

戦司書 絶望の魔王

Tatakau Shiro to Zetsubou no Maou

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スパークッシュ

Tatakau Shisho

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Lord Of Despair

by Yamagata Ishio

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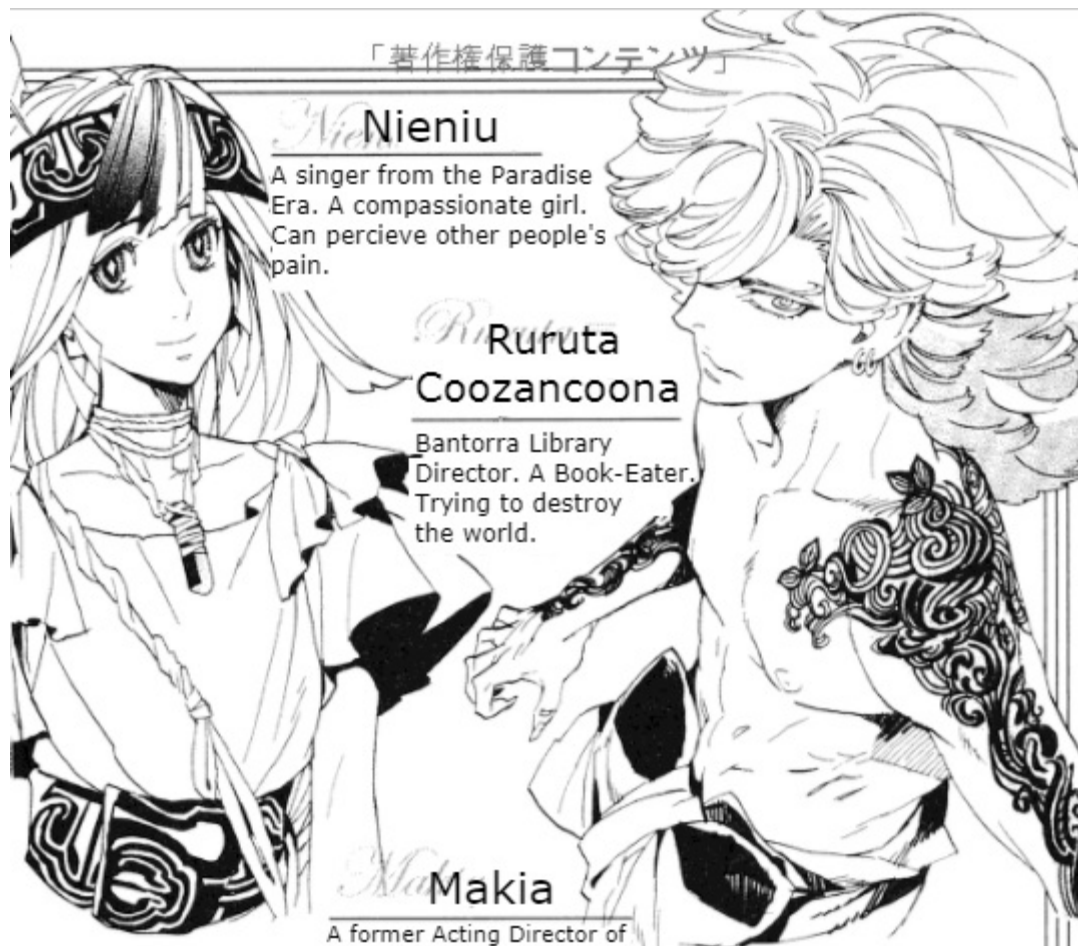
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Nie **Nieniu**

A singer from the Paradise Era. A compassionate girl. Can perceive other people's pain.

Ru **Ruruta Coozancoona**

Bantorra Library Director. A Book-Eater. Trying to destroy the world.

Ma **Makia**

A former Acting Director of Bantorra Library. The person who had raised Hamyuts and Chacoly.

Ka **Kachua**

A former Armed Librarian and the previous Overseer of Paradise. Fought against the Armed Librarians and lost.

Voo **Vooekisal**

A king who governed the world during the Paradise Era. He admires Ruruta.



戦司書 絶望の魔王

Totokoro Shō to Zetsubou no Maou

characters

Hamyuts Hamyuts (young)

Later became the Acting Director of Bantorra Library. She is extremely ruthless and aggressive. Has lost to Ruruta and perished.

Chacoly Chacoly

A mysterious girl who had once fought Ruruta. Was like a little sister to Hamyuts.



Prologue: The Demon Lord and Memories of Bygone Days

The Beasts of the Final Chapter were calling. They called towards the far, far horizon.

These were the shouts of annihilation. The Beasts' voices were filled not with the words of curses but rather a strong murderous intent. They would allow no human to live. They wouldn't even let them struggle or fight. They wouldn't allow anything and everything, even be it their breathing or their heart beating.

Their cries contained this will.

A wind as lukewarm as blood blew around. Pitch-dark rainclouds covered the skies. They were the wind and clouds invited by the Beasts of the Final Chapter. They have brought forth a spectacle suitable for the end of humankind.

In the royal capital situated at the center of a plain in western Meliot, people were running around. They all lost control when faced with fear. An amount of Beasts that was a thousand, ten thousand or even more times the number of people who lived in the capital came to kill them. There was no way anyone could've kept their sanity.

They ran toward the anti-Beast trenches prepared at the edges of the kingdom. This was the people's last resort made for this day. They dug holes deep underground, stockpiled food, water, fuel and medicine, and shut the entrance with a thick wooden door. If they were to run inside they might be able to survive a bit longer. Everyone rushed towards the anti-Beast trenches to survive.

However, the Beasts of the Final Chapter were howling as if to mock these humans.

Just what did they think they would defend against by running there? There was no way they thought it would protect them against the Beasts, right?

They thought that such a meager door would be able to protect against them –

against the strongest weapon dispatched by the Future Overseer Orntorra, against the ruin of mankind?

Or have they thought of welcoming the destruction of mankind in such a cave?

All the people felt as if such words were being carried by the wind.

“Someone! Someone! Has anyone seen my mother?!”

A girl proceeded in the opposite direction from the people running toward the anti-Beast trenches. She was looking for her mother. She had lost both feet in an accident several years ago. She wouldn't be able to reach the trenches by herself. And yet her daughter couldn't see her anywhere.

The girl bumped into a running man, falling to the ground. The man kept running ahead without even looking back. Everyone was doing their best protecting their own lives. No one would notice a collapsed girl.

A wheelbarrow carrying a sack of wheat ran through the road. The man running it paid no heed to the girl as well. The moment when her frail body was about to be caught up in the creaking wheels, it floated in the air.

“...Ruruta?”

The girl muttered. And she looked at the sky. There was a shining figure there.

“Ruruta...”

The man pushing the wheelbarrow muttered after her. People looked up to the sky one after the other. They all focused their eyes on the lone man shining within the dark clouds.

And they raised great cheers.

“Ruruta!”

“Ruruta!”

“Ruruta! Ruruta! Ruruta Coozancoona! Ruruta Coozancoona!”

Everyone shouted as if they forgot all other things except these words. They looked to the sky as if even forgetting to run away. They couldn't stop shouting. They couldn't stop looking. The being there was more close to them than a

mother was to her baby. The spectacle there was so beautiful they could think they were born for it.

“Do not be afraid.”

The person floating in the heavens – Ruruta Coozancoona – said. It was a calm voice yet it drowned out both the shouts of the populace as well as the cries of the Beasts of the Final Chapter, reaching everyone in the capital.

“Calm down and slowly evacuate to a safe place. There is still time. In order for you to be able to evacuate safely, please think carefully about what you should do step by step.”

However, everyone became calm even without waiting for Ruruta’s words. They all thought: *Yes, since Ruruta’s here there is nothing to fear.*

His long, transparent hair was flowing in the wind. The loincloth covering his lower half fluttered. His supple upper body was exposed to the crowd. It was the usual figure of Ruruta Coozancoona.

In his right hand he held a rod-shaped weapon covered in a black fog. It was the Memorial Weapon known as Dark Club Gmork. Below his feet was flying boat shining in all colors of the rainbow. It was the Memorial Weapon Colorful Sand Battleship Graógramán. The ivy pattern on his left shoulder was the Rhythmic Barrier Uyulála. The Ever-Laughing Magic Blade Schlamuffen and Ever-Crying Magic Blade Acharai were tied to his loincloth.

Ruruta possessed five out of the eight remaining Memorial Weapons in the world.

It was the first time anyone saw the figure of the fully-armed Ruruta. His majestic appearance was divine to the extent one couldn’t believe he was a human anymore.

“I will go. I will defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter. I will save this world.

I don’t know whether or not I’ll win. Neither me, the Gods nor anyone else can tell.”

People stopped breathing and listened to his words.

“But believe in me. Everything starts with belief. I will win and save the world.

I will never let the future be lost. Believe in me, everyone. Your belief will become my power.

Shout!”

Ruruta raised his index finger to the heavens.

“Ruruta does not fear anything!”

Following his voice, the people shouted to the sky.

“Ruruta does not fear anything!”

The words continued.

“Ruruta never gives up!”

“Ruruta never gives up!”

“Ruruta never runs away, will not die, and will never be defeated!”

“Ruruta never runs away! He will not die! He will never be defeated!”

The people shouted to drown the cries of the Beasts coming from afar. To transform their belief in Ruruta to his power.

“Ruruta is going! Let us meet again! In the new, Godless era!”

The Colorful Sand Battleship Graógramán at his feet started moving. Ruruta flew away faster than any arrow, leaving an afterimage behind.

Only about ten minutes passed since then.

From the distant horizon came great flashes of light which burned the crowd’s eyes. Immediately afterwards, they could hear explosive sounds that rocked all the way down to their bellies.

The battle began.

The battle of the absolute weapon meant to destroy the world – the Beasts of the Final Chapter, against the only possibility of saving the world – the hero Ruruta Coozancoona.

This happened long, long ago.

Ruruta recalled the far past. *This happened long ago and far away. Why did I recall this now?* He was thinking while overlooking the surface.

On January 12, 1927, the townscape of Past God Bantorra Island spread beneath his vision.

The town flourished to the extent it couldn't be compared with the royal capital of days old. For being so rich and safe, the people living there would seem like they came from another world when compared to that time period. This was the town the people have established for 1927 years.

Ruruta was standing alone on the giant needle protruding from the ground. Even now at his feet, in the middle of that needle, Hamyuts's corpse was still dripping blood.

People were collapsed on the ground. Both Armed Librarians, normal librarians and the civilians who didn't know anything were collapsed. They were deprived of their vitality and their wills to live, leaving them in a deep sleep they would never awake from.

The Beasts of the Final Chapter raised their voiceless cries, bringing a "tearless ending" to the whole world.

"It's the same as that day."

Ruruta muttered. Yes, the world was about to be destroyed just like 1927 years ago. The power of the Beasts was trying to cover the world.

There was only one difference.

Once, during the time of the first apocalypse, Ruruta fought in order to save the world. But now he was the one trying to destroy it.

"That period of time was... good."

Ruruta muttered. His voice was like that of an old man recalling his youth on his deathbed.

Yes, during that day Ruruta was boiling. He grinded his teeth, his pupils were burning and he wrung out every bit of physical and mental power in his disposal to fight the Beasts of the Final Chapter. He put his soul at stake wishing to save the world and to protect people. He thought that his life didn't matter as long as he could do it.

But time has passed. His emotions from that day will never return again.

“To think I would attempt to destroy the world... fufu, fufufu...”

Ruruta laughed listlessly. If he could tell his past self about the present what would he think? If he were to tell the hero trying to protect the world that he was going to destroy it 1927 years later, what would he say?

“...I wonder why.”

The surface was calm and nothing could be heard except for the voices of the Beasts. Ruruta muttered while overlooking it.

“I wonder why it has become like this.”

Even if he asked there was no answer. Not even Lascall Othello appeared now. The question reached no one's ears and disappeared.

Chapter 1: The Defeated Remnants and the Demon Lord of Despair

Part 1

Before the destruction of the world decided by Ruruta, the Armed Librarians were wiped out, Enlike Bishile yielded and Hamyuts Meseta lost her life. However, this didn't mean everything was over. There were still people who didn't abandon their will to fight.

They were not in the world where living humans dwelt.

They were inside Ruruta's body, in his Imaginary Entrails. The souls of those who had been Eaten by Ruruta still remained inside there. They were also fighting against the world's destruction.

"...Kh."

A single hand came out of the sand. It wasn't created out of sand; the man buried in the sand was crawling to the surface.

The man pushed his way through sand with his hand. After about ten minutes he succeeded pulling out the upper part of his face. The man started gasping for breath as he spit out the sand in his mouth. Wriggling further, he managed to pull his face, his right hand and right side of his chest out.

The man moved his face and scanned the surroundings.

There was desert for as far as he could see. The sand was endlessly white and the vast sky was cloudless. Although it was a desert the air was cool, and it would be pleasant normally. But no matter where he looked in the sky he could see no sun.

That man knew where he was.

He was inside Ruruta Coozancoona's body.

The possessor of the ability to eat the Books of humans, a Book-Eater. The user of that ability possessed organs that were used to house the souls he ate

inside his body, known as Imaginary Entrails. Although they existed magically, these entrails had no physical being. It was a stomach meant to digest souls and an organ meant to preserve them.

That man was right now inside those Imaginary Entrails. Ruruta's Entrails were shaped like a desert.

He had heard about this while he was still living, before being Eaten by Ruruta. The Book-Eater named Zatoh Rondohone was once a part of the Indulging God Cult. It was said that his Imaginary Entrails were in the shape of a swamp. The Entrails he was inside right now possessed a wholly different form, but the abilities of Ruruta and Zatoh as Book-Eaters were as different as the heavens and earth. Since their powers were so different it was also natural their Imaginary Entrails would look different.

"No one's here... seems like you can only get out by yourself."

Even now the man was trying to dig out his body from the sand. However, it would take a lot of time to do it by himself.

"...Can I do that? It is theoretically possible."

The man muttered. He held his breath and concentrated his mind. He was trying to use Magic. He had already died and became a soul with no physical body. However, as long as there was a soul, the Magic Right engraved unto it should still exist.

He heard that Enlike Bishile, even after being eaten by the Book-Eater Zatoh, did not lose his ability to use lightning. Also, Enlike had defeated him from inside his body and took over his body. So he should be able to use Magic as well. He exercised his Magic Right.

The man buried in the sand's figure changed into a black liquid. It began to seep through the sand to the surface, creating a puddle. Then the puddle returned to its previous human form.

"I've managed to resurrect. For now it's fine."

The man's name was Winkeney Bize. He was a skinny man who wore round glasses. His most prominent feature was that his head lacked any hair. He possessed the Magic Right to turn his body to petroleum.

