. Since not everyone is in Bantorra right now, I'm not sure we'll exceed 30 people."

"Understood."

"If you can prove your innocence it's all good. But if you're guilty... well, you know what'll happen."

"Yes."

He's quite calm, thought Mattalast. We already have all the evidence we need. Since it's all but certain Volken did steal it, I wonder why he's so calm.

He kept walking while having an inexplicable feeling.

"The moon is beautiful today."

Volken looked up with a mechanical-like gesture. The moon was rising from the other side of the sea. It was slightly short of being a full moon. When the air was at its clearest, the moon shined silver. Its color was that of a brand-new spoon.

"...Yeah."

There was a strange atmosphere. His expression seemed to convey that the facts that he was suspected and about to receive a trial were completely natural. However, it wasn't the expression of someone convinced in his innocence.

He had the face of someone going to fight. That was how Mattalast felt.



After the sun had set, there were no customers in Bantorra Library. In the reception hall there were only Armed Librarians who finished their work and

the trainees who finished their training.

Mattalast opened the door. When they saw Volken standing behind him, the other Armed Librarians grew tense. Some of them even instinctively reached to the weapons at their waists.

“Calm down, everyone.”

Mattalast said, showing both his palms.

“We will kill him only when the charges are settled.”

These words did nothing to absolve the tension. They kept directing astonished and nervous gazes towards him.

Volken walked and calmly surveyed his surroundings. *He's quite calm*, thought Mattalast.

“Who is that?”

He pointed at one person. He was a man who folded his arms in one corner of the hall and had transparent hair.

“That's Enlike-kun. You don't know him?”

“I've heard about him, but this is my first time seeing him.”

Saying so, Volken approached Enlike.

“Who are you? Are you an enemy or an ally?”

“An ally. I'm an Armed Librarian, someone who believes in justice.”

“...”

Enlike stared at Volken's face. He seemed to be evaluating him. Was he strong or weak? Is he someone to kill or not?

“Nice to meet you.”

Volken extended his hand. Enlike grabbed it back.

“I'm Enlike Bishile.”

“Volken Macmani.”

At that time, Mattalast heard Enlike muttering under his breath.

“...Not bad.”

He immediately released Volken’s hand and then headed for the Library’s exit.

“Where to?”

Mattalast asked as they passed each other.

“Home.”

Enlike said, looking around with some air of agitation around him.

“It seems like something had happened, but I have nothing to do with the Library’s internal affairs. I have someone to meet. I hope you don’t mind letting me go.”

“Is it a date?”

Enlike ignored the joke and went outside.

The atmosphere in the hall was slightly changing. When Volken came in there were only pure hostility and suspicions directed at him. However, the dignified attitude he had when speaking to Enlike... seeing Volken unperturbed, the hostility surrounding the hall had softened a bit.

This wasn’t how a traitor acted – Everyone started thinking so.

“Everyone, listen.”

Volken started speaking. All Armed Librarians listened to his echoing voice.

“I was charged with... stealing the Spinning Doll Ückück.

And this accusation is...”

He let his words hang for a while. After the long silence passed, Volken declared, “True.”

The entire hall was shocked. Even Mattalast almost dropped his pipe.

“However, I did not do so to assist the Cult. I did it for our – the Armed Librarians’ – sake.”

“Why?”

A voice rose. Volken stopped talking for a while and thought.

“I cannot speak of it now. The time to do so will come tomorrow. I will talk of everything in the trial then.”

This time the Armed Librarians were confused.

“Listen well. It has been 1900 years since the Age of Paradise has ended and the world was passed into the hands of humans. Who protected peace and justice in the meanwhile?

Who protected people’s Books from the evils of the world?

Who kept fighting the Indulging God Cult and protected peace?

If the Armed Librarians were to lose their justice, justice itself will be lost from this world.”

“ ...”

“Right now, we Armed Librarians are about to lose our justice.

I am fighting because this cannot be forgiven.”

At that instant, Volken’s eyes were directed at the hall’s entrance. He saw a person that seemed to enter without anyone noticing.

“I will expel from this Library all those who deprive the Armed Librarians of justice. My actions will never stray from the proper path.”

In front of Volken’s eyes stood Hamyuts Meseta. With her close associate Mirepoc at her side, she had the usual smile of a carnivorous beast.

“...How wonderful.”

Saying this, Hamyuts started applauding.

“Applause, everyone!”

By saying this, she got the other Armed Librarians to start clapping their hands. When the clapping stopped, she spoke with a delighted tone.

“It was a great speech, Volken. I haven’t seen you in a while, but have you grown a bit taller?”

Volken did not answer. His expression changed for the first time. He directed obvious hostility at Hamyuts.

“I like that look.”

Hamyuts grinned. It was the same kind of smile she adorned when she – who loved battles more than anything else – saw her enemy. All of the Armed Librarians felt fear as they saw this smile.

“I do feel like fighting for the death right now. But you probably prefer fighting at tomorrow’s assembly, right Volken?”

“...”

“It’s fine. I’ll play along. I look forward to tomorrow. Now then.”

Hamyuts clapped her hands loudly and called out to the Armed Librarians.

“Those who have work to do, keep going. Those who don’t, go home to rest. How long are you going to waste time like that, you naughty children?”

You can be free until tomorrow, Volken. There is no need to monitor him. Since he came back, there’s no way he’ll run away.”

Saying so, she started walking towards the exit of the hall. She then turned around and spoke again.

“You are welcome to try a surprise attack. Come at me whenever.”

Volken kept silent and Hamyuts was looking at him.

All of the Armed Librarians knew – this was something completely different from Mokka’s rebellion. All of them looked at Volken with very uneasy but slightly expectant eyes.

The Armed Librarians were about to lose their justice.

Those who deprived their justice will be expelled.

There was probably no one standing in that place who didn’t know who this was referring to.

Mattalast followed Hamyuts and spoke to her.

“Hammy. That was quite the declaration of war.”

“Even you pointed your gun at him. That’s no good. Don’t just do as you please.”

“Yeah yeah.”

The two walked. Hamyuts was probably using her Sensory Threads to make sure no one was there to hear them. Mattalast said words that must not be heard by anyone else.

“He likely got started during the Allow Bay Incident.”

“Probably. He saw something during that incident. Something he shouldn’t have seen.”

While Mattalast was gloomy, Hamyuts spoke with true delight.

“That isn’t all. He probably also knows all sorts of things.”

“I wonder who told him. Did that stupid Overseer of Paradise do something unnecessary again? Or maybe Lascall showed him a Book. I wonder who of them.”

“What about Photona-san?”

“I don’t think so.”

The two kept walking.

“How much does he know?”

“Who knows. Since he made such a show, I believe he knows something serious.”

“Like the connection between the Indulging God Cult and the Armed Librarians?”

“Who knows.”

“Or perhaps the identity of Heaven?”

“I wonder.”

Hamyuts stopped in place and flashed a smile at Mattalast.

“Well, at the worst case scenario, you and I will be kicked out of the Library.”

“It’s not just that. There is a possibility that the Armed Librarians will be destroyed.”

“Well, whatever happens, I look forward to it ending favorably.”

Mattalast shook his head as if saying 'dear me'.

"Well then, how much do you know? And how much did you obtain? Do your best, Volken."

Volken was about to leave Bantorra Library when Mirepoc came to speak with him.

"Volken."

If it was someone who knew how she normally was, such as Noloty, they would have been surprised by her tone. It was a terribly weak and frightened voice. She wasn't the sort of woman to let out such a defenseless voice.

"...Mirepoc, don't get involved with me."

Volken turned around only his head and asserted so.

"So it was true? I always believed it to be a lie..."

"I don't tell lies. The one who stole the Spinning Doll Ückück had been me."

Mirepoc shook her head in disbelief.

"For what reason?"

"That wasn't what I wanted to do. I just had to. I just had to have it in order to take Hamyuts's... the Acting Director's seat."

"The Director...?"

"Since you are Hamyuts's aide, you should know her true nature. There's no way a human such as yourself will not understand it."

Mirepoc was speechless.

Hamyuts's true nature. Outwardly she was someone much stronger and skillful than anyone else. Both in battle and outside of it, her achievements were great. So what was her true nature?

If she was told that Hamyuts was evil, she would have no problems being convinced of it. That much about her Mirepoc did know.

"Don't get any closer to me. You're Hamyuts's aide."

Saying so, Volken started walking away. Mirepoc grabbed his sleeve.

“Wait.”

Volken’s feet stopped in place.

“I’ve always admired you, Volken. You are many times stronger than me and devoted for justice more than anyone.

I believed that we always had a relationship of trust between us.”

“ ...”

“Was I the only one to think so? Have you not taken me into any consideration at all, Volken?”

With his back turned to Mirepoc, Volken thought for a while.

“...I believe in you. That is also your problem.”

He said and tried to leave. However, Mirepoc didn’t let go of it.

“Let me say one more thing.”

Mirepoc spoke hesitantly.

“Can you win against the Director?”

Volken went silent for a while, and then answered,

“I’ll win.”

Mirepoc let him go. At the same time, Volken left.

“Volken... your only weakness is that you’re bad at lying.”

She called to his back. He probably couldn’t hear her.

During that same, Enlike was walking by himself downtown. He was more or less interested in that Volken guy, but it was none of his business.

Although he was invited to become an Armed Librarian, he refused. He hated being bound by annoying rules and being ordered by other people. His collaborating with the Armed Librarians was merely done to repay Noloty. This kind of selfishness was not much different from how he was on the Monster’s island.

Enlike arrived at the intersection they decided on. He looked around.

“...She’s not here, huh.”

It was a bit past their appointed time. Enlike waited for a while, but ended giving up.

“Is she still at the store?”

Saying so, he walked away. Going down a gentle slope, he went towards the shopping district. His destination was the tailor shop in one of its corners. The one he promised to meet with was Renas Fleur.

The door had a “closed” sign on it. However, it was not locked.

He stepped inside. Enlike then raised a small startled cry when he saw the inside.

Vomit was spread all over the floor. Some of it was also mixed with blood.

In one of the shop’s corners, Renas squatted down and held her knees. Seeing her face, anyone who knew how she normally was would want to turn their gazes away. Tears and dirt stuck to her face. She didn’t even seem to wipe it off.

Her shoulders feebly shaking, she was gazing vacantly at empty air and crying.

“Renas!”

Enlike ran up to her. She made no response even as he called her.

“Renas Fleur!”

He shook her shoulders. She moved without resistance as if she was a dead body. Enlike flicked his finger against her forehead. He then shot a lightning strike at his lowest capacity.

“Gh...!”

Renas’s body jumped up with a scream. Enlike shook her body again. This time she had a human-like response. She stared at Enlike with vacant eyes, and then looked around her.

“...Ah.”

Understanding the situation around her, Renas staggered to a standing position.

“I have, to clean it.”

“Wash your face first.”

Enlike grabbed Renas’s body and pushed her into the restroom. In the meantime he used a mop to wipe the floor.

“Have you calmed down?”

“Yes.”

Renas came out of the restroom with her face back to normal except for it being a bit pale. Enlike casually squeezed the mop and threw it into the cabinet.

“...This is the second time. What’s more, this is way worse than last time.”

“...Yes.”

Renas hung her head and said. Enlike was slightly annoyed by her half-hearted attitude.

The two of them have started speaking only recently. Thinking about it, they had a lot in common. Both of their current bodies weren’t their original ones. Also, their original bodies had already died. In a sense, they were in the same position.

“Why did you not consult with the Armed Librarians?”

“...That’s...”

Renas held her tongue.

“Don’t rely on me. I can’t help you.”

“But... I’m sorry. Please let me wait a bit before consulting other people.”

Enlike scratched his transparent hair. It was a hard topic. Since there was no choice he changed the subject.

“So why did you call me today?”

“I started hearing strange words in my head. I don’t know what they mean.”

“What kind of words?”

Renas awkwardly recited those words. Enlike interrupted her midway.

“I know what they mean. There’s no way I wouldn’t. That’s what you chant during Magic Deliberation.”

“Why am I hearing such a thing...”

“Well...”

Enlike had a vague estimation – someone was performing Magic Deliberation.

But the one conducting it wasn’t Renas. It was her original personality before getting planted with another one.

Then what kind of Magic Deliberation was it?

“Renas. Your old memories are being revived. Memories you don’t know.”

“Right.”

Enlike started thinking. Perhaps she was trying to use Magic Deliberation in order to acquire the Magic Right of “restoring lost memories”. That would explain things.

But the problem was whether such a thing was possible.

The tool that stole her memories, the Memorial Weapon Fiction Obliterating Cup Argax, was powerful. There’s no way for a half-hearted Magic Right to be able to restore those. In fact, Enlike himself was also conducting Magic Deliberation to restore his memories, but wasn’t even close to success. He prided himself as a genius. But even he couldn’t do it.

For those who had comparable talent, even by wasting several years the success rate would be about 50%.

“...Anyway, this is my limit. I cannot help you by myself anymore.”

“Enlike-san, please...”

“Why are you hiding it!”

Enlike hit the wall with his fist. A crack ran through the wall made of oak.

“...I’m sorry.”

Renas deeply lowered her head. Enlike became speechless.

“Enlike-san. Just who am I?”

“You are Renas Fleur.”

“...Who was I?”

“Don’t think about it. You are Renas Fleur. I don’t want to lose you. Noloty likes you. I’m here so I could protect her and whatever she holds dear.”

“You’re a good person, Enlike-san.”

“...Hmph.”

Enlike snorted quietly. It upset him being told so. Just how much did he change from how he was before?

“There’s a place in Bantorra that I’d like to take you to right away, but it seems it will be a bit difficult right now. I’ll come again tomorrow. I’ll take you there even if you don’t want to.”

Saying this, Enlike went out of Renas’s shop in a quick pace.

She was thinking inside Renas. How disappointing. Just a bit longer and I would have been able to destroy Renas’s personality. She cursed Enlike who interrupted her.

I don’t like that Enlike either. Even though he was a Meat at the Indulging God Cult, he’s able to enjoy a peaceful life. He is definitely enjoying it. He is definitely happy. Just die. She murmured in her heart.

However, she could do nothing but curse. She, who didn’t have any fighting capabilities, will never be able to kill Enlike even if hell freezes over.

At any rate, it turned out bad. If the Armed Librarians were to discover her she would be in trouble. At worst, the memories she was finally able to retrieve would be erased by the water of Argax.

I’m in trouble. What should I do? She kept muttering in her heart.

I have to retrieve –... She simply couldn’t stand not retrieving it.

She had something she had to retrieve no matter what. But right now she couldn’t remember anything.

Part 3

During the same time, Volken was walking downtown. He had no goal in mind. He just wanted to relax.

He did act dignified while confronting Mattalast and the other Armed Librarians. However, he was merely hiding the anxiety in his heart. His trial was tomorrow. Volken predicted what was going to happen there.

‘Can you win against the Director?’

Mirepoc’s words resounded in his head.

He will win. That was what he said. But it was a lie. His chances of victory were zero.

Tomorrow, on top of Volken admitting that he stole Ückück, he will reveal the purpose of this crime. He did it so that he could impeach Hamyuts Meseta. It was to gather evidence of her misdeeds.

Hamyuts Meseta massacred the innocent Meats at Allow Bay. That was certain. There was evidence for that.

He will probably shock the Armed Librarians. It should increase the distrust they felt towards her.

However, Hamyuts Meseta will refute him thusly.

“It is true that I killed them. But they belonged to the Indulging God Cult. Even if they were kept powerless by them.

Well, there is certainly some humane problem just like you said, Volken, but that’s it.”

Hamyuts might receive some kind of punishment. But it will probably not go any further than that. She will remain in the position of Acting Director. And sooner or later she will enact her revenge on the rebellious Volken. Will he be exiled with a proper reason, or be executed in secret?

‘Don’t approach me.’

He said so to Mirepoc because he could see that result. He didn’t want to

involve his reliable friend in this.

“...Shit.”

He muttered without thinking.

Volken aimed for what happened next. Why did Hamyuts kill the Meats? He will unveil her true reasons and present evidence for them. He had to thrust them in front of Hamyuts and the other Armed Librarians' eyes.

For that purpose, he ran around collecting evidence.

For that purpose, he even took the reckless action of stealing the Spinning Doll Ückück.

However...

At that moment, on the other side of the dark road, he found a figure. It was Hamyuts Meseta.

“Howdy.”

Hamyuts lightly greeted him. It was as if she felt no tension at all. She probably knew that he was no threat for her.

“Hey, could we talk a little?”

“I refuse.”

Volken always talked politely with his senior Armed Librarians, but Hamyuts was an exception. She sighed.

“I wonder what makes you hate me. Did I do anything to make you feel that way?”

“I told you we'll speak tomorrow.”

“Say, why did you think of opposing me? Well, I do know that you hate me.”

“I became aware of your evil deeds. That is the only reason.”

“...What are you talking about?”

Hamyuts smiled and scratched at her head.

“This is only my conjecture, but you probably still haven't gotten any evidence.”

He tried to conceal his agitation but couldn't. His face changed colors.

"You probably know quite a lot, but not enough to corner me. It's probably something like that."

He was completely seen through. Volken gritted his teeth.

"Hey, don't be like that. It's not like I'm that angry. You can just give the Spinning Doll Ückück back, get along with me as you used to, and it'll be fine."

"No. I don't want to forgive you."

"Why do you hate me so much? How horrible."

While she said so with her mouth, her eyes smiled. Her face indicated she enjoyed the rebellion of this young warrior from the bottom of her heart.

"Oh well. See you tomorrow."

Saying only this, she left.

Volken stayed at that spot and looked up to the moon. The moon, that still not fully descended to the sky, was shining above Bantorra Library's roof.

The real reason that made her kill those Meats... He still didn't know what it was. He just couldn't understand it.

"...Shit!"

Volken hit his palm with his fist.

He looked for a single woman. She knew the entire truth and held all the evidence. She was also the original owner of the Spinning Doll. However, he didn't even know whether she was alive or dead.

Her name was Olivia Littolet. She was one of the Meats in the sunken ship.

Enlike was about to return to his house in the downtown area. However, he changed his mind and turned back.

He came back to Renas's shop. She was still there, cleaning up the place.

"Oh, what's wrong, Enlike-san?"

She seemed to be somewhat calmer than she had been when they separated. She also seemed to be mentally stable.

Enlike hesitated whether or not to say it.

“What’s wrong?”

He had a certain worry. In fact he might have been already late since long ago. Hasn’t most of Renas’s personality already vanished?

He spoke after a while of silence.

“I have something to ask. Who are you?”

Another silence lapsed. Enlike expected a reply like ‘*what are you saying?*’. However, she betrayed his expectations.

“...Ke...ha...kehahaha.”

Renas let out a strange voice. It took him a while to figure out it was laughter.

“What can I say? I don’t even know my own name yet.”

The tone of the calm Renas changed completely. She raised her voice in a noticeable manner at the ending of her words.

Her face had changed. Her usual facial expression, that of masking her grief with a smile, has vanished. Instead of it appeared a strange, warped smile. She laughed loudly with her cheeks bent, but her eyes were not laughing at all.

“Who am I, I wonder. Hey, Enlike, who do you think I am?”

Just like I thought, Enlike despaired.

“This is probably your original personality. Before Renas Fleur’s memories were implanted in you.

You completed your Magic Deliberation, pushed Renas’s personality away and came out.”

Renas – no, *she* sneered at him.

“Exactly. If you got it why did you come all the way here to ask me?”

“...Was it you who destroyed Renas?”

She smiled for a while as if asking what’s wrong.

“Hey, Enlike. To tell you the truth, I have to thank you. Ending up outside like this happened only now.”

“What do you mean?”

“Basically, because everyone around me was calling me Renas, she believed herself to be Renas. Her personality was destroyed long ago. It was you guys who kept supporting her.”

So, did that mean Enlike’s actions had the opposite effect?

“It’s exactly as you think. You destroyed Renas. You’re a terrible man, as expected from the Monster.”

With a crackle, sparks shot from Enlike’s fingers. She said something that she shouldn’t have.

“Oh my, are you going to attack? It’s fine. I don’t mind having your precious Renas die.”

She spread her arms and laughed. *She* knew Enlike couldn’t attack her.

She has horrible eyes, Enlike thought. They were the eyes of one who wouldn’t look at other people. The eyes of someone who wouldn’t even notice the death and misfortune of others.

Enlike knew them well. After all, he once had the same eyes.

“Ah, I’m so glad. I feel so refreshed. I was already at the limits of my patience. I was tired of this idiotic personality controlling me. I finally became myself again.”

“Do you hate Renas?”

“Yeah. I hate her. She was a stupid woman. A woman who did nothing and only sobbed.”

“I disagree about that.”

“Is that so. Oh well. Forget that stupid woman. She died long ago so it shouldn’t even matter.”

“I don’t think so.”

Enlike said. Renas was a respectable person. And the woman standing in front of him right now was not.

“I see. Really?”

She drew near to him.

“Whether you’re trying to protect her or whatever, don’t try any silly stuff.”

Saying so, *she* stood in front of Enlike. *She* was far too close. This wasn’t normally a distance for conversations.

“If we’re being honest, don’t you want something like this?”

She extended her hand. *She* put it behind his neck and slowly slid it down. Caressing his nape, *she* breathed around his collarbone.

“Isn’t this is what it’s all about? I can see through you.”

She glanced upwards at Enlike’s face. He had well-featured almond eyes. The tips of her breasts softly touched Enlike’s chest.

“It’s fine to be honest here.”

“I see. So let me be honest.”

Enlike said and shot sparks at her hand. He simply startled her; it was a lightning strike not powerful enough to leave any burn.

“...Ouch.”

She jumped away from Enlike and caressed the back of her hand.

“What is it. Are you like some chaste maiden? Or are you still a child?”

Enlike thought *she* was an unpleasant woman more and more with every word *she* said. *She* kept grinning and talking to him.

“My bad. Hey, Enlike. Frankly speaking, I want you to help me.”

“Do you need help with anything?”

“I have something that I need to retrieve. I have to get it back no matter what. As I am now, with no memories or allies, I cannot do anything.”

“And what’s that?”

“I can’t recall it yet. But it’s something important to me. I just call it *that*. If I don’t retrieve it, my life will have no meaning. It’s that much of an important thing.”

“...”

“Please. I’m really asking you. Weren’t we both Meats from the Indulging God Cult? Please help me.”

He thought that there’s no way she was trying to trick him. However, he had no intention of fulfilling her request.

“...Renas.”

Enlike said. He spoke in a loud voice once again.

“Renas Fleur!”

That woman said this before – by referring to her as Renas, Renas’s personality had been preserved. If so, then doing that should bring her personality back.

“Ah, I see. So that woman is more important to you than me.”

It seemed his speculation hit the mark. Her face distorted in anger.

“Renas Fleur!”

“Die, you piece of shit!”

As both of them spit out those words simultaneously, her body collapsed. After a moment, her expression changed. It became Renas’s familiar face. Enlike and she looked at each other. In front of his urging eyes she lowered her gaze apologetically.

“You’re aware of the situation.”

“Yes.”

“Why didn’t you say so before? There should be some way.”

Renas stayed silent.

“Did you really know it would turn out like this?”

She nodded.

“Then why didn’t you do anything!”

Renas kept her head down.

“I’m sorry. Enlike-san. Please don’t get involved with me.”

“You’re the one who called me.”

“I just asked about the chants. I didn’t want you to do anything further.”

“Why?!”

Renas didn’t say anything. Enlike waited for her to speak. Time passed along.

Enlike was the one to run out of patience first.

“That’s enough.”

Saying so, without attempting to disguise his anger at all, he left. *It’s not my business. Do whatever suits you.* He walked through downtown while thinking so.

Renas was left alone in her shop. The fact she made Enlike angry weighed heavily on her mind.

She needed to close the shop. She prepared doing so.

‘It worked out somehow. Well, I guess that’s enough for Enlike.’

She heard a voice in her head. These were *her* words. Her personality, lurking deep within Renas’s mind, rose to the surface to the extent she could clearly hold conversations with her.

Renas felt *her* mind. Right now, *she* was happy.

‘Something good happened after all. I just remembered it.’

“...What?”

‘I remembered it just now. The name of what I’m trying to retrieve.’

Although she was unable to recall her own name, *she* remembered the name of that. Renas understood how much of an important thing it was for *her*.

“What is it?”

‘Vend Ruga.’

She said. Renas didn’t know it. It sounded like a man’s name.

‘Vend Ruga. It’s Vend Ruga. Hey, Renas.’

She was in high spirits. Even Renas’s body felt like dancing.

Who was Vend Ruga? Why did she look for him? Renas had no idea. *She* probably had no idea either.

But Renas shared *her* feelings. When *she* thought of Vend Ruga it was nothing like a dream or a wish. It was more similar to hunger or thirst. A desire mad enough to blow away all reason. A desire strong enough that without it she would feel the world was hell.

To stop it there was probably no choice but to kill her. No, even if *she* were to die and became a Book *she* might still continue pursuing it. That desire was strong enough to imagine such an unrealistic event.

She was in high spirits. That horrible delight gave Renas goosebumps all over her body.

Volken still kept walking around downtown. By walking, he hoped to ease at least a small bit of his impatience and anger.

The person he was looking for... Olivia Littolet. He barely knew anything about her.

He knew that she was one of the Meats kept on the White Smoke. When Volken and the rest sank the ship, she had already been removed from it.

She was over 20 years old. She was a surprisingly beautiful woman.

“ ... ”

Olivia Littolet was a very special Meat. Although Meats had their memories robbed, their personalities destroyed, and became dolls with no will of their own, she was undoubtedly a failed product.

Olivia was different. With her flaming passions, as well as the calculated tactics that seemed cold enough to freeze one's body, she rebelled against the Indulging God Cult.

Using the Memorial Weapon Spinning Doll Ücküück, she led the Meats to an attack... in order to retrieve what was lost.

If Olivia was in good health, she surely was still fighting even now. Her frightening passions will surely not disappear until her very life was exhausted.

“Where are you? If you're alive, please come to me.”

She was surely looking at the moon. Where is Olivia? What is she doing? If Volken could speak to the moon, he would have probably called for her and asked about her. *Why won't you tell me? Even though you're such a clear moon.*

He suddenly stopped in place. Volken noticed that his feet brought him to one of Bantorra Library's corners. What was ahead of him?

Renas left the shop and walked in an opposite direction from her house. She was pacing through a small path encircling the Library. People said that Mokkania used to walk in this path a lot before he confined himself in one of the Book Labyrinth's corners.

Renas wanted to see her memories of Mokkania. This might be the last time she could immerse in her memories. She probably didn't have much time to stay as herself.

Mokkania's room had already been demolished. Everything he possessed, except for a few articles left for Renas, had been disposed of. This small path was the only remaining place that had Mokkania's lingering scent.

However, keeping in mind the fact that he nearly drove the Library to extinction, this was a rather generous measure. It wouldn't have been strange for them to erase all of his achievements and traces.

“...”

The entirety of Past God Bantorra's Island was a gentle hill. On its summit was Bantorra Library, and by walking around that path, one could overlook the entirety of the town.

She was below the moonlight of the almost full moon. While walking around and thinking of Mokkania, while looking down on the town, she thought of various people who had been nice to her and to Mokkania.

It was a quiet farewell ritual. Towards her memories of Mokkania, towards the people who lived in Bantorra, and towards herself.

“...?”

Suddenly, Renas noticed a figure walking across her. She could hear metallic sounds like those of heavy chains swinging around. Wondering if there was

someone walking here during this hour, she stood still.

In front of Volken was the path surrounding Bantorra Library.

In this place that had nothing special he ended up feeling sentimental.

He ran around here hundreds of times while building up his stamina. In front of him his senior Vizac ran, and behind him Mirepoc and Luimon followed, out of breath.

I saw Mattalast-san slacking off here. He practiced his trombone and was talking to a girl. The girl was a different one every time I saw him.

Mokkania-san seemed gloomy while walking around here. Thinking about it, I could feel something dangerous from him starting from then.

What am I thinking about? Volken thought. What will being sentimental help me with? Isn't it like I'm saying goodbye to Bantorra?

“...Yes, that's how it is.”

In fact, the possibility was high.

For Volken, Bantorra Library was not a mere workplace. He spent most of his life there. It was unbearably sad for him to leave.

He suddenly noticed there was someone walking in front of him. Who was that? At this hour?

He saw that she was a woman with long hair. As soon as he identified her face, Volken stopped in place.

Volken and Renas stopped face to face.

No person in the world could have predicted this meeting. Neither Winkeny who created her, nor Locolo who brought her to Bantorra, nor Mokkania who died saving her, nor Hamyuts who sheltered her.

Not even Volken who called for her to come to Bantorra. Probably not even Lascall Othello who guided stories and people.

No one had predicted their meeting. That meeting at that time was a complete and utter coincidence, unplanned by anyone.

Volken opened his mouth.

“...Is this an illusion?”

Renas couldn't fathom what he said.

“No, this cannot be. Yes, this simply cannot be.”

Volken grabbed at his chest. His heart rate was jumping. He first doubted his eyes and then doubted if this was even reality.

“Who are you?”

Renas said. Volken didn't answer. His mind was too occupied to reply. After a while, his heartbeats calmed, and he opened his mouth.

“...Are you Olivia?”

Renas's face froze.

“Are you Olivia... Olivia Littolet?”

Volken obviously did not know of Renas's current situation. He also couldn't notice the big change taking place inside her mind. Until now two personalities resided within the same flesh. Their balance has collapsed. At that instant, Renas Fleur has completely ceased being Renas Fleur.

“...Yes, that is my name.”

She – no, Olivia Littolet – said.

“I finally recalled it. That is my name.”

Olivia approached Volken.

“You, who knew my name... who are you?”

“Volken. I'm the Armed Librarian Volken Macmani. I know about you. I'd like to borrow your power.”

Olivia nodded and answered.

“I am Olivia Littolet. I don't know who you are, but I'd like to borrow your power.”

The following day...

The Armed Librarians were shaken by the news that Volken Macmani escaped Bantorra Library. The fact that Renas had also disappeared was hidden behind it

and did not attract attention. Barely anyone noticed the relation between the two disappearances.

Chapter 2: Tradition of Justice

Part 1

The sound of heavy bells echoed throughout Past God Bantorra's Island. Despite the fact that night hadn't passed yet, the Armed Librarians have gathered one after another at Bantorra Library. Normal librarians were shouting at the entrance that the lending of Books will be paused for today.

Mirepoc who was the one to call everyone hurriedly ate her breakfast and rushed to the Library. Next to her ran the Armed Librarian Kalne.

"Mirepoc, is it true that he ran away?"

"I don't understand it, but, that is undoubtedly true."

Kalne's face contorted in anger.

"Was I a fool lending ears to his speech yesterday? What was that? Why did he say he will protect justice and then run away?"

Kalne complained. Although it was didn't have anything to do with Mirepoc.

"I don't know. Frankly, I have no idea what's going on."

"I feel the same."

Mattalast joined them then.

"Mattalast-san, what's going on?"

Mattalast shrugged as if saying 'even if you ask me I have no idea'.

"Well, his speech yesterday was probably a bluff. He wanted to agitate us so that we would avert our gaze from his betrayal.

Were you two deceived? Don't tell me that you think he really didn't betray us."

"That's true."

Kalne nodded.

“If he tried impeaching Hamyuts I would have become Volken’s ally... shit, he tricked me.”

Mirepoc cut in the conversation with an objection.

“But I still can’t understand. Because I can’t even understand why he would run away.”

“If you truly consider the situation it should be obvious. What are you saying at this stage?”

Mattalast was blunt.

“But he...”

Mirepoc gritted her teeth. Why did he run away? Why would he do something that made his situation worse? She couldn’t understand any of it.

At that moment she noticed the figure of Enlike walking in front of them. In contrast to the three people who were hurrying ahead, he walked slowly and yawned.

“Enlike-kun. Will you come with us as well?”

“That’s my intention.”

He replied.

“That man ran away.”

“Yeah.”

Listening to Mattalast’s words, Enlike was clearly thinking about something. Mirepoc couldn’t guess his thoughts.

During the same time, Volken was far away from Bantorra, flying northwest. His destination was his headquarters. It was a Book mine called Dalai Mine located in the Straile Republic. In normal times, it was Volken’s job to manage it.

The two were riding an old-fashioned flying boat. Volken was the pilot. Olivia was sitting behind him. Because it was an old aircraft it couldn’t fly too fast or high. It could also not conduct an aerial fight against a new plane, and couldn’t

land on the ground. It was inconvenient, but they couldn't complain about luxury in this situation.

"Bantorra will probably make their move soon."

Olivia said. Volken thought the same. He worked to camouflage their escape, but it would probably be discovered soon.

They're all probably angry, thought Volken. After making a bold speech yesterday he just ran away. *Perhaps I shouldn't have run away,* he now had his regrets.

However, he had no choice. He could only act this way.

Volken recalled what happened the previous night.

Volken rejoiced at his meeting with Olivia as if it was a miracle.

But it soon turned into disappointment. Because he then came to know the reason Olivia was in Bantorra and the fact that she hadn't regained any of her memories.

So she could not become a witness for tomorrow's trial. There was no point to meeting her.

"I am trying to retrieve my memories using Magic Deliberation. So, just hang on for a while."

Could he really wait for it? In any case, they left the path they met on and went downtown to think about what measures they should take.

At that time, they encountered Enlike. This was Volken's second time and Olivia's third time meeting him that night. He seemed to be worried about Renas.

When she noticed Enlike, Olivia told him to hide in a hushed voice. They would certainly seem suspicious. Volken used his ability to hide himself.

"Are you still Renas?"

Enlike spoke to her.

"Yes. It should be fine for a while longer."

Olivia pretended to be Renas.

“I contacted a Magic hospital. The appointment is for tomorrow but you should go right away.”

“...That would be troubling.”

“Stop your bad acting. It makes me sick.”

He immediately saw through her. Even if she smiled, she couldn't fake her slight tone change and subtle expressions.

“I see, hmm, how troubling.”

Volken lurked in the darkness and listened to their conversation.

“By the way, is your name Olivia Littolet?”

Olivia splendidly hid her surprise.

“It's not. I still haven't recalled my name, but I would if I hear it.”

“I see.”

Enlike was thinking about something.

“So what about that Olivia?”

“A long while ago Hamyuts asked me about her. She asked if I know a woman called Olivia. I said I didn't.”

“And what of it?”

“...I was asked to kill her if she was alive.”

At that instant, Olivia turned around and ran off. Enlike tried chasing after her. However, Volken's Dancing Blade stabbed in front of him.

Volken and Enlike faced each other. Volken drew out the Dancing Blade on his back. Blue sparks were emitted from Enlike's fingertips.

He knew that Enlike was stronger than him. Volken would probably win only one or two out of ten battles.

“Don't fight a pointless battle.”

Enlike said.

“I don't plan on listening to Hamyuts's request. I hate that woman.”

Volken believed his words. He retrieved his Dancing Blade. Enlike picked up the Dancing Blade at his feet and returned it to Volken.

“Your circumstances have nothing to do with me. Olivia also has nothing to do with me. Suit yourself.”

“Understood. Thank you very much.”

Enlike turned his back to them.

“I am merely a bystander here. I think that’s good enough, but it also sometimes feels silly.”

Since she noticed she wasn’t being chased, Olivia returned. She saw Enlike off.

“Olivia-san. I have decided our course of action.”

“Is that so.”

“Let us escape. Hamyuts will come to erase you by any means possible.”

They both nodded at each other and started running.

When Mirepoc and the rest entered the conference room, nearly all the Armed Librarians at the Library gathered inside.

“You’re late, you guys.”

Hamyuts said, a piece of chalk in her hand. Several figures and instructions were written on the blackboard.

“I’ve already given the orders. Now it’s only time for questions.”

Mirepoc and the rest sat down in vacant chairs. Enlike stood in a corner of the room, crossing his arms.

“I see. So what’s my job?”

Mattalast asked.

“I will explain it in order.”

A world map was affixed to the wall. Hamyuts pointed at one point.

“First of all, Volken escaped at midnight yesterday. He used the flying boat that he brought here. We received information from Ismo’s shipping company that he was flying northwest.”

“Northwest, huh. That means his headquarters.”

Hamyuts nodded and continued the explanation.

“Yeah, Volken had until now managed Dalai Mine. He’s most likely headed there.”

“What is his goal?”

“Unknown. We have also received information that he has passengers, but it is unconfirmed.”

“I see... and what is our move?”

Hamyuts removed her hand from the map and took a seat.

“There’s a high chance it’s only a diversion. Since we’re sending out our main force from Bantorra Library, they might plan on striking our base.”

“I see, so it’s like what happened during the Monster incident.”

“And because of that, we send out the minimum fighting forces. For the time being I will go alone.”

“And then?”

“You guys protect the Library. Suspend today’s work and be extremely vigilant.”

“That’s it? I have the feeling it’s not enough against Volken.”

Hamyuts grinned.

“Since Mattalast is such a worrywart, I plan on taking another person. Mirepoc.”

“Yes ma’am.”

Mirepoc stood up.

“Notify old lady Ireia who’s already been deployed. Tell her to hurry to Dalai Mine and attack Volken. There is no need to hold back. Promptly obliterate him.”

“Yes ma’am.”

“And while you’re at it, I believe that the Spinning Doll Volken stole is also

somewhere in there. Tell her to also find it.”

“...Yes ma’am.”

Mirepoc spoke in a slightly choked voice. Hamyuts easily noticed it and told her off.

“Oh, is something the matter? It’s fine, you can tell me.”

“No, it’s nothing.”

Hamyuts glared at Mirepoc with a smile and kept talking.

“Next also notify master Vizac. Tell him to pursue Volken. Because his chances of winning are low if it’s Volken, tell him it’s fine to just keep him at bay.”

“...Yes ma’am.”

Mirepoc closed her eyes and sent her thoughts. The two Armed Librarians started moving and returned their thoughts.

“Well then, I also need to leave immediately. I leave the rest to you, Mattalast.”

“Got it.”

Hamyuts rose and once again looked into Mirepoc’s eyes.

“Oh right, Mirepoc. Have you talked with Volken about something?”

Mirepoc flatly shook her head.

“No, I have called to him, but he hasn’t replied.”

“...Okay. See ya.”

Hamyuts opened the window and jumped out. She ran on top of the roof and headed for the airfield.

‘...Volken.’

Mirepoc muttered in her heart.

They were already halfway to Dalai Mine. But they couldn’t be careless. The most cutting-edge aircraft used at Bantorra was flying after them. It would be good if they could have taken that airplane, but they would have been found out.

Besides, Ireia's group was deployed at the Indulging God Cult facility in the Kuler Region. They had to take into account pursuit from them as well.

No matter where they looked they were surrounded by enemies. There were only three people who weren't his enemies right now. Olivia, sitting behind him, was his ally. Since Enlike overlooked their escape he wasn't their enemy.

In addition, Volken had another ally. He closed his eyes and listened to the words of that ally.

'And that's it for our situation.'

Volken opened his eyes. His final ally was Mirepoc. Just now he asked her about the movements of the Armed Librarians.

'...Mirepoc. I'm sorry.'

Volken muttered this in his mind without thinking.

'Volken, let me just say this. This isn't for your sake. If you have truly betrayed us, I will not hesitate to kill you. I will say only this.'

'I understand.'

Mirepoc was that kind of person. That was why she was reliable.

'However, even now I believe that what you're doing is not wrong. I want to believe that much in you if possible.'

'...Thank you.'

'I will cut off the Thought Sharing now. Good luck.'

And so it ended.

Volken involuntarily made a broad smile. Rather than the information conveyed to him by Mirepoc, he was happy at her trust of him. This helped him reaffirm his actions weren't wrong.

"Is your conversation done?"

"Yeah. We'll probably manage somehow."

Volken said to Olivia in the rear seat. The amount of their pursuers was unexpectedly small. He was fortunate that they have mistaken it to be

diversionary tactics employed by the Indulging God Cult.

The danger of being overtaken by Hamyuts was small. They were already far away. He will probably fight with Vizac, but he would most likely beat him if it's one-on-one.

The problem was Ireia. She was heading for Volken's headquarters in Dalai Mine. However, this wasn't his destination. He had moved the Spinning Doll Ückück to a hiding place thirty kilometers removed from there. It was a measure against it being taken away by Hamyuts or one of her subordinates, and it seemed to work.

"We can do it, Olivia-san."

Volken muttered.

"Now, how's your memory retrieval?"

It sure turned out strange, thought Olivia.

My goal is to restore my memories. Vend Ruga... I still can't remember anything else but that name, and I have nothing else important to retrieve. I couldn't care less about Hamyuts and the rest.

My existence and Hamyuts Meseta... How are we related?

Oh well. Anyhow, this man's my ally. He's working to protect me. That much is enough.

"Say, Volken-kun. Where are we going to now?"

Olivia inquired.

"To a hut about thirty kilometers away from Dalai Mine. I hid a Book and the Spinning Doll Ückück there."

"Ückück?"

Olivia's heart rustled. That idiotic name sounded familiar to her. *What was it?* She thought while holding her head.

"It is one of the Memorial Weapons. It used to belong to you."

"...I get the feeling it's true. But I can't remember it."

“If possible please remember it.”

“I’m making an effort.”

Olivia distorted her lips into a smile.

“But aren’t I a strange woman as well?”

Olivia murmured. The one piloting in front, Volken, turned around.

“Aren’t I the only person in history to be involved in the rebellion of an Armed Librarian twice? Well, the first time hadn’t been me, though.”

Volken spoke with slight discomfort.

“This isn’t a rebellion. I’m fighting to restore the Armed Librarians’ justice.”

“Hmm, justice you say?”

I have nothing to do with it and I don’t care. I just want to retrieve it. She wanted irreplaceable treasure stolen by the Indulging God Cult back. Olivia didn’t yet know what it was at all.

Hamyuts’s airplane traversed the skies and plunged towards the northwest. Below her, the Armed Librarians were preparing for an attack.

“So we’re house-sitting again. What do you think, Enlike-kun?”

Mattalast said. He sat atop the billiard table in the reception hall and polished his cue.

“I don’t care. I already stopped fighting in the first place.”

“Well, I guess that’s fine.”

Mattalast hit the white ball. It collided with five balls and caused the fourth of them to fall into a pocket. He was a man of varied interests, but was expectedly good at billiards.

“By the way, I’ve wanted to ask, what is the Spinning Doll Ückück?”

“Do you not know? We also have one at Bantorra Library, do you want to see it?”

Mattalast said while aiming for another ball.

“Isn’t it valuable?”

“Out of all Memorial Weapons, the Spinning Doll Ückück is ranked the lowest. An ancient Magician made replicas and there should now be eleven of them in the world. It isn’t so valuable.

However, Ückück contains infinite possibilities. It isn’t very useful, but depending on its usage it might possess the strongest power.”

“And what is that power?”

“Right... as an example, your ability is to freely control lightning, but if you were able to concentrate it entirely on one point, wouldn’t you be able to use an outrageous amount of power?”

Mattalast’s explanation was thorough but roundabout.

“It certainly would. What of it?”

“Think about it further. If several people were to add their powers and conduct a Magic Deliberation together, wouldn’t they be able to use even stronger lightning? One about enough to destroy Bantorra Library with a single blow.”

Theoretically it could be true. But that was impossible. Magic Rights are individual. I never heard about people using a single Magic together. At that point, he finally understood what Mattalast was explaining to him.

“Several people using Magic together... is that the power of the Spinning Doll Ückück?”

“You’re a fast learner. Exactly.”

Mattalast polished the billiard cue.

“Spinning Doll Ückück is in fact an impractical weapon. Utilizing it requires many people to conduct Magic Deliberation over several years.

Furthermore, even when they master the Magic Right after all these years, it can only be used once. They are only able to use Magic once and then have nothing to do.

It’s too hard to use.”

“And in exchange for that, if they do use it they achieve tremendous power.”

Mattalast nodded.

“The Ückück Volken had stolen has enough of a Magic Right to activate inside. He just needs the person who put their Magic Right inside to invoke it.”

“What kind of a Magic Right was inside of it?”

“That we do not know. We’d have to ask the one who conducted that Magic Deliberation.”

Mattalast hit a ball. With the second collision, all balls on the table dropped into the pockets.

Part 2

Inside the flying boat, Olivia hit her forehead with her fingertips and kept thinking.

“The Spinning Doll... Vend Ruga... Vend Ruga...”

She spoke those keywords to herself. She was trying to remember them.

“Does it seem like you’re going to remember?”

Volken asked.

“Barely. I feel like I will but I just can’t do it.”

“Why don’t you try undergoing the Magic Deliberation? You should be able to use Magic to counteract the memory erasure made by Argax.”

Olivia shook her head.

“The Magic Deliberation has almost ended already. I can only try to recall everything now. But I just can’t recall it. This shit’s pissing me off.”

Olivia was annoyed. Volken thought that if she weren’t to show him that face she would have been pretty, and that it was unlike him to think so.

“Olivia-san. I don’t know what your goals are. I don’t know what is this Vend Ruga you’re looking for. I don’t know what is the Magic you and the Meats you were leading put inside the Spinning Doll. I don’t even know why Hamyuts wants to kill you.

I don’t know anything as long as you don’t remember it.”

“Dammit, you’re really useless aren’t you?”

Volken felt unpleasant by her way of speaking. However, he also knew that she was that kind of person.

“The Spinning Doll Ückück... Just what have I been doing?”

Olivia gritted her teeth. Then she held her head again.

At that time, the first obstacle was about to appear in Volken’s path. A single airplane was flying towards Bantorra. Its entire crew was a single man in the

cockpit.

He was talking to Mirepoc using her Thought Sharing.

‘These are the instructions from the Director.’

‘Understood, Mirepoc. I will change my course. I don’t know if Volken’s flying straight, but I will most likely be able to contact him.’

The one inside the aircraft was Armed Librarian Vizac Ziglass. He was over forty years old. Both his age and the length of his career were second only to Ireia Kitty. It’s been five years since he started murmuring about retirement. All those who became Armed Librarians at the same time as him were already retired. Those who didn’t were dead. In exchange for him overusing his body for such a long time, he looked older than his age. His face was wrinkled and his fine, black beard had already turned white.

He wore unusual garments – such as an iron helmet. This kind of helmet was much more fitting to be in a museum rather than on an Armed Librarian’s head.

Vizac knew that he was behind the times. He also knew that he couldn’t keep up with young people who used new weapons and bizarre fighting techniques. The times were changing. Pure and simple warriors like Vizac were no longer prevalent.

The old helmet on his head was part of his sense of humor.

‘But thinking that Volken would betray us... What about you, Mirepoc? What do you think?’

Vizac asked Mirepoc, who was about half his age.

‘...I just can’t believe it.’

He could feel Mirepoc was shaken. Vizac made a small smile. *She’s a smart girl, but still too young to not get affected like this.*

‘What do you think, Vizac-san?’

‘Eh, I don’t have anything to do with him. Anyway, I’m only going to fight. It’s that simple.’

‘...I see. Umm, take care. Volken is strong.’

‘Don’t worry. I am also strong.’

‘Yes. Well then, good luck.’

The Thought Sharing was severed. Vizac then noticed that he broke into a grin.

“...Volken boy, aren’t you doing quite the bold move there?”

He muttered. Volken’s face then floated to his mind.

Vizac already knew.

Volken would never betray the Armed Librarians even if the sky was falling. He only carried the stigma of a traitor because there was something he just had to do.

“I have no clue what you’re trying to accomplish, but do it to your heart’s content. After all, you can’t lose to some small fry like me.”

There were several hours until the expected time for contact Mirepoc told him. Vizac kept merrily flying the airplane.

Olivia suddenly opened her mouth.

“Hey, I don’t really mind being the subject, but why don’t you talk about yourself?”

“Huh?”

“I know nothing about you. Why are you helping me? Tell me.”

That’s certainly true. Please excuse me, thought Volken.

“It will be quite the lengthy talk. Is that all right?”

“Of course it is, just talk already.”

She truly has a bad mouth. While thinking this, Volken started talking.

Volken’s rebellion. Its origins lay in the Allow Bay Naval Assault Incident two years ago. Ever since that day when their fight with the Indulging God Cult began, his rebellion also did.

1923, the 12th of October.

That day had been nicely clear. Five Armed Librarians stood on the coast and

were staring at a ship caught inside the bay. The bay's entrance was blocked by several ships sailed by other Armed Librarians. The targeted ship, the White Smoke, had nowhere to escape.

"Don't be so nervous, Mirepo."

"You too, Luimon-san."

The two Armed Librarians behind Volken poked each other.

Volken, Mirepoc and Luimon. That day, the three novice Armed Librarians were given their first mission that wasn't in the Labyrinth.

Hamyuts was the one to decide that they should give them plenty of work of all kinds as soon as possible.

Their enemy was an antigovernment organization that opposed the Ismo Republic. Originally this was not an enemy that Armed Librarians would fight against. They took over this operation because it was Hamyuts's decision to actively intervene in world affairs.

Everyone thought that it would be an easy fight. Probably even Hamyuts.

"Well then, you all seem lively."

Said Hamyuts. Among the novices, only Volken was calm. He controlled his own tension. He acquired that kind of training as well.

"As expected of Volken. You're all relaxed... seems good."

Hamyuts praised. *As expected*, Luimon muttered.

"But they're just some terrorist group, so it's not a big deal."

One other Armed Librarian who was there opened his mouth. He was a man called Casma. He wore an old-fashioned robe from head to toes. However, his tone and behavior were light. He was a strange man.

"Well, this time it also serves as training for the newbies. They need to get experience while they're still young."

"We've been blessed with Armed Librarians lately. It was hard during Photona's times."

Casma spoke lightly.

“This time we have no detailed strategy!

Everyone just get on board and attack. You shouldn't kill noncombatants. If you're able to hold back you can also not kill combatants. These are the orders more or less. I will support you from here.”

A small fast ship came near the coast. Volken and the rest boarded it.

“Today's assessment will reflect on your salary. Do your best, everyone.”

Hamyuts said. The fast ship started moving.

Even as Volken's group approached, no attack came from the ship. It didn't even try to escape.

“How strange.”

Mirepoc said on the boat's bow. The fact that there was no response when they were this close to the ship was strange. If they were going to give up resistance and surrender, they should have raised the white flag or sent some messenger.

“What do you think, Volken?”

Luimon asked. Volken answered.

“An enemy that doesn't make any move when approached often has overwhelming defensive capabilities.

They are probably confident they can defend against our attack.”

Luimon spread both of his arms exaggeratingly.

“Hey now, they're only a terrorist group. Aren't you too cautious?”

Saying so, he drew the large rifle from his waist.

“Look. I will make them obedient with one shot.”

Luimon shot his gun as he spoke.

At that moment, something unbelievable happened. The shot bullet vanished in empty air as if it was some magic trick. The next moment, the bullet came back at the one who shot it.

“...!”

Volken swept Luimon's legs underneath him. The large body flipped over and fell. The bullet almost grazed him. Even though he was giant, even he wouldn't be fine getting hit by his own gun.

"Did it rebound?"

"No, probably not."

It didn't hit some invisible wall. The trajectory was flipped by 180 degrees while in air. This was an ability that they have never seen or heard about before.

"Good, Luimon loses one point. Volken gets two."

Casma cackled.

"Casma-san, do you know about this?"

"Yeah. I've heard rumors about it. This is the ability known as Spatial Control. I thought it was only a rumor, though."

Casma threw the pencil he was holding. Just like the bullet, it disappeared at one point in space and then flew to the opposite direction.

"You can understand by seeing it. It's distorting the connection of space. It's quite the amazing ability. I didn't think anyone could make this happen."

Casma gave directions so they could approach closer with their boat. Mirepoc drove the boat.

"Well, wait for a while. I'll negate that Magic."

Casma held his hands out and started reciting the chants for Magic Deliberation. It was a more complicated spell not used by other Librarians. Casma the Magician could use not only his own Magic Right but also special Magic handed down from ancient times.

"How long will it take?"

"Who knows. Just wait and don't count on it. After all, our dear enemy is undoubtedly a better Magician than me."

"Isn't he just a terrorist?"

Luimon and Mirepoc looked tense. Volken spoke to them.

“Calm down. It’s just a powerful terrorist. There is no need to be afraid.”

Several hours passed. Waiting vigilantly without a moment’s rest was more tiring than a battle.

“I’m hungry...”

Luimon said. Mirepoc restlessly walked around the boat while wondering if there was something she could do. Volken alone was calmly watching over the situation.

“I made an opening.”

Casma said.

“Did you break in?”

“Don’t get too excited, I just opened a hole. I will keep on like this and erase the entire barrier.”

Saying so, Casma kept casting his Magic further. At that time, something happened on the White Smoke. Someone jumped off the deck. He then swam in the sea, trying to escape. It wasn’t clear if he was swimming or drowning.

“Oh, this isn’t good.”

Saying this, Casma leapt into the sea. Even dressed in his robe, he swam skillfully and approached the drowning person.

Something happened yet again.

Just as Casma tried to help the person, a large column of water rose up.

“An explosion!”

Volken raised his voice. After the water column disappeared, robe scraps floated up. The surroundings became slightly reddish.

“What is... this...”

They knew what happened in their heads. However, they didn’t want to admit it. The man took a bomb, jumped into the sea and exploded. Was such a thing possible?

Next, several people jumped from the White Smoke into the sea. They got

closer to them while drowning.

Luimon drew his gun. Volken held him back.

“Mirepoc, move the boat! Go around the White Smoke!”

“Roger that!”

Mirepoc steered. Then, something came flying from behind. It was a gravel bullet used by Hamyuts for communication. The only word written inside was “withdraw”.

“Yes, he opened a hole in the barrier.”

Hamyuts asked them at the coast. It was Volken who nodded.

“Seems like we have no choice but break through that hole. But only Casma knows where it is... how troubling.”

“We’ll have to make a thorough search. We have no other choice.”

Volken said. Hamyuts nodded to that.

The four of them boarded the fast boat and approached the White Smoke once again.

“I will search for the hole in the barrier. Volken, make a foothold for me.”

Volken activated his ability. The twelve loops hanging from his waist floated. He used a simple and conventional telekinesis. By restricting what he could move to the twelve Dancing Blades, it increased their speed and accuracy. Their lethality was much higher than the average gun.

He made the Dancing Blades float in air and affixed them in place. Using them as footholds, he and Luimon ran up to the air.

“Now it’s getting exciting.”

Hamyuts quietly let her impressions.

Stepping on the swords floating midair, Volken and Luimon looked for the hole. Both Luimon’s bullets and Hamyuts’s gravel bullets were repelled by the spatial barrier. Just where was the opening created by Casma?

Even during their slow progress more human bombs came down from the

White Smoke. They were heading to the boat boarded by Hamyuts and Mirepoc. Mirepoc steered the boat away from them.

They attacked the barrier and looked for holes. They had to continue this terribly troublesome and time-consuming work. Meanwhile, the human bombs jumped into the ocean one after the other.

Luimon shouted.

“It passed through!”

A hole opened in the White Smoke’s hull. It was done by Luimon’s bullet.

“Look at me, I’m about to show you how cool I can get!”

Saying so, Luimon kicked at the Dancing Blade providing his foothold and flew. He slipped through the hole in the spatial barrier and landed inside the ship.

People quickly gathered on the deck and surrounded Luimon. He started defeating the enemies with his body and gun.

Volken got down to the deck after him.

After breaking through the barrier it all ended quickly. There weren’t many warriors on the ship. There was also no sign of the Spatial Magician.

The have finished suppressing the ship.

“Alright, we’re strong.”

Luimon rejoiced, but Volken’s expression was bitter.

“...What’s wrong, Volken?”

“We ended up killing them all.”

“...Yeah, that’s true.”

The situation on the ship ended up tragic. People’s limbs cut off by Volken’s Dancing Blades and Luimon’s bayonet were scattered around. The intestines of people who turned into pieces of meat by Luimon’s bullets were also strewn about. No part of the deck was unstained with blood.

The one saving grace was that the scent of death was blown by the sea breeze

and vanished.

The ship itself was in horrible condition. A human bomb exploded on the deck, slanting the ship. At this rate it will sink in a few hours.

They didn't intend to do a massacre. Even if they were enemies, they wanted to conclude everything without killing them.

Luimon probably didn't have any leeway. But Volken was far stronger than him. He thought that he would be able to hold back.

"Hey, Volken. Don't start thinking like Noloty. Well, since you're able to back up your words with real strength it's fine though..."

The spatial barrier was disappearing. Hamyuts and Mirepoc abandoned the fast boat and boarded the ship. The fast boat, damaged by the human bombs, was sinking.

"This isn't the time to talk, you lot."

Hamyuts said.

"I saw it with my Sensory Threads, but there are still plenty of people inside. Go check on them. It's quite terrible."

Until then, Hamyuts clearly had no intention of killing the Meats.

If the incident had ended like that, that battle would have been nothing more than a bitter memory for Volken. However, the problem came after that.

Just as they entered the main topic, Volken stopped talking.

"There seems to be something I must do before I continue this story."

Olivia understood the reason for that as well. A single aircraft was approaching them. The only ones who would approach them currently were enemies.

"I'll continue after we overcome this obstacle."

"Okay."

Olivia replied. She wanted to briefly discuss everything before the enemy came, but it appeared there was no choice. If they were to talk about it Volken would lose and so Olivia would, too.

Just before the aircraft passed by Volken, it made a huge swerve. It then began flying alongside his flying boat.

“Heeey, Volkeeen.”

The airplane’s hatch opened. A helmet-wearing head shouted from inside. Volken immediately knew him even from afar. The only one to wear such a helmet and the only one to call him like that could be only Vizac.

“Crashing our planes into each other will be boring. Let’s land somewhere!”

Volken glanced at Olivia. Once he saw that she had no complaints, he started a nose dive. Vizac also lowered his altitude alongside him.

“Seems like a carefree guy.”

“Yeah. That’s the kind of person he is.”

Olivia shrieked at the small shock received when they landed on water. Volken lightly jumped from his seat and stood on the sandy beach.

Vizac was leisurely walking from the plane landed atop the beach. He held his favorite spear.

“It’s been a while, Volken. Is the lady with you your girlfriend? Ain’t she cute.”

Vizac came and spoke in a cheerful tone.

“Really now, I take my eyes off of you for a moment and this is what happens.”

He cracked jokes and laughed by himself. It didn’t look like he came there to defeat a traitor at all. Even before the battle he wasn’t on guard at all. Even now, Volken was an ally for him.

“Vizac-san, she’s nothing like that. She is a witness so I can evict Hamyuts. I had to run away to protect her.”

“Hmm, so you actually do plan on revolting against Hamyuts?”

“This is no rebellion. I am merely trying to restore Bantorra Library to its proper form.”

“You got yourself into quite the mess. I thought you’re a man who’d do something, but who would’ve thought you would pick up a fight with Hamyuts.”

“It cannot be helped. It is necessary, for us Armed Librarians.”

Vizac’s cheeks stretched to a broad smile.

“You’ve grown, Volken.”

Part 3

Vizac was relieved. Volken's eyes did not seem rotten.

Even after not seeing him for a while, his eyes retained the same steel-like look that he knew. His pure heart stayed while the innocence of his childhood was disappearing.

"You've truly grown, Volken."

Vizac said again.

Joy filled his heart. He even felt proud. Volken was not just a junior to Vizac. No, he felt the same as all the time-weathered Armed Librarians.

Volken was raised to become an Armed Librarian since he was a baby.

When he was born, he was abandoned at the office of an Armed Librarian at a certain mine. The reason for his abandonment in such a place was thought to be the fact that he had beautiful, bright green hair. Leaving someone with a powerful Magical talent for the Armed Librarians probably indicated some parental affectation did remain.

Just as expected by his unknown parents, Volken came to be raised by Armed Librarians. His playground was the spacious Bantorra Library building. His playmates were Armed Librarians, normal librarians and the people who visited Bantorra.

It was truly hard for someone so young. But it was also truly enjoyable.