When alive he was a warrior from the Indulging God Cult. He manipulated Mokkania Fleur and challenged the Armed Librarians. He then died, failing to accomplish anything.

The Overseer of Paradise Kachua had acknowledged Winkeny's loyalty and achievements and permitted him to go to Heaven. His Book was then brought to inside Ruruta's body through Lascall.

"What happened to the outside world?"

Winkeny raised his head. Staring at the sky, he could see the outside world through it. What Ruruta viewed was spread on the heavens as if on a movie screen. He could see the scenery of the Sealed Labyrinth there. Ruruta was leisurely walking through it.

It seemed that Ruruta was exiting the Second Sealed Archive and heading towards the surface.

The view changed to that of the surface; Ruruta probably used his power of clairvoyance. On the surface, the Guardian Beasts... no, the Beasts of the Final Chapter were fighting the Armed Librarians. Those strong, frightening Armed Librarians were now extremely confused. Winkeny kept watching them in shock.

Mattalast was listlessly running through the Labyrinth. The elite Armed Librarians Yukizona and Yuri stood in Ruruta's way. The two fought against him and were utterly beaten.

"It can't be... no way, that can't be."

Winkeny paled. He started shouting and running toward the dark clouds.

"Why, Ruruta! For what reason? Why are you going to destroy the world?!"

Winkeny died a year and ten months ago. His Book was sent into Ruruta's Imaginary Entrails immediately after he had died. Winkeny and the rest called that place Heaven.

Going to Heaven was the biggest goal of all believers of the Indulging God Cult. The Books of those who have worked for God, for the Indulging God Cult, would be sent to Heaven. They were taught that in Heaven they would taste an

eternal happiness. Winkeny was also one person who wished to go there.

However, since he was no more than an underling he knew neither the truth about the Indulging God Cult nor about Ruruta Coozancoona.

He heard about the truth inside the Imaginary Entrails. The one to tell him this was a person who had died a short while before him, the man called Cigal. He was the True Man who created the human bombs. He was more or less an acquaintance of Winkeny's.

Thus he discovered the fact that Heaven was merely the Imaginary Entrails of the Book-Eater known as Ruruta; the fact that he had no intention of granting any happiness to the followers of the Indulging God Cult; and that collecting Books of happiness was nothing more than granting Ruruta's wish.

Cigal spoke even further – the Indulging God Cult was an organization established just to give Ruruta Books of happiness. They were the branch organization of the Armed Librarians. The battle between the Cult and the Armed Librarians was just a coup d'état meant to take away their initiative.

Cigal too hadn't known the truth while he was alive as. He too heard the truth from another person inside these Imaginary Entrails.

He started crying. *I was deceived. By the Overseer of Paradise, by the Armed Librarians and by Ruruta. If this was the result I wish I hadn't fought Hamyuts. If so, I wouldn't have been killed by that brat. I would make more money, buy whatever I want, and sleep with even more women.* He had not a single word of an apology to his subordinates for having deceived them or any regret for turning people into bombs.

"...Cigal, what's going to happen to us now?"

Winkeny asked. There was no need for any honorifics anymore.

"...Our souls will be dismantled. Only our happiness will be squeezed out and it will become part of Ruruta. Just like food that gets digested inside the stomach, sending nutrients to the intestines."

"And more concretely?"

"It is simple. We will be swallowed in this sand and become a part of it."

“What does extracting happiness mean? What will Ruruta do with that?”

“Who cares!”

Cigal raged. He then started cursing Ruruta. The target of his curses changed from Ruruta to the Overseer of Paradise, from him to Hamyuts, from her to the human bomb known as Colio, and to the Ever-Laughing Witch Shiron. In the end he had no idea who he was talking about.

Winkeny tired of Cigal and left.

He was fed up with anything and everything. He was sick of it all, of his life being continuously used by the Armed Librarians, by the Overseer of Paradise and by Ruruta.

Because he had nothing to do, Winkeny buried himself in the sand. He dug a hole and stuck inside everything but his face and torso so he could drag the sand from above. As he did this, his body gradually changed into sand and became part of the desert.

The feeling of his soul slowly melting away was not as bad as Winkeny thought, and so he was determined to vanish just like that.

There were also cases where the other souls Eaten by Ruruta struck conversation with him. He told them what he had heard from Cigal as is. Some of them wept, some of them shouted; their responses were varied.

As far as he could tell from the scenery in the sky, the Indulging God Cult was in an unfavorable position on the surface. Even the secret plan of reversal was prevented by the efforts of Noloty and Enlike. Kachua died and the seat of the Overseer was passed along to Minth Chezine.

Winkeny stared at this poor situation without much interest.

As his soul melted, only the area of his head and torso remained, and most of it became sand. There wasn't any particular pain. Before long Winkeny gave up thinking and closed his eyes. *That's enough.* Those would probably be his final thoughts.

However, Ruruta's voice prevented Winkeny's eternal sleep. Even while melting in the sand he could clearly hear it with his ears.

‘My name is Ruruta Coozancoona. I am the owner of the world and the one who had Eaten your Books. I am now about to destroy the world. Anyone who wants to stop me, get out of the sand and come to my side.’

‘Destroy the world’. These were completely unrealistic words, but only when Ruruta mouthed them they seemed truly feasible. Winkeny, who had tried falling asleep, opened his eyes and began thrashing around. His body, most of it having become sand, responded to his will that he must stand up and regained its former flesh and blood.

And so Winkeny managed to somehow escape from the sand.

‘Destroy the world’. Although Winkeny himself had already died, that was scary enough even for him. He couldn’t stand the fact that the town he grew up in and the people he had related with would be destroyed.

His ability, the power to turn into petroleum, was completely useless. And he didn’t think he could do anything. However, he couldn’t help but want to do something.

Winkeny ran in the desert, searching for Ruruta. However, he noticed that it was faster for him to become petroleum and slide on the sand. While sliding in the desert, Winkeny found a human figure. It was probably another member of the Indulging God Cult just like him.

It was a boy wearing khaki-colored clothes. He was probably about 15 years old. He was unfamiliar to him.

It seemed that he was trying to dig out something from the sand. Winkeny approached him, returned to his human form and spoke.

“What’s going on?”

“Someone’s buried and trying to get out. I’m digging him out. Help me.”

Looking at the sand, he could see someone’s clothes poking out. Winkeny and the boy cooperated and dug through with their hands. They didn’t even introduce themselves to each other. They didn’t have the time for that.

Eventually a fat middle-aged man appeared from the ground. His face was familiar. Winkeny never thought that he would be at this place as well.

“Charlot, right?”

Winkeny and the other boy pulled him out. The middle-aged man – Charlot – came out of the sand while coughing. He was also a False Men serving the Cult. He was a talented Magician who had perfected a Grand Magic capable of controlling space. When his betrayal had been discovered he was supposedly robbed of his memories and turned into a Meat, so why was he here?

“You are Winkeny, right? I don’t know the other guy, but thank you.”

Winkeny spoke while supporting Charlot.

“Greetings come later. Anyway, we must head to Ruruta.”

Charlot nodded while frowning.

“Even if you say that, where is he? Even my Spatial Magic is of no use if I don’t know the location.”

Winkeny didn’t know his location either. The boy then interjected.

“I know where he is. Ruruta is in the center of this space.”

Winkeny and Charlot looked at the boy.

“But where is that center?”

“This appears to be a completely different place than the outside world. Both location and direction are undetermined. If you walk to where you think the center is, you will reach it no matter where you head to. If you wish to get farther from the center then you will no matter where you walk to. I don’t really get it myself, but it seems to be this way.”

“It sounds strange but I understand. What’s in the center?”

Winkeny asked.

“A building that looks like a theater.”

“A theater...?”

Winkeny and Charlot were puzzled at the boy’s words at the same time. Wasn’t the center of this world supposed to contain the castle of the world’s owner, Ruruta? Wasn’t a theater somewhat out-of-place?

“I don’t know why there’s such a thing there, either. And because I’ve seen it only once, I don’t know what the inside’s like. But...”

The boy stopped talking for a short while, then resumed.

“There was a person there. Even me, an amateur in fighting could tell... there was someone with unbelievable powers there.”

Winkeny and Charlot exchanged looked and nodded. They had to go. Winkeny changed his form to petroleum and Charlot activated his Spatial Magic.

“Will you go too, boy?”

Charlot said. However, the boy shook his head to the side.

“Unlike you lot, I can’t use any Magic. Even if I go I won’t be of any help. I do plan on doing something my own way, but it will probably amount to nothing.”

“I see...”

Winkeny started sliding on the sand. Charlot advanced while proceeding directly through space.

However, Winkeny started to think while advancing. Even if they went to Ruruta, what could they do? Could those two people who have no fighting abilities battle Ruruta? Or would they beg him not to destroy the world?

What would happen at that place? As if he could see through his thoughts, or perhaps in an attempt to convince himself, Charlot spoke.

“Winkeny. Don’t give up. Weren’t you quite amazing?”

“...”

Winkeny couldn’t reply.

“Even I have no idea what to do. But we need to think, search and find it. The possibility is definitely not zero. Weren’t you the man who once managed to do the impossible?”

Right, Winkeny encouraged himself. I have read Mokkaia’s heart and manipulated him. Just like that I can learn about Ruruta, read his heart and control him. It shouldn’t be impossible.

But for that I must know about Ruruta. At the very least, if I don’t know why

he wants to destroy the world I can't do anything.

He advanced for a while. He could see something on the other side of the desert. It was too far away so he couldn't confirm it, but it might be that theater or whatever the boy had told them about.

Then, two people appeared on the road between Winkeny, Charlot and the theater. When they saw them, they both stopped at once.

Let us go a bit back in time. Apart from Winkeny and Charlot, another man had emerged from the sand. Just like Winkeny, that man had gazed at the scenes viewed in the sky for a while. On the screen on the sky he could see Yukizona's defeat, the Armed Librarians being wiped out, and Mattalast's pleas.

"...Hu."

While watching that the man began laughing. At first quietly, but it gradually became louder and in the end he burst into laughter while looking up the sky.

This was the laughter of a perfect victory. It was the arrival of a dream he had embraced for many years, for fifty years. The laughter of someone whose adversaries have collapsed all at one fell swoop.

The man's name was Kachua Beeinhaus. He was an old man with thin green hair, thin and worn-out. He was the former Overseer of Paradise and the man who had schemed a coup d'état using the entire forces of the Indulging God Cult. Even he was brought into Ruruta's Imaginary Entrails by Lascall Othello. Kachua then spoke.

"How marvelous, Ruruta. There was not even a single mistake. Everything went according to what I planned and wished for."

Raising his hands, Kachua admired the scenes he was watching.

"I was killed by Enlike and had my dream crushed by Noloty. However, I still have not lost. My soul is alive within Heaven. And I have finally grasped victory."

Kachua spoke while gazing at the sky. He couldn't detach his eyes from it. He didn't want to miss a single second of how those unpleasant Armed Librarians were being erased from the world.

"I remember a story I have read as a child. The protagonist climbed

mountains and went down rivers, all in search for a fairy that grants happiness. Yet in the end the fairy was inside their house. What a great story. True happiness is in a place too close to see.”

Kachua kept talking as if he was speaking to someone.

“I did not even need the Indulging God Cult. They were a useless detour. Dying, ascending to Heaven and meeting Ruruta... that was the road to victory.”

He lowered his hands.

“However, if I were to have but one complaint, it would be that it was unnecessary to awaken all the Books from the sand. Such as this one.”

Kachua turned around. He had noticed for a while that a lone woman was standing behind him.

“Some annoying people came here to stop you.”

He turned around to face the woman behind him and spoke to her, smiling.

“I don’t remember letting you come into Heaven. Well, it was probably Lascall’s whim.”

The woman opened her eyes and grimaced. Then, she unhesitatingly opened her mouth.

“I’m only asking this to be sure, but... You’re the Overseer of Paradise, right? You’re the one who’s gotten me and Cigal into the Indulging God Cult.”

“It is indeed so, but what of it?”

Kachua knew the woman who stood there.

Alme Norton. She had short, red hair as well as red skin. In her hand she was holding a rusty, big sword. She had once served Cigal, but broke from the Indulging God Cult after his death. She had pursued Lascall Othello for the sake of revenge, but was defeated by Mirepoc and Mattalast.

She was impulsive and simplistic. A woman without any deep thoughts or pursuit of ideals.

“...Aaand you’re the one who’s caused this situation, right?”

“I planned to say it so that you understand as well. Unbelievable, was it not

enough?”

Alme's red cheeks paled.

“I'm the one who finds this unbelievable. What're you thinking about, you bastard, how many screws are you missing?”

“Explaining things so that you would understand seems to take too much effort. It is cruel on this old body.”

Kachua laughed.

“What on earth are you thinking about? Do you really want to destroy the world?”

“Indeed.”

“Have you lost your mind, you old fart?!”

Alme attacked. At the same time Kachua activated his Magic Right and pulled out his sword. It was his favorite sword from his Armed Librarians days.

He dodged Alme's charge with room to spare. He used an illusion that concealed his existence; he showed her himself dodging to the right but actually came from behind her. She slayed the right illusion without doubting it for a second.

“Cleaning up the leftovers, huh? It is a boring job, but it has to be done, I suppose.”

Kachua readied his blade. At that moment, he noticed that a single man and what appeared to be a puddle of water approaching. They reached Alme's side in no time.

They were Charlot and Winkeny in his petroleum form. *So as I thought Winkeny is here, thought Kachua. A person with a backbone, which is rare for the Indulging God Cult. But why is Charlot here? Lascall's whim yet again?*

“Alme! Explain the situation!”

Winkeny asked while reassuming the shape of a human. Alme pointed at the illusory Kachua and shouted.

“We need to kill that guy, he's the source of everything! He's the one who's

made Ruruta act!”

“...The Overseer of Paradise...”

Charlot had an expression of fear and bewilderment.

“So you’re planning to...? But why? Weren’t you trying to create your ideal world?!”

Everyone seems to ask the same, Kachua smiled wryly. But I do not feel like explaining it.

“This isn’t the time for chatting! He’s obviously got a loose screw! We have no choice but to beat him!”

Alme shouted. While confused, Charlot and Winkeney joined the fight. Yet all that Kachua could think about was that the amount of trash he had to clean rose by two.

He suddenly recalled the past.

Kachua Beeinhaus was born to a family of landowners with a lineage that stretched to the nobles of the Guinbex Empire. He had no particular inconvenient memories, and he didn’t think his home environment had had any problems. Kachua himself couldn’t understand why he had developed such a bizarre personality.

He was born with malice without a cause. Embracing within him something that could be called only that, Kachua accepted his life.

Ever since his birth he hated anything and everything. His family, his friends, his country, other countries, the Present Management Agency, Bantorra Library, and himself. Everything that he could see and all that he couldn’t see; he hated anything and everything.