There were also those who became flustered due to not being used to raising children. There were also those that, despite living a life full of battles, were unexpectedly tactful. There were those who were unfriendly and kept their distance, and there were those who loved him dearly.

Ireia was unexpectedly strict. She said that they shouldn't spoil him until he becomes an adult.

Mattalast was unexpectedly affectionate. Perhaps he thought of him as a much younger brother.

If Volken hadn't been around, just how much boring and dull would the battle-filled life of Vizac and the rest become?

And how happy were they to see him grow into such a splendid Armed Librarian? People like Hamyuts could not understand these feelings.

Suppressing his joy, Vizac pointed the tip of his spear at Volken.

"You and I do not need to fight. My target is Hamyuts alone."

Vizac shook his head.

"Are you hesitating?"

"No, that's not what I mean."

Volken was troubled. He was thinking on how to persuade Vizac.

"How do you plan on winning against Hamyuts?"

"I will soon get evidence of her misdeeds.

If I show that to the other Armed Librarians, she will undoubtedly be exiled."

"And where's that evidence?"

"I still do not have it."

"Can you really get it?"

"I do not know. It depends on the circumstances."

Vizac thought for a while. He kept aiming his spearhead at Volken.

"I also don't like Hamyuts. I'd also like to cooperate with what you're doing.

However, orders are orders."

"But, Vizac-san!"

Vizac encouraged the uneasy Volken.

"Shut up. If you can't win against me, fighting Hamyuts would be nothing more than a pipedream."

"...You're right."

Volken suppressed his uneasy expression. And he then threw up the Dancing Blades at his waist to the air. Two blades protruded out of the iron rings and

Volken started spinning them.

Hamyuts was probably pursuing after the desperate Volken. If that was true, she would probably think to beat him with a surprise attack.

However, that didn't have anything to do with Vizac right now. Right now, his feelings of wanting to celebrate the growth of the snot-nosed kid were much larger.

“This will be an offering. Feast on my spear.”

“I'll gladly receive it!”

A one-on-one fight against the boy he's raised... was there anything as enjoyable as that?

The pair's fight has begun quietly. However, for the eyes of the average person it might have seemed like a fierce battle.

Vizac's spear was not a mere spear. Its handle was dreadfully long and it also had a rifle barrel. Bullets that could pierce even through the armor of MBTs in one shot were fired at Volken.

However, he was far. Volken's martial arts were such that being at such a distance allowed him to evade by seeing him shoot.

The Dancing Blades attacked Vizac from all directions. He blocked those with his spear's tip.

They were about equal in their physical skills. It would become a battle of Magic.

The first one to unleash his ability was Vizac. The sand at his feet scattered as if there were explosives buried inside. It was made by the power of his kick as he ran ahead.

His ability was charging.

Only for the moment when he headed directly for the enemy, his physical capabilities were explosively improved. His speed slightly surpassed even that of Hamyuts who boasted on being the fastest Armed Librarian.

A Dancing Blade grazed the projecting spearhead. Its trajectory was slightly

altered. Volken leapt forward. He kicked at the spear's blade, brushed against Vizac's shoulder and landed behind him.

Volken already knew that this was the one and only method to deal with Vizac's charge.

“Good, as expected of you.”

Vizac said.

And at the moment he turned around and prepared his spear for a second charge...

Volken activated his own ability as well.

The power of his Dancing Blades was something that he acquired later with Magic Deliberation. His true power, symbolic of his bright green hair, was now attacking Vizac.



Volken became two people. Both Volkens left and right drew their Dancing Blades at the same time and fired them simultaneously. Vizac blocked them

both.

However, their form vanished as soon as the spear touched them. Further Dancing Blades came attacking him from the back. But as he tried hitting them with his spear's butt, they also disappeared.

"...So all three were fake."

Vizac muttered.

There were several dozens of Volkens around him.

Volken's ability was to create illusions. There was no limit to their quantity and size. Even manufacturing an entire town was easy.

The only way to distinguish them was by touch. There was no other way of seeing through them. The illusions were even elaborate enough to fool Sensory Threads.

This might have been a somewhat unsuitable ability for Volken seeing as he believed in honesty and frankness. But he had full control of it.

While fighting, Vizac recalled the old days. He remembered Volken and the previous Acting Director, Photona Bardgamon.

Photona was a terribly strict man. He was strict to others and even more to himself. He imposed extremely harsh training on himself even though no one told him to.

However, strangely, Photona was the one to whom Volken was the most attached. He always used to say that he wanted to become like him and that he wanted Photona to acknowledge him.

He was overly self-disciplined just like Photona. He strongly believed in justice just like Photona. His very life was to grow into the ideal Armed Librarian.

For Volken, being an Armed Librarian wasn't merely an occupation. You couldn't describe his life as being something other than an Armed Librarian.

He tried being that way to the extent he betrayed the Library. If possible, Vizac wanted him to accomplish this. Thus he thought while he was fighting.

Which of the several dozen Volkens was the real one? Although Vizac

hesitated, he soon threw his doubts away. Making him hesitant was a part of Volken's strategy. He could do nothing else but break the illusions and charge forward.

He narrowed down his target to a single Volken and charged. He ran while weaving his way through the gaps between the several hundreds of Dancing Blades. One of them was real. Blood spouted from Vizac's flank.

The Volken stabbed by the spear was an illusion. However, Vizac predicted it since he didn't take any evasive actions. Vizac erased Volken's illusions one by one. The real Dancing Blades mixed with the illusions minced up his body.

There were only three Volkens left. Which of them was real? He continued his slightly dulled charging attack against two Volkens. Vizac flew sideways. Kicking at the sand, he then charged in an attempt to penetrate the two Volkens.

Vizac should have probably noticed at that point. Thinking calmly, it was a simple psychological trick.

The spear penetrated the two Volkens. There was no resistance. They both were illusions.

"..."

Stopping in place, Vizac surveyed the scene around him. Volken was sitting in the cockpit of the plane Vizac took there.

His body was wet, probably from having hidden himself in the sea.

"Vizac-san. I broke your airplane. Repair will be easy, but will take time. I will keep you here."

Those who were shown several fakes would think that the real one was among them. It was an elementary technique frequently used for sleight of hands and fraud.

Vizac's injuries were not shallow, but his life was not at risk. It wasn't impossible for him to continue fighting. However, Vizac threw his spear away and sat on the sand. It was his complete defeat. He was led by the nose.

"That's fine. You weren't bad at all."

Vizac sure said something embarrassing, thought Volken. These were the

same words he used when he trained him.

Volken lowered his head.

“Thank you, master.”

Vizac blushed in embarrassment.

“What’re you saying. Go already. Hamyuts is coming to get you with her face burning in rage.”

Even so, Volken kept bowing his head for a while.

“Listen, Volken. The Armed Librarians have some sort of secret. Even I or sister Ireia don’t know it. Probably only the Acting Directors and those close to them know of it.”

“Yes.”

“Be careful.”

“Understood.”

He started running towards the flying boat as if he didn’t think of Vizac anymore. *That is fine. Don’t look back,* thought Vizac.

Sitting inside the flying boat, Olivia closely watched the fight between the two. Volken was impressed by her. A normal person would look at the fight of Armed Librarians and tremble with fear.

“Our fight has only just begun. Let us hurry.”

Wiping off his hair, Volken started the plane’s engine. At that time, he heard Olivia’s whisper coming from behind.

“No.”

Volken turned around.

“That was no fight.”

Volken was upset. They brought out each other’s full strength and left no regrets behind. He himself thought it was a fine fight.

“A fight needs to be dirtier.”

“Why?”

“I dunno. I just thought so.”

Once the airship reached enough altitude, he stopped ascending.

“Keep telling the story from earlier.”

Olivia said. Volken nodded and started talking.

After having occupied the White Smoke, Volken and rest went below deck just as Hamyuts told them. Mirepoc screamed. Volken covered his mouth from the stench.

More than a hundred people were stuffed in about twenty cabins. They were so dirty to the extent they didn't seem human.

“What's wrong with these people?”

Volken entered the cabin and called out to them. What were their names? Why were they here? Those who gave a normal answer to that were rare.

“How is it, Volken?”

Hamyuts, coming in late, spoke to him. Volken shook his head.

“It's just unbelievable. For what purpose would they...”

“They were probably turned to livestock.”

Hamyuts's sound was the very image of calmness. Volken couldn't tell whether she was shaken but suppressed it or if she didn't have any emotions in the first place.

“Because human beings are very useful. They could turn them into bombs and such.”

“How evil...”

Volken clenched his fist. He regretted the meaningless massacre.

But he couldn't let the human bombs die. Those people on this ship had to be protected.

“Let's rescue them for now. This ship will sink soon.”

“There should have been a lifeboat left. Let's use it.”

Hamyuts shook her head.

“We won’t be able to fit all of them on one boat. Besides, we’ll be using something else.”

“Something else?”

“Yeah. We’ve found lots of interesting stuff. I ordered Mirepo and the rest to bring them out now.”

Volken went outside. Luimon held some documents and carried them to the deck.

A lifeboat was floating on the sea’s surface. Mirepoc was inside of it.

Luimon tied a bundle of documents together and threw them to Mirepoc. Besides the documents, various kinds of unfamiliar objects were stowed on the boat. They prioritized collecting information about the terrorist organization to rescuing people.

That’s not right, thought Volken. Luimon spoke to him.

“Hey, come and help us. We have to take everything from the ship no matter how small it is.”

“Shouldn’t human lives take precedence? If the ship sinks those people will die too.”

“Mirepo called a rescue ship. Look over there.”

Luimon pointed at the bay, where a ship was starting up. The seized goods were carried on the lifeboat and the ship will carry the people. *It certainly is better that way, but I still feel uncomfortable that human lives aren’t of the highest priority.*

“But we’ve found something quite incredible.”

“What is it?”

“It’s the Book of the Ever-Laughing Witch, Shiron Booyacornish. In addition to that there are pathogens for Dragon Pneumonia, the Spinning Doll Ücküek and plenty of other things.

Just what was that ship? This is unbelievable.”

“Hey there. Stop talking and work.”

Mirepoc called from the boat.

“Look, you’ve made Mirepoc angry. You work too.”

“...Yeah.”

It’s fine for another ship to come and rescue them. We have other work to do.

Thinking so, Volken went back to the cabins.

Volken regretted what happened next even now. If they took some people on that boat, they might have managed to save some of them.

Volken entered a room below the deck. He didn’t think there were valuable items in such a place, but decided to check it anyway. He found something unpleasant inside that cabin. There was a pile of explosives there. They were probably meant to hide evidence in the worst case scenario. It was fortunate they did not use it.

They had no time to get rid of the explosives. He found the detonator and removed it.

“Oh my, what’s that? How unpleasant.”

Hamyuts came inside.

“Volken, pull out the detonator.”

“I already did.”

He handed the test tube full of black gunpowder to Hamyuts.

He just casually did so, but he regretted this moment as well. He thought that he should have destroyed that detonator or perhaps throw it into the sea countless of times. Even though he knew it was meaningless to think so.

Volken kept searching further inside the ship.

He entered yet another room. It appeared to be some sort of warehouse, and he found nothing impressive inside. There was a mountain of clothes dirtier than mops; pots and barrels that gave foul smell; and whips with dirty fingermarks on them. They were probably all tools to take care of the people on the ship.

Just as Volken was about to close the door, he noticed something. Hamyuts

was sitting in a corner of the room. She was staring at something. There seemed to be something written on the wall at the height of her knees.

Volken saw a horrifying and unusual sight. Hamyuts's eyes were wide open and her mouth slightly ajar. It was an expression of utter shock.



Hamyuts made a poker face. A poker face was different from being expressionless. Her face barely showed any agitation and dismay.

Was it because she neglected to check if there were people around? Or was it that big of a deal?

“Director.”

Volken spoke. Hamyuts rose up.

“Oh, Volken, what’s wrong?”

She returned to her usual voice and expression which made one not understand her true intentions from. Volken was worried about what she saw.

“What are you doing there, we have work to do.”

“Yes ma’am.”

While he answered, Volken looked down at the scribbling Hamyuts saw. The following was written there: “Vend Ruga is alive. He is alive in Olivia Littolet’s heart.”

He had no idea what this meant.

“Volken. The rescue ship will arrive in 30 minutes. Bring those people to the deck.”

Mirepoc called him from the deck. Luimon headed for the shore with the lifeboat slightly earlier.

“Understood.”

Volken destroyed the cabin’s locks and lead the people to the deck.

At that moment, the ship shook with a tremendous roar.

“What the...”

“Aah!”

He had no idea what happened in an instant.

The floor, at first slowly and then at great speed, slanted to the side. The people slid on the blood-covered floor and were thrown into the ocean. Volken couldn’t respond immediately. He didn’t even have time to create footholds using his Dancing Blades.

Volken was thrown into the sea. Water filled his nose.

The hull came crashing from above. Volken swam down and pulled his head out away from the ship.

“Why!”

As the ship toppled sideways, a black smoke that was the opposite of its name came out from its belly. Seeing that, Volken finally understood what happened.

“But I removed... the detonator...”

Volken muttered as he grabbed on to the floating wood scraps. He looked at the sinking ship dumbfounded.

“Are you alive, Volken?”

Hamyuts came swimming to him.

“...Director, the detonator, I...”

“You have your Dancing Swords, right? Make some footholds. Mirepo is also fine. She’s swimming around here.”

The Director’s voice hasn’t reached Volken’s ears. He felt as if she was speaking to him from far away.

“The detonator...”

Hamyuts clicked her tongue, ignored Volken and swam around.

“Volken, let’s go. It’s dangerous here. There might be more explosions.”

Mirepoc shouted. However, Volken didn’t register what she said as well.

He looked for the figures of people who should have floating on the sea. However, he found not even one.

“I was looking for them now. But no one came floating. I found some of them but I couldn’t save them.”

“Why!”

“I tried saving them. But they wouldn’t grab to me or try to float.”

“Shit!”

Volken dove into the sea. Bumping into the debris of the sinking ship, he finally found one person. When he grabbed his hand there was a response. He

was still alive.

He emerged to the water's surface. He tried making the skinny body grab a wooden scrap. However, the rescued person listlessly shook off Volken's hands.

"Why?"

Volken grabbed the clothes of the person who was about to sink and pulled him up.

"Why, do you not want to live?!"

The Meat tore off the grabbed clothes. Then he sank again.

"Don't you want to live?!"

Volken screamed again and again. There was no reply; only the sounds of the sinking ship replied to him. These people lived as if they were livestock for a long time. It seemed those days robbed their reasons to live.

Volken and Mirepoc dove into the ocean in an attempt to rescue them many times. And they felt it was all in vain every time.

Eventually, the only ones rescued by the ship Mirepoc called were Volken and the rest who didn't need it.

Part 4

Volken kept speaking of his past regrets. Olivia listened to it all expressionlessly. She once lived on the White Smoke. However, hearing about the death of people in the exact same place and of the exact same circumstances didn't move her heart at all.

Her only response was about the scribble.

"Yeah, I can faintly remember it. I was the one to write that."

"...Is that so."

"I see... so Vend Ruga's alive..."

Olivia said and smiled. She couldn't help but be happy. She didn't care about the dead Meats at all.

That was the sort of person she was. She would pay no heed to other people if it was for her goals.

Volken knew that Olivia was that kind of person. However, when he saw her that way in front of his eyes he couldn't help but feel uncomfortable.

Perhaps I can't trust that woman. She can only think of how to use other people. However, Volken had no choice but to help her.

"I will continue the story."

It was after the incident. Volken had some suspicions. He suspected that Hamyuts was the one to cause the explosion. However, he had no positive proof and she had no motive. It didn't go beyond being a suspicion.

The Armed Librarians were busy. Their battle against the Indulging God Cult began. Their current goal was to look for a man called Cigal Crukessa. Even Volken, who was in charge of managing his mine, took part in it.

He also couldn't neglect his normal business. He didn't have any time to breathe.

Volken's situation changed after some time has passed.

“Hey, Volken. I need to speak with you about something unrelated to our work now.”

It was a casual chat after they both finished writing their reports. It was actually Hamyuts that started talking nonchalantly. Recalling this afterwards, she was probably pretending to be casual. She tried mixing up the important truth that had to be concealed in idle talk.

“Yes, what is it?”

“Umm, how will I say this. It’s just that... were you perhaps given a Book by some strange person?”

He couldn’t recall such a thing.

“A strange person? Please be more specific.”

“A strange person’s just a strange person. If I were to be specific...”

Hamyuts started thinking. After a while, she shook her head.

“No, never mind.”

“What was that all about?”

“I just wanted to check something.”

He didn’t pay any heed to that at the time. A few days later, Volken understood the meaning of that conversation.

It happened as he came back to his home from Bantorra Library.

He hadn’t returned there for more than half a month. He took off his uniform after a long time and changed to casual clothes. He slept in a tidy bed for the first time in a week.

Volken’s eyes were suddenly caught on the pocket of one of the clothes inside his drawer. The breast pocket of a suit he hadn’t worn in several years was bulging. A small scrap of paper peeked from the pocket’s edge.

“What is this?”

Volken took out the suit. Inside the pocket was a single Book.

He took out the piece of paper and read it.

It was a letter to Volken, written in flowing letters.

“To Volken Macmani-sama.

I now entrust you with this single Book, in order for you to grant a continuation for this story. You were not originally the person meant to inherit this. Entrusting it to you is an unavoidable measure.

The person meant to inherit the story of this Book is Olivia Littolet-sama. However, she had lost her power to live.

The possibility of her inheriting this story is lower than that of moss growing on a large tree, but since the world of man is full with mysterious events, there is also the possibility that this Book will someday be delivered to her. I ask you from the bottom of my heart to deliver this Book to Olivia Littolet someday, and to bring about the ending of this story.

P.S. Hamyuts-sama alone must not know of this.”

“...I can't understand it at all.”

Volken was befuddled. The letter seemed to be rejecting the understanding of its reader at its very core. Was it really fine handing this Book to the woman called Olivia?

“...Olivia, huh?”

He thought for a while and then remembered. That was the name mentioned in the scribble on the White Smoke.

And the end of the letter was a warning to not let Hamyuts know of it.

Volken recalled his conversation with her a few days prior.

That's secret information.

Hamyuts asked me whether or not I received this.

Volken reached his hand to the Book.

As expected, the reason for the White Smoke's sinking was written inside. The one to sink the White Smoke was Hamyuts just as he thought. And he knew... that it was done in order to kill the person known as Olivia Littolet.

“And so you have rebelled against Hamyuts.”

“Indeed. She sank the ship because of you. She involved hundreds of people in order to kill you. Is there something more inhuman than that? It’s no different from those Indulging God Cult guys.”

“...I wonder.”

In contrast to Volken’s anger, Olivia’s response was weak.

“I do not know your goal. I also have no idea why Hamyuts wants to kill you. However, I do know that Hamyuts is evil.

Please regain your memories as soon as possible. You, the Book I was entrusted by someone, and the Spinning Doll Ückück. Once I gather all the evidence, I will strike at Hamyuts.”

“...I see. Do as you wish.”

Olivia bluntly said. Her goals were to regain her memories and Vend Ruga. She had nothing to do with Hamyuts.

“You’re also a strange guy. Why are you so passionate about this?”

She said her impressions with a brief comment.

Volken suddenly recalled the past. He thought of the Armed Librarian he admired, Photona.

If he were to see him now, what would he say? He will probably not tell him he was doing a foolish thing.

Volken will not forgive those who make light of human lives; he inherited that belief from Photona. He was raised in the Library. His life until now has always been with Photona at his side.

It was already ten years ago. Volken was playing at Bantorra Library. Usually, the Librarians who had some free time or the visitors who came to view Books were his play partners, but that day he was all alone.

“...No one’s here.”

Saying so, Volken reached for the Book held inside a basket. It was a Book meant to be shelved in the Sealed Archive. Volken took advantage of an opening where the Armed Librarian didn’t look at the Book and took it. He

wanted to try reading it no matter what. A Book that was meant to be sealed and not allowed to be read tickled his young adventurous spirit.

“...There’s no one here.”

Volken’s talent for Magic was blooming. He knew that everyone around him said that he will become an Armed Librarian sooner or later.

He felt no guilt. *I’m going to become an Armed Librarian. I’m just taking an early peek.* Thinking so, Volken reached inside the basket.

At that moment, he heard a voice from behind.

“Hey! What’re you doing!”

Someone called him. It was the one supposed to carry that Book, Hamyuts. Volken panicked and tried to escape. Then, the basket fell.

“You can’t be here.”

To make matters worse, Volken stepped on the Book in his panic. He heard an unpleasant voice underneath his foot. The Book had broken into five or six parts.

“Uh oh.”

Hamyuts held her head.

Volken’s leg, still on the Book, trembled. He was afraid not only about breaking the Book, but also about Photona getting angry at him.

Photona was scary. He was the scariest person among the Armed Librarians.

Hamyuts came out from the Acting Director’s Office. Her expression was not gloomy. It seemed he wasn’t too harsh with her. She wasn’t someone who could suppress her anger.

But it was not so for Volken. Facing so much fear that it made him feel as if he was floating in the air, he entered the Acting Director’s Office.

Even if a Book breaks one could read it using the fragments. However, only part of the information could be read from it. If a Book breaks, most of the content inside disappears.

“Breaking a Book is the same as killing a person.”

He had always been told so.

Photona and Ireia were inside the office. He felt a little relieved. It was better than meeting Photona alone. His steel-like gaze was directed at Volken.

Photona Bardgamon.

His body wasn't particularly big. He was about as tall as Hamyuts. He wore a bad-looking uniform the sort that a private at some army would wear. It fit neither his position nor his looks, but he was a man who only wanted his clothes to be easy to move in and durable.

He was close to forty years old. However, his face was that of an 18 years old boy. The aging of his body has stopped long ago. It was an extremely rare phenomenon that occurred to those who polished their bodily reinforcement Magic to the utmost limit. Even from his face alone, it was clear that he possessed extraordinary fighting capabilities.

His pure white hair was natural. It wasn't a sign of his Magic Right, but that his body simply lacked pigments.

His most prominent trait was his eyes. Normally facing these old lion-like eyes was frightening.

"Volken. Do not become an Armed Librarian."

Was the first thing Photona said. That was more painful than the worst case scenario Volken had anticipated.

With the shock and the intimidating air transmitted by Photona, he couldn't even cry.

"Director."

Ireia raised her voice. Photona ignored her.

"That's all. You can go."

He didn't reprimand him at all. Volken couldn't even talk back or apologize.

Hours passed until Volken stopped crying. He stopped not because the shock had lessened, but because he was tired of crying.

"Photona-san was too harsh, wasn't he?"

Mattalast said with a sour expression. Volken wanted to become an Armed Librarian from the bottom of his heart. He admired Mattalast, Vizac, Ireia and Photona as well. His aspiration and the gratitude he felt towards them raising him until now were his reasons to become an Armed Librarian.

“Seems like the Director didn’t want to let Volken become an Armed Librarian in the first place.”

Ireia said.

“He certainly did say something like this... I wonder why.”

Mattalast was troubled. *Why? Volken thought. I seem to have talent. I also have the desire to become strong. Even though I like Bantorra Library more than anything, he...*

The Book Volken had broken belonged to a man who lived in the small country known as the Dizala Republic. He was the leader of a criminal group. *Unforgivable*, thought Volken. He felt some anger towards Photona, but was also angry at the Book that robbed his future.

Isn't it just one of many? How did things turn out like this from just that? Volken’s sadness transformed into anger.

With Ireia’s help, Volken wasn’t chased out of the Library. A few languid days have passed. One day, Mattalast called out to him.

“Hey, go to reading room number 54 in the Sixth Level.”

“Huh?”

Volken went down the stairs and entered the reading room he was told.

There was an old man inside.

“Dear me, are you a lost child?”

The old man said. It seemed like he wasn’t the one to call Volken. Then why did he have to come here?

He soon understood why. His eyes turned to the Book on top of the desk. It was the Book Volken stepped on and broke.

“Little boy. This isn’t a place you can just come into. Making the Armed

Librarians angry is scary.”

The man said. Volken approached him while hanging his head. He vigorously bowed down.

“I’m sorry!”

“...I see. So it was you.”

And with that the old man seemed to understand the situation. He gently tapped Volken’s shoulder and made him raise his head. He guessed who told him to come here. It surely was Photona.

The old man made Volken sit on a chair and spoke with him. The man in the Book was his old friend. They spent time together when they were young, and death separated them.

“He was my friend... he wasn’t a man worthy of praise, but the people around him felt relieved when he died.”

Volken silently listened to the old man’s story.

“We were both poor. We simply wanted money. If only enough so we could see a doctor when we get sick. However, at some point along the way he strayed to the wrong path. He had somehow found his way to the gallows.”

The man kept speaking. The light of his youth returned only to his eyes.

“Before he strayed from the proper path he truly was a good man. Everyone adored him. I am probably the only one left to remember these times.

I wanted to see the memories of that time...”

Those times have been lost from the Book’s fragments.

“No-one knows about those times anymore. Whenever someone speaks of him it’s always complaints. His youth was also lost at Bantorra Library.”

Volken sniffled. He told himself that he mustn’t cry.

“It’s okay, boy. I know. The memories about him will be inside my Book. So it’s fine. That man from those times will remain in this world.”

He now understood why Photona made him come here. He wanted him to understand just how much important was even a single Book.

After that, Volken spoke with Photona again. Without him mentioning what he talked with the old man about and what he thought about after hearing him, Photona asked him a single question.

“Why are there Armed Librarians?”

Volken has been thinking of that ever since he parted from the old man.

“Because Books have important information written inside. They exist in order to make use of Books and prevent their abuse.”

“There are far more people in the world that hold no important information.”

“There are people who want to meet them in their memories. The people left behind want to cherish the memories of the dead.”

“And if there were no such people, would throwing the Books away be fine?”

He then hesitated. Why were Books important? That was essential.

“Every person thinks of themselves as special. Therefore, every Book is special. Umm, I can’t explain it well.”

“...Volken.”

Photona stood up and put a hand on Volken’s head. He pinched a tuft of his bright green hair.

“People die. Until their deaths, they live earnestly for a short while. All stories made during this time are precious.

Both good and bad people. The long and the short. Even those with life full of hardships or those with boring lives.

There is no need to ask yourself why or how. Everything is equally precious. Do you understand?”

Yes, he wanted to say.

“You must be sad at a person’s death. You must be happy at a person’s salvation. You must respect people’s lives.

That is the justice of the Armed Librarians. It is more important than strength or honesty.”

At that moment, Volken saw Photona smile for the first time in his life.

“If you understand this, you will become a fine Armed Librarian.”

Photona’s palm was thick and stiff. Feeling it became like a guidepost for Volken’s life.

Becoming strong. Protecting the Armed Librarians’ justice. Becoming like Photona. Volken decided to devote his entire life to those goals.

Ireia, listening to the conversation from the side, spoke.

“You doting parent.”

Mattalast then spouted,

“Ireia-san. Don’t cut in like that.”

Vizac who listened from the side also laughed.

“Volken’s doing his best, eh. We now have another Photona.”

“Give me a break. If we had another person like that I wouldn’t be able to slack off peacefully.”

“Stop slacking off, you idiot.”

While everyone was laughing together, there was another person with a completely different expression. It was Hamyuts. No one there had noticed her.

“Good grief, that Photona-san and his nonsense...”

The emotion rising up to her face was scorn.

Volken was thinking while piloting the flying boat.

“Photona-san... I haven’t been wrong.”

He had confidence. Since he was confident, he could fly away like that.

A while before that.

It was inside a hotel room at the Ismo Republic. A man playing with chess pieces was there. He was moving the chess pieces placed on the chessboard in front of him by himself. White was overwhelmingly dominant.

He was the Overseer of Paradise.

A bee stopped on top of the black king. A piece of paper about as big as two fingers was wrapped around its abdomen. The Overseer of Paradise read it.

“So Volken has rebelled. Hmm, something seems strange.”

He recalled the face of the boy who grew up in Bantorra Library. In his memories was only his face as a young child.

Another bee came flying inside. He read the second report.

“...Olivia Littolet has been revived? Now then, who was that?”

The Overseer of Paradise thought for a while. He couldn't recall who this name had belonged to. He stopped his hand handling the chess pieces.

“...Couldn't be that woman? That woman from the White Smoke?”

He stood up without noticing. However, he soon pulled himself together and sat down again.

“Oh well. Hamyuts will probably kill her.”

He muttered. However, the slight sense of danger did not disappear.

“But... just in case, should I do something?”

Chapter 3: Heart of Lead

Part 1

What is a victory?

It is easy when talking about chess. If you checkmate the opponent's king, you win.

Billiard is also simple. If you land the 9th ball into the pocket, you win.

In a battle, you win if the opponent dies.

Alternatively, if they surrender you also win.

If you survive, that can also turn into a victory.

There were few people who have secured more victories in life than Hamyuts Meseta. There were few people who knew more about victory than her.

However, there was one thing that even Hamyuts did not understand.

There were people that, even if she caused them to surrender, even if she killed them, she would still not win.

How could she win against that?

Just what is victory?

While piloting the airplane, Hamyuts was thinking. Where was the flying boat with Volken and Renas? Would she be able to catch up to them in time?

"...Olivia, huh."

She was already convinced – Renas's true identity was Olivia Littolet. The Allow Bay Incident... Volken... Renas... The one common point to these three could be no one else but Olivia.

Hamyuts didn't know he she looked. She only knew it was a woman from her name.

"No way, right..."

She subconsciously put strength into her hands holding the steering wheel. And she started complaining.

“I mean, it’s possible. But really, there’s no way it’s true.”

She thought that Olivia Littolet died when she sank the White Smoke. But she apparently happened to leave the ship before Hamyuts sank it. Then, Winkeny implanted a different personality in her and brought her to Bantorra Library. Furthermore, she survived Mokka’s rebellion and even met with Volken.

Wasn’t it a coincidence? She could think of it as nothing else. But it was also too incredulous to be true.

“It really is impossible.”

She grumbled.

Right. This battle was based on an impossible situation from the very beginning.

The origin of this incident dated even further back than the Allow Bay Incident. Even when the battle with the Indulging God Cult was not yet to begin, the story had already begun.

It was ten years ago. Third Grade Armed Librarian Hamyuts Meseta was young then.

In front of Acting Director Photona Bardgamon who was strict about order and discipline, even Hamyuts refrained from dressing slovenly. She buttoned her shirt all the way to the top and wore not sandals, but leather shoes.

Her braided hair hung on her back and was tied by a white ribbon.

They were in the Principality of Meliot, far from Bantorra Library, in the mountainous region extending to the west.

Hamyuts and Photona were walking by themselves in the bare rocky area of the mountain.

“Oh, the other person’s coming first.”

Hamyuts said. This was information transmitted to her from the Sensory Threads carried by the wind.

“Are we late?”

Photona said.

“No, I think we are on time.”

Photona nodded a little and kept walking.

“Ooh, it’s a rabbit! Yay!”

Hamyuts found a wild rabbit peeking from the distance. When she waved her hand, it soon drew back. She wanted to catch it and hold it in her arms, but knew Photona would be angry at her so she couldn’t.

“Hamyuts. We have to hurry. This mission is a secret from the other Armed Librarians. I’d like to finish it as soon as possible.”

Photona kicked at the ground and lightly landed atop a rock ten-odd meters away.

“Okaay.”

Hamyuts followed him. The pair reached their destination shortly.

This was a month after the day Photona had reprimanded Volken and taught him how life was precious.

“It’s been a while.”

Photona greeted. On a flat crag halfway through the mountain was a single man. He was sitting on a rattan chair; did he bring it up all the way there?

His figure and face could be seen. However, once you averted your eyes from him, no memory of it would remain. Hamyuts stroked the man’s body using her Sensory Threads. She could see him, but she understood that he did not exist at this place.

“Hamyuts. Let me introduce him. He is the current Overseer of Paradise.”

Hamyuts gave him her hand to shake, but the Overseer of Paradise did not take it. Because he was not there, obviously.

“Nice to meet you, young lady. Your name is?”

The Overseer of Paradise said. Photona answered instead of her.

“Hamyuts Meseta. She is a Third Grade Armed Librarian, but will sooner or later become the Acting Director.”

Oh my, thought Hamyuts. Is it fine disregarding the primary candidate Mattalast and saying that?

“Say, will I really be the next Director?”

“That’s my intention. It also depends on how many dissenters will be.”

“If it’s Mattalast no one will oppose. He’s quite popular after all.”

“That depends on a lot. Besides, we have still to let in Mattalast on our secret.”

“Well, that’s true.”

“Uh, excuse me.”

The Overseer of Paradise raised one hand.

“Could you leave the matter about that person for later?”

“Right.”

Photona said and returned to face the Overseer of Paradise.

“Photona, this young lady seems to be aware of the circumstances.”

“Yeah.”

“About our relationship and God’s identity as well?”

Hamyuts grinned.

“Yes, I know it all well, Overseer of Paradise-san.”

“So you agree to it all.”

“Naturally.”

“Then all is good. Nice to meet you, young lady.”

The Overseer of Paradise bowed a little.

As the three finished their greetings, they moved further. Reaching the summit, they looked down to the bottom. They could see a stone fortress in the middle of the mountain.

This fortress didn't have normal firearms at the ready. There were also no ditches against tanks or barbed wires against infantry to be found. Instead, a protective wall made by Magic covered the entirety of it. It was a fortress prepared to defend against warriors employing Magic.

"The rebels are barricading themselves in that fortress."

"Does that mean all of them are inside?"

Photona inquired.

"Yeah. My forces have annihilated all those who aren't inside."

"Are you sure? So even those who surrendered got killed, huh."

Photona emphasized. The Overseer of Paradise nodded as if it was clear. He kept explaining.

"Our enemy was a single girl. She was a True Man, yet wanted to destroy Heaven.

While we already killed her, the False Men who served her will not stop the fight.

In order to oppose me, they prepared a powerful weapon. Unfortunately, we cannot send any more men. I have no choice but to bear some shame and rely on you."

"Overseer of Paradise. To be honest, I am disappointed in your work."

Photona reprimanded the man.

"Your intelligence management is inadequate. You have insufficient amounts of False Men and pawns. The quality of your True Men is not good either. If you feel you are inadequate for this job tell me immediately. I will dismiss you and find another Overseer of Paradise."

"Will you not wait for a while longer? We recently almost got the work back on track again."

"...Oh well. Perhaps it's fine to let you have somewhat insufficient capabilities. So you will not plot of rebelling against the Armed Librarians."

"A rebellion? Of course not. We can coexist perfectly fine, can we not?"

“Indeed.”

If other Armed Librarians heard this now they would be so shocked, thought Hamyuts. She laughed in her heart. The chief of the Indulging God Cult, enemy of the whole world, was speaking on good terms with the Acting Director.

With a few exceptions, the relations between the Indulging God Cult and the Armed Librarians were not revealed to their subordinates. This was the same for both the Armed Librarians and the Indulging God Cult.

“For the time being, you should get a few more battle-able subordinates. Calling us for help every time something happens will hinder preserving the secret.”

“I am sorry for that. However, Photona...

The Indulging God Cult is an organization that exists to make people happy. Heaven exists for the happiness after death, and I exist for the happiness before death.

I believe that happiness is something unrelated to battle.”

The Overseer of Paradise used a perfectly sound reasoning.

“That depends on the time and the circumstances. If a peace exists because of the use of minimal force, that peace is happiness.”

Photona’s objection was perfectly sound as well.

Hamyuts again wanted to laugh. If anyone were to hear their conversation, they would think these two were absolute pacifists.

Photona was about to commit a massacre. With the same mouth that preached Volken about the value of life, he was about to command Hamyuts to begin a slaughter.

Moreover, it was no simple massacre. The order was to give them “true death”.

“Hey, I’d like to wait a little.”

Hamyuts, who until now was silent, opened her mouth. The two people directed their gazes at her.

“A one-sided massacre is quite savage. I think that the times are changing.”

The Overseer of Paradise rounded his eyes and looked at Photona.

Photona shook his head as if to let her keep speaking.

“Now is the world of democracy, of human rights, of discussion with one another. First of all we have to solve it by talking.”

“What is the young lady saying?”

“Let her be.”

Hamyuts jumped off the mountain towards the fortress. The Overseer of Paradise tilted his head while Photona saw her off in disappointment.

She approached the fortress. She did as she said before; she did not destroy it or kill any soldiers. Hamyuts casually walked to the door and spoke calmly.

“Hey, can you open for me?”

“Who are you?”

She was questioned from inside.

“I’m an Armed Librarian. I came to talk with you.”

She answered, and surprisingly, the door actually opened. The enemies seemed to have understood the disadvantages of the situation as well. They were desperate. Even more desperate now that Photona and the rest came to discuss with them.

As Hamyuts entered through the door, she found something strange. No, it should be called *someone* strange. There were dolls standing on both sides of the door that opened to the inside. They were life-size dolls shaped like men. They wore khaki-colored plain clothes. The upper half of their faces was concealed by wide-brimmed hats.

Their faces were made of metal. Judging by the color, they were made of lead.

“What’s that?”

Hamyuts tried touching one’s face. She felt slight warmth from the coldness of the metal. As she knocked on its face, its head moved. Eyes made of lead

stared at Hamyuts from under the hats.

“Wow, scary!”

At that moment, a single man came to greet Hamyuts. He seemed tired from the long siege. He had sunken cheeks and deep dark circles under his eyes.

“...This is Vend Ruga. The lead soldier who protects us all.”

The man spoke in a muffled voice that sounded like the dark clouds right before a thunderstorm. *I see, so that's the weapon the Overseer of Paradise mentioned.*

“So this is Vend Ruga. And who's next to it?”

Hamyuts pointed at the other doll.

“It's also Vend Ruga. These lead dolls are all Vend Ruga.”

“...Seems inconvenient. Well, not that it matters.”

She closely observed the two dolls. They were warriors made of lead, surpassing the human body. *Normal bullets and swords would probably have no effect. Not a bad idea at all.*

Hamyuts left the Vend Rugas and proceeded towards the man.

“They seem to be so-so.”

She commented. However, being “so-so” held no meaning against people like Hamyuts and Photona.

Hamyuts met with the False Man representative at the basement of the fortress. They probably had no alcohol, coffee or tea. They offered her only a cup of dusty-smelling water.

The grey-haired man sat with his arms folded. Rather than a rebel, the man seemed more like a herbivore running while being chased around.

“Well, I'm sure you understand, but our goal is to give the Violet Sinner a true death.”

Hamyuts said. At the mention of that name – the Violet Sinner – the False Man had a faint response.

The leader of the rebels was a single True Man. Uttering her name was no longer permitted. For convenience sake, she was called after the beautiful color of her hair – the Violet Sinner.

“A true death?”

Hamyuts gave a supplementary explanation.

“We will obliterate the very fact that the Violet Sinner had existed. Erasure of all memories, records and traces relating to her. This we call a true death. It is the heaviest punishment in this world bestowed by the God’s representative.”

The leader of the False Men listened to Hamyuts’s pronouncement expressionlessly. He was probably already accustomed to the feel of despair.

“Look, the Violet Sinner doesn’t exist in this world anymore. The lovely violet had been plucked off by the Overseer of Paradise.

Don’t you want to erase your memories of her with the water of Argax and serve another True Man?”

The leader laughed weakly. His way of laughing was as if saying ‘isn’t it too late now?’ People who were ready to die sometimes laughed like this.

“She was everything to us. Telling us to forget her is the same as telling us to not be ourselves. We refuse, of course.”

“Right, you were that kind of people after all.”

Hamyuts moved her eyes a little and thought.

She drank the water offered to her and stood up. She slowly walked around the room. She smiled while walking, and then spoke.

“Well, it’s about time to get down to business. I have a request for you.”

So we haven’t gotten into business until now? The False Men leader felt dubious.

“My request is a simple thing... well, since it’s beneficial for the both of us, I thought I’d try suggesting it.”

“...What is it?”

“Will you all kill yourselves for me?”

Hamyuts said seriously. The leader of the False Men hesitated for a while, and then pulled out his gun and pointed it at her.

His wrist was then torn off by the string of a sling.

The massacre began.

Hamyuts used a gravel bullet to knock down the ceiling and then jumped onto the fortress's spire. This was the spot she decided to take her position in the moment she saw the fortress.

She swung her sling. She scattered the lead dolls swarming around her. Their limbs cracked and fell apart.

At the same time, Hamyuts saw Photona leap on one of the fortress's walls. Four slashes flashed. Even Hamyuts's eyes could barely follow his speed. A square hole opened up on the wall strengthened by Magic.

What Photona swung around was a completely normal piece of wood. It was one of the legs of the chair the Overseer of Paradise sat on until now.

Photona's ability was named Dream Invasion. Like its name suggested, it was the ability to let ideas invade reality. It was the ultimate combat ability, exceedingly close to that of the erasure of cause and effect. There was no need for Photona to hit his target with a blade. As long as he was convinced that something had been cut, it would become so. Swinging the rattan pole around was nothing more than a ritual to gain that conviction. Both lead and steel held no meaning against him. At that moment the gates of hell were probably opened up beneath Hamyuts.

"Well then."

She came up to the spire in order to snipe all those who try to escape. Her goal was the death of all people there. She must not let there be any survivors.

"Mm, how disappointing."

Hamyuts's expectations were betrayed. No-one tried to escape. Her gravel bullets attacked only the lead soldiers gathering at the spire.

The lead soldiers died one after another, with none of them spilling even one tear.

They don't even have that sort of function. No – that function had probably been deleted.

“...Hmm.”

I don't know who planned these, but they created quite the stupid weapon.
Hamyuts couldn't help but think so.

A soldier who fought with no regard to death would definitely be something scary to face. If their opponents were not Hamyuts or Photona they would have undoubtedly felt fear.

However, once you kill such an enemy it's all over. A dead opponent can no longer fight.

The one truly scary would be an undying enemy. An enemy who surrenders when they know they'll lose and runs away when they know they'll get killed. An enemy who will keep fighting even after losing again and again. While wondering if such an enemy exists, Hamyuts secured her position and swung her sling around.

“Booring.”

There was nothing more boring than having the enemy's performance be below your expectations. She felt like switching sides and teaching her opponent about battle tactics.

The battle was over when the figures of lead soldiers have disappeared. All that remained was killing humans. She only had to kill those inside the fortress who had no fighting capabilities.

Although it wasn't supposed to turn into a battle in the beginning, the job came out even more boring than expected. Hamyuts performed it with a long face.

“O GOD!”

She killed an old woman who attacked her with a spear. In the meanwhile, she thought about what she should do when she gets back.

“W-w-why aren't bullets coming out?!”

She killed a girl who desperately pulled the trigger of a gun without removing

the safety device. In the meanwhile, she thought about taking a vacation and going somewhere.

“Aaaargh!!!”

She used her bare hands to kill a man who probably couldn't think of anything else and so rushed her down recklessly. In the meanwhile, she thought she could do something like head to Fulbeck's new cinema.

“Aah, so boring.”

Hamyuts spoke out loud without noticing.

“Hamyuts... Hamyuts Meseta, you...!”

Looking down, she saw the False Man leader she spoke to before holding a gun. Thinking there was probably no longer any need to watch from where she was, Hamyuts withdrew her Sensory Threads and jumped down.

Blood was dripping from one of his arms and he used the other to hold a gun. His aim wasn't steady. Hamyuts didn't even need to evade and the bullets missed and disappeared. She lightly flung a stone hanging on her sling.

She no longer felt anything and just kept killing. Mattalast told her that Parney's movies were not really interesting. He was well-acquainted with the cinema. She thought of asking him what she should see.

She felt like talking to the dying people. *What're you doing? Shouldn't you learn to fight better instead of dying here like that? I'm fine with even one of you escaping, looking for comrades, finding weapons and then challenging me again as many times as you'd like.*

Photona was killing in a disinterested manner. His expression contrasted with Hamyuts who stifled her yawns. He was as serious as usual. He had the same face even when doing paperwork.

Hamyuts lay her emotions bare; Photona showed none of his feelings.

Which one of them strayed more from the proper path?

Part 2

Before long their work was over. The fortress was wrapped in fire that was produced by Photona and raised smoke. Since Photona was careful, this was his decision in case someone was left hiding inside.

“I wonder if we really had to go that far.”

The Overseer of Paradise said while hanging his head.

“Weren’t you the one who asked us to do this?”

“But they were all my dear False Men. Killing them is still painful.”

Photona was still looking for survivors. Hamyuts wondered how much of a workaholic he was.

“These guys aren’t the type of enemy to die from crushing their heads.

All of the Violet Sinner’s followers fought while calculating their advantages, loss and gain and various other things. The Violet Sinner was everything to them. They abandoned all other paths except being destroyed or winning.

With such an opponent, there was no other choice.”

“ ...”

“The Violet Sinner used to be a mere girl. She simply possessed some strange power. Responding to her will, people became her comrades, their hearts became connected, and it finally became this large.”

“Right.”

“The violet is a weed, you see. If even one seedling remains, it would end up covering the entire field in violets again.”

“...As expected from the Acting Director candidate... is what I should say?”

The Overseer of Paradise said sadly. Hamyuts spoke with a slightly irritated tone.

“I don’t really mind, but how long are you going to pretend you’re a good person?”

“...Oh my.”

The Overseer of Paradise flinched a little.

“Photona-san seems to be easily deceived, but I’m not that simple. Aren’t you hiding a lot of things?”

“How did you find out?”

“Well, let’s just call it woman’s intuition.”

Hamyuts said, smiling. Perhaps disturbed, the figure of the Overseer of Paradise shook and flickered for a moment.

“You probably intend to create a rebellion against the Armed Librarians. That Vend Ruga was the weapon you’ve created in order to oppose us Armed Librarians. Is that not so?”

“...”

“Outwardly you feign incompetence, but behind the scenes you’re devising a plan to rebel against us. You’re not bad at all.”

The Overseer of Paradise became speechless for a while.

“...Oh my, not good. It really is bad, young lady.”

He desperately feigned his calmness. Hamyuts thought there was no use trying to pretend at this stage, though.

“Exactly as you said, I plan on a rebellion against the Armed Librarians. Since I managed to deceive Photona-san I was relieved, but this is... not good.”

“So, do you have any way to beat the Armed Librarians?”

Hamyuts inquired. The Overseer of Paradise felt the situation was changing. It didn’t seem like she was about to kill him at all.

“No, it’s unthinkable. Completely impossible. Right now we have no chance of victory against the Armed Librarians. Not when Vend Ruga was supposed to be our main force and it ended up like that.”

I see. So he called Hamyuts and the rest here to check the performance of Vend Ruga. He annihilated the traitors and simultaneously gauged Vend Ruga’s power. It was killing two birds with one stone.

“Are you perhaps looking to be our ally, Hamyuts-san?”

Hamyuts shook her head.

“That’s also fine, but rather than that, fighting you seems a lot more fun.”

“It’s fun... you say? For you to fight?”

“Yeah. I have nothing else.”

“What a dreadful person.”

The Overseer of Paradise smiled.

“So, about how long do I need to wait until you could beat the Armed Librarians?”

“Let me think... preparations will take about ten years.”

“Ten years is a bit too much though... Oh well. Let us wait until then.”

“In that time the power of the Armed Librarians will also decline. Photona will concede his seat as the Acting Director and Ireia will probably also retire.

Besides, if you were to become Acting Director, it would make things easy for us.”

Hamyuts felt regretful.

“I’m stronger than Photona. Right now we’re probably equal, but I’ll grow stronger.”

“However, you’re easier to cooperate with.”

This time it was Hamyuts who became upset.

“Why’s that?”

“Because you like playing. Photona doesn’t think of fighting as playing.”

“...”

“A truly terrifying enemy would not have let me off the hook here.”

“I see... yeah, that’s true.”

Saying so, Hamyuts smiled. The Overseer of Paradise did as well.

If, at that time, Hamyuts had killed the Overseer of Paradise, the following

tragedies would not have come to pass. There would have been no people who would be converted to Meats and die, and no Armed Librarians would have lost their lives in battle. The main cause of the tragedies lay with the Overseer of Paradise and Hamyuts of that time.

After a while, Photona finished his work and returned. Seeing the two people smiling at each other, he spoke.

“You two being on good terms isn’t bad. After all, the peace between the Armed Librarians and the Indulging God Cult is the peace of the entire world.”

Hamyuts and the Overseer of Paradise exchanged glances with the eyes of brats who outwitted their master.

“I suppose that’s true.”

“Indeed.”

Perhaps the two of them really were children. With one of them possessing tremendous fighting capabilities, and the other possessing resourcefulness, ambitions and influence, they were two brutal kids. At the very least, that was how Hamyuts saw her relationship with the Overseer of Paradise.

They truly were horrible people.

However, in many cases disaster and tragedy struck due to silly reasons.

Hamyuts thought that the incident had ended with that.

However, the tie between her and Vend Ruga had only started in that moment.

At the place where the rebels’ fortress stood were the Dark Fossils brought from Moogunt mines. Souls were drawn into these small, soft rocks and became Books inside the ground. By disposing of all the excavated Books, the Violet Sinner finally received “true death”.

Photona has already returned to Bantorra Library. Hamyuts remained at the fort for about a month. The subordinates of the Overseer of Paradise dug out the Books. Hamyuts was monitoring them.

Watching the Overseer of Paradise leading the work, she had too much free time. And when she had free time, she would talk to him.

“Hey, what about Lascall Othello? Won’t he dig out the Books and give them to other people?”

“It is fine. That sword has been sealed. You have no need to worry about him.”

Lascall Othello. All owners of the Passed Stone Blade Yor carried that name.

Lascall Othello was essentially neither the subordinate of the Indulging God Cult nor affiliated with the Armed Librarians. He was temporarily sealed so that he wouldn’t do any unnecessary things. It would be troubling for him to get these Books.

“Then it’s all good.”

Hamyuts said and left him.

The subordinates of the Overseer of Paradise were digging out Books. The Books of the False Men and the Vend Rugas were thrown into a grinder used for construction work. It became no longer possible to read any information out of the Books if they were crushed to pieces.

“...”

Protecting Books was the duty of the Armed Librarians. Hamyuts was also a small part of that system. She somewhat pitied the demolished Books.

It was the proof they were alive. All the records of their love, hatred and eagerness were being erased. It was much more tragic than death because it erased the very fact that they existed.

But this was the verdict known as true death.

Hamyuts casually grabbed one Book.

“Let me see it for a bit.”

The Book’s owner was one of the lead dolls known as Vend Ruga.

The lead doll Vend Ruga. In addition to his body, some of his brain had been changed to lead as well. A Magic circuit had been implanted in his brain so he could move automatically. He could no longer be described as a remodeled human, but rather a doll that used the components of a human.

Hamyuts was surprised to find out such a being could become a Book.

The ones to become the raw materials for Vend Ruga were robust men gathered from all around the world. Their backgrounds varied. Some were Meats, some were False Men, and some were unrelated persons as well. There were criminals and good people. However, regardless of their background, their memories were stolen, their names were erased, and their bodies were remodeled.

Everyone became of the same personality and appearance – that of Vend Ruga.

“All of them share one thinking circuit. We reproduced the ability of Thought Sharing with technology.”

The Magician who created them explained to the Overseer of Paradise.

“If one of them knows something then all others will know as well. If one of them is ordered, that order will spread to all of them.”

“Seems to be quite useful.”

The Overseer of Paradise said his impressions. The Vend Rugas stared at him. Being called useful made them a little happy, but a little sad at the same time.

Some human emotions still remained in the people that turned into dolls.

All the dolls shared their suffering. Even the Magician who made them did not notice this fact.

For example, there was a certain day at spring.

They were doing gun training with perfectly coordinated movements. They were arranged in a row, held the same gun and fired it simultaneously. A butterfly flew in front of them. One of the bullets pierced through it.

“...”

The Vend Rugas all stopped at once. The magnificence of the butterfly's movements, as well as the sorrow it was gone, as well as the regret for killing it, all passed through their hearts.

No-one there had noticed the movements of their hearts.

“Fire!”

They could also think. They perceived beautiful things as beautiful, and were sad upon the death of living beings. However, no one knew this. They could not speak or change their expressions. They had no means with which to express their hearts.

If someone were to understand their feelings, Vend Ruga would probably be happy. Alternatively, if someone told them to throw away their emotions, perhaps that would also have been salvation for them.

No-one knew that. To be ignored was painful above all else. They were dolls. However, they were dolls with a heart.

No-one was aware of that.

They were brought along by the rebels and made to fight. Fighting was one of Vend Ruga’s functions, so they pursued it.

At first they felt nothing. They fought because they were ordered to. That was all.

One day, that feeling changed. A single Vend Ruga found a single girl. He was surprised that even a child was mixed up in battle.

The girl stared at the ground. She did so for a long time without tiring.

In front of her was a single violet.

How pretty, thought Vend Ruga.

“Pretty, isn’t it?”

The girl said. She just spoke nonchalantly. It was the sort of impression that she would forget soon after saying. However, that lone sentence filled Vend Ruga’s heart. That girl knew – Vend Ruga also had a heart.

It was the dearest wish for all of the Vend Rugas. For normal people these would be trivial words, but for Vend Ruga they were more important than anything else. The Vend Rugas decided to risk their lives protecting this girl.

However, their wish was in vain. Photona and Hamyuts visited the fort. There was no need to see any further. Hamyuts removed her hand from the Book.

“Boring.”

Saying so, Hamyuts stopped killing time.

After all the Books were dug out and destroyed, Hamyuts left the fortress.

Before going back to Bantorra, she went to Fulbeck and saw two movies and one opera. After that she went browsing the food stands in the entertainment district, and drank a lot at a bar that played music. That was far more enjoyable and stimulating for her than the massacre.

While listening to music, Hamyuts reflected and came to the conclusion that it was a truly trivial job. And with that, the name of Vend Ruga vanished from her mind.

A while after that...

Hamyuts was called by Photona. Sitting in the Acting Director’s chair, he seemed to be glum more than usual as he looked at the documents on his desk.

“Is something the matter?”

Hamyuts lightly asked.

“...We’ve received troubling information from the area of the civil war in the Region of Kuler.”

“What is it?”

“Seems like a monster appeared. A moving doll made of lead.”

The X on top of the map was a mere 300 kilometers away from that fortress.

“You’ve said this yourself. The violet is a weed. If even one of them remains, they will cover the field again.”

“Yeah.”

“The existence of the Cult is a secret to normal people. And the truth about the Indulging God Cult is a secret for normal Armed Librarians and the Cult’s subordinates.

Go kill it before the secret’s out. As soon as possible.”

Hamyuts flew to the civil war zone. The reasons for it and its progress had

nothing to do with her. It truly was just a civil war that began for boring reasons and had boring circumstances.

She spoke to a soldier who was walking alone, perhaps straying from his unit. When she introduced herself as Third Grade Armed Librarian Hamyuts Meseta, the soldier's face lit.

"An Armed Librarian... is the Present Management Agency finally getting involved?"

Exhausted from the long fight, the soldier's expectations rose upon hearing about a possibility of the war ending. When Hamyuts denied it, he hung his head.

Even here they have boring fights, thought Hamyuts. There was nothing more boring in the world than a battle that didn't excite you. She loved fights, but it didn't mean she loved every single one of them.

Besides, there was the matter of Vend Ruga. Just what was his goal? The story of the Violet Sinner should have ended. Not knowing his goals felt ominous.

"I heard a rumor about a monster appearing here."

"Yeah, it's true. But what of it? We have plenty of other enemies."

He didn't seem to interest the people on the battlefield.

Other information was flowing on the surface. The monster that appeared on the battlefield was a lifeless puppet made by some ancient Magician. Someone accidentally booted it up and it started moving... that kind of thing.

Hamyuts searched for the monster. The battlefield was vast. Even her Sensory Threads couldn't cover all of it. She talked to another soldier.

"...It's quite the terrifying monster."

The soldier said.

"It's good you came to beat it. We thought even the Armed Librarians have abandoned us."

"So, where is it?"

Hamyuts asked. She was told the place it appeared at. That would usually be

enough, but she inquired further.

“What has that monster been doing there?”

“...Have you heard of children going missing around here?”

“No.”

“That lead doll seems to be abducting them. The abducted children never return. We have no idea what happened to them.”

“I see, thank you. I’m going.”

After hearing the soldier’s story, she had a guess. Vend Ruga was probably trying to fight. He was gathering subordinates to fight bravely against Hamyuts. He was probably ordered by one of the rebels to keep on fighting. He tried to fulfill his functions even now.

He couldn’t win against Hamyuts by himself. He needed allies. Although he was a doll, he had that much intelligence. It was even more useless than their previous fight though.

Hamyuts found a lone boy and talked to him.

“Is there a lead monster around here?”

“Yeah. In a place about two days away from here.”

“Have you by any chance met with him?”

The boy nodded.

“He caught me and was trying to convey something. I don’t know what he wanted to say.”

“What do you mean?”

“...I can’t read.”

“I see. Sorry.”

Hamyuts left the boy and kept walking. Trying to succeed the death wish of the Violet Sinner and keep fighting was impossible. There should be no people who would fight alongside him.

Imagining Vend Ruga looking for allies, Hamyuts felt he was a bit pitiful and

adorable.

Before long, the tips of her Sensory Thread found a body made of lead. Hamyuts approached it. Even as she walked closer, Vend Ruga did not move. He did not notice her approach.

There was no one around him. He was simply standing in place. What was he thinking about? Was he digesting the loneliness that came about from him being the only Vend Ruga? Was he resenting himself for not having any skills despite wanting to fight?

“Poor little Vend Ruga all alone.”

The lead body entered the range of her sling. She spun her weapon around and shot a gravel bullet. It penetrated Vend Ruga’s chest. The heavy body flew several meters away and collapsed.

With just that it stopped moving. She had no trouble at all.

This time it ends. Thinking this, Hamyuts left.

Ten years later...

It was after the name of Vend Ruga completely disappeared from Hamyuts’s mind. She then met with him again.

Hamyuts walked inside the slanted White Smoke. Her long-awaited battle against the Cult has begun. Hamyuts concealed her exhilaration of this fact.

While waiting for the rescue ship to come pick up the Meats, she strolled around the White Smoke. Aimlessly walking around, she stopped at a certain room. A scribbling made with faded ink entered her vision.

“Vend Ruga is alive. He is alive in Olivia Littolet’s heart.”

Momentarily she did not understand its meaning and overlooked it. But the moment she passed by it, she noticed Vend Ruga’s name.

She couldn’t have predicted the appearance of that name. Hamyuts was utterly shocked.

“...Impossible.”

Vend Ruga was alive. For a while, she couldn’t understand what this meant.

Vend Ruga definitely died on that day. There was no doubt about it. So was there another Vend Ruga? Hamyuts denied that too. They were all definitely destroyed.

She could think of only one option. There was someone who met that Vend Ruga and inherited something from him. Even if Vend Ruga died, someone took over his fight.

Although Vend Ruga was dead, his will was still alive.

At the moment she thought of this... emotions Hamyuts never felt before scattered small sparks in her brain.

“...”

She was stunned for several dozens of seconds. If Volken hadn't spoken to her, it would have been longer than that.

“Oh, it's you Volken.”

Hamyuts pulled herself together when Volken entered her sight.

“What are you doing there, we have work to do.”

That was quite a clumsy recovery if I may say so myself. Thinking this, Hamyuts passed next to Volken.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, she had some small detonators in her pocket. Taking them out, Hamyuts walked for the room in the bottom of the ship that was packed with explosives.

“Why?! Why is this...”

Volken was crying. While watching the sinking ship, Hamyuts was thinking to herself.

Rationally thinking about it perhaps there was no need to go this far. No, there really wasn't. I don't know who this Olivia Littolet woman is. She didn't even know whether she would be a threat to her. No, the chances of that being true were extremely slim.

However, Hamyuts had killed. She couldn't stop herself from doing so.

Hamyuts was thinking while pursuing Volken on the plane.