Why was he so stupid? He was foolish and unreasonable. He was imperfect and defective.

Although he thought this he hadn’t sought to change it. Kachua was Kachua because he hated. The only certain thing was hatred and all that needed to change was everything except hatred.

He resolved to change the world. While wearing the mask of a normal person,

he began to think of ways to change the world. What would be a world Kachua wouldn't hate?

After a long time of thinking, Kachua finally reached the answer.

A world where all people would become one perfect existence. No one in the world would have their own will and they would not have any values. The goal of their lives would be to serve the perfect being and nothing else.

Believing only in the perfect existence, seeking only the perfect existence, throwing aside everything else; a world that would contain such people.

In short, Kachua was looking for God. He wanted a world full of faith for God.

However, there was a definite problem; this world had no God.

It was said that there were once Gods. No, they were still there. They were the three World Overseers who supervised the world.

Among them, the Future Overseer Orntorra was the closest to what Kachua wanted. However, he left this world when the Paradise Era ended. He now existed only in myths.

The Present Overseer Toitorra could be called no more than the laws of the world, different from a God.

Past Overseer Bantorra secluded deep underground and would never meddle with this world again.

Kachua anguished. Even if he wanted to believe in a God there wasn't any.

So he just had to create one. He had no idea how to, though.

Kachua advanced in his way as an Armed Librarian. It was because Bantorra Library, both now and in the past was the organization to possess the strongest military. In order to change the world such power would undoubtedly be needed. He concluded that he had to rise to the position of the Acting Director in preparation for the day he would have an idea of how to change the world.

There were in fact only few people who chose the path of an Armed Librarian in order to gain authority. Those who aimed to become Acting Directors were all people who sought to raise their fighting strength rather than obtain authority.

Also, those who possessed powerful Magic Rights tended to lose their greed for power and money. There was a reason why the seat of the Acting Director who held tremendous authority was unrelated to corruption and power struggles.

Among them, Kachua was an extreme exception.

Kachua was an excellent Armed Librarian. The ability he was born with was extremely useful for battle. Avoiding both alcohol and gambling, diligently repeating his Magic Deliberation, he became praised as a model for all Armed Librarians. His excellent mind was congratulated as the talent Bantorra Library sought the most.

Kachua advanced his plan to steadily control the entire Library without anyone noticing the madness lying behind his mask.

Then, an incident that changed his life, as well as the fate of the world later, has occurred.

Part 2

That day, Kachua was diligently going through paperwork. It was related to the work review and personal assessment of the Armed Librarians. He was preparing the materials for the yearly annual salary discussions and personnel administration. This job was originally done by the Acting Director and examinations in the office, but he was able to gain enough trust for them to let him do everything single-handedly.

He wore a refined cocoa-colored suit with a loop-tie and had small glasses on his nose. Apart from his special hair color it was an appearance unlike an Armed Librarian.

He was 23 years old back then. He had already passed through the Second Sealed Labyrinth and obtained qualifications as a First Grade Armed Librarian. He heard about the existence of Ruruta and the secret of the Indulging God Cult from the Acting Director. However, at that point in time he didn't have any interest in Ruruta. He only acknowledged him as a bothersome hazard that required the expense of time, money and manpower.

Running his feather pen, Kachua was suddenly disturbed by incomprehensible thoughts shared with him.

'Kachua, go to the Acting Director's Office.'

Who was saying that and on whose behalf? Kachua was annoyed and ignored it.

'Kachua?'

The sender seemed confused by their being ignored. The next instant Kachua felt a repulsive sensation run through from his spine to his rear. Even he couldn't understand what that was. Was it murderous intent or did someone activate an ability to cause discomfort? He couldn't explain it in words other than the fact he had never felt something like that nor would he ever feel it again.

'Kachua, go to the Acting Director's Office.'

He realized who the sender was. *I never thought that he would call me.* There was no mistake it was Ruruta Coozancoona.

He removed his glasses, pulled out his sword and ran to the corridor, as it was definitely not an ordinary situation. When he ran into the Acting Director's Office the next moment, he nearly fell down in surprise.

"...Kachua, you did well to come. I was helpless by myself."

Inside the office was the man who was both his friend as well as his rival. His name was Makia Dexiart. He would later take over as the Acting Director.

Just like Kachua he wore a suit, but his tastes were completely the opposite. His black, shiny suit had a shawl-collared shirt. Both were high quality and order-made. His hair was neatly arranged and spilled to his right side.

On his left eye was an eyepatch in the shape of a spade. That glamorous outfit seemed more suitable to the kind of man who'd kidnap a nobleman's daughter. The only thing resembling an Armed Librarian about him was probably the rapier at his waist.

Kachua was probably somewhat stronger than him. He also won in the sharpness of his mind. However, Makia's attitude was aloof and unperturbed and he exhibited an incomprehensible intuition at important times. Even Kachua couldn't gauge this mysterious man.

"I think you get it by looking, but I'm in a bad spot."

His lips were trembling and his face was pale. Kachua was the same. That was not an expression befitting those who were called the right and left hand of Bantorra Library's Acting Director.

This room was supposed to have the Acting Director in it. No, he *was* there. He was definitely there.

His neck was at the window. To the feet of Makia.

His legs were alongside the wall to the door side. That was at Kachua's feet.

His torso was in the middle of the room, and his hands were near the walls of both sides. His thighs were directly connected to his torso and legs. Between his hands and torso were both arms.

He was torn apart. Literally.

Kachua clutched his own breast and gasped for breath. The Acting Director had fighting strength on a whole different level than him. When compared to Ireia or Hamyuts from later on he was at about their level or perhaps even above it. That Director's body was in front of his eyes. And he knew who killed him so casually. He couldn't help but feel dread.

He supposedly understood Ruruta's strength. However, he only knew it with his mind. It wasn't something he witnessed with his skin or his eyes.

"You seem to have calmed down, Kachua."

Makia spoke in a strange, elongated tone. It was his usual foolish tone. He seemed to be pushing himself somewhat. And yet he still retained his calmness.

"Yeah, somewhat."

Kachua responded while pressing on his chest.

"For the time being, nothing happened in other rooms. Only two people were killed. I told the others not to come here."

When he said "two people", Kachua hurriedly looked around him. He hadn't noticed this, but there was also a person collapsed there as if a mere decorative plant. It seemed to be a woman of about 40 years old. He wasn't acquainted with her.

"...You haven't met her. She was the current Overseer of Paradise."

Makia explained. Looking at her, he could see plenty of needle marks on her arm. They were traces of something having been injected into her. She was perhaps still alive but impossible to save.

Regardless, it was an abnormal situation. Unable to follow any of it, Kachua stood there, stunned.

"By the way, Director. I understand what's happened, but... what should we do now?"

Makia said. Kachua was surprised, but Ruruta was indeed the only one who knew what to do. Although Makia didn't seem calm, he hadn't lost his strange boldness and his rationality.

'...Kachua, Makia, please calm down. I have no intention to harm you.'

Ruruta's Thought Sharing echoed in his mind. His tone was strangely gentle. It really seemed like he had no intention to attack.

'I seek your opinion. Do you two think this is happiness?'

Two syringes appeared from the window. There was some poisonous-looking purplish red liquid inside them. They slowly flew through air. The strange combination of Ruruta and these syringes made Kachua's body stiff.

There were two syringes and there were two people in the room. What he was going to do was clear. Kachua tried moving but his body froze. He couldn't even tell if he was restricted or was simply unable to move out of fear.



“I disagree!”

Looking at the liquid inside the syringes, Kachua cried reflexively. One of them stopped.

“Hey, what’s that?”

Makia said while paling.

“Makia, it’s the Roiz drug.”

Kachua told him.

“W-What’s that?”

Makia panicked.

“It is a powerful narcotic drug. A few years ago, a researcher from the Science Agency developed it from the flower known as Roiz. For a short time you feel exaltation and euphoria, but they are followed by frightening side-effects.”

Makia then shouted.

“W-what the heck’s that, I-I disagree. I also disagree!”

The syringe stopped on the verge of stabbing him. Both syringes ruptured at the same time and a sweet smell was emitted from the liquid within.

‘Good. You two agree with me as well.’

Ruruta seemed to be really relieved.

‘I believe that you have both already received explanations about me from the previous Director. As well as about the fact I am looking for the perfect, unblemished happiness.

I shall explain the current situation. The previous Acting Director and the Overseer of Paradise gave the Roiz Drug to people and offered them to me as the Books of happy people. I was quietly watching to see if they had any ulterior motives but it seemed they thought this was enough for their professional duties.

Do you two think they were correct?’

“ ... ”

Kachua was silent. He had heard about Ruruta's existence the year before. The Acting Director told him that as long as Ruruta was given Books of happiness he was harmless. He felt some anxiety at the time, but now his needless fears became reality.

"I cannot deny they have neglected their duty."

Kachua said unhesitatingly.

'I see. What do you think, Makia?'

Makia stayed silent for a while. He then spoke as if squeezing the words out of his stomach.

"...They certainly didn't fulfill their duties."

'If you also think that way, I judge it adequate for them to take responsibility for this case. From now on you two will manage Bantorra Library and the Indulging God Cult. This is all I have to say to you. I hold expectations for your future work.'

"Can you not just decide to end the conversation on your own? Can't you say even a single word for having killed him?"

"Cut that out, Makia."

Kachua stopped him in a hurry. His friendship with him was a pretense, but he still had some value. He couldn't let him die.

'Makia. Your anger is not beneficial. You are a useful Armed Librarian, so losing you would be a great loss for me as well.'

If he won't obey he'll be killed. That what was Ruruta said in simple terms.

"What're you saying? I'm talking about you killing him."

"Stop Makia! Do you want to die?!"

'Since humans are all my property, it is my liberty whether or not to kill them. He had made a mistake, and people don't reflect on their follies unless they die. I believe that is enough of an excuse.'

After staying silent for a while, Makia started laughing.

"That's true, yeah, I've forgotten, sorry for my rudeness Director. I was

extremely rude.”

His voice was laughing, but there was anger deep within it.

‘...Makia, I am satisfied with your decision. Settling this without killing a useful Armed Librarian is very fortunate. I have expectations for your future work.’

“Why thank you.”

Makia said indifferently.

‘Makia. My request is nothing wrong. I only wish for two things: for more people to be happy, and for that happiness to be offered up to me. Making people happy is good, and offering up that happiness to me is also good.

Accomplishing this is the best thing for both me and you. You should understand this. I will let you decide who will become the Acting Director and who will become the Overseer of Paradise.’

With that their conversation was over.

Makia hit the desk as soon as all signs of Ruruta vanished. And he then began to cry quietly. Wearing the mask of a normal person, Kachua tried consoling him.

“Nothing to do about it, Makia. There was nothing we could have done about it.”

In contrast to his words, Kachua was thinking of a completely different thing in the depths of his mind.

He was impressed.

What wonderful power. It was enough to make him scared as well as make Makia and the previous Acting Director completely helpless.

An absolute authority had to be supported by absolute power. And he has seen that absolute power right now. He would set up Ruruta to become a God. Kachua found his goal.

The thing he needed was close by. Kachua only needed Ruruta Coozancoona.

And thus he began action. He discussed with Makia and assumed office as the Overseer of Paradise. He stopped using the Armed Librarians. The existing

organization would only be a nuisance for reforming the world.

It took ten years for Kachua to refine his plan for the unification of the world. It took him twenty years to expend the organization of the Indulging God Cult. And it took him further thirty years to gather military power.

Controlling the state would be impossible; he simply sent spies to the center of every country. Afterwards only destroying the Armed Librarians remained. He had already gotten enough military power for that purpose.

Then, the deadly struggle between the Indulging God Cult and the Armed Librarian involved the entire world.

One could say they have done their utmost efforts against the one hailed to be the strongest in history, Hamyuts. They have caused her to fall to a crisis countless times and there were also times she was cornered nearly to her death.

Kachua supported Cigal, raised the monster Zatoh, manipulated Mokkania to make him fight, and used the warriors and human bombs he brought up without any regrets. And he was able to reach his final move, the activation of Arkit's Deep Blue Curse. But even then Kachua was defeated.

Hamyuts Meseta who became the center of battle; Colio Tonies who rescued her from her crisis; the spy-hunting specialist Minth Chezine; as well as Noloty Malche and Enlike Bishile who were able to break through the Deep Blue Curse Rebellion. If only one of those five had been missing, he was certain he would have achieved victory. He didn't think his plans or military power was inadequate. He simply had bad luck.

While watching the peaceful world reflected on the sky of Ruruta's Imaginary Entrails, Kachua finally gave up on changing it.

Kachua walked alone in the desert of the Imaginary Entrails. He wanted to meet Ruruta once before disappearing into the sand.

He wanted to know what Ruruta was thinking about. He only knew about his absolute power and so had no idea what kind of a being he was. Why hadn't Ruruta supported him? The world he wanted to create was far better than the Indulging God Cult of the past.

He wanted to hear the answer to his final question and then disappear satisfyingly. So he thought.

Kachua arrived at the center of the Imaginary Entrails, at a building that looked like a theater.

That theater was surprisingly small. It looked to be about as big as the square of a small village. It was all made from white stone. It was probably made by hardening the sand from around. There were simple stone benches inside the circular walls. It could probably accommodate around 70 or 80 people.

It was small and undignified, yet it also didn't have any purity or elegance, so as a boring theater it gave the impression of being something that was merely forgotten behind.

It wasn't a building suitable to be the castle of the man who owned the world and surpassed the power of the Gods. Yet Ruruta was there.

“...”

Kachua hesitated on talking to him. It was because it seemed as if he sat inside the center of the stage and was asleep. Even as he grew closer Ruruta made no response. Was he actually sleeping?

Ruruta had a time he was asleep. No, someone had once said that he was probably asleep for most of the year. Was it Makia or Photona? He couldn't recall.

He might have been asleep during the entire time Kachua's Indulging God Cult fought. If it was true it wouldn't be funny at all.

Ruruta seemed practically defenseless. He didn't seem like he was about to open his eyes. Kachua walked inside the theater and looked around.

Suddenly he noticed that there was something strange further inside the stage.

“...Why is such a thing here?”

Having a theater in the middle of the desert was bizarre, but *that* being inside was also strange.

No, perhaps this whole theater was created for *that*? If so, it meant that *it*

was something important to Ruruta.

An isolated lone theater in the vast desert. *That* inside that theater. There was no way *it* wasn't important.

He approached and touched it.

"Kachua Beeinhaus, huh?"

Ruruta opened his eyes. Kachua had already removed his hand from *that*.

"...Have you touched it?"

"Yes, I have. And I now know what you are really after. I will say it plainly, Ruruta Coozancoona. You should destroy the world."

"..."

Ruruta stayed silent.

"You will never get what you are seeking unless you destroy the world. Both Armed Librarians, the Indulging God Cult, and all this world is completely meaningless for you."