Why did I sink the ship? What made me lose my reason at that time?

“...Huhu.”

She laughed.

Ten years ago, she killed the Vend Rugas one after another.

At first it was in the rebels' fortress. Next it was on the battlefield where a single Vend Ruga wandered. Finally, she tried killing the person who inherited his will on the White Smoke.

Even so, Vend Ruga was still alive.

He was living even now in the mind of the one flying ahead of her, Olivia Littolet.

“Vend Ruga...”

Hamyuts called to the airplane ahead. She called towards Vend Ruga who kept living inside Olivia's heart.

“Amazing, Vend Ruga. You made me scared.”

Other people would find Hamyuts's fear hard to understand.

She was undoubtedly the strongest person in the world. After Mokkaania had been erased, there remained no-one that could rival her. No matter where one looked in the world, there should be no-one to make Hamyuts afraid.

Despite this – no, because of it – Hamyuts feared Vend Ruga. He was an opponent she couldn't kill despite being the strongest. He was an enemy that kept living even when she killed him.

Vend Ruga was in a domain unreachable by her sling.

Even when she was cornered by Cigal, even when she was drowned by Mokkaania, she felt nothing like fear. That was because her powers could affect them. Because if she hit them with her sling they would die. However, against an enemy that wouldn't die even if she killed it, she couldn't win at all.

She didn't know why she couldn't kill him. And people feared the unknown.

It was truly bizarre. Vend Ruga was much weaker than those like Cigal or Mokkaania. Olivia had no power at all. But Hamyuts still felt fear.

It was probably the kind of fear that no-one but Hamyuts herself would understand.

“...Huhuhu.”

Laughter leaked from her mouth.

How wonderful. Something in this world can cause me fear.

Her body shook and trembled. It was a feeling similar to masochism.

I want to kill Olivia. At the same time, I want to feel more fear. As usual, two contradicting emotions filled Hamyuts's chest.

Her heart throbbed. She was the same as a girl who imagined her first kiss the day before her date.

Hamyuts called aloud.

“Olivia Littolet. Just who are you?”

Something unknown was waiting for her at the flight's destination. Her airplane kept flying while cutting through the clouds.

Chapter 4: Witch of Recollection

Part 1

Approximately 20 hours passed since Volken and Olivia left Bantorra.

Hamyuts pursued and Volken ran away. There was no change in that situation. No contact from Mirepoc came in a while so Volken knew nothing about the current situation. Where was Hamyuts flying? And who was coming after him?

Olivia made no move as well. She was sitting motionlessly in the passenger seat. She stayed silent, her gaze directed at her feet. She was probably trying to retrieve her lost memories.

“Does it seem like your memories are about to return?”

Volken asked although he didn't need to. If her memories returned she would have told him so. Since she didn't, they didn't.

“...Just talk.”

“Huh?”

“Just talk about something. Anything that has to do with me.”

“Shouldn't you focus on remembering?”

“No, stupid. I need an opportunity. When you told me my name some of memories returned. When that piece of shit Enlike called me it was also like that.

I need something to help me evoke my memories.”

Volken considered. He didn't know much about her.

“You used the Spinning Doll Ückück and commanded some Meats to conduct a Magic Deliberation.”

Olivia thought for a while. She then shook her head and scratched it.

“It's useless... I can't recall anything.”

If given some chance she could remember. That was probably not wrong. However, what Volken told her by itself was not enough.

Without Olivia's memories, all of his plans will collapse. He could do nothing but pray for her to retrieve her memories.

At that time, Hamyuts felt unpleasant vibrations from her airplane.

Its condition wasn't good. It was an overused aircraft in the first place. Moreover it was flying at its top speed ever since morning.

There would no problems if she was to lower her flying speed, but she would not be able to catch up to Volken.

"...Tch."

Hamyuts clicked her tongue.

She was worried about Olivia, but Volken was also a problem.

If she fought him she would undoubtedly win. However, her problem was different. She had to protect the secret.

How much did Volken know?

Did he know about Lascall Othello?

The truth about the Indulging God Cult? Its connections to the Armed Librarians?

If those facts became known to the Armed Librarians, their organization will collapse.

Above all she was concerned about Mirepoc. If she were to know the truth and convey it to all Armed Librarians, Hamyuts would be finished. And the Armed Librarians as well.

"...Mm."

Mirepoc and Volken were on good terms. There was a chance Mirepoc would have some ideas.

This might turn out to be more of a predicament than what she thought.

'Director.'

At that moment, she received Mirepoc's thoughts. Hamyuts understood that something has happened.

Olivia kept thinking while muttering something under her breath. Volken was piloting in silence. At that moment, a thought was sent to him. It was Mirepoc.

'Volken. There are two things you need to know.'

"Did something happen?"

Olivia asked. He told her to be quiet. He had to focus on the Thought Sharing.

'What is it? Good news or bad news?'

'I wonder. Where are you now?'

'I'll soon pass over the Kuler Region. I have about two hours until my destination.'

'Then that's good. The Director is still above sea.'

'Still only there?!'

He was truly surprised. It wouldn't be strange for Bantorra's fastest airplane to already catch up to him.

'She says she has engine trouble.'

'So she can't accelerate any further.'

'Right.'

'And the second thing?'

'That is good news for you. There were unofficial discussions between the Armed Librarians about how to judge the current situation.'

'And?'

'This is obviously not official, but overall everyone supports you.'

'...Really?'

It was unbelievably sudden. Since he escaped from the Library, he was prepared to be branded as a criminal just like Mokkania.

'This surprised even me, but Mattalast started supporting you.'

'...Mattalast-san really did? Isn't he the person closest to Hamyuts...'

'He didn't say too much, but... he said something like 'there are also things that only I can understand'.'

'I see... Please tell him my thanks.'

'I can't. On the surface you and I are not in contact.'

'I see. Thank you.'

Mirepoc was considering something.

'Volken. What's your goal? Isn't it about time to speak about it?'

He looked at Olivia in the back seat. Her memories still haven't fully returned. He also didn't yet know why Hamyuts sank the ship.

'I can't say yet. Sorry.'

'...I see.'

Saying this, Mirepoc suddenly severed the Thought Sharing.

"You're smiling, so did something good happen?"

Olivia inquired. Turning back to her, his expression was bright.

"Yeah. It seems we escaped from Hamyuts. With this all of our obstacles are gone."

"...Huh."

Olivia exclaimed bluntly.

"Really? Did that monster let us go so easily?"

"The circumstances are on our side. We weren't as lonely as I thought."

Olivia was not yet convinced. She was wary.

"Just don't grow lax yet."

"Of course."

Volken nodded. However, he no longer felt the heavy pressure of Hamyuts on his back.

Olivia was not convinced at all. Will that Hamyuts really let them escape so

easily? No, it wouldn't help either way. The only thing she could do was restore her memories.

She suddenly looked down from the aircraft's windscreen. A hilly area covered in brown dead grass and burnt ground spread before her eyes.

Where are we? Thought Olivia. She had no knowledge of the world map. She either had it taken from her when she became a Meat or didn't know it in the first place.

"Where is this?"

"...The Region of Kuler."

As soon as she heard that, words came leaking out of her mind.

"Is the war over?"

"Huh?"

She didn't know why these words came out. Why did she know there was once a war there? Volken then answered.

"The civil war has ended. The Independent Army won and they're now under a ceasefire, but what of it?"

Olivia remembered – she was once there. This dreary hill was Olivia's birthplace.

At that instant, a man's figure suddenly entered her mind. For the small Olivia, it was a large man that she had to look up at. A man with khaki-colored worn out clothes. From the holes in his clothes and under his wide-brimmed hat, lead-colored skin was visible.

"...Vend Ruga."

Olivia remembered – it was there that she met with Vend Ruga.

"Volken! Get down! Get down here!"

Olivia grabbed Volken's shoulder. The aircraft shook.

"What's wrong?!"

"I was here. I also met Vend Ruga here! Get down! My memories might

return!”

Volken was confused and hesitated. He was probably measuring the danger of Hamyuts catching up against Olivia’s request.

“...Although there’s a small chance she will catch up to us, Hamyuts is still a threat.”

“Please. If I won’t go it now I won’t be able to remember.”

“..Only fifteen minutes. I won’t wait any longer.”

Saying this, he let the airplane descend. He landed the airplane on a river flowing between two hills a bit too hard.

Olivia got off the plane. Volken went behind her.

“How is it? Are your memories returning?”

She didn’t answer. The dry, dusty wind lifted her hair. As she walked around, she could hear her every step on the ground.

Nostalgia filled her heart. With just this, her memory was revived. They were the memories of her childhood, before she became a Meat.

The place Olivia was born in was a battlefield.

It seemed to not be the case when she was born, but Olivia knew her hometown as nothing else but a battlefield. She grew up with bullets and corpses as her toys.

Occasionally tired soldiers gave her things to eat. Eventually, she learned how to exchange things she took from dead soldiers or remains of tanks. Eventually, she learned how to steal food directly.

Every day she watched people lose their lives in front of her eyes. The country wasted the lives of soldiers, and the lives of people disappeared in vain. Olivia only thought of this as natural, so she didn’t feel anything. She only thought about eating every day. She was no different than an animal that wore clothes.

Even she had allies. They were the children living in the same circumstances.

“There are strange people.”

Olivia was told by one of the children.

Although they were companions, they didn't feel any connection. They also didn't help each other. If they had the chance, they would kill and loot each other. Being careless led to you getting killed. Such was their relationship.

"They're kidnappers. They seem to be kidnapping children like us."

"What kind of people are they?"

"I dunno. They don't seem to be part of either the Independent Army or the National Army. They slip between the two of them and kidnap children."

She heard various rumors about them. It seems that the children that were caught never returned. It seemed like they were caught and then made to drink water that made them lose their memories.

She later came to know they were False Men from the Indulging God Cult. Amongst the turmoil of the battlefield, they caught children in order to turn them to Meats.

After a while Olivia encountered those kidnappers.

They were the guys she was told about. They had the military uniforms of both sides. Olivia did not resist. If she were to resist, the enemies' guns would turn her into Swiss cheese. It was better getting kidnapped.

The kidnappers held Olivia's body and brought a cup full of water to her mouth.

"...Don't be scared, this water won't do anything to you."

It was useless resisting. Olivia opened her mouth. Just as she was about to drink, the cup was removed from her. One of the kidnappers then shouted.

"...It's him!"

She saw a single man coming. He wore tattered, khaki-colored clothes and a wide-brimmed hat.

The kidnappers aimed their guns and shot without warning. The bullets hit his body but were reflected with a dull sound. The man moved.

He knocked out the kidnappers. He wasn't very fast. Neither was he smooth. Even from Olivia's viewpoint it seemed like a clumsy way of fighting.

She saw his face from underneath the hat. At first she thought it was a mask because it was made from lead just like bullets. The hatted man saw Olivia and his lead eyes were moving. It was not a mask.

Olivia recalled a different rumor. There was supposed to be some man fighting the kidnappers. Nobody knew his name or identity. There was a man, perhaps not human, a warrior made of lead.

Vend Ruga. She came to know his name quite a while after meeting him.

“...Vend Ruga.”

Olivia opened her eyes and looked around. The nostalgic battlefield was no longer there. In this land, no longer a battlefield, there was no one else but her.

Her restored memories only went that far.

After that, Olivia received something from Vend Ruga. She fought in order to retrieve it. Just what did she receive from him?

“So?”

“Seems like I can remember things from before I turned into a Meat.”

Volken spoke while looking at the direction Hamyuts should come from.

“I’m sorry for saying this, but if possible I’d like you to remember the time that you were a Meat.”

“Yeah. I’ll make an effort.”

Saying this, Olivia closed her eyes again.

She recalled the figure of Vend Ruga. However, what she wanted to restore wasn’t just his appearance. She wanted to remember the most important thing handed to her by him.

The fact that she recalled his form became a chance for her. She ended up being able to retrieve her memories from when she was on the White Smoke.

She first retrieved the memory of a Magic Deliberation.

She was in a storage room that wasn’t used. It was the memory of a dusty room that had barrels, pots and whips casually placed around. Olivia spent most of her time there.

“Those who go will not go, and those who come will not come. The moon is the sun. Birds are fish. Living beings become corpses. Steel becomes weak. All of reality becomes dreams, and illusions become all of reality.”

Several dozen Meats sat in a circle, and at their middle was the Spinning Doll Ückück. The Magic Right they acquired wasn't theirs, but was stored inside Ückück.

The Spinning Doll Ückück, attached to a steel stand, didn't look like a doll children would have. When it gains enough Magic Rights for it to activate a Grand Magic, the doll moves. And when its owner Olivia commands it to move, the doll would start spinning around.

The Meats continued their Magic Deliberation. Olivia softly opened her eyes and looked at the doll.

The doll was eagerly shaking its body as if it was hesitating whether to dance or not.

Several Meats have probably succeeded in their Deliberation. The Spinning Doll seemed to be grasping their Magic Rights. Today was good. Olivia smiled in her heart.

“Everything is defined as false, and thus I undergo the Magic Deliberation.”

Just a bit more. Activating that Spinning Doll was Olivia's one and only goal. In order to retrieve ... she would perform this outrageous Grand Magic.

Retrieve ... and thus retrieve Vend Ruga.

“...!”

At that moment, one of the Meats suddenly sprang up. Still sitting cross-legged, he floated high, and then collapsed on his back. Bending his body like a shrimp, he suffered violent convulsions. His trembling nails scratched the wooden floor, and in the blink of an eye his fingers started bleeding.

Shit, just when we got to a good part... Olivia's face distorted.

“...Ah.”

The Meats opened their eyes and stopped the Magic Deliberation. *Don't stop, you pieces of trash.* Olivia cursed them in her mind.

“...Olivia.”

One Meat called to Olivia with a hollow voice. Having no choice, Olivia stood up and sat down next to the convulsing Meat.

Seems like he overdid the Deliberation. Magic Deliberation was an act of distorting the axioms of the world. If one distorts them too radically, they might end up getting caught by the distortions they made themselves. They will lose their sanity.

“...Tch.”

Olivia clicked her tongue. The tongue of the convulsing Meat was blocking his throat. There was no use anymore.

In order to prevent such a situation there would usually be a Magician appointed to directing the process. If the Deliberation was being overdone, it had to be stopped altogether.

However, they had no supervisor. Olivia, being an amateur in Magic, could not serve the part.

“Good grief, what a lame way to die.”

Olivia muttered.

“Keep the Magic Deliberation going. Also, someone come here to throw this away.”

The Meats gazed at Olivia with broad eyes. None of them stood up. Since they were deprived of their memories and personalities, they didn't know how to act independently.

“You, come here.”

Olivia kicked around the knees of one of them. He rose up sluggishly.

The sky was indigo blue. A white light could be faintly seen from the east. Without them noticing, it was almost morning. Tidying up the place before their caretakers woke up would be troublesome.

“Push it.”

Olivia held the head of the faintly moving Meat. Another person held his legs.

The two of them climbed the narrow staircase.

“...gh.”

Dying from suffocation, the movements of the dragged Meat stopped. Olivia felt as if his body, now left powerless, became heavier.

The Meat holding his legs looked at his dying face and thought of something. He was probably sad.

If Olivia was a kind commander, she would probably raise her voice and say...

“Do not be sad. Keep fighting for him.”

And if she was a severe commander she would probably say...

“Forget about him.”

However, she said nothing.

It was because Meats were no people to command, but people to use. She would use them and then throw them away. Olivia wasn't a commander. She was a consumer.

They reached the edge of the boat's deck. The shadows of fish could be seen in the sea's surface that was slightly illuminated by the sun.

“Oh, here they are.”

Olivia muttered. They mustered their strength, lifted up the Meat's corpse and threw it into the sea. The sea became suddenly disturbed and a red color spread around.

Recently sharks have been wandering around the ship, aiming for the Meats thrown off of it. Because of the steady supply of good-quality food they were given, the sharks were growing comfortably fat.

Watching them dance around, Olivia laughed listlessly. It was a pity losing one Meat. However, there was nothing to be done about it. She couldn't retrieve ... without any sacrifices.

“Volken, I remembered.”

Olivia said. Volken nodded. *But it's strange. I can remember my past but not my goal. Why's that?*

Thinking so, Olivia closed her eyes again.

It was about three years since she started conducting the Magic Deliberation. She didn't know the exact time. She couldn't even tell her age.

At that time Olivia wasn't in the Meats' filthy cabin. She was in a cabin meant for the False Men below deck, which was like a whole different world. It had a clean bathroom, nutritious food and a soft bed. Everything not in the Meats' room was there.

Olivia was allowed to use all of it.

"...Nn, mm."

Olivia rose up from the bed. She fixed her disheveled bustier half unconsciously. Before doing it, it was fine like that. After doing it, it was better to wear it properly. She understood this by her experience. At the very least, it was like that for that man.

She didn't know any other men, so she didn't know if this was common.

"Charlot-sama."

She called at the relaxed man next to her in bed. Olivia had a distinction over when to use just his name or add an honorific. At rough times she would use only his name, and at peaceful times she would add a "sama". Olivia made no mistakes in that distinction.

"Good morning, Olivia."

Charlot spoke with a gentle voice very different from the one he had a while earlier.

He was a man more than fifty years old. He wasn't particularly fat, but his belly was swollen accordingly to his age and his face was wrinkled.

He was said to be the best Magician in the Indulging God Cult.

He was a man who managed to realize the fabled Magic sought after by many Magicians – Spatial Magic. That power was said to be a match to Magicians such as Ireia. However, its reputation was not spread to the world. Those who served the Indulging God Cult couldn't come out publicly. It was said that he abandoned fame and instead sought to complete his research.

Perhaps he was important, but for Olivia he was merely a man. He was nothing more than a middle-aged man who indulged in her body.

It was morning. However, Olivia hadn't slept. She planned on diving under the blanket again and sleep until after noon. Charlot spoke to her while getting dressed.

“Olivia. Do you love me?”

Olivia answered with a smile.

“I like you, Charlot-sama.”

It seemed that man preferred being told he was liked rather than loved. She didn't care about his feelings. She simply used him because that middle-aged man could get whatever he wanted. She took a glance at an object. Her goal was casually placed in a cupboard inside the room.



“Oh yeah. Today we are going to anchor after a long time. Is there anything you want?”

Olivia suppressed her welling desire. She resisted pointing at one of the room's corners and saying 'I want that'. She wanted the object on the desk, the Spinning Doll Ückück.

This was one of the many treasures that belonged to the Great Magician Charlot. It was one of the Memorial Weapons, but for Charlot it was merely a trivial tool. He didn't have any plans to use it.

If she begged him he might give it to her. However, it was too early.

Olivia devoted herself to Charlot in order to get the Spinning Doll. She must not let him notice that fact. She had to keep up the illusion that she truly loved him.

She will let him indulge more and more such that he will not be able to live a single day without her. She will get the Spinning Doll Ückück afterwards.

Letting him lose his head with infatuation, the rest will be easy. He will create his own delusions.

She must be cautious. These filthy times were a necessary process in order to retrieve Vend Ruga.

Having restored her memory, Olivia thought. *Right, that also happened.*

Her actions were quite impure, but Olivia's insides were still beautiful. For her goal she would betray the love of a naïve middle-aged man hundreds of times.

She did many more dirty deeds. Olivia in the past was a woman much more heretical than the people of the Indulging God Cult.

Part 2

Although she was a Meat, Olivia didn't lodge in the Meats' cabin. Obviously, it was thanks to Charlot. Keeping only her treatment in mind, she was no longer a Meat.

At that day Olivia went to a room which wasn't Charlot's cabin.

"...My request is what I said. What should I do?"

Two people sat face to face. One was Olivia. Her slender legs peeked from the hem of her thin dress and she smiled.

The other was the ship's manager. His job was to manage the Meats for the Magicians and scientists serving the Indulging God Cult.

He couldn't use Magic and had no special skills. When they realize he could also not manage the Meats, the Indulging God Cult will throw him away. And all the Cult's followers knew that they would be thrown away into the Meats' room.

They were staring at each other. The manager stared at Olivia angrily, but she responded with a mocking expression.

"I've said this plenty of times, but my request is very simple."

She said, pointing at him with her index finger.

"I'm just asking you to not lay hands on what I'm doing. You will see nothing and know nothing. That's it. Isn't it easy?"

The manager gritted his teeth.

"A Meat requesting me... a Meat..."

"Choose your words, False Man."

She hit the desk with her fist. A loud sound echoed, but Olivia was not intimidating at all.

"Charlot-sama approves. You just need to nod and agree."

"This bitch..."

First a Meat and now a bitch? I've been promoted, smiled Olivia.

“Think well about this. This is the best option for you.

I don't intend on interrupting your job. You can keep using the Meats for experiments as usual. You can test strange medicines on them, kill them, or whatever.

Meats are meant to be used right? This is all about you using me as well.”

The manager ground his teeth. Olivia read from his expression that he needed another push. The only thing that made him hesitate answering was the humiliation of doing what a Meat told him.

“You certainly might also kill me. But if you do so, Charlot-sama will be angry.

That's not all. It might also be exposed to those higher in the Cult. If they think you're an incompetent manager who can't control the Meats what will you do?”

“ ... ”

“As long as you stay silent about this, nothing will happen.”

“ ... ”

“Do you want to lose everything? Don't you want to go to that place called Heaven?”

She made her final push. The manager nodded.

Olivia had already understood the Indulging God Cult was a large organization that worked for their self-interest. Such organizations were usually harmful. Let sleeping dogs lie and all that.

“Oh, I also have another thing to ask.”

“You're still not done?”

“You can throw away as many Meats as you'd like, but can I be the only exception?”

The manager's eyes widened for a while. He then muttered as if he was spitting.

“You heretic...”

You as well, thought Olivia.

She was at the dead end of a corridor at one of the ship’s corners. Several False Men were talking there. Olivia hid and listened to them. Obviously, they were talking about her.

“When are we going to stop letting that bitch roam around?”

“Someone has to deal with her.”

“But how? Charlot’s looking out for her.”

“That horndog... everything’s his fault. He’s a mere False Men so what is he thinking the Cult’s supposed to be?”

Olivia knew that Charlot was not faithful to the Cult in the first place. He joined it only so he could perform human experimentation that couldn’t be done in the outside world. He had no interest in what all False Men seemed to aim for, the place called Heaven.

“But what’s that bitch trying to do?”

“As if I care!”

Olivia stopped eavesdropping and tried to take her leave. A man came walking from behind her.

“Oh, you’re finally here.”

She said. She told a Meat to come there beforehand.

“Ah, uh...”

He was a particularly broken man even amongst the Meats. He could barely understand words, but his ability to think was thoroughly destroyed. Because of that he easily followed orders.

Just as Olivia told him, he came there bringing explosive from the bottom of the ship. Olivia pointed at the ship’s corridor and instructed him to go. She could hear the sounds of the False Men talking between them.

“...Why’s a Meat here?”

“He’s holding a bomb!!!”

She heard panicking. Olivia walked in the shadows, nodding.

The False Men tried apprehending the Meat while he resisted. He held to the bomb and clung to it with both arms.

“Stop!”

Hearing Olivia’s voice, both the False Men and the Meat ceased all movements.

“You can’t do that. These people didn’t think of killing me.”

Saying this, she took the bomb away from him.

“I’m sorry. The Meats are too loyal. They’d do such things against their better judgment.”

“ ... ”

The False Men shook with fear.

“I wonder what would happen if I were to die?”

She glared at them. Then she made the Meat rise to his feet and go back to his cabin. The higher ups of the Indulging God Cult would never imagine this – that the ship meant to raise Meats was under the control of those very Meats.

She opened her eyes.

Since she ended up remembering a lot, Olivia felt bad. She felt slightly sick. Volken looked at her worryingly, but she shook her hand to signify she was fine.

What did she receive from Vend Ruga? What was her goal? She still couldn’t remember.

“...Still, I was quite something.”

Olivia voiced her impressions. Thinking of her misdeeds, she could say nothing else.

“Say, Volken. You probably know about me.”

“Yes.”

“What do you think about it? As an ally of justice.”

Volken spoke frankly.

“You are a villain. That was what I concluded.”

What an honest man, thought Olivia.

“Aren’t you thinking of beating me before Hamyuts?”

“I have. But that would not be the proper course of action.”

“...”

“There are two reasons. First I need you in order to defeat Hamyuts. One must occasionally work together with a small evil in order to bring down a greater evil. I may be inexperienced, but I can make that much of a distinction.”

“Hmm.”

“Secondly, I don’t know your goals yet. Even villains sometime take action for the sake of justice. But be as it may, they are still villains.”

Olivia silently clicked her tongue.

“Well, that’s true. I’m a villain.”

She then thought to herself. *I don’t care about being a villain or whatever. As long as I retrieve Vend Ruga I don’t care about anything else.*

“Fifteen minutes have passed. Let us go.”

They both got on the flying boat. It accelerated on the narrow river and then flew to the sky.

“...A villain, huh.”

Olivia muttered. That was probably true. She let many Meats die and never shed a single tear. It wasn’t because she was strong. She never felt sad or the need to cry.

But that was fine. For the sake of her goal she had no need for feelings.

‘...That’s wrong.’

At that moment, a voice came into her head. Olivia looked around her. Since it was a woman’s voice, it was obviously not Volken. She thought it might be the thing known as Thought Sharing, but had no idea how that worked.

But she could understand someone was talking to her.

‘What’s wrong?’

Olivia returned her thoughts.

‘I think you’ve missed the most important thing of all. Since you didn’t notice it, you can’t remember your goal.’

‘What’s this important thing?’

‘If you face yourself you should understand it.’

‘Don’t talk as if you know everything, Renas Fleur.’

After a short while of silence, Renas replied.

‘I am you. I know all about you.’

“...How annoying.”

Olivia mumbled. Volken turned around to check if there was anything wrong but she waved her hand signaling nothing happened.

‘I think that you’re truly a bad person just as Volken-san said.

However, fundamentally you’re not bad. You had to kill in order to fight. You had to betray people in order to win. You were in a fight where one had to act this way.’

‘Aren’t you acting out of character?’

‘I do hate fighting. And I will never forgive you.

But although I hate it, I do understand. You had to fight.’

Shut up, thought Olivia.

‘Stay silent, Renas Fleur. You’re already gone. You can’t come back to this world.’

‘I have some grace period before I disappear. It will probably soon end though.’

Renas replied inside Olivia’s mind.

‘Remember, Olivia. Deep down in your heart, you are not a cruel person.

Please remember this.'

Together with Renas's words, another memory was revived.

She was on the ship. Hearing the sounds of a person being dragged in the night's darkness, another corpse was being thrown away. How many people it had been? She stopped counting at the fifth one.

"Don't you feel anything?"

The Meat holding the legs opened his mouth.

"He died for you. Don't you feel anything about that?"

"...You speak well."

The eyes of the Meat were not cloudy like those of the others, even though until recently he had the same dead eyes like the rest of them.

"I've recently regained my thinking ability. I might have been influenced by you."

"...Is that so."

Olivia and the Meat cooperated to throw the corpse into the sea.

"Even if I were to die you would probably not feel anything. No, that's fine. That's what being a Meat's all about."

"Yeah. You don't feel anything for a piece of meat."

"What a strange person. Although your mind is working fine, only your feelings were omitted. Or perhaps you were that kind of person in the first place?"

Olivia slapped his cheek as he kept talking.

"Shut up. Don't talk. I'll kill you."

"Are you really not sad?"

She hit the Meat's cheek again. This time she balled her hand to a fist and struck him. A tooth flew out from his mouth.

"I'm not sad. No matter who dies it doesn't matter to me."

"Why are you lying?"

“I’m serious.”

Saying this, Olivia turned her back to him.

“...I’m serious.”

Her words were her true feelings, yet simultaneously a lie.

Death did not sadden her. She really felt this way. However, it was also sad at the same time. Things that weren’t sad saddened her.

It should have been different in the past. Before becoming a Meat she was saddened at people’s deaths. However, right now she wasn’t. She was turned into a Meat and her memories were stolen, but at the same time her feelings of sadness for death were also taken away.

This saddened her.

It was another certain day.

“Olivia. Let’s get out of here.”

Charlot suddenly said on top of the bed. Olivia pushed the blanket aside and got up.

“Why?”

“I’ve already completed my research. My value for the Indulging God Cult is diminishing.”

She knew that as well. His research was about realizing spatial transferring of people. He used the Meats for experimentation again and again. He was already able to transfer people at will.

He was asked to create a spatial barrier to protect the ship by the Cult’s higher-ups. That was also completed.

“There’s no need for me to stay here. Let’s go to some beautiful place.

Olivia, I much prefer the birds flying in the sky rather than a bird inside a cage.”

Charlot grabbed her hand and brought her into the bed. Olivia remained silent and received a hug.

“There’s no need to worry. You know my ability. There’s no way we won’t be able to escape.”

“ ... ”

“Also, didn’t you say it? That you wanted to become human.”

Even right then the Meats were undergoing the Magic Deliberation as per Olivia’s orders. The day her goals would be fulfilled approached. She couldn’t leave.

Olivia caressed Charlot’s chin and spoke.

“Even if a pig were to exit its cage, it would not turn into a tiger. No matter where we go, I will be a Meat.”

“That’s not true. You are beautiful. You are no Meat.”

Charlot kept clinging to her. He seemed intent on taking her no matter what.

She quit her long-standing act for the first time.

“I’m not joking. Go by yourself.”

She had no need for the man anymore. She was ready to be cursed, ridiculed and resented. However, his response was different.

Charlot embraced her even stronger.

“Yeah. I knew it would come to this.”

“ ...Huh?”

It was unbelievable.

“You were using me, right? I knew it. From the very beginning. But I thought I would be able to create a real relationship someday. I wished for it.”

Feeling Charlot’s body heat, Olivia answered.

“If you understand it makes this easy. I’m using you. You’re using my body. Isn’t that enough?”

“ ...Olivia, do you not know my feelings?”

“Yeah. I don’t know and I don’t want to.”

“...The Meats are important to you. No matter how much I love you, the Meats are more important for you.”

“It’s because I’m a Meat. I’m not a human like you.”

Charlot released her body.