"..."

"Please make a decision for yourself."

And after a while of silence...

"Disappear."

He said this one word and moved his finger. Kachua's body was blown away with a tremendous force and pounded against the sand. And he was buried inside it.

That happened a year ago. Ruruta has finally made a decision after hesitating for a year. He was going to destroy the world just like Kachua wanted.

He was happy from the bottom of his heart. He was finally able to attain his goals. He was finally able to destroy this imperfect world.

This was already above the grade of a simple chess. It was the same as taking the piece of the king off the board. He didn't even have any obstacles in his way.

Kachua continued his fight with the resistance of the last three people remaining inside the Imaginary Entrails.

Winkeny was impatient. They couldn't afford being delayed at such a place. Never mind defeating Kachua, they wouldn't necessarily stop Ruruta who already began his move. Even after beating him they would have to look for a way to defeat Ruruta.

"Alme! Behind you!"

Winkeny shouted. Alme turned around and attacked behind. Her aim wasn't wrong. However, she wasn't fast enough. Her sword cut through air and Kachua's one-handed sword sliced her all the way from her shoulder to her chest.

"Curse you, Overseer of Paradise!"

Charlotte invoked his Magic Right and twisted the space Kachua inhabited. But, perhaps already having moved, the attack only cut through air.

Winkeny anticipated Kachua's path and began an attack. He jumped while in his petroleum form and tried covering him to get inside his lungs. That also failed.

Although old, he was a former First Grade Armed Librarian. There was a big difference between their skills. Alme was far below the top as a warrior. Charlotte was a Great Magician but had no battle experience. Winkeny was out of the question.

"It is useless, you foolish resistance. Please disappear already."

Kachua said while laughing. Because of his ability to show illusions they had no idea where he really was.

They were all injured. From the wounds inflicted by Kachua's one-handed sword what came flowing out was not blood but sand.

"What's this sand..."

Winkeny muttered. He had his left hand cut off and sand spilled from his wound. He tried stopping the sand from spilling, but that gave an opening for Kachua to attack him again.

Winkeny soon noticed the mechanism of this world. The people inside the Imaginary Entrails were already originally dead. They were an existence with no body, only souls. Even if hurt by an attack no blood will spill. Since he had no flesh he also had no blood. Instead, his sense of self was shredded with every attack. The more sand spilled from him, the less Winkeny could recognize himself as Winkeny.

“Winkeny! Since you’re weak, get away!”

Alme shouted and charged. But without being able to see through Kachua’s illusion she attacked in vain.

“Why, Kachua?! Weren’t you trying to create the ideal world?”

Charlot distorted the area around him with his Spatial Magic. However, even for Winkeny it seemed too dull of an attack.

“Why...”

Winkeny couldn’t do anything. *Why are we so powerless? Why are us powerless people the last defense of the world? We can’t save anything like that. So why were we the only ones left?*

If it’s useless to fight then kill us already. That way I’d have less regrets!

Kachua nimbly evaded their attacks and lunged his sword as if to torture them to death. Winkeny and the rest had no choice but continue this desperate fight.

At that moment, Ruruta who stood on top of the needle that penetrated Hamyuts and Bantorra Library suddenly noticed something.

“Something is happening inside my Imaginary Entrails. Are those that came to stop me fighting?”

Ruruta closed his eyes.

“I’ll go there.”

He crouched with only one foot, still standing atop the needle with only his big toe.

He closed his eyes. It looked as if he was asleep or lost his consciousness. He sunk his soul into the Imaginary Entrails. And it then showed up in the desert

where Winkeny and the rest fought. Ruruta came from the outside world to the other world inside him.

After a long battle, Charlot finally became exhausted.

“O-Olivia... you are the only...”

With these final words also in vain, his fat body turned into a heap of sand.

And Alme was also defeated. Both of her legs were severed and her body morphed to sand.

“Shit, so that’s how it is, Mirepo?! Armed Librarians! Are you all like that?!”

“We are exactly like that, Alme.”

Kachua finished off the collapsed Alme. Her body also became sand and vanished.

At last only Winkeny has remained. He was already at his wits’ end. At that moment, he heard a voice.

“So as I thought it is you, Kachua.”

Simultaneous to this voice a large explosive sound roared around. It was a lightning strike. Winkeny was convinced of his death without even any time to ponder if this was someone’s attack. There was no way his petroleum body could withstand lightning.

However, Winkeny was alive. His form returned from that of petroleum to human. Around him he could only see sparks and even looking around he could see no one else. Even Kachua became sand and vanished.

“...Ruruta?”

Winkeny looked up. A human figure was descending from high above in the sky. It lowered to the sand only a bit farther from where Winkeny was. He couldn’t grasp the situation for a while and stayed there standing.

“A troubling man as always.”

Having come down, Ruruta spoke in a quiet voice and yet it was clearly audible even from afar. Winkeny finally realized that Ruruta had defeated Kachua and saved him.

Ruruta glanced at him, turned his back, and began walking to the theater.

Winkeny followed him.

Crossing the desert, Winkeny set foot in the small theater. Ruruta supposedly entered this place.

Even when he came inside, he heard no complaints or attacks. Winkeny stood behind the spectator seats.

Ruruta was there. He lightly sat on the stage and looked at Winkeny.

He spoke to him as he stood there completely clueless and dumbfounded.

“Were you Winkeny Bize? If I am mistaken forgive me.”

It was a surprisingly calm voice. And he spoke with surprisingly normal words.

“...There is no mistake. The False Man of the Indulging God Cult, Winkeny Bize, apologizes for this unannounced intrusion.”

Winkeny said while remaining standing upright. He couldn't really tell if there was or wasn't a need to use polite language but decided to pay respects for the time being.

“You came here because you have business with me, right? Please seat down.”

Just as he was told Winkeny sat on one of the stone chairs in the audience section.

What a strange atmosphere, he thought. This conversation was far too normal. This man, who was about to destroy the world, offered this plain, boring man Winkeny to sit down. These unusual circumstances and ordinary interaction did not fit each other.

“You have come to stop me, right?”

“Indeed... Ruruta, have you defeated Kachua to save me?”

He had no idea where to start from. For the time being he just asked what first came to mind.

“A guest was trying to come to my place. However, a rotting old tree was blocking the way. I have simply removed the obstacle.”

“...Thank you very much.”

“I’m the one who called you. You don’t have to thank me.”

What was going on with this conversation?

“I’ve heard what that man... what Kachua was saying from the middle. He seemed to have been thinking that he had me under his control. What a stupid man.”

“Huh?”

“Kachua was not the cause. Not even the trigger. I would have done this regardless of his existence. If you think that Kachua is the cause for the world’s destruction, you better think again.”

“...”

“It just so happened that the situation moved in the direction that man had wanted. He had no accomplishments whatsoever.”

What did that mean? Did that mean destroying the world was Ruruta’s own decision?

“He was a bothersome man. Of all the things he’s done none of them were for my sake. Even the new Indulging God Cult he had tried to build was trifling. It would’ve simply ended in a tyranny that made people miserable. If saying so makes you uncomfortable I apologize, though.”

“I do not mind. I already do not possess any feelings of adoration for Kachua.”

“...I see. However, your Book was not something bad for me. Yeah, as was the Book of that Alme. You guys have not brought any benefits to this world, but seeing you bring out your wits, putting your lives at stake and expending your utmost efforts is beautiful to me. Do you dislike our chat?”

“...N-no.”

“I have become quite talkative as of late. Now that I think about it, it’s been fifty years since the last time I conversed with anyone.”

Winkeny had no idea what to talk about. He could only feel discomfort.

Ruruta Coozancoona. He was the owner of the world, possessing powers that

surpassed even the Gods. And now he was aiming to destroy the world.

Winkeney had thought of him as a person mentally twisted from his very base like Hamyuts. Or perhaps someone whose mental balance had crumbled such as Mokkaia. If not that, then perhaps it was already impossible to hold any conversation with him, a being that normal people could simply not understand. However, as long as they were conversing Ruruta wasn't like any of that.

He was normal. Defining a normal mentality was hard, but he felt nothing strange from him.

However, that normal man wanted to destroy the world. Winkeney couldn't understand him. Who was this man? What was he thinking about? Why did he want to destroy the world?

“For a while I've been the only one to speak. How about you say something? You came to stop me, right?”

Indeed. However, he had no idea what to say that would stop Ruruta.

“Ruruta, why?”

“...”

“Why do you plan to destroy the world? I cannot understand.”

Ruruta averted his gaze.

“I can't explain it briefly.”

“...You search for the perfect, unblemished happiness. That is what I have heard. We the Indulging God Cult have been dedicating ourselves for that. Cigal was devoted and so was Ganbanzel. Were they not enough?”

“...”

“You have said that the Indulging God Cult is foolish. I agree with that. However, there is the new Overseer of Paradise, Minth Chezine. Since it's him, he will be able to create a much better Cult than Kachua.

The Indulging God Cult worked for you with whole-hearted devotion! Why is their reward destruction?! What complaints do you have about us?!”

Winkeny was surprised at his own words. Did he really have such an attachment to the Cult?

“...The Indulging God Cult has worked well. Minth Chezine is also probably working well. I believe that you’ve also done what you should.”

“So why?!”

Winkeny stoop up and shouted.

“Because you cannot reach it... The unblemished, perfect happiness.”

“That doesn’t make a reason! Do you intend to destroy the world because it doesn’t give you the perfect happiness?! If you do so then you won’t be able to get it all the more! It is self-evident!”

“...I’m sorry.”

Winkeny was shocked. *Why are you apologizing? And if you apologize, please give up on destroying the world.*

“However, I have no choice in the matter.”

“...”

“I have wondered for a long time whether there is any other way. But I can only do this.”

After a while of silence, Ruruta spread his right hand and lifted it up as if offering something. As he did, small shining sand was created inside his palm.

“If I speak about it in words for several hours you will probably not understand. So I will let you know.”

The sparkling sand floated on his palm. He lightly blew it away with his breath. It spread to the desert.

“This is my memory. If you touch it you will come to know of my 2000 years of life.”

Winkeny touched a grain of sand scattered in the wind. Just like a Book, it had Ruruta’s entire life embedded within.

Only several tens of seconds passed. During this time, Winkeny understood everything. Ruruta’s birth, his fight against the Beasts of the Final Chapter, as

well as the reason for the destruction of the world.

“Do you understand now, Winkeny? The reason for why I’m about to destroy the world.”

Ruruta said calmly.

“So, what will you do, Winkeny? You came here to stop me, right?”

Winkeny was speechless.

He had to stop Ruruta. He had to save the world. However, he couldn’t think of even a single word to say to him.

He couldn’t. He just couldn’t stop him. Now that he understood everything about him, he couldn’t reject him.

Don’t give up, think. Just like you manipulated Mokkaia back then you can do it to Ruruta. Move Ruruta’s heart.

Even if he thought so, he couldn’t think of anything to say.

A tear fell from Winkeny’s eye. Who were these tears for? For the world about to be destroyed? For himself who was unable to save it, or tears for Ruruta?

“...It’s useless.”

Winkeny said in a sobbing voice. He dropped to his knees.

“I can’t do anything... I’m sorry, Ruruta, I couldn’t stop it... There’s nothing I can do... Besides destroying the world, there’s no...”

Ruruta smiled somewhat sadly.

“...So you think so as well.”

He rose up and moved silently. He stood next to Winkeny and put his hand to his head.

“The Power of Tearless Ending.”

Winkeny’s body fell to the ground.

Seeing Winkeny’s body stretched on the sand, Ruruta once again sat on the edge of the stage.

“So you were unable to stop me as well.”

He spoke to the sleeping Winkeny.

“Neither the Armed Librarians, the Indulging God Cult, you nor anybody else were able to stop me. I’m making the utmost compromise. No matter who, please tell me you will stop me.”

Ruruta looked to the sky.

“Is there really no one who can stop me? Do I truly have no other choice?”

He kept muttering while gazing at the sky.

Chapter 2: The Warrior and the Savior of Light

Part 1

Let us go back to the past. Even before Ruruta's birth.

It is the story of the time that will later become known as the Age of Paradise. Just like its name implied, it is the story of the period in which humanity lived in an unblemished happiness.

Let us go back 20,000 years in time from the final day of Bantorra Library, from the day of the second world destruction.

During that time there were still few people in the world, and they lived together in the center of the continent, in the warm region that would later become the Principality of Meliot and Rona.

People's lives were simple. Their houses were made out of unglazed bricks. The only things they had to eat were barley gruel, flat bread and some soup. They would only eat meat and fruits when they could find them.

They wore dull linen clothes. They had neither jewelry nor gold, and the only thing that decorated women was beautiful pebbles and feathers that they could find. Speaking of entertainment, there was only the troupe of travelling performers known as the Singers that visited the villages.

If people of the later age that celebrated prosperity and knew of electricity and the steam engine were to see that period, perhaps they would think of their lives as shabby.

Perhaps they would even disdain them and claim that it was the Age of Paradise only in name.

But they should look at the faces of people who lived then. They would probably see unbelievable comfort there.

They were much more blessed than ordinary citizens of the later age. Since

they had no need to worry about their future meals, they never knew about hard labor.

They were always calmer than the nobles. Since they had no property they weren't afraid to lose it. They had no need to display themselves or their wealth.

There were no crimes or wars. There was no envy, opposition or discrimination. People of later periods could never understand or imagine it; there was true peace there. It was true peace because they could live without fearing that peace would crumble.

During the Age of Paradise there was a being that guided people. He was called the Future Overseer Orntorra. He was the World Overseer that gave people their proper future.

Orntorra was invisible to the eye. Even by straining one's ears you couldn't hear him. Even by looking around the world no one could ever find him. Yet he undoubtedly existed.

For example, on the dinner table of a certain household there were the best grapes from that year's harvest. For the three children there their taste was happiness that couldn't be compared to anything. They ate them one by one. However, they wondered if they weren't wasting them.

At that time, Orntorra spoke to the children. It was neither a human voice nor Thought Sharing, but simply a mysterious feeling that created understanding without any sort of transmission.

'The eldest brother has eaten six pieces so far. The middle brother has eaten seven and the youngest sister five. From now on, if the eldest eats three, the middle two and the youngest four it will be equal, but as a big brother he should pass his share to his younger siblings.'

The elder brother listened to Orntorra. He felt pride as an older brother that his younger siblings had a taste of delicacy.

Orntorra whispered only about small matters. He said what was needed to compromise in a married couple's disputes or he would find common ground between quarrels of villages so that none of them would end up with losses.

He taught humility to the strong and encouraged the weak.

Orntorra whispered about commonplace, ordinary matters. However, repeatedly accumulating these small matters created a paradise.

The later era and the Age of Paradise – the amount of happiness in each one couldn't be compared, because every person was happy. However, if you brought the people living then to the later age, they would have all shuddered and despaired.

The later times were a terrifying age. As deplorable as hell itself.

Let us proceed a bit further in time. It was about 3000 years before present time.

The world was as peaceful as always, but looking carefully one could sense omens of unrest.

Those who had plenty and those who had little were divided. What they possessed were decorations, luxury, food and land. Those who were rich scoffed at those who were poor who were jealous of them. Men sent vulgar gazes at the women and the women enjoyed it.

At some point people learned the pleasures of alcohol. They also began smoking grass. They did it despite it disturbing their normal mentality and harming them. They did it despite Orntorra not teaching them about it.

Please stop. Even when Orntorra whispered them this, they didn't listen. It wasn't like the world would stop being a paradise just by turning their backs to his orders once.

They only lived once. Wasn't having fun the most important thing? Thinking so, they forgot all about Orntorra's proper future.

Let us advance time further. It was about 2000 years before present time.

While people of later ages knew these well, they were things unfamiliar to the people from the Age of Paradise:

Crime. War. Nations. Races. Opposition and discrimination.

Using all sorts of frauds, people who referred to themselves as kings possessed much too fortune to be used by a single person and even took hold

of people's lives. Those known as aristocrats took care of the leftovers.

Some worked by stealing with whatever tricks they could. They would take away everything from people who had earnestly worked without stealing.

Some diverted the pain in their hearts by hitting other people. Some showed their strength by oppressing other people.

Everyone already forgot about the existence of Orntorra. Even though he was part of their knowledge, they thought of him as a distant being irrelevant to them. Even when they heard his voice none would lend him their ears and at some point they became unable to hear him without noticing.

One day after this continued for several hundred years...

It happened.

The place was the capital of the Meliot Kingdom that ruled the world back then. In its middle was the tall, large tower that held the king's throne. Its eleventh floor which was the summit started suddenly shining. At first the people thought this was the king's power. However, when they saw what fell from the very top they all raised cries of fear. The king's corpse and his dazzling throne were thrown away as if mere trash.

There were winged women within the light. They were unbelievably detailed silver statues. These seven angels all held a different strange tool in their hands. A sword patterned like a spider; a dagger shaped like a caterpillar; the sculpture of a crouching fairy; a cup with the face of a monkey carved on it... All of them were unfamiliar tools.

This is a digression, but these seven tools will end up being called the Memorial Weapons later. They were all first brought to this world at the time. Since it was impossible to read the happenings of the Age of Paradise from Books, information about the Memorial Weapons or the Creator Deity were only passed along by word of mouth. There were many mistakes in the tradition, and since the Armed Librarians fabricated history the legend of the Memorial Weapons was passed along wrongly.

The seven angels with their seven Weapons overlooked the crowds. Their faces were beautiful and noble, yet their gazes were full of murderous intent.

At that time, Orntorra's voice reverberated through the heads of all people living in the world. He spoke in a strong tone of voice that no one in history has ever heard before.

'I am very disappointed.'

There was great anger hidden beneath these words.

'Orntorra has decided to use violence in order to lead people to the proper future. The seven Punishment Angels will destroy all rebels from now on. And on the days to come, when the world is paradise no more, Orntorra will send forward the Beasts of the Final Chapter.'

The Beasts of the Final Chapter. When people of the world heard this name they understood what form they would take, how terrible they would be and how strong they would be. They knew they couldn't do anything with human power. This was the power of Orntorra to grant understanding without any transmission.

'There is still a fragment of paradise in this world. When that disappears this world will be heaven no more. That will be the end of the world. Until that day, at least live correctly.'

Saying just this, Orntorra's voice disappeared. The seven angels also rose to the sky and vanished somewhere.

People started crying. None of them could do anything but cry. When the Beasts of the Final Chapter arrive everyone would definitely die. If the sun comes down from the heavens there would be no survivors. If it never rains again nobody would survive. They could understand this.

They realized that the power of the Beasts of the Final Chapter was synonymous to that.

The people kept crying sorrowfully.

A year passed. A lone man stood in the plaza of the royal capital. He covered his face with a hood and wore a cloak all over his body. He raised his fist and shouted a speech. Since everyone lost their wills to live, no one lent their ears to him. The man kept talking as if knowing no rest.

“The world will not be destroyed! If people combine their powers we can defeat even the Beasts of the Final Chapter!”

This incorrigible speech kept going for long, and gradually more people assembled. However, everyone all looked at him with pitying eyes. They all thought he lost his sanity from grief and was caught by delusions.

“What we need are 100,000 warriors! If everyone expends their powers to obtain Magic Rights we will surely gather 100,000 warriors!

What we need are the seven Weapons possessed by the Angels! If we gather brave warriors and resourceful tacticians we will be able to slay them!”

People were somewhat interested in this man who spoke with too much confidence. However, they were discouraged by his following words.

“And what we need are the Books of 100,000 warriors!”

That was impossible. People’s souls became Books and were then stored at Bantorra Library. People couldn’t touch Books. Bantorra Library which gathered Books blocked the approach of humans using the vast ocean, the deep labyrinth and a barrier employing the erasure of causality. Human powers couldn’t compete against the Librarian Angels who dug out Books. There was no way for anyone to get their hands on the Books of humans.

“How can we get Books?!”

“Even I do not know how to get Books. But there must be some way!”

“How can you tell?”

“Because I have seen it!”

The man raised his hood. Beneath it he had mottled hair in the colors of white, black and brown – meaning calico-colored hair. This was proof of the power everyone thought of as a legend, the power to predict the future.

“I have seen it! When people gather the Books of 100,000 warriors and obtain the seven Weapons, a single hero will appear!”

No one ridiculed him anymore.

“The hero’s name is Ruruta! Ruruta Coozancoona! The transparent-haired

savior Ruruta will appear.

I have seen him fighting against the Beasts of the Final Chapter!

Gather the Books of 100,000 warriors and the seven Weapons! If you do then the savior Ruruta will definitely bring about a miracle!”

The people cheered. A new era began. An era where people staked their lives fighting against the Gods began.

Let us move even further in time.

“...Kh.”

Someone's calling. Thinking this, Hihak Yammo slightly opened his eyes.

“Hihak, you dead?! If not then stand up!”

Someone was calling him. *What is it, I want to sleep.* Thinking this, Hihak Yammo tried closing his eyes again.

The next instant he jumped up. A spear fell at his feet. He picked it up and looked around him.

There were more than 100 soldiers around. He could hear the sounds of spears cutting through air and the explosive roars of Magic. There were angry roars, shrieks and death throes.

Oh yeah. I was fighting. Fighting for Ruruta, for the world, to gain the seven Weapons. Hihak grasped his spear and ran ahead while enduring the pain in his head.

He was a thin man of about thirty. He was short, his face was narrow, his eyes were drooping, and even from his thin lips no strength could be felt. Yet even someone like him had to fight in order to save the world.

This was 1928 and a few months before the present. Using later terminology, it was the year 1 BC of human history.

Hihak Yammo and the other soldiers were in the area that later came to be known as the Mamelia Region of the western part of Rona.

The soldiers all wore bronze armors and shields with linen clothes underneath. Their shields were small and the armor was barely able to cover

the area around their heads and chests. Although not very reliable, this was the best equipment of the era.

Their weapons were spears with only bronze tips. There were also people who wielded poles that didn't even have any sort of blades attached to them.

“Don't let the formation collapse! Surround it, surround it!”

Only the commander wore an iron helmet. He kept shouting to the soldiers from behind.

“You have to defeat it, do it!”

They all pointed their spears at a statue shaped like an angel. It was the statue of a beautiful woman, made of silver that made it seem as if her entire body was shining. She wore a thin cloth made transparent by light and silver wings grew from her back. She held two strange cups in her left hand.

She was a Punishment Angel sent by the Future Overseer Orntorra. The final one.

The female statue surrounded by soldiers tried flying to the sky to escape. However, soldiers who jumped into the air pursued her. Her shining, silver body was cruelly wounded. Another concentrated attack came when she had collapsed.

However, the Punishment Angel still kept moving.

The cornered Angel raised a voice that couldn't be heard.

[Magic Beasts of the Final Chapter summon first section Jail King Snake Lancer Iron Jaw Mouse Elephant Soldier]

The soldiers tensed up. A black mud was born at the angel's feet. It took the form of terrifying Magic Beasts. The produced Beasts assaulted the soldiers one after the other. Only one section of the Beasts of the Final Chapter had been called out. In a few years enough of them would be summoned to cover the entire land.

The commander shouted at the agitated soldiers.

“Don't falter! Shout our savior's name!”

“Yeah!”

The soldiers responded to their commander’s voice. They all shouted out.

“Ruruta Coozancoona!”

“Ruruta Coozancoona!”

“Our savior, hope of mankind, our Ruruta Coozancoona!”

These words inspired the soldiers. They stopped the attacks of the summoned Beasts with their shields and stabbed them with their spears from behind. They feared neither the Jail King Snake’s acid nor the large body of the Elephant Soldier.

However, the Magic Beasts had great powers. The number of soldiers reduced.

The Punishment Angel launched further attacks against them.

[Exercising Final Punishment Privilege activating causality erasure ability name: Binding Song executing]

The Punishment Angel’s right hand that hasn’t moved so far now moved. Her slim finger pointed at the commander’s chest. The next instant he grabbed his chest, turned a somersault and collapsed.

The causality erasing ability Binding Song. It was the Punishment Angels’ strongest power. They could unconditionally kill the person they were pointing at with their fingers.

“You cursed Angel!”

Even after losing their commander the soldiers’ morale didn’t go down. They swung their spears and kept raising shouts.

“Ruruta does not fear anything!”

“Ruruta will never falter!”

“Ruruta will never be defeated!”

“All of us will become like Ruruta! All of us will become like Ruruta!”

As if their very words themselves imbedded them with magical energy, the

soldiers kept shouting Ruruta's name. Everyone went on dying merrily, all the while calling his name.

An hour passed. There were only five soldiers left. However, all of the Beasts of the Final Chapter were annihilated and even the Punishment Angel was wounded. Hihak was also among the five left.

Amongst them Hihak's abilities were mediocre. There was no other reason to his survival except luck.

The remaining five soldiers gathered and aimed to kill the Angel. One of them then spoke.

"Just a bit more. Only one of us needs to survive. If we defeat this Angel and bring the Weapon back to Ruruta it'll be our win. If one of us survives it's our win!"

"Yeah!"

The comrades responded with their eyes glittering.

"...Y-yeah."

Hihak also responded in a delay.

The weakest among the five soldiers began a reckless attack. The Punishment Angel pointed at his heart and killed him.

"Keep going!"

He put his life on the line as a decoy. While he would be killed the remaining four people will attack. Even the Angel dulled in its movements; it wasn't impossible for them to destroy her before she moved her finger. The soldiers pursued her and the Angel withdrew.

Hihak was the last in line of the four. The Angel pointed her fingers at them in the order of proximity to her and they died.

"Ruruta, save the world!"

The man who was running foremost died. Three people remained.

"Ruruta, please take my Boo..."

He died before he finished talking. Two people were left.

“Win, Ruruta, win!”

As another soldier died Hihak was left all alone.

With another step he would be able to reach the Punishment Angel. If he stepped and hit he would be able to cut apart the Angel. It was extremely tight whether or not he would make it in time.

If he had stepped ahead with no hesitation he would have probably made it in time. But Hihak did hesitate. The Punishment Angel raised her finger.

“R-Ruru-ta...”

It was a listless murmur. The Angel’s finger moved slowly. Hihak threw his spear away and turned his back. He raised a wail and ran away.

[Wicked beings, exterminated punishment over]

He heard the Angel’s voice from behind. Even so Hihak kept running. He left behind the corpses of the hundred soldiers who had fought for Ruruta, who had fought to save the world.

“...You idiot.”

Spat out Vooekisal, the Unified Salvation Chief. Standing in front of him Hihak Yammo merely bit his lips.

This was ten days after the fight with the Punishment Angel. Hihak returned to the royal capital in the western part of the Meliot Kingdom. It was obvious that a trial would wait for him.

They were in the large tower at the middle of the capital. The judge was the man in front of him. His name was Vooekisal Meliot, the King of Meliot. He was a distant relative of the king killed by the Punishment Angels before.

He was a young man with eyes like a hawk. He was as scary as his features indicated – no, much more than that. His ability to rule the populace was incomparable with previous kings. His will to lead the people was stronger than anyone in the world.

Also, since he was severe in reprimanding cowards, Hihak felt no relief for being alive.

“Being unable to get the seventh Weapon is not improbable. However, shamelessly coming back here alive is unthinkable.

Do you understand? This world is now heading for the annihilation decided by the Future Overseer. We must obtain the seven Memorial Weapons in order to defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter.”

Hihak bit his lips. Blood spurted from within the gaps of his teeth. He knew it. He understood it, but had still lost himself to fear and ran away.

“There is no way I don’t realize that.”

“You were supposed to have taken an oath before your departure. You were supposed to live, fight and die for Ruruta’s sake. How will you defend yourself?”

He couldn’t. Living for Ruruta was a matter of course. Dying for Ruruta was the goal of all people. Being of use to Ruruta was the greatest virtue and having your Book Eaten by him and become a part of him was the greatest honor.

Looking at this from the moral viewpoint of the later age would be wrong. If Ruruta was defeated without being able to accomplish anything there would be no one in the world to survive.

Hihak wanted to squirm with regret. Why had he survived? Did he not realize what would happen afterwards?

“Call the barrier troops. After going through torture of the highest degree he will be executed.”

Vooekisal said naturally. Even Hihak realized that would happen.

“...A-at the very least...”

“Oh, it seems like you want to say something.”

Vooekisal’s face twisted and he sneered at him.

“Can you give Ruruta... give Ruruta my Book to Eat?”

“...Ka...ha!”

Vooekisal burst into laughter.

“Being eaten by Ruruta and becoming part of him is the proof of a hero, does the man here think he is a hero?!”

With his lips trembling, Hihak persisted.

“But my power might become of use to Ruruta, so please at least let it become part of him.”

“Become of use to him? You idiot. Show us your power here.”

Hihak invoked his Magic Right while trembling all over. His body morphed. His torso became a tree trunk, his arms turned into branches and his body hair into leaves. Hihak’s ability was to turn his body into a tree. It obviously had no use for battle. He had originally tried to obtain the power to control plants, but it ended in failure.

“What a stupid power! It is completely useless! Enough! Just seeing it is disgusting! Just get out of here, drop dead somewhere! You can just bury your Book in the ground and disappear!”

Vooekisal ranted about how he couldn’t even bear to look at him. However, words whispered from behind stopped him.

“Wait.”

He said but one word. However, everyone who was there prostrated on the floor faster than they could think.