“Right. Then go as far as you can, no matter the consequences.”

A month passed since then.

Charlot lost all of his memories and fell to the position of a Meat. The same happened with all of the other False Men. A True Man and his subordinate occupied the ship and Olivia was caught.

Her plan had been exposed.

The long-haired man spoke to Olivia. *We will take your memories again and send you to a different research facility. And we’re going to have some fun before that*, he said while laughing.

She was on the ship’s deck.

The long-haired man sat on a sofa brought there and looked at her. Olivia was topless and tied up. Both of her legs were bound to a pole.

In front of her stood a Meat. Behind him stood a red-haired woman. She had a whip in her hand.

“Get them to speak more, Alme.”

“Certainly, Cigal-sama. Come on, speak.”

Saying so, the redhead kicked the Meat’s back. It was a light kick, but the Meat raised his voice as if he endured hell. There was no skin on his back. He was hit until his very muscles were exposed.

“Olivia... die, die, Olivia!”

The Meat shouted in a hoarse voice. Olivia clenched her teeth as she heard this.

“You’re at fault. You did everything wrong, die, die, suffer and die!”

Meat corpses were piled up behind her. They were all tortured the same way,

and they were all forced to abuse Olivia the same way. Receiving the hatred of her comrades was her own torture.

“Alme. You’re overdoing it. Look. Isn’t it painful?”

“I’m sorry, Cigal-sama.”

The redhead – Alme – swung her whip. It had countless of thorns. It was no longer a tool for torture. It was a whip that could peel off skin even with a slight blow.

“It would be boring for them to just die. You must tease them carefully.”

She swung her whip again. The Meat kept cursing Olivia and eventually died.

“Now, Olivia. Don’t you have anything to say?”

Cigal said. The redhead kicked her back.

“Look at these poor Meats. They all suffered so much and died. All because of you. What do you think?”

Olivia gritted her teeth. She didn’t apologize. If she were to say it, her heart would break. She would give up retrieving ... which was her goal. She didn’t want to give up. No matter what happens to her, she didn’t want to give up.

“Well then, it’s about time to stop playing around.”

Saying so, Cigal stood up. He pulled out a pen from his pocket. He stabbed it into Olivia’s bare shoulder.

“This is now the real deal.”

The redhead approached. She raised her whip.

The torture kept going until the sun set. Olivia never felt regret even once until Cigal got tired. And she didn’t think of giving up.

Olivia managed to regain some of her memories. However, she still hasn’t recalled her goal.

‘I think you have actually suffered.’

Renas said. Olivia smiled in scorn.

‘Don’t be silly, Renas. You said you don’t think I’m a bad person deep inside?’

No matter how you look at it I was the worst villain.'

'...'

'I couldn't get anything without killing? True. However, I wanted things that I had to kill for. That was my evil.'

'...'

'I've killed the Meats, Charlot, and also you.

If I didn't wish for anything you would not have died. Am I wrong? Didn't everyone die because of me?'

'...Right.'

'Even so, that was what I wished for. I wanted Vend Ruga no matter what.'

Renas grew silent. Olivia kept talking.

'This will probably be the last time we can talk. Since it's the last time, I'll let this slip.

Everyone was kind when you lived on Past God Bantorra's Island. The trainees did silly things, but all of them were good people. Enlike, Mattalast and the rest of the Armed Librarians have truly cared for you.

Even that monster Hamyuts got along with you.

I considered... couldn't I just live in peace inside you?

But as I thought I couldn't. Everyone was kind, but not to me. They always smiled only at you.'

'...Olivia. Everyone would have probably been kind to you as well. Because they're all good people.'

'Perhaps. But even if it was so, I couldn't have accepted them. They were far too kind. I just wouldn't be able to live there.'

'That might be so now, but you would have gotten along eventually.'

Olivia answered inside her mind.

'Impossible. I'm the worst heretic. I'm a woman who can't cry no matter who she sees die.'

'People's hearts can change. You can definitely change.'

'Impossible. I won't do anything I judge to be impossible.

I just don't know... what to do when meeting kind people. I just don't know.'

'...'

'I know how to deceive; I know how to use people; yet I can't change my heart.

Therefore I can do nothing but fight.'

'Olivia, you are...'

'...Go already.'

She couldn't hear Renas's voice.

Thinking about it, she was a strange woman. When Olivia tried to take Renas's body away from her, she didn't even try to resist her. Although she was scared of Olivia's memories, she was prepared to accept her.

Why's that? She wondered.

During that time, Bantorra Library was preparing for an attack. However, there were no signs of the enemy coming for them. They started thinking that perhaps there was no diversion.

"Heeey, Enlike-saaan!"

Noloty was looking for Enlike. Before she noticed it he disappeared. He was at the airport, gazing up the sky after Hamyuts, Volken and Olivia were gone.

"What're you doing here, Enlike-san? Mattalast-san's angry."

She called to him.

"Is that so."

Enlike spoke lightly. Noloty sighed. And she thought he would be scared of making Mattalast angry... but he probably didn't find anything scary in the first place.

"Since there might not be any attack, let's go back to the Library."

She grabbed his sleeve but Enlike was unmoving. He was thinking of

something as he gazed at the sky.

“I’ve once asked Renas something. It was about Mokkania.”

“Eh?”

What’s he saying now? Thought Noloty.

“At the very end Mokkania surrendered and took his own life. But apparently he didn’t do it to protect his mother.”

“Huh?”

“She was a poor woman caught by the Indulging God Cult, had her memories removed and was given a new personality. He apparently did it so she wouldn’t die.”

She did not quite understand, but Noloty kept listening to him. If she were to ask him something like *so what?* right now he would be mad at her.

“Renas told me she was glad for that. She told me that she was happy for raising a child who would do that even at the very end. Even though I don’t really understand it.”

Enlike looked up to the far skies. Noloty didn’t know what he was seeing there.

“Thinking about this now, perhaps it was determined from the very beginning.”

I can’t understand it at all, but he seems to be talking about something important. So Noloty thought.

“I wonder if she successfully ran away. If she can, I hope she would do so.”

Enlike muttered and let Noloty lead him away from the airfield.

“Olivia-san.”

Hearing Volken’s voice, Olivia raised her head. Looking around her, she could see a vast forest beneath the airplane.

“We will arrive in about fifteen minutes. We will recover Ückück and the Book and immediately move along.”

“Where will we go?”

“I haven’t decided yet, but it will be a safe place for you. I will look for some location in the northern frontier’s ruins. We will retrieve your memories there.”

“I see. Let’s do so.”

“Please rest a bit. You should retrieve your memories as soon as possible, but we’re not tight on time.”

Olivia leaned on the seat’s back and breathed.

During the exact same time...

The tips of the Sensory Threads Hamyuts extended ahead touched an object. It was the aircraft of Volken she was chasing after.

She opened her airplane’s hatch and set the sling on her right hand. They would soon be in her range.

“I’ve finally caught up.”

Volken, unaware of Hamyuts’s approach, kept flying straight ahead.

Chapter 5: Rebellion of Despair

Part 1

Their goal was near. Flying a little more, they would find a lake that could be landed on. Getting off there, in another five minutes of walking they would find their destination. They would arrive at the hideout containing the Spinning Doll Ückück and the Book.

Looking down, Olivia could see a forest made of dense yet thin trees. Several hours later Hamyuts will arrive and will probably search through the forest with her Sensory Threads. But by that time, Volken and Olivia will be flying further to the northwest.

“We got her.”

Volken muttered. He didn't know how his battle with Hamyuts will unfold afterwards. However, the first round ended in his victory.

But just when he thought so...

Something appeared in the edge of his vision. When he recognized this fact, it had already passed by him.

A bird? Thought Volken. However, no birds flew in this altitude.

He considered another possibility, but it was impossible. Every calculation would indicate Hamyuts should be flying around 500 kilometers behind them. Even her gravel bullets couldn't reach that far.

He looked behind. There was something impossible there. A single airplane was chasing them.

“Impossible!”

Volken shouted. Olivia also turned around. Another gravel bullet grazed the airplane.

As expected of Hamyuts, sniping even moving objects from a distance of about 25 kilometers seemed easy for her. But that wasn't the problem.

“Why’s Hamyuts here?!”

Volken shouted. At that moment, a voice resounded inside his head.

‘Volken.’

It’s Mirepoc. I need to inform her of this, thought Volken.

‘What is it? I think it should be about time the Director catches up to you.’

The thoughts she sent were cold. That coldness made him understand...

Was it all a lie? Both about Hamyuts and about Mattalast? Was everything a lie meant to deceive Volken?

‘You slowed down just as expected. If you flew at full speed ahead it would’ve been questionable if she could catch up to you.’

Volken’s body grew weak. He felt as if his legs were floating around in empty space. His entire foundation up to now started crumbling.

‘Mirepoc... did you...’

Deceive me from the very beginning? No. When you first spoke with me at Bantorra, and when you first sent me information you didn’t try to deceive me. If he didn’t think this way it would be far too painful.

‘I roughly understand what you’re thinking about. I believed you at first.’

‘Then... why?’

The woman’s thoughts reverberated inside his head.

‘Isn’t it obvious?! It’s because you’ve killed Vizac-san!’

Murderous intent could be felt alongside those words. *This can’t be,* thought Volken. Vizac admitted defeat in the midst of battle and sent him on his way.

‘This is a misunderstanding, Mirepoc. Vizac-san isn’t dead.’

‘You thought you could deceive me? Too bad. After the Director embarked several Armed Librarians followed. They easily found Vizac-san’s remains.’

Why? Thought Volken. *This cannot be.*

‘That’s... H-Hamyuts...’

Mirepoc laughed at the other side.

‘What are you even thinking of saying? There’s no way the Director would have killed him.’

‘There’s no way I killed him! Vizac-san said he would support me!’

‘The Director couldn’t have killed him. There’s evidence. Vizac-san was slashed by a sharp weapon and died. The Director doesn’t use blades.’

It has to be some mistake. If it’s a dream I have to wake up. I can’t believe it. I don’t want to believe it.

Vizac-san’s dead. And I’m about to die as well...

‘Oh, right. You brought Renas-san along with you. Is she a hostage?’

‘Renas is behind me right now.’

‘Armed Librarians don’t yield to hostages. You know this, right? Poor Renas-san.’

‘Don’t be silly. She’s right behind me now.’

‘Oh? Then why can’t I connect to her thoughts?’

‘That’s...’

Volken was about to explain about Olivia. However, Mirepoc interrupted him before that.

‘Goodbye, Volken. It doesn’t matter at all, but die quickly.

I plan on forgetting about you using Argax. I don’t want to remember your name and face.’

The Thought Sharing was severed. Volken’s hands slipped off the controls.

“This can’t be... Vizac-san...”

A while before this, the Overseer of Paradise received a message in his thoughts.

‘Overseer of Paradise. Your faithful False Man Daltom killed the Armed Librarian Vizac.’

Why? Thought the Overseer of Paradise. I don’t remember giving such an

order.

Daltom shouldn't have been able to defeat someone around Vizac's level. He probably attacked him while he was injured.

'More importantly, we're done spreading our battle formation.'

That was what he ordered. That was much more important. He gathered forces that would kill Volken and Olivia inside the forest.

'We have finished preparations by your faithful False Man Ulay.'

He told the False Men that any of them to kill an Armed Librarian will ascend to Heaven.

'Understood. Let Daltom know he is promised to go to Heaven.'

'As you wish.'

The Overseer of Paradise then muttered.

"So Vizac died..."

He recalled him. Vizac was brave and funny.

"He sure died at a boring place. He is the kind of man who should die fair and square on the battlefield."

This wasn't an interesting incident for the Overseer of Paradise. However, he didn't know that this boring death had cornered Volken and Olivia.

The flying boat zigzagged around to avoid Hamyuts's sling. She didn't hit, but the accuracy of her attacks gradually increased. A gravel bullet grazed one of the wings. The plane greatly lost its balance.

"Hold me and jump!"

Olivia shouted from behind. It was a matter of time before they were shot down. He had no choice but to abandon the airplane if he wanted to protect her.

"Hold on tight!"

Volken opened the windshield and held Olivia's body. Scattering his Dancing Blades in air and using them as footholds, he went down and softened the

impact. If it was just him he could even jump down directly, but Olivia wouldn't be able to bear the impact of his landing.

Having lost its pilot, the flying boat flew around in vain. Hamyuts's gravel bullets punched through the empty plane.

Olivia shrieked inside his arms. Volken landed, ripping apart the vegetation around.

Olivia groaned. It was an unbearable impact for a normal person. Volken ran around while carrying her.

“An attack's... coming...”

“I know.”



Volken invoked his ability. An illusory fog was created around him. He knew that Hamyuts's Sensory Threads would lose their effectiveness in it.

Volken also produced illusions of him and of Olivia. The fake Volkens and Olivias scattered in all directions inside the fog. That should buy them some time.

But what should they do with that time?

He knew that beating Hamyuts Meseta was impossible. So should he devote himself to running away? And if he manages to run away, what should he do then?

Right now they had no allies. What the hell could he do in that situation? Volken started running around despite not having an answer.

When she saw Volken landing, Hamyuts abandoned her plane and jumped down. The plane crashed and Hamyuts raised a cloud of dust as she landed.

As expected Volken created illusions. *Is he running away?* Hamyuts smiled.

“Don’t give me such a boring fight. You’ll be scolded by Photona-san.”

Hamyuts loaded three gravel bullets onto her sling. She erased the Volkens headed straight for her. All of them were illusory. Which of the escaping Volkens was the real one?

Then, she felt something different from Volken’s illusions. She probed it with her Sensory Threads.

“So it’s the Overseer of Paradise... It’s fine taking some measures in advance, but it’s unnecessary help.”

Hamyuts mumbled.

“Shouldn’t you take this opportunity to kill me rather than that?”

Saying this, she kept crushing Volken’s illusions.

“Anyway, it’s been a long time. It reminds me of Colio.”

She felt the tips of her Sensory Threads touching something different from Volken’s illusion. The ones who lay in wait for Volken’s group felt nostalgic to her.

Volken kept mixing with his illusions and running away.

He couldn’t think of any plan right now so he could do nothing but escape. It

wasn't an aggressive escape like Hamyuts would make; he simply ran away. He didn't have the leeway to feel humiliation at that.

At that moment, Volken noticed the figures of people. They were probably men. What were they doing at this sort of place? They wore old khaki-colored jackets and trousers. Their entire heads were covered with cloth masks.

Muttering something under their veils, the men paced around unsteadily.

Were they enemies or allies? Should he speak with them or not? Volken hesitated. Olivia then spoke.

"Kill that."

At that moment, the masked man started running. He had the speed of a normal person who didn't use bodily reinforcement. The man stumbled on the grass and fell over. At the same time, his body exploded. Volken remembered that. It was a human bomb just like the one that collided with and took Luimon's life on the battle on the White Smoke*.

"...So even the Indulging God Cult came here. Seems like it's getting more and more hopeless."

Olivia laughed drily as if she found it amusing.

"Overseer of Paradise."

One of the Cult's executives spoke to him. His job was managing weapons.

"You ordered me to use up all of our human bombs, but is that really fine?"

"Yeah. Human bombs aren't of use against Armed Librarians. They're effective weapons only for a surprise attack. Once they know about them they become useless. Spending them all here isn't much of a loss."

The executive was displeased. Even though he made improvements upon improvements to them... wouldn't it be a waste?

"But still, just to get rid of a single Meat woman..."

"We lost Charlot to that Meat woman."

"But..."

"Forget it. We will end Olivia now. Exhaust even the unneeded human bombs.

That is all.”

They deployed the human bombs just in case. Hamyuts could not be trusted. There was a possibility she would let Olivia get away with some trick.

But now he had peace of mind. There was no way for her to escape.

“Well, if you think about it it’s obvious. Our direct enemies are the Indulging God Cult. Having them be quiet until now was fortunate.”

Olivia said.

The situation just got progressively worse. Hamyuts was coming from behind and human bombs from the front. They had no allies. It was far worse than the worst case scenario Volken imagined.

“Let me down already. It’s fine.”

Olivia got off to the ground. And then she started cackling.

“This is impossible. We’re going to die. Definitely.”

That’s true. But is it fine giving up so quickly? While Volken thought this, Olivia spoke to him.

“But say, Volken. Do you understand this is a battle?”

She spread her arms. She didn’t have the face of someone who gave up.

“We have no allies. Our enemies are the worst. We can’t win no matter how much we try. Looking around we can find nothing but despair. This is a battle.”

“ ... ”

Olivia looked at Volken and laughed.

“Is this your first time, Volken? This is my second time. My time on the White Smoke was far worse than this. Because I have you this time. This is much better.”

“...Olivia-san.”

“I am going to fight. What will you do? Will you just die here doing nothing?”

Olivia turned her back and started walking. Volken gazed at her back.

“I am...”

Volken muttered. And he then remembered.

What was I fighting for? I fought to protect the justice inherited from Photona-san and the Armed Librarians of the last 2000 years. This justice will not yield. I never strayed from the proper path.

Therefore he could fight. The reason to fight still remained in his heart.

“Please wait, Olivia-san.”

Olivia turned around. Volken activated his ability. A mist that was white like rich milk was created inside his palm.

“Take this and go. This is part of my ability. Using this you can create illusions like me.”

Ability transfer. Warriors who could use that technique were rare. He acquired it for his comrades in case he fell in battle. He never thought he would transfer it to a non-Armed Librarian.

“Where are you going?”

Receiving his ability, Olivia asked.

“I’m going to fight Hamyuts. I have my own battle. And you have your own.”

“Right, in the end we have different fights.”

“...It’s been a short time.”

“See you, Volken. You’ve been the most useful man I’ve met so far.”

Is that what you choose to say as farewell? Volken smiled.

The two of them were neither comrades, kindred souls or war buddies. That was their final farewell. Their two paths, after slightly intersecting, once again branched out.

Volken fought for justice. Olivia fought for Vend Ruga.

“Mm...”

Hamyuts mumbled.

One of the Volkens scattered in the forest created an illusory fog. Further Volkens were created inside of it and spread around. Different from the fight

until then, all of the Volkens came running at her. She couldn't see Olivia anywhere. Did that mean they separated?

"Hmm, how curious."

Hamyuts thought she should kill Olivia without delay. If she aimed only at her she would be able to snipe her. However, her bad habit of postponing easier tasks came out. She focused instead on fighting against Volken.

She did nothing but keep attacking the illusory Volkens. She could do nothing but that for now. *What a troublesome ability*, Hamyuts thought.

Volken created illusions and controlled them. He had no chance to win, no plan and no goal. He was simply fighting. He just ran and successfully entered the range of his Dancing Blades which was 150 meters.

"Wait, Volken."

At that time, Hamyuts ceased her attacks.

The faint sounds Olivia could hear from behind probably came from the battle between Hamyuts and Volken.

She was walking towards the mountain she was told about. She couldn't run through the gaps of trees like Volken. She walked while pushing her way through grass, going under tree branches, and feeling the legs peeking from under her skirt with gashes.

For someone like Hamyuts, walking that slowly would seem as if she stopped in place. If she was aimed at, she would become scraps of meat even easier than it was breaking a glass cup.

Volken produced a large quantity of illusory Olivias and spread them around. Even Hamyuts would have to rely on luck in order to snipe her.

This bought her some time. But their plan was to trust their luck. Her head might be smashed any second now. She could do nothing but pray Volken bought her enough time.

"...tch."

Olivia heard an explosion from the right.

She remembered an illusory Olivia walking to the right before. A human bomb probably found her and detonated.

She looked at the amorphous mist hanging around her right hand. She held it aloft and wished. Olivia produced an illusion with her appearance in front of her eyes. She told it to advance forward in her mind and it did as told.

“I wonder if it’s fine now.”

Letting it go ahead for several minutes, Olivia also started walking. She followed after the illusion she sent ahead.

After a while, she heard an explosion from ahead. If she didn’t send her illusion there, the real Olivia would have died.

“Those shitheads...”

Olivia produced yet another illusory copy, and she sent it ahead the same way.

The illusory fog received from Volken grew smaller the more she used it. It seemed to have a limit of uses. Judging from its size, she could probably use it only ten more times.

“You’ve worked hard. All for a little girl like me.”

Olivia didn’t know – it was Cigal Crukessa who invented the human bombs. The human bombs attacking her now were models improved by other False Men. And she didn’t know that it was Cigal who came up with the idea after Olivia used a bomb to threaten the False Men.

In a sense she was the originator of the human bombs. And she was now reaping what she sowed.

“Wait, Volken.”

Hearing these words, Volken reflexively stopped his movements. Ever since the time he was a trainee he learned to absolutely obey the words of the Acting Director. That long-time habit made him stop faster than he could think.

“We should talk before we fight, right? Conversing before fighting... isn’t it the spirit of this age?”

Are you kidding me? Thought Volken.

But regardless of her true feelings, it did appear that Hamyuts wanted to talk. Volken stopped the movements of the illusions swarming around her. But he still let the illusions of Olivia keep moving.

“First let me ask a question. You didn’t cross over to the Indulging God Cult, right?”

“Right.”

One of the illusions opened its mouth. He was not so foolish as to let her find him based on his voice.

“I knew it. That’s what I thought. You don’t seem like the type to aim for Heaven. You’re the type of person to not care about your own happiness.”

“...?”

Heaven – it was the vain, baseless concept the Indulging God Cult were chasing after. He obviously didn’t have any interest in it.

“Then what’s your goal?”

“I act for the justice of the Armed Librarians. I have no other reason.”

“Did you take Olivia for that? How weird... I don’t get it at all.”

Hamyuts cocked her head.

“Wanting to protect justice is fine and all, but if you do something stupid Bantorra Library might be destroyed. Do you understand this?”

He interpreted these words as Hamyuts’s conceit. She was probably saying that if they lost her they would be destroyed by the Indulging God Cult.

“Even if you alone will be gone Bantorra will not be destroyed. We won’t lose to the Indulging God Cult.”

“...? That’s not what I meant though.”

Hamyuts cocked her head.

They were both talking about completely different things. They haven’t noticed that.

“Conversely, I have something to ask of you. Why did you sink the Meats’ ship? And why are you trying to kill Olivia? She’s not opposed to you.”

“Ehhh, that’s what you’re thinking about?”

“Answer my question. Why are you trying to kill Olivia?”

“I can’t let Olivia live. That’s all.”

“Why?”

Hamyuts once again cocked her head.

“Well, it’s a tough question. I can’t really say. I wonder why.”

“You don’t know? Not even the reason for your massacre? Did you just kill them without any reason?”

“No, I do have a reason. But I’m not sure how much Olivia’s involved.”

The story didn’t seem to mesh properly from a while ago. He couldn’t understand what Hamyuts was saying. In the same way, she didn’t seem to understand what was happening.

“That’s enough. I don’t get it.”

Hamyuts scratched her head.

“It sure turned out to be troublesome.”

“What?”

“That’s enough. Let’s stop fighting. Let’s kill Olivia. Then we’ll erase your memories of her. Let’s hear the true situation from Lascall Othello. And we’ll wrap this up.

No, it doesn’t seem like there’s a need to kill her. The human bombs will probably do so. Let’s stop this.”

“...Hamyuts.”

Volken was convinced – that woman was definitely evil. She wasn’t an Armed Librarian, one who protects the lives of people and Books.

He operated his illusions. All Volkens charged towards Hamyuts.

“Hey, what’re you doing. We haven’t finished talking yet.”

She swung her sling. The fight started again.

Volken moved his Dancing Blades. Hamyuts was already within his range. The battle started at that moment.

*The author either mistook Luimon's death in Volume 1 or meant to write Casma instead.

Part 2

Olivia walked for a long time. She was walking so slowly she would seem like she stopped in place for people like Volken and Hamyuts, but she still kept walking.

Several sounds echoed within the woods. Stopping in place and looking around, she could see smoke rising around here and there. It seemed the human bombs found the illusory Olivias and detonated.

“Shitheads...”

An explosion sounded ahead. The one being erased by the bomb was probably one of Olivia’s produced illusions. With her method of sending her illusions ahead and following them, she was able to evade the bombs.

She once again created an illusion and sent it forward. She waited in place until that illusion got ahead.

At that moment, she heard the grass rustle from behind.

“Dammit...”

So they came from behind. They probably already found Olivia. She had to run.

A human bomb came chasing after her in a straight line. Although it was a forest with bad visibility, he didn’t lose sight of her for a second.

How can they know I’m here despite wearing a mask? Thought Olivia.

That was the skill of the improved human bombs. They were robbed of their eyesight so they would not be distracted by unnecessary things. Their heads were embedded with eyes possessing the Sacred Eyes ability, allowing them to perceive souls and chase after them.

Olivia had no choice but to produce an illusion and send it backwards. The moment the human bomb touched the illusion it exploded. Volken’s ability was amazing enough to deceive even the power to see souls.

“...Shit.”

However, she could not use it much longer. She had to reach her destination.

Dancing Blades covered the entire sky. Several Volkens ran on the ground.

Just as Hamyuts said, fighting against Volken was truly troublesome. She drove hundreds of gravel bullets into Volken's skull. However, the real one was still unhurt.

A Dancing Blade attacked Hamyuts from behind. She sent it flying away by hitting it with her sling. At the same time Volken came charging from ahead. She smashed him but he was also an illusion.

Dancing Blades cut through empty space and assailed Hamyuts. Although she knew that most of them were illusory, she had to evade all of them.

"Jeez!"

She got impatient. The moment she impatiently starts going on the offensive and stops evading the Dancing Blades would lead to Volken's victory. Hamyuts knew that. She was impatient *because* she knew that.

She had no reason to use her basic tactic of fighting while running away right now. None of the attacks were real yet. There was no point to retreating.

Volken kept creating more and more illusions. As expected he knew to use his power well.

It was now a battle of patience. Both had the strongest patience amongst the Armed Librarians. They could be said to be equal in that sense as well.

Volken was thinking to himself.

Why was he fighting? Even in the unlikely event that he beats Hamyuts, what will he do then? His allies will no longer accept him. Volken's career as an Armed Librarian has already ended long ago.

Even so, his fighting hands did not relax. He was as strong as he always was.

He did nothing wrong. It was because he was convinced in this. The justice he kept believing in was at his side.

Therefore he could fight. Although he was all alone, he could fight.

If he didn't meet Olivia he would have surely given up. He would be unable to

fight by himself and without anyone to rely on. But he now knew. As long as nothing changed within his heart, he would keep on fighting.

The sun was setting. The situation became disadvantageous for Olivia. She did not have any lights. After the sun goes down she will not be able to walk around.

She would reach the place where Volken hid the Spinning Doll Ückück in about thirty minutes. If she had to stay put on the way she would not get there on time.

She heard a sound from her right. It was human bombs. There were two of them. Olivia produced an illusion and made it run ahead. She herself ran to the left. She had to take a detour.

When she walked around enough, she heard an explosion come from ahead. But it was only one sound. Since they were two, there should be another one left. However, no human bomb came after her. It seemed they did not possess the intelligence to split and chase both ways.

Thinking she got away, Olivia stopped. She was at her limit. She was injured everywhere on her bare skin. Her ankles hurt because she kept running through places with no clear paths.

She wanted to rest even if for a minute. She took a deep breath and exhaled.

“...”

The explosions she heard from a while ago lessened. The numbers of the human bombs seemed to have been considerably lowered. They all died with along with the illusions.

“Really now, we’re all going to die...”

Olivia muttered. The human bombs were dying. Volken will also probably die soon. Once again she would amass a mountain of corpses on her way.

Just who was in the wrong here? She thought.

The ones who killed them were Hamyuts and the Indulging God Cult. But who made them do so? Who had driven them to death?

Obviously it was Olivia. She made them die, and Hamyuts killed them. Olivia

was the one to begin it all.

“...Kuku.”

She laughed listlessly. She was at the wrong. She did well to kill so many people until now.

But she did not mind this. In this world there were only enemies and people she could use.

‘Do you really think so?’

She heard Renas’s voice. *Shut up*, thought Olivia. At that moment, she recalled her past again.

It was a memory from when she was on the ship.

Inside the Meats’ room, some False Men were holding a single girl by her shoulders. She was meant to be used by Charlot. His Magic that could transport human bodies had not been completed yet. By repeating human experimentation again and again, he sought to complete it.

“...Olivia.”

The girl raised her face and called. In front of her stood Olivia. She could not stop the False Men. They had an agreement that they could use the Meats freely.

“Help me. I don’t want to die.”

She begged for her life, which was originally forbidden for Meats. The girl kept shouting.

“I don’t want to die yet, I want to become human!”

Olivia was thinking. *I didn’t make it in time. If I was slightly faster, I could have turned her human. I could have retrieved her ... as well.*

The girl was taken out of the room. Olivia averted her eyes from her. Once she was taken away the Meats’ room grew quiet. Another person opened his mouth.

“Olivia-san.”

It was another Meat who followed Olivia just like the girl.

“Let us fight. For that girl as well. We will retrieve ... no matter what.”

The Meat’s eyes were burning with the intent to fight.

Renas called to her.

‘You weren’t as lonely as you think you were.’

‘Shut up, Renas.’

Saying so, Olivia stood up. The pain in her body did not go away, but her breathing relaxed.

Let’s go. Just a bit more. But just as she thought so and started walking...

She found a figure in front of her. It was at such a distance that she couldn’t understand how she didn’t notice it.

She could tell. This was the human bomb she supposedly lost earlier.

“...Why?”

Although she had rested, it was for a short time. He shouldn’t have caught up to her. Also, he didn’t come from behind but from ahead of her. He couldn’t do such a thing unless he teleported.

“ ... ”

The human bomb stood in place for a while. And he then started sluggishly walking towards Olivia.

She hurriedly created an illusion and sent it charging at the human bomb. But he made no response. The illusions touched the human bomb and disappeared. He already settled on aiming at the real Olivia.

Her feet wouldn’t move. What stopped her in place was not fear. It was because she couldn’t come up with anything to do. *Is this the end?* Thought Olivia. Regret, fear and anger swirled around in her chest. At the same time, she also felt some faint relief at being released from her long and painful battle.

And just as Olivia’s heart has completely accepted defeat... something changed with the human bomb.

Although he was going straight ahead to her, his feet stopped.

At the same time, change has also occurred in Olivia. She slowly moved her legs ahead.

“No.”

Her mouth moved.

“You should know this. I am not Olivia Littolet. I am not the person you’re looking for.”

She approached the human bomb standing in place. She actually wasn’t Olivia.

She was Renas.

Olivia’s consciousness was driven deep inside her mind just like it was until yesterday.

The human bomb was confused. Neither Renas nor Olivia knew they chased after souls. However, she chose to bet on a small hope and succeeded with her last resort.

Renas stepped ahead. She gently reached for the masked face.

“It’s fine. You don’t have to do this anymore.”

The human bomb nervously moved his hands. He held Renas’s hand as if he was a little girl petting a cat for the first time.

“You can go to rest. Take it easy.”

The human bomb’s body collapsed as if he was released from something. He sunk down to the ground like a child that grew tired of playing.

“...Let us go. We’re almost there.”

Leaving the seating human bomb behind, Renas started walking.

‘Why?’

Olivia asked Renas.

‘You could regain your body anytime you wanted to, couldn’t you? Then why did you hand over your body until now?’

“To tell you the truth, I vaguely understood that you could possess me from

the time we were on Past God Bantorra's Island. I knew this and didn't resist."

'But why?'

"I simply returned what I borrowed. Besides, I thought of wanting to save you all along."

'Why! Why would you want that!'

"I understand your feelings. Your true feelings that you haven't noticed.

That is my only reason."

'My feelings?'

"I will say it again. Try and think about it. What do you need? What was taken away from you?"

Just before the setting sun sunk completely, Renas could see a small hut in front of her.

"That Vend Ruga person was probably the one who gave you your most important thing, Olivia. You were probably the only one who thought she was merely using other people. You have reached this far because everyone had supported you."

Renas returned her body to Olivia. She started walking again.

"...Shit, this pisses me off!"

Hamyuts was on the verge of numbness. While she was stronger in battle, Volken had more patience than her. He was devoting himself to protection. He did so for Olivia who was behind him. He didn't know if she was alive or dead, but she had to be protected.

At that moment, Hamyuts changed her way of fighting.

She started shooting at the Dancing Blades midair without aiming at Volken. No attacks came at her besides the charging illusions of Volken. Although she was already on the defensive, she went into it even more.

This was bad for Volken, however. The real one had been freely using his illusions to protect himself. In order to not be targeted by Hamyuts, he was always at a distance outside her field of vision. However, his Dancing Blades

could not do so.

The Dancing Blades flying around were shot down. Unlike his illusions that were inexhaustible, there was a limit to the number of Dancing Blades that he had. If they were all shot down, he would have no means with which to attack.

Volken also changed his strategy. He switched from defense to offense.

Dozens of Volkens charged at Hamyuts. It was no longer a bluff like before. The real one was among them.

At that moment Hamyuts shot her sling. She aimed at the ground at her feet. Dirt sprung up as if exploding. The illusions hit by it dissipated.

“Found you!”

She swung her sling. The string aimed to wrap around Volken’s neck and lop his head off. He anticipated that attack. Since it was anticipated he was barely able to evade it. Volken’s body lay on the ground.

Hamyuts instantly loaded her sling with a gravel bullet. Volken used both arms and legs to leap like a beast.

The bullet grazed his back. Cloth and skin were torn.

His spine was exposed from the gaping tear. This sort of wound would make a normal person writhe in pain, but for Volken it was shallow. He could still fight.

“...Not bad, Volken.”

For Hamyuts it was an opportunity to keep the offensive. However, no attacks came. Blood flowed from her shoulder.

The real Volken was a decoy. At the moment she was about to attack him, a Dancing Blade came from behind. Hamyuts scowled and Volken smiled. Given the difference in their strength, a simultaneous injury was humiliating for her. All the illusions surrounding Hamyuts changed their appearance. Just like the real Volken, they all got torn, bleeding backs.

What was he fighting for? While he kept fighting, he didn’t think he could beat Hamyuts. However, he kept fighting her for even a minute or a second more. For as long as he kept fighting, the justice of the Armed Librarian was at Volken’s side.

The two took their distance and faced each other. At that moment, Hamyuts stopped rotating her sling.

“Say, Volken. Since this is a good cutoff place for our fight, why don’t we continue our talk?”

“...”

Volken also stopped fighting. Thinking about Olivia, buying some time wouldn’t be so bad.

“I’ve said this before, but I have no idea what are you fighting for. I know you’ve said you wanted to chase me out, but I don’t understand why.”

He did not interject. He decided to let her speak.

“Did you find out the truth about the Indulging God Cult? Is that why you’re opposing me?”

The truth about the Indulging God Cult... Volken did not know it. As Vizac had told him, Hamyuts was certainly hiding something. Was that what she was referring to?

“No? So do you know about the Violet Sinner or Vend Ruga?”

He knew the name Vend Ruga. But it was the first time he heard of the Violet Sinner. Was that related to Olivia?

“So you don’t know them as well. How strange, why are you fighting then?”

Volken then answered.

“My goal is to expose your crimes. To find evidence, present it to the other Armed Librarians and thus expel you from Bantorra Library.”

Hamyuts started thinking.

“Which of my crimes? I have so many I can’t tell if you won’t be more specific.”

“...I’m talking about you sinking the ship at Allow Bay, killing the Meats!”

Volken shouted without meaning to.

Hamyuts widened her eyes. Although she was in the midst of battle she

stroked her chin, scratched her head and started thinking.

“Is that it?”

Hamyuts said.

“Are you angry because I killed those people? Is that all?”

“Is that all, you ask?!”

Hamyuts was surprised for a while, and then chuckled.

“It’s that, I see, so that’s why. So what. I thought it was something much more terrible.”

She started laughing as if completely forgetting they were fighting.

“Right, what I did was bad. So what were you trying to do?”

“I will reveal to everyone that you were the one to sink the ship. If everyone knows you are a villain, no one would acknowledge you as the Acting Director.”

“What, is that what you were thinking?”

This time she burst into shrill laughter. Volken faltered.

“So that’s how it was, oh my, how troubling. That’s so troubling.”

Hamyuts didn’t even look at Volken anymore. She was laughing so much she was in pain.

“Ah, my stomach hurts. My shoulder also hurts but so does my stomach.”

Volken felt fear. Was his goal that insignificant for her? Did that mean his very fight had been meaningless?

“So, Volken. Let me tell you something good.

Everyone already knows that I was the one to sink the ship at Allow Bay.”

“...Huh?”

He made an idiotic sounding voice. Making such a voice against his enemy already indicated that he had lost.

“Mattalast already secretly revealed it to everyone. Didn’t you know?”

“...You’re lying.”

“Although they were Meats, there was also a chance they would turn out to be our enemies, so I killed them. That’s how we settled it. The real reason is different, of course.”

“...Then why did everyone stay silent?”

“They turned a blind eye to it. They were scared of causing a fuss and making me angry. I’m the only one who’s a villain through and through, but everyone else is also quite bad.

You thought that the Armed Librarians represent justice. But in the end it’s only our public face. Normally you’d notice it gradually. Armed Librarians are not necessarily just.

Isn’t that what’s becoming an adult all about?”

No words came out of Volken’s mouth. Until now he believed that all his comrades but Hamyuts have protected justice. He was naïve.

“I’m glad you ran away before the trial. You would have made a great embarrassment out of yourself.”

Saying so, Hamyuts laughed.

However, Volken once again operated his Dancing Blades. Even if all the Armed Librarians haven’t thought of protecting justice... he alone still believed in it.

If there was no one to protect it, he will do so by himself. That was the justice he inherited from Photona.

“My, how persistent. Do you still intend on fighting?”

Hamyuts dodged the Dancing Blades.

“Then I’ll tell you more. The Armed Librarians’ justice you believe in is nothing but an illusion.”

It’s a lie.

“There’s a truth only the various generations of the Acting Director are told about. I’ll make a special case and tell you too.”

Hamyuts spoke while evading and shooting down the Dancing Blades.

“The battle between the Armed Librarians and the Indulging God Cult... the roots of all evil lie within the Armed Librarians.”

His body stopped for an instant.

“...You think it’s a lie? But it’s true. Outwardly we seem to oppose each other, but the truth is different. The Armed Librarians and the Indulging God Cult originally coexisted. Sometimes there’s some rebellion like what’s going on now, but we mostly get along in peace.”

It’s all lies, thought Volken.

“Besides, the leader of the Indulging God Cult – the Overseer of Paradise – is selected from the ranks of the Armed Librarians. In a manner of speaking, the Indulging God Cult is our branch organization.”

This can’t be. Volken told himself this.

Hamyuts enjoyed speaking. She used the truth to torment Volken much like a cat toying with a mouse.

“Then why did it turn out like this? I’ll also tell you the reason for it.”

Huhu, she laughed.

“It’s because the Indulging God Cult was created by us Armed Librarians.”

The Dancing Blades stopped.

Volken’s knees buckled. The illusions kept standing and the only the real Volken collapsed.

It was a fatal failure. The moment he noticed this, he was shot by Hamyuts’s gravel bullet. It bore exactly into Volken’s chest.

“...You’re, lying...”

The illusions disappeared. His body collapsed.

“Goodbye, Volken. What you believed in did not exist in this world.”

Volken lay face-down and stopped moving.

Photona’s face floated at the back of Volken’s mind. The justice of the Armed Librarians he was taught by him floated to his heart and disappeared.

Photona knew everything from the very beginning. He knew but taught Volken of justice. The words he believed in were all lies.

Just what was my life? Volken thought so with his fading consciousness. What are the Armed Librarians? What is the Indulging God Cult? I don't understand anything anymore.

He was dying without understanding.

His comrade Armed Librarians floated to his mind. He thought of Mirepoc. He thought of Vizac, Luimon, Mokkaia, Minth and Ireia.

They are all being deceived. Deceived by Photona, by Hamyuts, by the other Acting Directors.

I must tell everyone. Volken so thought. Even now he believed that there would be someone, even a single person, who would protect justice. He had to tell someone of it.

If his voice could reach his lost comrades he wanted to shout. If he could send his thoughts he wanted to.

Please, anyone, let me explain. Please find out the hidden truth.

However, along with the suspension of his heart, his wishes vanished into the darkness.

Part 3

It happened in the past, on the day Volken officially became an Armed Librarian. Mattalast spoke to Hamyuts then.

“Photona-san really didn’t want Volken to turn into an Armed Librarian until the very end.”

“Is that so?”

Hamyuts didn’t think so. Based on the result, Photona was the one to guide him to that path.

“Photona-san cherished him. He wanted him to make his dream come true. But at the same time, he didn’t want him to become an Armed Librarian.

I believe that he always hesitated.”

“What do you mean?”

“Volken’s strong. If he grows up, he might eventually climb up to the position of an Acting Director. Even if he didn’t, he might reach the position of someone who knows the truth like me. Photona-san hated that idea.”

Mattalast was also one of the people to cherish Volken. He thought of him like a much younger brother.

“Photona-san also believed the justice of the Armed Librarians at first. But when he became the Acting Director he learned the truth. I believe that he had suffered.”

“Why?”

Hamyuts said.

“It’s painful to know the truth. To those who have even a tiny bit of a conscience, anyway.

He had to hide the secret, deceive his comrades and keep conducting evil. He had no choice, though. Even a liar like me hates it. I believe that he suffered even more.

People like you are the exception.”

Photona certainly was an overly self-disciplined man. He was probably continuously suppressing his conscience to fulfill his duty as the Acting Director. He had to continuously commit evil while withstanding the pangs of his conscience.

“He wanted the Armed Librarians to keep representing justice even if only inside Volken’s heart. He wanted him to protect the justice of the Armed Librarians even if it was a lie.

Since he knew the truth and couldn’t protect justice, he wanted him to be his replacement.

I believe that Photona-san thought this way.”

While looking down at Volken’s corpse, Hamyuts mumbled.

“Photona-san. As expected you were a fool. You were always a half-baked softy about everything.”

Volken’s dead face was full of sorrow and anger.

“You’ve made both me, who’s devoted to evil, and Volken, who’s devoted for good, follow your example, Photona-san.”

These were words of condolences directed at Volken.

The fight was yet to end. Olivia was still alive. Hamyuts loaded her sling with a gravel bullet meant for long-range sniping.

While starting to rotate her sling, Hamyuts felt a presence behind her.

Turning around, she saw a lone girl standing there. She was a graceful and refreshing girl wearing a blue one-piece dress. She had never seen this girl, but still spoke to her.

“Oh my, it’s been a long time, Lascall.”

“How nostalgic, Hamyuts Meseta-sama.”

Lascall Othello pinched the hem of her skirt and made a lovely bow. She appeared like a disciplined young girl. Her expression, seeming more nihilistic than mature, did not give her a human-like impression.



“Well aren’t you cute?”

Hamyuts lowered her sling and turned to face Lascall.

“You were the one to bring Volken something strange, right?”

“Indeed. I have entrusted Volken-sama with the Book of a Meat who perished on the White Smoke.”

“So you’re the mastermind this time as well, huh?”

Lascall shook her head.

“My, a mastermind? How awe-inspiring. People like Mirepoc-sama and Alme-sama also thought this way, but everyone greatly overestimates me. I am a being who exists only to carry Books. Reading those and acting accordingly are all done by humans.”

The girl’s body sank into the ground. She then appeared again next to Volken.

“What a pitiful boy. I did give him that Book, but what he thought and acted upon had nothing to do with me.”

Lascall spoke truly irresponsibly. However, responsibility was something to be taken by human beings, not by swords. That was probably what she thought.

“So, what are you going to do?”

“I am only to carry on my function. I will pass along the Book of Volken’s interrupted story to someone who can inherit it.”

“I see. Well, do as you wish.”

Saying this, Hamyuts turned her back to Lascall. She loaded her sling with a bullet meant for long range sniping and started rotating it. Lascall thrust her sword into the ground. The soil hardened into a Book.

And just as she picked up Volken’s Book... Hamyuts swung her sling. While completely opposite of her field of vision, she shot at Lascall’s left hand holding the Book.

“...!”

Her delicate hand was torn off and flew to the air together with the Book. Lascall sank inside the ground. Hamyuts accelerated her sling at the same time.

The left hand drew a parabola in the air and was about to land. In order to grab the Book held by that it, Lascall’s torso emerged from the ground.

“Too naïve.”

The second shot hit Lascall’s head. It crushed her head and mowed down the trees behind her. The right half of the girl’s face disappeared as if gouged by a spoon.

“ ... ”

Her mouth seemed to form the word ‘Hamyuts’, but no voice came out. The stone blade fell from her hand and vanished into the ground. The hideously destroyed body of the girl was all that was left in front of Hamyuts.

“Lascall. I feel bad for you, but it’s somewhat troubling for me.”

Hamyuts already moved away with frightening speed. She ran next to the corpse and used her sling to seize Volken’s Book.

“I can’t let the truth be found out. Bantorra Library can only exist in this world if it has an Acting Director. Volken’s story ends here.”

Saying so, she placed Volken’s Book on the ground.

Bending her body, she touched the Book with a finger. Volken’s story flowed into her head. His goal was also there. It was a memory from when he read the Book that told him of Olivia.

The hut she reached was probably what a hunter seeking refuge from rain would use. A single Book and a doll were left on the floor. Olivia reached for the latter. The delicate doll shook its knees. It was waiting for the moment to activate the Magic Right the Meats and Olivia had accumulated in it.

It finally came back to me. My precious Spinning Doll Ücküek that was taken by Cigal.

The doll was aching to dance. However, Olivia couldn’t make it do so right now. She couldn’t remember the orders needed to give the doll.

She turned her gaze to the Book. Volken said that this Book did not contain Olivia’s goal. However, it might still become a clue for her to regain it.

If she read this Book and could not remember it would all be over. Relying on her resolve, she extended her fingertips to it.

Olivia and Hamyuts both touched the Book simultaneously. They both came to know the life of a single Meat.

His name... saying it would be meaningless.

There existed words in this world that could identify *him* individually. However, *he* threw that name away. *He* had also abandoned *his* memories and feelings with *his* own will.

He was a simple Meat who became such out of his own accord.

Before *he* became a Meat *he* was a shoe polisher living in a certain city. *He* polished shoes every day so he could pay for his daily necessities. *He* ate in the morning, in the afternoon and at the evening, and went to sleep when *he* became sleepy.

Without being disliked by anyone nor liked by anyone, *he* kept on living. On the surface *he* was a normal human you could find anywhere.

The only thing different from the norm was that *he* was very afraid of death. Of course, there was no one in this world that did not fear death, but it was still far more extreme for him.

However, that was the only part of him different from other people. Overall *he* seemed to be an ordinary person.

He became divorced from the norm when he realized his goal. It was at the day *he* started looking for a way to escape the fear of death tormenting him.

At first *he* tried ordinary means. *He* drank alcohol, took drugs and slept with women. *He* tried forgetting about death in his pleasure.

He soon quit. The more attached to his life *he* felt, the more *he* felt afraid of death.

Perhaps *he* could live a peaceful life so that he would have a peaceful death. *He* thought that dying as if gently withering away would lessen his fear of death.

He soon quit that as well. Death was simply death. Nothing has changed.

How about trying to die? People will not die twice. If *he* dies *he* would escape his fear of death. *He* thought of it as the best way.

I see, he thought and immediately took action.

“ ... ”

He started thinking in front of the knife he was holding.

Although it was the only way, it seemed to be a much too foolish method.

Where did all misfortune come from? Why did *he* have to suffer so much? *He* tried thinking.

He noticed before long. If *he* were not alive *he* wouldn't have to die as well. Meaning, the source of all misfortune was being alive. All unhappiness came from his fate to be born, live, die and be placed in the Library.

So I should die. Thinking this, *he* pointed the point of his knife at his heart.

The blade was then grasped. At some point without him noticing, a man stood beside him.

“Please wait.”

The man grasping the blade said. *He* was using superhuman strength. *He's probably a Magic-using soldier or an Armed Librarian, he* thought. It was a strange man whom he could see but could not remember the appearance of.

“I have one suggestion for you, sir. How about forgetting everything? If you forget everything in this world, wouldn't you also forget your fear of death?”

Doesn't seem bad at all, he considered. And *he* then nodded.

The man offered him a cup of water that he said would make him lose his memories. *He* drained the cup without hesitation as if it was breakfast milk.

He was sent to the Meats' ship. All *he* could see was moldy bread crumbs and a pot filled with excreta. *He* was surrounded only by livestock that wore clothes. They had no happiness. They had no hopes. They had no dignity as human beings and their lives had no value.

Since *he* had nothing, *he* didn't fear losing it. Since his life was worthless, *he* did not fear death. Since *he* had no memories he had no troubles. Since *he* had no will he had no desires.

It felt calm. *He* was absolved of all his suffering.

He was truly happy.

I've tried many things, he thought. I didn't realize that not having happiness was that blissful.

"While you do not need anything, I will give this to you just in case."

Saying this, the Overseer of Paradise engraved a small seal on his hand.

"If something bothers you, use it. It is the power of protection transferred by a certain Magician."

I will probably not use it, he thought. Since he did not need anything, he was released from all suffering.

He was a Meat, but also a True Man at the same time. *He* knew neither the existence of Heaven nor the doctrine of the Indulging God Cult, but *he* was still a True Man.

Cigal, Ganbanel, Parney and *him*. Out of all True Men found by the current Overseer of Paradise, the one to lead the happiest life was probably *him*.

Not even the ship's manager knew *he* was a True Man. *He* received the same treatment as all other Meats. His happy despair kept going for a while without incident.

Until *he* met a strange person one day.

The girl started talking to him.

"Say, can you understand words?"

At first *he* thought she was one of the caretakers. It was because she wore a dress that revealed her thighs like that of some and not rags like the other Meats. She also wore perfume and makeup and was beautiful.

"I'm looking for comrades. If you understand my words, will you help me?"

He stayed silent.

"We want to become human. We're looking for people who would fight with us for that purpose."

He didn't reply. What did becoming a human mean?

“...No, looking at your eyes there does seem to be some intelligence but... it’s no use.”

Saying so, she left him. She said the same to another Meat. It did not matter if they agreed or refused. If she saw a human-like response she would simply take them.

After a while, *he* came to know that woman appeared to be named Olivia. *He* also learned that she was a Meat.

“The number of Meats is decreasing again...”

“That Olivia used them. Really, what’s that woman doing?”

What happened? *He* questioned. A Meat who was supposed to abandon everything was wishing for something.

Apparently she was threatening the caretakers. Also, she was buttering up one of the False Men. Apparently, night after night, she gathered the Meats and surrounded a weird doll.

There are strange things in the world, he thought.

Primal feelings like curiosity still remained inside his heart. *He* exited the room and went to the place where Olivia gathered everyone. Thanks to her, the Meats could freely move inside the ship to a certain degree.

Olivia was crouched inside the room. She was throwing up. She suffered alone as to not show anyone.

“Damn it, that pervert man...”

In front of Olivia was a scribble. She then noticed him.

“...What do you want?”

He didn’t answer anything.

“...Don’t tell this to anyone. I come here to throw up when I’m tired. Seeing this scribble distracts me.”

Olivia stood up.

“Act as if you didn’t see it. You probably won’t understand it anyway.”

But he did understand. She was suffering. By wishing for something, she was suffering for it. Why did she do such a thing?

Loving someone, wishing something... These were all filled with pain. If you wish for nothing, nothing will hurt you. Don't live and don't wish for anything. That was the best sort of happiness.

Eventually Olivia's actions came to light. She and the Meats who've followed her received torture out of this world.

Told you so, he thought.

Since you couldn't get it no matter what you tried, you were better off not wishing for it in the first place.

The long-haired men tormented Olivia.

"So, say you're sorry already. Say something like, 'I have overstepped my position as a Meat. Although it would be natural to kill me, please make use of my body for the Cult's sake'."

Olivia shook her head. She was then tortured further.

What she's doing is strange, he thought. If she suffers then she just needs to run away.

Why does she still wish? With only doubts left in him, Olivia left the ship.

Even after Olivia had left, his despairing happiness continued. However, the questions she left with him stayed. But *he* didn't seek for an answer. *He* didn't try thinking about it.

Before long the ship became noisy again. This time it was something other than Olivia.

The almost perfected human bombs were mobilized. False Men carried their guns and ran around. It seemed to be a battle. Someone probably came to sink the ship.

The battle kept raging for a long while. Although it couldn't be destroyed in just several hours, it was probably already useless. This ship will sink and end his happy paradise. However, *he* was not sad. *He* possessed no such feelings.

Eventually some unknown people have boarded the ship. They seemed to be Armed Librarians.

He stood up. *Let's die.* There should have been some explosive at the ship's bottom.

He started walking there.

"...Oh, do you need anything?"

Someone got to the ship's bottom before him. It was a woman with ruffled hair. She was activating the explosives at the bottom of the ship ahead of him.

"Sorry. I'll have you die for me. I have to kill Olivia."

Saying so, the woman rose up and left. *He* thought of thanking her.

Soon an explosion took place. *He* was thrown into the water. *That's fine, he* thought.

However, a boorish hand pulled him up. Although *he* thought of thanking them, they also did unnecessary things. *What a strange bunch, he* thought.

The one to rescue him was a green-haired youth.

Please don't do meaningless things. Thinking this, *he* shook off the rescuing hands.

"Why?"

The youth was shouting. *I'm the one who wants to ask this. Why are you trying to save me?*

"Don't you want to live?!"

The youth shouted. Indeed. *He* didn't want to live.

While sinking, *he* thought. *He* had some time until his death. *He* thought back on his life.

Why did that youth try to save him? It was unnecessary.

"Don't you want to live?!"

Why did he ask that? There was no meaning to life.

He recalled Olivia.

Why did she fight? There was no meaning to wishes.

He was thinking. Why do you live? Why do you want to live in this world filled with nothing but suffering?

He ran away. Because this world had nothing but suffering, he ran away from it. He gave up on anything he couldn't get and anything he left behind. He believed this was the only way to reach happiness.

But was that really the right path?

Was there perhaps another way of living in this world?

“...”

A way of living? He smiled wryly. Do I have any way of living? My heart is working, but wasn't I dead since long ago? What way of living could someone like me possibly have?

They were living. I did not.

I have never lived. I did nothing but run away. So what does living mean? Maybe trying to live wasn't so bad after all?

“...”

He was a True Man. A True Man, meant to become nourishment for Heaven, should not question his own happiness. At that moment he lost the qualifications of a True Man. The desire to live was born in his heart.

His body moved. Seeking air, he paddled towards the sea's surface. It was useless. He exhaled the oxygen remaining in his lungs and his already scarce droplets of life vanished even further.

And yet *he* still struggled. *He* struggled to he could live.

He ran from suffering, *he* abandoned his sorrow and was simply alive without doing anything. It was easy. It was possibly very happy.

The world was filled with suffering. People hated each other, hurt each other and mocked each other. Love was fleeting and lost, dreams were thrown away and ideals were eventually corrupted.

However, if *he* could keep struggling and suffering even now...

If *he* would aim at the things *he* couldn't get...

That was what it meant to be living. This was life.

He flailed around. And *he* yearned. *He* yearned for Olivia and for all people in the world who wished for what they could not get.

However, when *he* started yearning for it, it was already too late.

The sea's surface grew farther. His flailing grew weaker. *He* will soon be exhausted.

"...Olivia."

He voiced the name of the person *he* admired. Even *he* could not hear his own words. They formed bubbles and vanished.

I want to become like her, he thought. *If I can't become like her then I want to be of help to her, he* thought.

His body was sinking.

Just before his consciousness fell into darkness, *he* could hear a voice. *He* lent his ears to those words.

"The moment you have wished to live, your Book lost the qualifications of going to Heaven. However, you will bring forth a new, poor story."

The voice kept talking.

"Olivia-sama is alive. Since you have wished to become of help to her, your story – as truly weak as it might be – possesses the right to continue.

Your Book will probably be of some small help to Olivia."

I see. So do it. Thinking this, *he* died.

Hamyuts crushed Volken's Book.

Even reading it, she did not find out Olivia's goals. She still didn't know her connection to Vend Ruga.

Then I should just kill Olivia. I can just read the truth from her Book.

"Hmph, so you've helped her, huh."

Crushed by Hamyuts's hand, Volken's Book was grinded to dust and

scattered.

It certainly did help Olivia. This Book guided Volken, and he guided Olivia. But that was also meaningless.

Hamyuts loaded her sling with gravel bullets.

Olivia put *his* Book on the floor. Renas then inquired her.

‘Olivia. Have your memories about Vend Ruga returned?’

‘No, it was useless. It didn’t help at all.’

However, she was faintly smiling. It wasn’t a smile meant to deceive or a mocking smile.

Plenty of people died because she wished for Vend Ruga. Thinking of that, the fact she was a villain did not change.

However, what she was trying to gain was not mistaken. This she understood.

Whoever it was that delivered this Book to her surely wanted her to understand this.

Olivia turned around to the Spinning Doll Ückück. *Let’s get our memories back.* Her life had but several minutes left. Even so, she kept yearning for Vend Ruga.

There were but several minutes left to the end of the long fight. Although Olivia overcame all despair, the final obstacle was waiting for her.

Hamyuts’s gravel bullet has started accelerating.

Chapter 6: Oath of the Beginning

Part 1

The moon was peeking through the gaps in the wall. It started climbing to the top of the sky after the sun sank down. The previous day it was slightly shy of a full moon, but today it was round and proudly shining.

Olivia crossed her hands in front of her face. In front of her was the Spinning Doll Ückück's cherubic body. It looked as if it was praying to the endless moonlight.

The Spinning Doll held enough Magic Rights to be able to be activated. Olivia was the only survivor among the Meats, but the fallen Meats' Magic Rights still remained.

All that remained was for Olivia to recall the details about her Magic Right.

'To retrieve Vend Ruga.'

Olivia always wished for it. She met Vend Ruga before she became a Meat. Regaining her memories of him was Olivia's goal.

Therefore, Olivia opened her mouth—

"Restore my memories."

But the Spinning Doll did not dance. The Magic Right contained in it was different.

Thinking about it, Enlike said that Olivia had talent with Magic. She should be able to have enough power to restore her own memories. She had to do that first.

It's a different Magic Right. So what is it? Olivia started thinking.

Hamyuts rotated her sling. She then shot her first gravel bullet. She first aimed at the Book left besides Olivia.

She could obviously also target the Spinning Doll or Olivia. The fact that she first targeted the Book was nothing more than her just feeling like starting to

destroy everything from the right. It was the same as facing three cakes and wondering which of them to eat first.

That was clearly Hamyuts's carelessness. She didn't know that Olivia could still use Volken's ability.

The sniper shot hit with perfect accuracy and the Book besides Olivia was shattered to pieces. At that moment, she activated Volken's ability. She produced fog and hid herself within it.

"Oh my..."

Hamyuts let out a small voice in response to this unexpected resistance. She then remembered that Volken had been able to transfer his illusion power.

Four Olivias holding Ückück in their arms came running out of the fog. Hamyuts loaded her sling with another bullet.

Olivia was embracing the Spinning Doll Ückück. Couldn't Hamyuts have waited several minutes – no, even one minute? Olivia didn't even plan on staying alive in the first place. She only wanted to settle whatever she was trying to do.

With that illusion, Olivia fully used the power of illusions received from Volken. When all of them disappear she will die. No, if Hamyuts were to notice the real Olivia before that, it would be all over.

No matter how much she struggled, she would probably only live for about a minute. But before that she simply had to make the Spinning Doll dance. Her life would become far too meaningless if she wouldn't be able to grant a conclusion to the stories of the people who have died for her.

Her comrades said that they wanted to become human. That they were fighting to become human.

With this, one could imagine what her goals were.

Something that was needed for a Meat to become human... Those were the memories prior to them being Meats.

"Retrieve the Meats' memories."

Olivia said, and the Spinning Doll slightly rotated its body. It was closer than

before. But it was still wrong. It was something more specific.

Think. What was I doing on that ship?