At some point he was at Vooekisal’s back. The boy had a naked torso with a cloth wrapped around his waist and his lean and thin body seemed to be glowing in the dark room. He had transparent hair that reached to his back and an ivy-patterned tattoo engraved on his shoulders.

He was the world’s savior, humanity’s last hope.

The Book-Eater Ruruta Coozancoona was there.

“Ruruta. Have you woken up?”

Vooekisal said. He was the savior of the world but Vooekisal didn’t use any titles. It was because saying Ruruta’s very name was the greatest of honors towards him.

“A bit earlier.”

His eyes seemed to be looking at Vooekisal yet also seemed to be not looking

anywhere. One couldn't judge his intentions from that expression.

"I beg your pardon, Ruruta, but you are the world's sole hope. You should not be wasting your time and efforts on commoners like us."

Vooekisal said. Ruruta seemed like he heard him but also like he heard nothing.

"Right. Let us make it short. Don't kill that man... don't kill Hihak."

Everyone including Hihak was astonished. Hihak himself was probably the most surprised. Governing the populace was left to the King of Meliot Vooekisal. Ruruta seldom interrupted him. Yet now he even told him to spare such a useless person...

"We cannot! That man has shamelessly deserted..."

"I'm saying that I need him. Is there anything else?"

Ruruta calmed down the Vooekisal's argument with a few words. Was he so impressive due to his powers that far surpassed that of humans or due to something indescribable that he possessed inherently?

"When will the next campaign to obtain the seventh Memorial Weapon start?"

Ruruta inquired.

"Gathering the remaining warriors, procuring weapons and armor, identifying the position of the Punishment Angel... they should be able to head out in a month."

"Let Hihak take part in that fight. Give him another chance."

"...Ah... un...derstood."

Hihak simply kept prostrating in front of Ruruta while not having a single clue about why he had saved him.

"Hihak."

He never thought Ruruta would talk to him. He was so stunned no voice came out.

"You are strong. And you can become stronger. For the following month you

will see Ruruta. You will come to know Ruruta and understand his strength.”

“...A-ah.”

He couldn't even answer properly. Even just having Ruruta speak to him was an honor. He couldn't believe that he had gotten so many words out of him.

“If you understand why I'm strong you will be able to become stronger. One month. I will wait no more than that.”

Since Hihak was prostrating he couldn't notice, but it seemed that Ruruta left the room at some point.

Vooekisal rose before he did. He looked at Hihak disgustingly.

“...I have no idea what that person's thinking about.”

Hihak too couldn't understand. He couldn't think of even a single reason for him to be saved.

Part 2

Hihak left the royal tower and got on his way back home. Next to him was his son who would become seven years old that year. His name was Carloy. The father and son lived all by themselves.

“What happened, dad?”

Carloy said as he looked at his father’s face. Hihak was supposed to say his eternal goodbyes to him.

“Your dad ended up needing to come back. I’ve received orders from Ruruta and Vooekisal-sama. So I’m back.”

He lied to Carloy. He realized that such a lie would immediately be found out. However, right now he hadn’t the courage to tell his son the truth.

That was the kind of man Hihak was.

“...I see.”

Even Carloy could probably tell what sort of a person his father was. Yet he said nothing. They were a parent and child with no emotional connection. There was no way such a pathetic father would make his child connect to him.

“We weren’t able to get the seventh Memorial Weapon.”

“...If I was there we would’ve definitely gotten it. Since we’re going again in a month we will definitely get it. Once we do, Ruruta’s victory will be certain.”

He was bluffing. But didn’t Ruruta say this? He said that Hihak was strong. And that he could become stronger. So saying this much shouldn’t matter.

“ ... ”

Carloy made no response.

Suddenly he stopped walking. They could hear a roaring sound like a volcano from afar. From the far reaches of the northern skies.

“It’s Ruruta.”

Carloy was the one to mutter this. Both father and child lined up and looked

up to the north.

Intermittent red lights blinked and the ground shook after a delay.

Ruruta was probably using explosive Magic. It was his usual training in preparation for the day of battle.

Ruruta made the Magic Rights of the Books he had Eaten his own. Already more than 30,000 warriors gave up their lives and became Books. All of their Magic Rights became Ruruta's.

Humans could obviously not become his sparring partners. Ruruta crushed mountains, boiled the sea, and erased the earth to polish his battle techniques.

“If you understand why I'm strong you will be able to become stronger.”

So he had said. What did he mean? Hihak could tell how strong Ruruta was just by seeing the red lights. He was obviously strong due to being the world's savior. He was a different sort of being from Hihak in his very nature.

“What did he mean...”

The more he looked at it the more he could see the overwhelming gap between them. There was no way he could become strong.

The next day, Vooekisal's aide visited Hihak. He told him to go and see Ruruta.

“Were these his words?”

He asked, but...

“No, it is simply Ruruta's intention that you go see him.”

The aide answered with a cold voice. He immediately left as if saying that he hated even seeing his face.

Leaving Carloy behind, Hihak once again came to the royal tower. In the courtyard there was a place surrounded by rows of trees and fences. This was Ruruta's training spot, and originally people like Hihak wouldn't be allowed to enter. However, one of the gate guards today indicated for him to enter using his chin.

Inside the training grounds were Ruruta, Vooekisal and an old woman.

“Lascall Othello.”

Hihak muttered. It was his first time seeing that person, but he had heard about the stone dagger. Lascall was in the form of an old woman, but was merely borrowing the body of a dead person. Lascall Othello's true identity was rather that of the stone dagger.

Hihak didn't know much about Lascall. It seemed that he was in this world from even before Ruruta or Hihak were born. He was a being that produced Books for humans and gave Books to Ruruta.

If Lascall Othello hadn't been there, no Books would have ever reached Ruruta. Meaning there would be no chance to save the world. Just like Ruruta, Lascall was indispensable to saving the world.

However, his origins were shrouded in mystery.

"Do you really plan on eating 99 people?"

Vooekisal said. Ruruta looked at him with his usual calm face that hid his determination.

"Even your Book-Eating power is not flawless. Eating that many Books would be too dangerous."

"They all staked their lives for my sake. And in exchange I will risk my own; there is nothing else to do."

On the ground were 99 Books. All of them danced in the air, floating around Ruruta.

"As I thought, it's dangerous..."

Said Vooekisal, but he had no authority to stop Ruruta.

"If I were to die here, defeating the Beasts of the Final Chapter would be impossible to begin with."

In a split second the Books all shattered to pieces. Turning to fine dust, the Books were being absorbed into Ruruta's body. After having finished Eating all of them, he stood in place for a while with his eyes closed.

"...!"

Ruruta's body fell to the ground. The next instant, he jumped away from

Vooekisal and the rest like an arrow.

“Dear me, have you perhaps pushed yourself too hard?”

Lascall spoke in a vaguely enjoyable tone. Vooekisal pursued Ruruta.

“Don’t get close! You’ll get caught up in it!”

Ruruta shouted. The next instant, he grabbed his own throat and gasped for breath. His body began heavily trembling. Invisible explosions began appearing midair and phenomena such as light orbs, lightning strikes and fire or ice attacks began being emitted from his body.

“What is happening...?”

Hihak asked Vooekisal, but he didn’t answer. Lascall spoke instead.

“He is unable to control his Magic Rights. 99 measly Books would not make his Imaginary Entrails yield, but his Magic Rights are another matter entirely.”

Lightning shot from Ruruta’s back scorched Hihak’s leg. The rampaging power also hurt Ruruta himself.

“Ruruta-sama has to control his Magic Rights with his own power. Furthermore, both his body and his mind have already surpassed their limits of fatigue.”

Hihak had never heard of this. He thought that one could simply gain power by eating a Book and be done with it.

“However, he still is able to survive. That is why he is Ruruta-sama.”

Ruruta’s shaking gradually settled down. And he also began controlling the rampaging Magic Rights. He removed his hands from his throat and collapsed to the ground. Vooekisal grabbed his body and took him to the tower.

“Just as expected.”

“...I think so too.”

Hihak watched Ruruta and the rest leave. Ruruta had not only an inborn Magic Right and talent, but also had the ability to study and endeavor.

“Hihak-sama. You have been told to understand why Ruruta-sama is strong. So, are you able to grasp it now?”

Lascall turned around to face Hihak. For some reason, he had the feeling that he didn't respect Ruruta. Even the fact that he addressed him as "sama" felt not like honor but merely to make a fool of him.

"...I can't understand why Ruruta's strong... Can you, Lascall-sama?"

"Well then... such a lowly servant as myself can in no way understand such things."

Lascall said curtly.

However, there was something Hihak did realize that day.

Until now, he thought of Ruruta as a perfect and elegant being that knew of neither suffering nor pain. But that was wrong; he gained his strength through training and efforts. He endured great pain and undertook great challenges.

Hihak himself knew he had to grow stronger as well. He had to exert much more effort from now on.

However, he thought, I'm already past thirty. Undergoing the Magical Deliberation to obtain a Magic Right can only be done until one's twenties. No amount of effort would help me now.

Hihak didn't know what to do. How could he become stronger?

Inside the royal tower, warriors were conducting their Magic Deliberation. Their number has considerably decreased from before. Most of them had been Eaten by Ruruta or had alternatively pursued the Memorial Weapons and died. Those who gathered there were the best of the best.

Hihak paced aimlessly among them.

They were all uniformly directing cold gazes at him. It seemed that both him deserting under enemy fire as well as what Ruruta said later became well-known.

Suddenly he looked to one of the rooms.

Inside were gathered people in their teens to their early twenties. In the middle of their circle was the statue of a girl with wings. This was one of the six Memorial Weapons currently in their possession, the Spinning Doll Ücküç. It was originally a tool with the power to deprive people of their Magic Rights.

They modified it to serve as a tool bundling the Magic Rights of people together.

“Start.”

A man who seemed to be the supervisor said and they began the Magic Deliberation.

They were warriors of a much higher position than Hihak, but they haven't participated in the fight against the Punishment Angel. They would probably not take part in the next campaign as well. They had a different role.

“...G-gahhh...”

As soon as the Magic Deliberation started, a single boy started scratching his head. His Deliberation was a failure; he came too close to chaos. The supervisor dragged him away, held his body and made him drink water. Hihak also hurriedly helped him.

“You're done for today. Everyone else, keep going.”

“No! Please let me do it! For a bit longer!”

The agonized boy tried crawling back to position.

“Stop, it's dangerous!”

The supervisor tried pushing him. However, the boy clenched his teeth and spoke.

“No, I won't. Just a bit more and the power we offer to Ruruta will be complete!”

“But you're at your limits already.”

“Today's critical. All ten of us don't fear death!”

Pushed off by their vigor, Hihak gave up. The boy returned to the circle and continued his Magic Deliberation.

They were attempting to create a Grand Magic that could revive people. They were trying to obtain a Magic Right that would let them automatically revive once after dead. They would store that Magic Right inside Ücküek and transfer it to Ruruta. When he had first heard of it Hihak thought that realizing such a

Magic would be impossible. However, right now these youths were trying to make the impossible a reality.

“...Gyyyaaaahhh!!!”

The boy who collapsed before now screamed again. The supervisor shook his head. He was already beyond any help. However, none of the other youths lost even an ounce of their concentration.

Another boy and another collapsed. The supervisor and Hihak helped them. When only six people remained, the supervisor forcibly picked up Ückück and stopped the Magic Deliberation.

Everyone began crying. The fact they'd lost some of their comrades was not the reason; they lamented the fact their Magic was not completed. Some of them even pressed the supervisor to let them continue.

“The last day approaches. If we lose because we weren't able to make it in time we will all die.”

“Go and rest. Tomorrow... we'll definitely do it tomorrow!”

Hihak felt alienated in that room dominated by enthusiasm and a sense of duty. On one side were these boys who feared nothing and had no doubts and on the other was him, someone who didn't even know where to go and what to do. What was the difference between them?

Even though they are trying their best to this extent, just what am I doing?

Looking outside the tower's window down to the training ground, Hihak could see Ruruta's figure. He was engaged in something there. It looked like he was moving his arms repeatedly, but he couldn't tell what he was doing. As he looked, Vooekisal's aide passed right next to him. Although he was timid he tried talking to him. What was Ruruta doing? After he asked, the aide surprisingly answered pleasantly.

“He's training his precision movements. He uses wheat grains and needles. He then throws one grain in the air like that.”

He gestured with his hands. It looked like throwing a grain of wheat into the air with his left hand and then cutting it with the needle in his right hand.

“He cuts them hundreds of times in the air. In order not to break the grains he needs to weakly scrape them off with the needle. He repeats this hundreds of times.”

Hihak was struck with admiration. Ruruta possessed not just enough destructive power needed to shave off mountaintops, but also had terrifying precision and speed.

“Ruruta’s physical abilities keep rising from the Magic Rights of the Books he Eats. He can’t control his body well right after eating. That’s why he’s doing this training.”

Ruruta’s right hand moved in a speed invisible to the naked eye. The wind pressure it created reached all the way to them. A cut ran through Hihak’s skin as if he was struck by a blade of vacuum.

“I have never seen Ruruta take a break. He only sleeps for a little while once every few days. Day after day he knows no repose.”

What a difference from me, admired Hihak.

“No, but there was one time...”

Vooekisal’s aide mumbled at that time. He seemed like he was about to say something then stopped.

“Is something the matter?”

“Nothing. Do you think that doubting Ruruta would be forgiven for you?”

“No, I have never... but what did you...”

“There is no need for you to know of that.”

Leaving these words behind, the aide went away.

He couldn’t really understand it, but it seemed like something happened to Ruruta in the past. More importantly he should think about himself.

Seeing Ruruta only made him aware of the overwhelming gap between them. He hadn’t the slightest idea what to do with himself from now on. *Time to go home,* thought Hihak. *Perhaps I’ll think of something good tomorrow. Thinking tomorrow should be fine, right?* He thought and went back home.

He took a meal like always and put Carloy to sleep. Leaving the bedroom, Hihak went outside to look at the moon. He thought of the future while looking at it.

He already knew how to become strong; what he lacked was a strong mind. A mind that would let him make great efforts, a mind that would not be disheartened, a mind that would not be afraid. His ability to become a tree was useless, but even in comparison to the other soldiers his bodily reinforcement Magic as well as sword and spear techniques were not inferior at all. Even in the fight against the Punishment Angel he would've won had he not faltered.

What should he do? How could he obtain a strong mind like that of Ruruta's? Hihak kept thinking. However, he went back to bed without having any idea.

I can just think of it tomorrow. I will definitely have a good idea tomorrow.

He always, always thought the he would become stronger the following day, and spent his days like this. When tomorrow comes he would definitely postpone it yet again. His "tomorrow" would not come for decades.

When Hihak had already drifted to sleep Ruruta finally finished his training. He flew in the sky and returned to his bedroom on the topmost floor of the royal tower. He opened the door attached to the wall made for him and entered the room.