Memories of the past were revived at the back of Olivia's mind. They were the memories of when she started her fight.

Ten years ago, Olivia was a young girl.

Just like the other Meats, she lived in a cabin by gnawing moldy bread crumbs. The only difference with her was one small thing. She still retained a slight bit of her memories.

“...”

Olivia stared intently at her hand. She could remember... that hand was holding something. It was something very warm and important.

“...So warm.”

The little Olivia muttered with a bird-like singing voice.

Since she had nothing else to do, she kept staring at her hands. What was the thing her hands once held?

For over a year, without tiring of it, Olivia kept staring at her hands.

The name of the person she held was Vend Ruga. She held someone who had that name with those hands.

Olivia herself did not know, but this was the budding of her Magic Right. On rare occasions, people who possess strong wills can gain a Magic Right without undergoing Magic Deliberation. Magic after all is the act of bending axioms with the power of will. By continuously and strongly wishing for something, you unconsciously conduct a Magic Deliberation.

Vend Ruga. She murmured this name in her heart again and again. She kept muttering this small thing left inside her, that name.

So she got away? Thought Hamyuts. She felt the four Olivias that were running away with her Sensory Threads.

This was a battle originating from the faraway memories of the past. There was no way she would be able to kill her easily.

Besides, she did cause a bit of fear for her in the past. An enemy who would die too easily was beneath Hamyuts Meseta's dignity.

Hold out. Oppose me. While thinking this, she kept rotating her sling.

It already reached sufficient speed.

She soon quit thinking which of the four Olivias was the real one. If she was an amateur she would mix in those four and run away. However, thinking of Olivia as an amateur this late in the game was foolish.

It was the simple psychological trick that Volken used. The real one wasn't among the four. Hamyuts shot the gravel bullet into the center of the mist.

Her second shot punched through the worn-out walls and crawled on the floor towards the center as if mowing it down.

While controlling the illusions, Olivia's mind was still in the past.

There was a single girl in the same room as Olivia. She didn't know her name. Even the girl herself didn't seem to know it.

She frequently talked to her. She told her bad jokes and pulled pranks to get her attention one after another. However, Olivia did not make any response. Her feelings disappeared long ago.

Eventually the caretakers took the girl away. As she left she looked at Olivia. Her eyes called out to Olivia as if expecting her to say something.

"Hey, I'm going to die."

"Is that so."

The girl smiled. But while smiling, tears gathered in her eyes.

"I'm going to die. I will die."

The girl called repeatedly. Olivia then replied.

"So what?"

The girl averted her gaze from Olivia. And she then left the room.

She probably wanted to hear something. But Olivia didn't know what to say to her. She probably wanted to become her friend. However, feelings of love for

her just didn't form inside Olivia.

At that moment, she remembered something from before she became a Meat. She once loved Vend Ruga.

She was someone who was able to love people. But now she was different. She couldn't love anymore. Why was that?

"Why's that... Why, Vend Ruga?"

Hamyuts's Sensory Threads covered the entire shack. There was no change in the fog or in the illusory Olivias. It seemed that her second shot missed.

"...tch."

Did she overestimate Olivia? Or was she looking down on her? Was she reading too much into it or was it reverse psychology?

Either way, Hamyuts's actions did not change. She loaded another gravel bullet. At this distance, she couldn't just crush all four of them at the same time. She had to aim at them one after one. She slowly accelerated them in five seconds then shot with good aim.

The first shot hit a running Olivia. It was a miss.

One illusion vanished. Olivia's remaining time was steadily running out.

During that, she kept recalling her past. Inside her arms, Ückück was waiting for the time of its activation.

She kept thinking after the girl disappeared. Why couldn't she love anyone?

She could feel the warmth in her hands gradually disappear as months and years passed. She wanted to be touched. She wanted to converse with someone. She wanted the same thing she could feel in her hands.

Olivia caressed her own body. She could feel nothing except her empty pulse and her dry sweat.

She tried touching the Meats next to her. They were lukewarm and dirty.

No. This isn't it. It's not like that. Vend Ruga's nothing like that.

She wanted to converse with the Meats. She wanted to connect to them as her comrades. She wished for it, but did not know how to accomplish it.

Months had passed.

When her body first became developed, Olivia was sent from the Meats' cabin to the private room of a Magician. Charlot took notice of her since she was the most beautiful amongst the Meats.

"I love you, cute Olivia."

Instead of a Meat she became a bird in a cage. However, Olivia kept thinking just as she did before.

Why wasn't she able to love people? She couldn't love the Meats. She couldn't love Charlot either. She certainly loved Vend Ruga, but she couldn't love anyone else.

While her body was intertwined with Charlot's, she prayed.

I want to return to the Meats' room. I want to converse with them and connect our hearts. Just as I connected with Vend Ruga long ago.

Olivia was lonely.

Although she wanted to love she couldn't. Her sense of loneliness had no place to go and was thus accumulated inside her heart.

Inside of Olivia, the will to fight was slowly boiling up. Just like the temperature of water rising up inside an airtight place, the will inside her was getting hotter and hotter.

In short, she had only one reason to fight.

She was just lonely.

After exactly five seconds, Hamyuts shot her sling. With each five seconds passing, Olivia's life was running out.

The second illusion vanished. The remaining Olivias kept running. They ran inside the forest with all of their might. *Just where are you trying to go?* Hamyuts asked in her heart.

At this rate, you wouldn't reach a safe place even if I were to nap for six hours.

"...Hmm."

Or was she still planning something? For example, will the Overseer of

Paradise aim for that opening? Perhaps Volken still had something prepared.

Hamyuts looked around and searched with her Sensory Threads.

There's nothing.

Then does the Spinning Doll Ücküek have some power able to save her? That also can't be.

So there's no problem at all. Hamyuts rotated her sling. The third illusion vanished.

While being kept inside Charlot's room, Olivia was determined on thinking. Since she was so cold, Charlot brought her presents one after another in order to draw her attention. She didn't even look at them.

One day, he spoke to her.

"Do you not love me? Despite me loving you so much?"

It was in fact true. She didn't love him at all. Olivia tried answering.

"Charlot-sama. I can't love anyone."

"Right."

Saying so, Charlot caressed Olivia's body.

"That's because you were deprived of your memories of love."

"Huh?"

"Those who haven't been loved are unable to understand the feelings of love. Love is something you learn. People learn to love by receiving love."

"...I see."

Falling into bed along with Charlot, Olivia finally understood.

She understood the reason why both she and the Meats couldn't love anyone. At the same time she understood what she had to do.

The Spinning Doll Ücküek, lying in one of the room's corners, was reflected in her eyes.

The illusion disappeared by the third shot. Hamyuts then shot the fourth. She was trying to settle the score. But her expectations were once again betrayed.

The fourth Olivia was also an illusion.

Just how many times had it been now that she mistakenly thought it would all be over?

“Where?!”

Hamyuts’s Sensory Threads have covered the entire hut. She had nowhere to run to. There was nothing except the mist which had an area of about three square meters and did not allow her Sensory Threads to pass.

But she shot inside it before. If she was inside she should have been finished long ago.

The mist slowly cleared up.

Hamyuts focused on the information she received from the Sensory Threads. She had confidence in their power. She thought that Olivia was within her range. And it took her five full seconds to realize the simple truth.

If she wasn’t inside or outside, then she was below.

The mist cleared.

Olivia was there. A hole was opened in the outworn floorboard. She hid inside of it.

Of course, she wasn’t confident she could fool Hamyuts. If the trajectory of the gravel bullet tearing through the mist was slightly different, Olivia would have died. Did Hamyuts have bad luck or did Olivia have good luck? That was the limit of the time she could buy with the illusions and mist. Olivia’s body has been exposed to Hamyuts’s Sensory Threads. The next shot would be the last.

A final memory awoke inside of her. This was the memory she was looking for.

Olivia brought back the Spinning Doll Ückück she stole from Charlot to the Meats’ room.

“Listen, everyone.”

She said.

“All those who can understand my words, lend me your help. Don’t complain.

This is an order.”

Several of the Meats responded. They turned their cloudy eyes to her.

“What for?”

One person asked. Olivia replied.

“To return our hearts. Return our hearts that were stolen by the Indulging God Cult.”

“...How?”

“Using this Ücküück. Let us join our powers and use Magic.”

“What Magic?”

Olivia answered...

It was tough. It was truly tough, Hamyuts thought while feeling Olivia lying on the floor. She did well to cause her to go to great lengths despite having no powers.

Hamyuts finished accelerating her gravel bullet and shot it. It flew with perfect accuracy.

“...Is it over?”

These words leaked from Hamyuts’s mouth.

Olivia was embracing Ücküück as if she was protecting it with her body. She was probably trying to activate the Magic inside. But she didn’t make it. During the time she will voice her words and let Ücküück answer them, the gravel bullet will erase her.

Her connection with Vend Ruga will also end there.

But just when Hamyuts was convinced of it...

The bullet was repelled by an unseen power. Grazing Olivia’s body, it then changed its trajectory as if meeting an invisible wall.

“...!”

Hamyuts was stunned. Something has happened. What was the power that protected Olivia?

She remembered the True Man she read about in Volken's Book.

The Overseer of Paradise left *him* some protective power. It did not protect him. When he wished to protect Olivia that protection power was transferred to her, unbeknownst even to him.

"Impossible!"

Hamyuts shouted and swung her sling again.

That protection will work only once. The next time... the next time I will kill her.

At the very moment she tried speaking to Ückück, the gravel bullet came flying at her. Olivia did not know what the power that protected her was.

That was her last extension granted by an unknown person.

Olivia called to the Spinning Doll Ückück. It activated the Magic that was long since wished for.

The Magic meant to return Olivia and the Meats to being human. The Magic Right meant for them to recall being loved.

She spoke the order.

"Please dance, Spinning Doll Ückück.

Please restore the memories of love stolen by the Indulging God Cult to all Meats."

The crouching Spinning Doll rose up. It raised its arms high just like a little bird before flying. Standing on its tiptoes, swinging its hands, the doll danced round and round.

The Magic Right was discharged. Olivia's long battle came to an end in that moment.

At that moment, Renas saw the Spinning Doll. As Olivia gained her memories, Renas's personality was disappearing. The time to leave finally arrived.

Renas was thinking in her last moments. *I'm glad. I'm glad I was of help to Olivia. I'm glad my beloved son protected her.*

Renas spoke to Olivia. She told her of the reason she had helped her.

‘Although you let people die, deceived them and continued your evil deeds... even your heart awaited the day it would become fulfilled with love.’

Inside the forest, the surviving human bombs stopped in place. They were surprised by the sudden change occurring inside them.

Some people stripped off their masks, and some sat down listlessly.

Some of them thought about their loved ones that were also captured by the Indulging God Cult.

Some of them thought of their families who’ve betrayed them and became False Men.

Some of them thought about the friends they connected with on the ship.

All of them tore off the explosive detonators inside their chests and threw them away. And then they started walking to whichever direction they liked.

At Bantorra Library, Enlike crouched while holding his head.

“What’s wrong, Enlike-kun?”

Mattalast came running. Enlike was surprised at the sudden change in him. He suddenly saw the faces of a man and woman he didn’t know. He recalled that they were his parents before he died.

“Why’s this...?”

That wasn’t the only change. Several other memories floated inside his mind. They were emerging from the Imaginary Entrails inside his body.

“Is this Sasari? ...Kayas? ...Lonkenny?”

The memories of his lost friends resurfaced. A tear fell on Enlike’s cheek.

A certain ship floating on the ocean. The False Men supervising the Meats there noticed something unusual. Their cabin became suddenly noisy.

“What happened?!”

The False Men shouted. They could hear crying, angry roars, and people shouting names. They couldn’t tell what was happening at all.

“Go ask the Overseer of Paradise for instructions, quickly, quickly!”

And Olivia also remembered. She regained her memories of Vend Ruga.

Part 2

“What’s that?”

Hamyuts raised her voice. Something happened right now, but she couldn’t tell what. She couldn’t read it with her Sensory Threads.

“What’s happened...?”

She was stunned for a while, but then came to herself.

What was she doing? She was in the middle of an attack. Nothing about the situation, her goal or anything else has changed at all.

Hamyuts rotated her sling and launched a gravel bullet. She felt somewhat disturbed, but her aim was precise.

However, when there remained but an instant to impact... a man blocked the trajectory of her shot. He did not appear out of the ground like Lascall Othello. He appeared instantly in place like some special effect from a movie.

And he wasn’t an illusion. Hamyuts’s gravel bullet pierced through his back, after all.

Olivia forgot all about Hamyuts at that moment. She didn’t even think of running away. Just when she thought she was about to get attacked, the gravel bullet had already been fired.

However, at that moment a man suddenly appeared in front of her. The bullet went through his back. She was splashed by his gore.

“...Olivia.”

The man’s body collapsed. Olivia caught it.

“Oh, I see...”

Olivia staggered under his weight. She knew that feeling. She used her hand wet with blood to remove his mask.

“So you were Charlot.”

He was the Grand Magician who was turned into a Meat because of her. And

he was the final human bomb who stood in Olivia's way tens of minutes ago.

"...I've remembered. I finally remembered, Olivia."

Olivia hugged his body.

"Sorry, Charlot..."

Charlot mustered his barely remaining strength and touched her back.

"I'm sorry, Charlot, I'm sorry..."

Charlot activated his Magic Right that he had been forging for several decades. Space was distorted and some other place was connected to the spot where Olivia was standing. Her body passed through space and went somewhere.

Having lost its support, Charlot's body collapsed. Hamyuts's gravel bullet passed through the space Olivia had occupied in vain and stabbed into the ground.

Her shot missed. Hamyuts could understand only this. Who was the man that suddenly appeared? Why and how did he save Olivia? She had no idea.

"...Did something happen?"

There was no sign of Olivia inside the range of her Sensory Threads.

Losing its centrifugal force, her sling fell to the ground listlessly.

"Wait a minute... what happened?"

She had no idea. Why did Olivia disappear? And what was her Magic Right?

All of it unfolded in a manner Hamyuts had nothing to do with. And she left her behind.

"...Just what happened here?"

She tried to calmly grasp the situation with her confused mind.

Olivia fulfilled her goal and survived. And Hamyuts did not fulfill her goal and was left all alone.

Meaning, she was defeated.

Until she realized that fact and accepted it, Hamyuts simply stood in place at

her wits' end.

Olivia was on a plain somewhere.

The moon was high in the sky. That hut was supposed to be close to ground level. So she was probably moved a distance that caused a time difference. No further attacks came from Hamyuts. Olivia survived.

The Spinning Doll Ückück had been activated. Also, she escaped Hamyuts's assault and was still alive. Olivia won.

But what did she win for?

She fought in order to connect with the Meats and speak with them. However, all of them have died long ago.

Olivia barely made it, but at the same time she was also far too late.

"...I'm sorry."

She muttered.

"I'm sorry, everyone..."

She fully restored her memories, such as who was Vend Ruga, why she was yearning for him, and why his memories were inside of her. And she also understood that Hamyuts tried to kill her in order to erase all those who knew of Vend Ruga.

Olivia recalled the past. She recalled how she met Vend Ruga ten years ago, before she became a Meat.

On the battlefield...

Olivia was saved from the underlings of the Indulging God Cult who've kidnapped children and gathered Meats. She looked up at the lead giant. He wasn't really as big as a giant, but to the small Olivia he looked like a monster.

"Who're you?"

Olivia said. The lead giant made no reply. She didn't know if he couldn't speak or just had no mind.

"Do you need anything from me?"

Instead of answering, the lead giant sat down. Then, he wrote something using his finger. She thought it was some picture, but apparently these were letters. They were hard to read as if written by a young child.

“vend ruga”

“Is that your name?”

He wrote further letters.

“protect”

“You want to protect me? Why?”

Vend Ruga’s fingers stopped. She understood that this was all he could write.

“I don’t get it at all, but if you want to protect me then go ahead. Do it.”

Olivia said and started walking. Vend Ruga immediately followed. *I can’t understand him at all but he seems quite useful,* thought Olivia.

Vend Ruga did nothing but protect Olivia. He simply followed her and the kidnapers found them he fought. That was all. Except some strange guy following from behind, Olivia’s life hadn’t changed at all.

One day she was hungry. In front of her was a girl. Her foot was injured, possibly because she got involved in the detonation of some unexploded shell.

“Olivia... save me, don’t kill me.”

Since plundering was easy, she of course intended on doing so. Olivia knew that girl, but had no reason to care. When she tried taking hold of the knife with her thin, little hand, Vend Ruga grabbed it.

“Release me, Vend.”

The lead giant said nothing. He simply grabbed Olivia’s hand.

“I shouldn’t kill her because she’s a comrade? Is that what you want to say?”

She shouted at the giant. In the meanwhile, the other girl was tottering away. *Shit,* Olivia mumbled and threw her knife. It missed and the girl ran away.

“Let me say this, Vend. I have no friends! I’m alone. I live alone and will die alone. That’s all.”

She couldn't read anything from Vend's expression.

"If you're going to complain go away. Just scram!"

Olivia shouted. Vend did nothing. He stayed silent.

"Don't you want to say something?"

Saying so, she sat on the ground. Picking up the knife, she scratched the ground.

"I'll teach you to write."

Vend Ruga had bad memory. Olivia, who was always intelligent, became annoyed.

"I can't read it like this. That's upside down! Are you even trying to learn, you blockhead!"

She kicked his lead body. Her foot hurt. Vend Ruga obediently received her teachings.

Olivia wanted to know – why was he protecting her?

He wanted to protect someone. This was the first time she met someone who thought that.

After a while, he became able to communicate on some level. While teaching him, she understood one thing. Vend Ruga was not a doll created by Magic. He possessed his own will and moved by his own volition.

Olivia started inquiring him.

"What are you?"

He engraved letters on the ground with his fingers.

"weapon"

"Why do you want to protect me?"

He wrote again after thinking for a while.

"want to protect"

It didn't seem like he acted on someone's orders or was used by someone to protect her. But she couldn't understand the reason he did so.

“Why do you want to protect?”

Vend Ruga was silent.

Seems like he can't explain it well, thought Olivia.

“There's no progress. It's useless if you can't write out proper sentences.”

Saying so, she began teaching him to write again.

She hadn't noticed, though. At first, she only brought him along so he could protect her. She had no interest in his reason; she was gladly using him.

Why did Vend Ruga protect her? Now she wanted to know the answer. Olivia's reason to stay with Vend was changing.

The pair's shared life continued. On the battlefield at dusk-time, gunshots were heard instead of birds' chirping. When she heard it in the past she would shudder. But now she had Vend Ruga on her side. As long as he was there, she had nothing to fear.

“Where did you come from?”

“far”

“What kind of a place was it?”

“i had friends. i had people i wanted to protect”

“And what happened?”

“they died. killed by a scary enemy. they killed them all and even broke their books”

“...Did you escape by yourself?”

Vend Ruga stopped his movements. He seemed to be sad. Olivia was gradually able to understand his feelings.

“i escaped by myself”

“Why?”

“because i wanted people to know of us”

She didn't really understand what Vend meant. But she received no further explanations from him.

‘they will soon come to kill me. a scary person will come’

Vend wrote the letters on the ground and soon erased them.

“You know, Vend.”

Olivia said.

“I feel sad being with you.”

That was probably because she didn’t know why she was being protected. Or so Olivia thought.

More time passed since then.

The children living on the battlefield were quick to find information. The rumor soon spread around.

One day she heard a rumor that an Armed Librarian was coming.

Hearing that, Vend Ruga brought Olivia to a hiding place.

“What are you doing!”

She was surprised. Vend Ruga wrote in a hurry.

“run. if you stay with me they will kill you too”

Olivia read the letters and Vend hurriedly erased them. Then, he started walking away and pretending not to know her. She now understood why his behavior changed so suddenly.

The scary enemy he told her of was coming. In order to kill Vend Ruga. If she stayed with him, she would probably be killed as well.

Then our relationship ends here. I’ll return to being alone. Thinking so, Olivia started walking in the opposite direction. Neither of them turned around.

She met that strange guy and passed some time with him. It was just some unusual event.

When she separated from Vend Ruga, she started thinking. *Since I was always alone, and about to be alone from now on, I should forget about him as soon as possible,* she thought.

However, Olivia stopped in place and looked behind her countless of times.

Won't he possibly come after me like always? She thought and turned around. She walked for a little and turned around, walked again and turned around. No matter how many times she turned her head around, she couldn't see the figure of the lead giant.

She felt gloomy. This gloom, which she started feeling a while back, clung to her heart.

"I'm curious. Why did that guy try to protect me?"

She tried saying such things.

"Just what was that guy? He was so strange."

She spoke a forced monologue.

Olivia stopped in place. Then, she turned around and ran. Although she understood she shouldn't involve herself with him anymore, she still ran.

She always thought she was alone.

She thought she didn't love anyone. She didn't believe she had the emotion called love. She thought it was some nonsense made up by those living in peace.

But now Olivia knew. Once she was with another person, she couldn't go back to being alone again.

She ran. She ran and looked around. Although it's not been even an hour since they separated, she already felt nostalgic.

She kept looking and eventually found him.

And she knew that she didn't make it in time.

"...Vend."

His body of lead, that she thought would never collapse, fell to the ground. A hole opened in the center of his chest and she could see the ground through it.

I've missed my chance, thought Olivia. *I wanted to tell him I love him, but I couldn't.* She thought of telling him so but the person to receive her words has died. Olivia sank down to the ground.

At that moment, the lead face moved. He raised his hand listlessly.

“Vend...”

He was trying to write something onto Olivia’s hand. However, he probably had no more strength to write. Olivia clenched his trembling hand.

“Why did you want to protect me?”

No reply came. He simply held her hand. Olivia then felt for the first time that his lead-made hand was warm.

Olivia kept holding it for some long time.

Vend Ruga surely knew that this day would come. He knew that the day when he would get killed by the scary enemy was inevitable.

He had said that all of his friends died. Even their Books had been erased.

There was no one left to verify that the being called Vend Ruga had existed in this world.

“So you wanted someone to know...”

Olivia muttered.

Vend Ruga’s wish – was for someone to remember him. He wanted someone to know the fact that he had existed, lived, loved and protected.

His hand made of lead was warm. Vend Ruga’s mind was transmitted to Olivia through her clenched hand. Although he could not speak the words were still conveyed. They were conveyed because he could not speak.

“Is that, it?”

Olivia said.

“You wanted someone to just know this? You wanted someone to just never forget this?”

It was a far too trivial wish. She grasped Vend Ruga’s hand tightly.

“There’s no way I’d forget you! I won’t, you idiot, there’s no way! I’ll never forget you!”

Olivia screamed although she didn’t know if he was still listening. Even if his ears couldn’t hear, she kept shouting it for his soul.

While the warmth disappeared from his hand and it returned to being mere lead... Olivia kept shouting at Vend.



Soon after, Olivia was caught by the Indulging God Cult kidnappers. Since Vend Ruga who stood in their way was gone, they walked around the battlefield as if they owned the place.

They held down her body and made her drink the water of Argax. She tried resisting and fought against drinking it.

She swore not to forget. She swore not to forget Vend Ruga.

She wished not to forget. She wished not to forget herself as she loved Vend Ruga.

Olivia resisted the Memorial Weapon with the power of her will. And the little girl's will has achieved a small victory. Only the memories of the warmth left in her hand remained in her mind as she became a Meat.

Everything started from there. And now, it all ended.

Stepping on withering weeds, Olivia started walking under the moon's light.

She loved Vend Ruga. But she wasn't able to say so. Just when she wanted to do so, Vend Ruga had died.

“ ... ”

Olivia returned her past self. She could now say she was lonely when she felt so. She could now tell people she loved them when she felt so.

The heart of a cruel witch has disappeared. Her heart returned to that of a young lonely girl.

“...You guys.”

Olivia muttered. The range indicated by those words was wide. She called to all the people she met so far.

She loved the Meats on the ship as well. She loved Charlot as well.

The people living on Past God Bantorra's Island.

The Armed Librarians. Volken. Renas.

She truly loved them all.

She always fought so she could regain these feelings. So she could regain

herself and say such things.

Olivia's knees fell atop the dry grass.

She no longer had anyone. They have all died. They died for Olivia's cause. She made all of them die.

"I'm sorry, everyone."

She said.

"Everyone, I'm sorry."

Olivia shouted. There were too many people to apologize to, so she didn't know where to start.

"I'm sorry, I loved you, I truly loved you all!"

Olivia looked to the sky. Then she cried. She cried, she cried, she shouted and cried.

"I'm sorry, sorry, I'm sorry!"

Those words never reached anyone. Olivia was simply crying by her lonesome.

"...Olivia, huh?"

Hamyuts was intently looking at her sling. She wondered where Olivia was.

She always looked for an opponent whom her sling couldn't hit. She always looked for those who could intimidate her, for those who could kill her. Cigal was almost there. Mokkaia also fought well. Enlike was strong, but he will probably not fight with her anymore. The other Armed Librarians will not rebel against her.

Wondering if there were no more people who could kill her, she despaired. And then she met Olivia. She called to that woman wherever she was.

"You're amazing. Really amazing."

Although she possessed no powers, she still beat her. She was able to beat the strongest with nothing but her unwavering will as her weapon.

Hamyuts was happy.

There's still some people like that in the world. People that my sling cannot reach. People that despite being the weakest cannot be killed. The strength of her will surpassed the power of my sling. She couldn't help but be happy.

Hamyuts whispered towards Olivia who was probably watching the same moon somewhere.

“Let us meet again. We will probably be able to do so.”

Fragment: Lingering Scent of Violet

“Olivia has survived?”

Even the Overseer of Paradise couldn't hide his surprise. He dropped the chess piece in his hand and rose from his chair.

“Probably because of Hamyuts. She must have toyed around with her and let her run away...”

“You idiot.”

The Overseer of Paradise denied it. That couldn't be.

It was probably the result of the many people who have helped her and an unbelievable amount of luck. Still, he couldn't believe that Hamyuts let her slip. Even a miracle could not defeat her.

“Also, for some reason, the Meats are making a fuss. The False Men tried suppressing them but they're helpless. We also have a limited amount of the water of Argax...”

“I don't care.”

The Overseer of Paradise crushed the chess piece in his hand. It cracked as if it was about to explode.

“If they're able to suppress them then let them. If they can't, then kill them, let them escape or whatever. We have no need for the Meats anymore.”

The Overseer of Paradise stood up.

“Leave Olivia be for now. We will have to get rid of her sooner or later, but now is the time to devote everything to our fight with the Armed Librarians.”

The time was approaching. The preparations made in order to destroy the Armed Librarians were almost done.

“The end of our long subservience is near. We will surpass the Armed Librarian and Heaven will surpass the Library.”

The Overseer of Paradise shook off Olivia out of his mind. He then started giving thought to the approaching decisive battle instead.

Night passed. At the middle of a railroad passing the grasslands, Olivia was inside a small station that had no roof. Holding a single paper bill she found, she was waiting for the train.

It would not come until that day's noon. She was sitting there with an empty stomach.

"Olivia Littolet-sama."

As Olivia turned around, she noticed a boy that came there without her noticing. He was probably around 13 years old. He had blonde hair and wore mourning clothes. She had a good enough intuition to tell whether he was an enemy or an ally with a single glance.

By staring at the boy's face she understood. He was neither enemy nor ally.

"My name is Lascall Othello. I am one who grants the tales interrupted in the middle a proper continuation."

The boy bowed.

"Once, there was a single True Man.

She was a kind-hearted girl who wanted to grant a conclusion to Heaven's tale. However, her story ended in the middle by the hands of the Armed Librarians and the Indulging God Cult. The Violet Sinner... that was how she was called."

Olivia listened in silence.

"Vend Ruga once fought for the Violet Sinner. He was that story's final survivor. And you have the lingering scent of that story."

"..."

"I will not stop you from boarding a train and going to a place unrelated to them all. However, if you could grant the story of Vend Ruga a continuation, I will support you."

"You're so roundabout I can't really understand. Are you telling me to fight

instead of Vend Ruga?”

“I am not telling you to fight at all. I am asking whether you will fight or not.”

Olivia thought quietly.

“I have nothing already. I cannot do anything.”

Lascall Othello replied.

“What you can do and which powers you possess are but trivial. You proved it with your life. I am speaking with you because you did.”

Olivia stood up.

“I will never forget Vend Ruga. This promise alone I will not break.”

“And...”

“Please tell me. Tell me about Vend Ruga... and about his fight. Also, while we’re at it, what can you do for me?”

Lascall smiled sweetly.

The number of pawns on the chessboard has decreased. Black was the Indulging God Cult. White was the Armed Librarians. The time for their decisive fight was approaching.

At that time, no one yet knew that a small Violet-colored pawn has appeared on the board.

Afterword

Hello everyone. This is Yamagata Ishio.

I deliver unto you the fifth installment of the Tatakau Shisho series, “Tatakau Shisho to Tsuioku no Majo”. This is my longest work until now, but I hope you have enjoyed it.

It’s been about ten years since I started writing novels, but this is the first time I’ve experienced something. As usual, I got stuck in the middle of writing. As I told before, I would usually sip some coffee or confine myself in the toilet to refine my ideas, but this time it had no effect. The deadline was steadily approaching.

In such timing, I suddenly woke up one night. As I tried thinking about why I had woken up, some kind of weird idea came floating into my mind.

The human brain seems to continue its work even as we’re sleeping. I heard that creative pros constantly look for new ideas even while resting or sleeping. So for those who are professional, having ideas float into their minds while they’re sleeping is probably natural.

Thinking that I was approaching that kind of level, this event made me very happy.

From now on, I think I will try to snuggle under my blanket the next time my mind gets stuck. However, simply by speaking of this there’s no doubt that the editor, who always works on proofreading my typos and omitted letters without a moment of sleep, will double slap me with sparks flying from his eyes. Therefore, I swore in my heart to keep this a secret from only him.

As it was, this time I had also received the help of plenty of people. The illustrator Maeshima Shigeki-sama, my editor, those of the editorial department, I would like to use this opportunity to offer my gratitude.

And to you the readers. Let us meet again in my next work.

Yamagata Ishio