"I am glad you have returned safely. Here is your meal."

Looking at the person who came inside, Ruruta spoke.

"Is something wrong? Surely you don't have such a lack of manpower that you need to personally serve me meals."

Vooekisal was in his bedroom. Ruruta quickly ate the meal he had brought him. That meal was the same as that of commoners – barley gruel and some slightly salted meat. Ruruta normally restrained himself from having luxurious meals.

"I have something to ask you about. It is about Hihak..."

"Is something the matter with him?"

"Nothing in particular."

“Don’t come with meaningless topics for conversations. I am busy.”

Ruruta finished eating in no time flat. He called his aides to massage his tired body. They applied medicine to his wounds and checked there was nothing wrong with his body. For Ruruta even resting was a battle. He had to heal his fatigue and wounds in preparation for tomorrow’s training.

“Why did you need to save Hihak? I simply cannot understand it.”

“Is such a thing so important for you? Just how much free time do you have?”

Ruruta spoke bluntly.

“If it is important to you, then I must act as well.

Is his ability – changing his own body to the form of a tree – so important?”

“No such thing. If I needed his ability I would have let him die there and Ate his Book. He himself wanted it. In the first place how is that ability useful?”

“If you keep the form of a tree you can live for thousands of years...”

“The battle with the Beasts of the Final Chapter will come in several months. Winning there is everything. If it’s not useful it’s meaningless.”

“That is true, but...”

“He is nothing, just a simple man. There is no reason for you to care about him.”

“Then, Ruruta, why have you saved him?”

Ruruta abruptly made a small sigh.

“You wouldn’t understand it. You wouldn’t get it no matter how much you think about it. You, at least.”

Saying this, Ruruta had Vooekisal leave.

That night, Hihak had a dream. *Oh, not this dream again*, he shook in dread.

This was the dream commonly known as Orntorra’s Whisper. Everyone in the world had it about once every month. It was shown to humans by the one who sent forth the Punishment Angels and the Beasts of the Final Chapter to destroy the world – Orntorra.

“...W-waaah...”

In this vague dream world Hihak was all alone and the Beasts of the Final Chapter were surging from afar. Even just a few of them would result in a tough fight, but there were millions, tens of millions, no – an infinite number of them rushing at him.

Hihak held his spear and ran away. He couldn't even consider fighting; it was like trying to extinguish an active volcano using a cup of water. Or like trying to stop a tsunami using a single sliding door.

The running Hihak was caught by the Beasts and held down. He was promptly ripped to pieces and died.

Orntorra showed him that dream to make him surrender. To make him realize that fighting was useless and to give up on living.

Hihak woke up. His body was covered in cold sweat. Just like a dead person.

“...Haah, haah, haah...”

He was made to understand every time he had seen this dream: the Beasts were far too strong. He didn't think even Ruruta would be able to beat them.

Ruruta should have also seen this dream countless of times. And yet he lived without fearing the Beasts, without doubting his victory and without losing his way. How could he do that? Hihak just couldn't understand him.

How could he become stronger? How could he obtain a strong heart? He remained clueless and the only thing to progress was time.

After three weeks Hihak was summoned by Vooekisal. He kept racking his brains throughout all of this time, yet looking from the side it would seem as if he merely ate, slept, and wasted his time.

“Have you become strong like Ruruta wished for you to?”

Vooekisal said. Hihak couldn't think of any way to talk himself out of it, so he spoke in a choked voice. Vooekisal then spoke without hiding the contempt in his voice.

“Hmm, so you're the only exception of Ruruta's discerning eyes... but...”

He looked at Hihak with his hawk-like eyes.

“This is not the reason I have called you here today. This is another matter entirely. A moderately strong warrior is needed. Take this.”

Hihak was handed a sword. It was a bizarre sword with a hilt shaped like a spider and a blade as thin as a thread.

“Is that... no way...”

“Yes, it is one of the seven Memorial Weapons, the Ever-Laughing Magic Blade Shlamuffen. Learn how to use it for this day only.”

Hihak further inquired to what he needed to do with it.

“Including you idiot I have gathered four warriors. I will have you lot help with Ruruta’s training. You will use four of the Weapons to fight against him.”

Hihak felt chills down his spine. Even if he were to use Shlamuffen he wouldn’t last a single second against Ruruta.

“No, Ruruta has said that he will not make any offensive move. You will all launch attacks at him and he will simply evade all of them barehanded.”

Hihak felt yet another chill. What if they by chance ended up killing Ruruta? It seemed like Vooekisal was afraid of that possibility as well.

“I also told him that. I said that he should refrain from any dangerous conduct. However, since Ruruta has resolved himself to do it I shall obey. There is no other choice.”

“...”

“Ruruta also said that he wouldn’t forgive you going easy on him even a little bit.”

Hihak received the Magic Blade while trembling all over. He was afraid of killing Ruruta with his attack much more than his own death.

The following day, the training took place in the desert at very edge of the world. Hihak and the other warriors were brought there by Ruruta. Everyone had a gloomy countenance, but Ruruta ordered them to attack regardless of their anxiousness.

Their fear of killing Ruruta turned out to be needless. None of them was even able to see his movements. He ran at a speed far beyond what their eyes could follow and danced in the sky. Far from simply pointing the blade at him, Hihak had no idea where to attack.

“This isn’t fit for training.”

Ruruta said. Hihak and the rest were relieved. However, Ruruta then spoke other terrifying words.

“I will not move from here. You all attack me however you’d like.”

He stood atop the sand.

None of them moved. All of the four warriors froze in place with the four Memorial Weapons in their hands.

Hihak was holding the Ever-Laughing Magic Blade Shlamuffen. Although imperfect, the sword could enact attacks that erased causality as well as an assault of countless slashes that would rip apart anything and everything.

Another was the Ever-Crying Magic Blade Acharai. It worked on the same principle as Shlamuffen but had less power.

Besides these two swords were three other Weapons superior to them. They were the Dark Club Gmork, the Colorful Sand Battleship Graógramán and the Rhythmic Barrier Uyulála.

Dark Club Gmork was a simple bludgeon covered in a black fog. One could ascertain its shape by touch, but its real form was invisible. It was said that those who see it directly would become blind. It could smash the earth using a large, invisible blow.

The Colorful Sand Battleship Graógramán was shaped like countless iron scraps the size of a dagger assembled together. It moved according to its owner’s will and could change its form. That ship was like a flying fortress.

“...I will not use the Rhythmic Barrier. I will only defend using my own power.”

The fifth Memorial Weapon – Rhythmic Barrier Uyulála – was the pattern tattooed to Ruruta’s shoulders. It possessed defensive capabilities of the causality-erasing kind. He would always activate this invincible and absolute

defense unless he had no intention to fight.

In addition, the sixth Memorial Weapon – Spinning Doll Ückück – was not there on account of it being useless in direct battle. Adding the seventh Memorial Weapon which Hihak had failed to retrieve, these were all the weapons they needed.

Also, the Passed Stone Blade Yor did not count among the seven Memorial Weapons. Vooekisal had told him this but he didn't really understand why. A little while ago it should have been counted though.

“Come at me now.”

The warriors shook their heads to the side.

“I can't, I'm too afraid, my hands won't move...”

“Do it. Don't be afraid.”

“But...”

Ruruta rebuked them.

“Ruruta does not fear anything. Ruruta will never falter. So Ruruta will never be defeated.

Believe in me. If you have the will to believe you should be able to attack.”

After a short while of silence, Acharai's crying voice reverberated. Also, Graógramán took a dense offensive formation, and the destructive hammer of Gmork was unleashed. Hihak, despite being a step late, invoked Shlamuffen's power.

Ruruta swung both hands. A black wave drowned the attacks of Shlamuffen and Acharai; Countless giant needles rose from the ground to intercept Graógramán; Gmork's attack, enough to make the ground collapse, was repelled using a single fist.

“A spiritless attack. Do you still not believe in Ruruta?”

There was some anger in his calm words. The warriors lost their tempers hearing them.

The fight lasted all night. But the one to give up wasn't Ruruta but the four

warriors.

“...It’s useless.”

Ruruta muttered. His figure was bloody. As expected even Ruruta couldn’t get out unscathed. His wounds have long since healed due to his super regeneration, though.

“I’m... sorry. But my legs can’t... anymore...”

Hihak and the rest collapsed to the sand. Their whole body felt as heavy as lead. Their throats were as dry as sand.

“This isn’t about you. My...”

Ruruta clenched his fist.

“My power isn’t sufficient.”

Hihak was astonished. He was far beyond them even using the four Memorial Weapons. And yet he said his power is insufficient?

“I need power. A power much stronger than it is now. Let’s go back to the royal capital.”

Saying this, Ruruta grabbed the four warriors with an invisible force and made them float. They flew like this back to the capital in the speed of an arrow.

“I will protect...”

Ruruta muttered something. Hihak had the feeling he heard someone’s name, but he couldn’t grasp it.

And that wasn’t all: Hihak’s worries became far deeper than that.

Even though Ruruta held so much power it wasn’t enough for him? What could Hihak do to compensate for that? Even if Ruruta were to Eat his Book it would be like adding a cup of water to a large river.

I wasn’t able to approach the answer today. All I realized was that I’m powerless and Ruruta has overwhelming power. That’s it.

Does he really need me? Hihak couldn’t help but ask himself this most fundamental question of all.

Part 3

Having returned to the capital, Ruruta surprisingly called with a loud voice.

“Vooekisal! Lascall! Come here! I will eat Armakisk’s Book!”

Vooekisal came running out of the royal tower. The other four warriors that were with him also nearly fell in astonishment.

Armakisk was the name of a warrior who had died 30 years ago. He was a man who couldn’t control his far too powerful Magic Right and went up in flames as he acquired it. Ruruta decided that he mustn’t eat that person’s Book and so sealed it.

Lascall appeared from inside the ground.

“If it is Armakisk-sama’s Book you wish for, I already have it prepared with me.”

“Excellent.”

Ruruta approached Lascall.

“I can’t let you do that! This and only this. This time I will not let it happen!”

Vooekisal clung to Ruruta’s legs in an attempt to stop him. Likewise the four warriors stood in Ruruta’s path.

“You lot, use the Memorial Weapons or whatever, just stop him!”

Hihak prepared Shlamuffen faster than he could think. However, Ruruta’s fingers moved before that and he was blown away by an invisible force. The three other Memorial Weapons were also robbed from their wielders without being able to be used.

“Vooekisal, you’re in my way.”

As Ruruta moved his finger Vooekisal rolled behind.

“I’m sorry, I can’t let you do this, even if I sacrifice my life...”

The three other warriors were also blown away. Hihak, the only one to remain, started prostrating himself and begging to Ruruta.

“Ruruta... that’s enough, please stop it, you are strong enough. Please don’t endanger yourself any further!”

“...You’re Hihak, right?”

Ruruta said as if suddenly recalling his name.

“Stop! It’s enough! You’ve fought enough! You’ve become strong enough! Please stop it!”

“...Hihak. If I’m not mistaken, about a month has passed.”

Ruruta said with a somewhat painful expression.

“So you’re still weak, huh? You haven’t been able to understand me.”

Hihak’s body was blown away. Ruruta received the forbidden Book from Lascall.

“Vooekisal, Namo, Yanna, Lakiri, Hihak and Lascall.”

The Book broke. Its shards were absorbed by Ruruta.

“Believe in my. That’s all I need.”

Ruruta Ate the Book he mustn’t ever Eat.

His body was instantly set ablaze. Hihak, who was close by, screamed from the heat and escaped. He writhed in pain to extinguish the flames that caught on to his hair and clothes.

That was what happened to Hihak who merely close to him; he was afraid to imagine what was happening to Ruruta himself.

The color of the flames went beyond red and became white that was never seen before. The white light completely concealed Ruruta’s figure.

“Bring water!!!”

“Water Magic! Can no one here use water Magic?!”

One person hit Ruruta with his water Magic. However, it evaporated right before reaching him. Even when he concentrated all of his efforts it didn’t amount to anything.

“Someone, please, do something!!!”

People started helplessly running around the blazing Ruruta. Hihak closed in on Lascall and held him by the collar.

“Lascall-sama, no, Lascall! What’s going to happen with Ruruta?! Tell us!”

“It is unknown to me. Will he perish, or will he survive?”

Lascall said calmly.

“However, it would be quite disappointing for him to die here.”

“This is not the time to say such things!”

Hihak thrust Lascall away.

It’s no use. Ruruta’s going to die. There’s no way he won’t. This is the end. We’re all doomed.

But aside from fear he also felt some sort of relief. If Ruruta dies, no one would tell Hihak to become stronger anymore.

He fell to his knees and pounded the ground. His tears started overflowing and wouldn’t stop.

Ruruta and the world are done for.

Vooekisal grabbed Hihak by the collar and dragged him up.

“What are you doing, you idiot? Look at Ruruta! Believe in him!”

What’s there to see though? It’s all hopeless.

“It’s no use. Everything is over.”

“You idiot!”

Vooekisal started hitting him. Hihak collapsed to the ground and didn’t try standing up.

A long time passed. The heat gradually weakened.

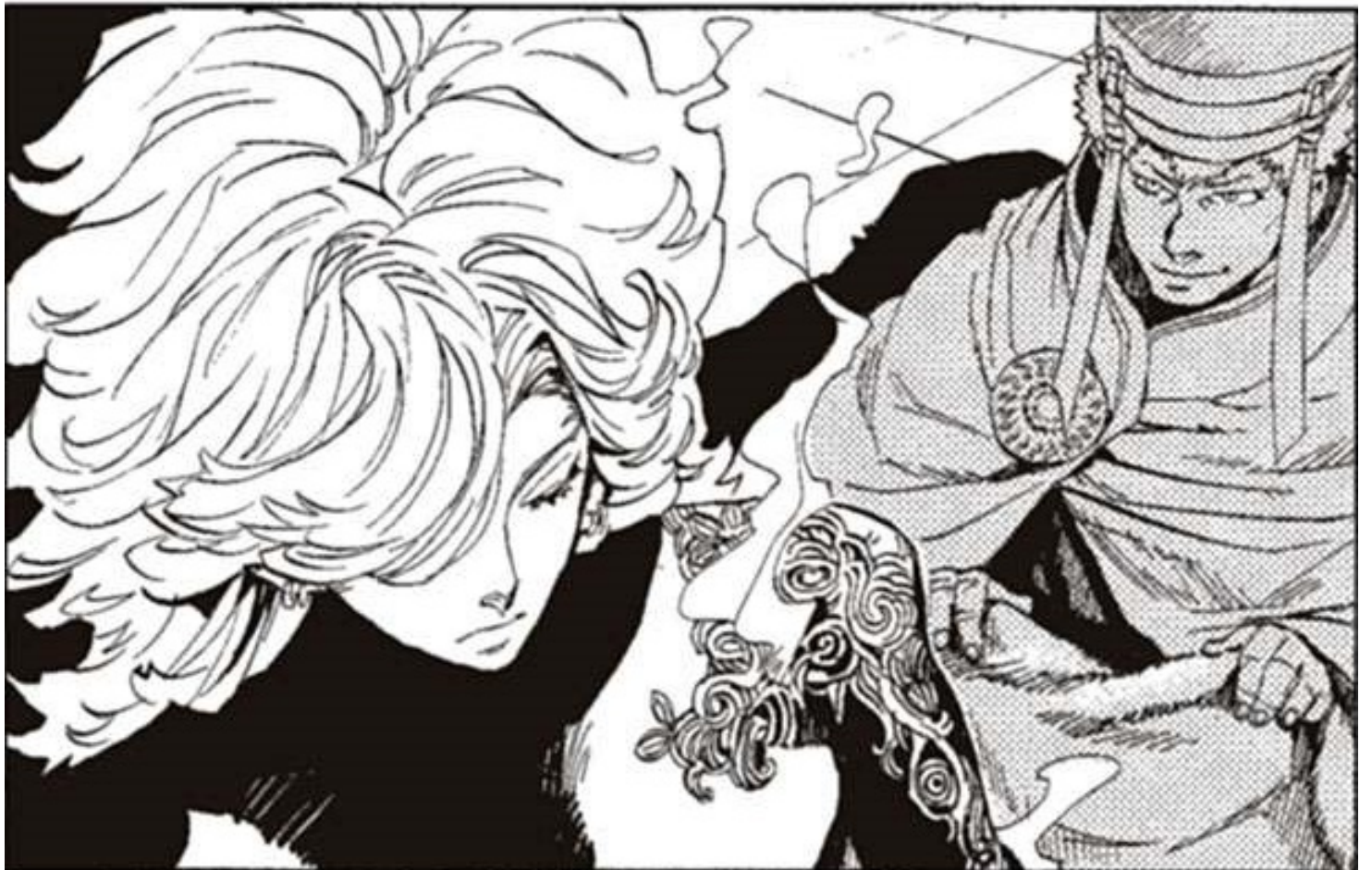
“What’s... that?”

Hihak raised his voice. An intense cold air started mixing in with the heat. The convection caused by it smothered both the hot and the cold air. Was this cold air a product of someone’s Magic?

“...No way.”

The heat settled down. Ruruta’s body was collapsed on the burnt ground. His entire body down to the bones was scorched so black he only looked like a stick figure.

Everyone watched him while clenching their teeth. He started gradually regaining his human form. At last his hair returned and Ruruta raised his naked body.



“Vooekisal, get me some clothes.”

Great cheers erupted. Vooekisal rushed over to him while holding a waistcloth.

“I have gotten somewhat tired. Vooekisal. Let me rest.”

Vooekisal took Ruruta into the royal tower. He turned around listlessly then spoke while smiling.

“Listen and rejoice – Ruruta finally acquired it. I now have the power to defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter.”

“Ruruta, you shouldn’t talk yet...”

“Tell this to everyone: I am going to win.”

Another cheer rose. People started running around to spread the word. However, Hihak alone stood there in complete shock.

Look at Ruruta and understand him. If you do that, you will become as strong as him.

Hihak survived thanks to these words. And he was troubled trying to understand Ruruta.

Yet the only thing he was able to understand was the overwhelming gap between them. Even so, Hihak kept thinking. He wanted to be of use to him.

However, Ruruta told them today – he was finally able to obtain the power to defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter. If so, then Hihak was no longer needed.

I’ll just run away. No, not run away, simply leave. Ruruta has no need for me. I don’t have to worry or try to become stronger anymore.

He went back home and gathered his luggage in order to leave.

He took surprisingly little stuff. He would just die on the road somewhere by himself.

“Where’re you going?”

The moment he left the house, Carloy called out to him.

“O-oh. I’m leaving for a while. I’ll be right back so you don’t need to worry.”

“...Is it the next campaign?”

“What’re you talking about? I’ll be back soon.”

He was going to leave Carloy behind. Orphans weren’t anything rare nowadays.

“You’re the worst.”

“What’re you saying, Carloy?”

“I saw it. Today, when Ruruta was burning you were the only one to give up, daddy. You said it was all over.”

“ ... ”

“Why don’t you believe in Ruruta? He told you to believe.”

“ ... ”

“Why are you lying to me? I knew from the very beginning you ran away and came back.”

“ ... ”

“Why are you running away? Why?! Just tell me why!”

“Because I’m weak. That’s it.”

Saying this, he left.

He left the capital and headed somewhere. He had no place to go to.

Hihak knew – not everyone in the world fought for Ruruta. There were, however few, people that have run away from the battles. He could simply become one of them. He would just wait for Ruruta to save the world in the meanwhile. That was all.

He got tired of walking and sat down.

“I don’t regret it...”

Hihak muttered. He tried shaking off Carloy from his mind.

Stop thinking. If he wasn’t there I would have run away ages ago. He’s at fault for making me suffer so much.

I haven't run away so far for his sake. Because I didn't want to make him feel pity for me. I wanted to be a strong father at least for him.

Oh well, that's over. He already realized I was weak all along.

"Shit, shit!"

He knew that he was weak. Even so, Hihak rose up and started running. He was headed back to the capital.

"Carloy! Carloy!"

He kept running while calling. He asked passersby whether they have seen Carloy. However, no one would answer him. It was as if they couldn't even bear looking at such a coward. Although he was a coward, only the children would cutely call him names.

The sun was sinking. He checked once again at his house, but Carloy hasn't come back. He was afraid he would never see him again at this rate.

He searched around again and got tired of walking. The moment he sat down, he heard a voice calling from afar.

"Hihak, Carloy's here."

He started running towards the voice. He hadn't noticed who it belonged to just yet.

Carloy was inside a forest outside the capital. He was sleeping, exhausted of crying. Hihak saw another person sitting next to him while leaning on a tree trunk.

This can't be real, is it a dream? Thought Hihak. But it was no dream.

"Ru..."

He couldn't voice it. His mouth stayed agape and wouldn't move. Hihak saw a man lending his lap to Carloy and patting his head. He was Ruruta Coozancoona.

"Why are you so surprised?"

Ruruta smiled as he saw Hihak's face. This was the first time he had seen him smile. No, it was the first time he even knew he could smile.

“...Even I need a break sometimes. Especially since it’s so cold today.”

That wasn’t what surprised Hihak; it was the fact that Ruruta, the savior of the world lent his knees to Carloy.

“A lot of time has passed. It appears that you didn’t realize yet why I am strong. Really, you are a troubling man.”

His tone was completely different than Vooekisal’s. Hihak couldn’t feel any coldness. On the contrary, it was a voice that made him happy he was being scolded.

“You still don’t get it? It’s quite simple.

I’m strong because I have all of you.”

“ ... ”

“Everyone lends me their power. Everyone gave me their Magic Rights. Everyone was able to obtain the Memorial Weapons by expending all of their power. However, with that alone I will not become a savior.”

“ ... ”

Ruruta clenched his fist. It was much more small and delicate than Hihak imagined it would be.

“There are those who want to protect. And there are those who try to protect me. That’s why I’m strong.”

Ruruta caressed Carloy’s hair.

“People are weak, Hihak. And the Beasts of the Final Chapter are strong. Extraordinarily so. However, as long as one wants to protect someone, I believe that they’ll never lose to them.

Wanting to protect someone... Having someone protect you... If you are able to think this way, you will definitely become strong.”

Ruruta gently stroked Carloy’s head.

“You have this child, don’t you? I know it – if you have this child you will become strong.”

I see, thought Hihak. When I tried escaping the one who put a stop to it was

the existence of Carloy.

“I haven’t thought of anything when you deserted. You are not a great warrior. Since I have left governing the populace to Vooekisal I haven’t thought of intervening.

However, this child came to my place.”

“...Carloy did?”

“He tried to protect you. ‘Daddy’s actually strong, so please let him fight again’, he said to me.

‘Daddy probably pities himself. I don’t want to let him die like that’.”

“...No way.”

“I want to protect everyone. Everyone also wants to protect me. You want to protect this child. This child tried protecting you. It’s all the same. Therefore, you are as strong as me. That’s what I think.”

Ruruta gently shook Carloy. He was surprised at being held by Ruruta. He alternated his eyes between Ruruta’s face and Hihak’s face.

“This is my wish. Carloy, Hihak cannot be relied on. So you have to protect him.”

After a long, long time of being unable to say anything, Carloy finally spoke.

“...Even if...”

He said while crying.

“Even if you didn’t tell me this...”

Apparently reaching his limits, Carloy was hugged by Hihak.

“Stupid, stupid, you stupid daddy!”

Hihak embraced him. Ruruta smiled while looking at them.

Hihak started thinking. *I can’t run away anymore. I have no need to run away. I have obtained true strength.*

“Thank you so much. We will be going back home, so see you tomorrow.”

“Yeah. See you tomorrow.”

Ruruta gazed at the western sky. Hihak and Carloy also looked there.

“What a beautiful sunset. It never changes, but that’s why it’s beautiful. Don’t you think so?”

He had never looked at the setting sun much until now. Now that he was told so, it really was beautiful. Ruruta kept speaking.

“Nowadays admiring the sunset or flowers is difficult. Since the world approaches its end, we have neither the time nor mental leeway.

But if I save the world a new era will come. Everyone would be able to see the setting sun in peace. Right, Hihak, Carloy?”

“I believe so.”

“Everyone would live in peace. Everyone would be able to connect their hearts. We’ll definitely be able to do it. The Future Overseer will be gone, and humans will create their own paradise. That’s what I believe. So I’d like for you to believe in it as well.”

“Yes.”

Ruruta sighed.

“I feel like it’s the first time in a long while I’ve talked so much. It was fun.”

“Yes, Ruruta, thank you so much.”

Carloy said. Hihak had something that he had to ask.

“Please tell me one final thing, Ruruta. Why have you saved this child and me?”

As he was asked this, Ruruta widened his eyes in surprise. He then smiled troublingly.

“Are both Vooekisal and you unable to understand such simple matters?”

“Huh?”

“I was able to save you and your son. That is very simple. Is actually doing it so strange?”

Meaning he had no particular reason for it. Was that all?

“Can you not understand it without thinking there’re some special circumstances or something behind the scenes? Such troublesome people you are.

Well, if I had to state one reason...”

For some reason, Ruruta embarrassedly scratched his nose.

“I just can’t let a crying child be.”

Leaving these words behind, Ruruta left for the royal tower. While seeing him off, Hihak started talking to Carloy.

“We’re so fortunate.”

Carloy unhesitatingly nodded. Ruruta was bigger than life. Both his strength and his kindness. Just living in the same era as him was fortunate.

“Sorry for making you worry, Carloy. Your dad will never stray again. Because I’m going to become stronger.”

Ten days afterward, a new campaign was arranged. Hihak also joined it.

They returned home seven days after their departure. This expedition of a hundred people came back with only 75. And Hihak was walking at their front.

Hihak found the figure of Carloy among the families waiting for the soldiers at the gate.

He then struck his fist upwards to the sky.

The seventh Memorial Weapon that Hihak brought back was in the form of two bizarre cups. The commander took them to Vooekisal’s place. They were going to grant them a name and give them to Ruruta.

Regarding the Weapon’s ability, it apparently had already been researched so Vooekisal knew it. However, Hihak heard nothing about it. There were some things he was worried about, but felt they were insignificant.

Hihak became strong and he was able to become of use to Ruruta. That was enough for him.

Ruruta never showed himself to Hihak and Carloy again. But that was no problem either. He was already deeply engraved in his heart.

For half a month afterwards, Hihak worked busily. According to the prophecies, the final battle was soon at hand. Hihak and the rest dug out special anti-Beast shelters for public use and they would also deal with the Beasts when they came to attack these trenches.

The elderly and children abandoned their homes and went to the trenches with all their possessions. The few remaining warriors prepared to protect them.

Just when preparations were complete, that day has arrived.

It was obvious to everyone that today was the day. Dark clouds suddenly drifted in the clear sky. Thunder incessantly roared despite there being no rain. The people still outside ran away as if pushing each other along. Hihak lead them, occasionally carrying some of them to the trenches so they could take shelter.

When almost all work was done, just before the doors of the trenches were going to be closed, Hihak asked a warrior next to him.

“Where’s Ruruta?!”

“He’s still in the royal tower!”

“...I’m leaving this place to you!”

Saying so, Hihak started running. Strangely, ever since a few days ago, there was no sign of Vooekisal, his aide, as well as the elite warriors who served Ruruta.

He reached the tower. There were a few other people who shared the same worries.

“What is going on with Ruruta?”

“Where’s Vooekisal-sama? Where could he have gone at this time...?”

Everyone was confused. They were all elite warriors. They were not allowed to enter the royal tower with no permission. They just whispered in front of the gate.

“There’s no need for you to be here!”

That moment, a sonorant voice reverberated. A figure leapt off the topmost floor of the tower.

“Go to a safe place! At once!”

In contrast to these words nobody moved. It was because they all wanted to burn into their eyes the appearance of Ruruta heading for the final battle.

His transparent hair fluttered with the storm and the pattern of the Rhythmic Barrier Uyulála was engraved on his left shoulder. At his feet the Colorful Sand Battleship Graógramán shone in the colors of the rainbow, and in his hand he held the ominous misty Dark Club Gmork. The Ever-Laughing and Ever-Crying Magic Blades were hanged from his waist.

It felt indescribable. They went speechless looking at this mighty and godly power.

“I will go! You will live in a new age!”

And Ruruta moved to another place.

“Don’t fret. Stay calm and carefully evacuate to a safe place. There is still time. Please think carefully about how to evacuate people one by one safely.”

Ruruta was worried about the other people’s safety before battle. Hihak almost teared up from admiration.

They all shouted a slogan before heading to battle. Everyone shouted together.

Ruruta does not fear anything. Ruruta will never falter. Ruruta will never be disheartened and will never lose.

Hihak started thinking while shouting. *I will believe it. I will continue to believe these words.*

Seeing off Ruruta fly away to the battlefield, Hihak and the rest went toward the anti-Beast trenches.

However, there were two things they were still worried about.

Where Vooekisal and the rest had went to and what will they do with the seventh Memorial Weapon that had been brought back by Hihak’s group.

Ruruta hasn't taken it.

But they had no time to worry about that; the battle of Ruruta against the Beasts of the Final Chapter already began. They could hear huge explosive roars from the horizon.

"...Ruruta, we believe... we believe in you."

Saying so, Hihak took position in front of the entrance to the trench. His battle was to protect this spot.

However, contrary to expectations, Hihak's fight ended abruptly. Two wolf-shaped Beasts of the Final Chapter bit and tore the door to the anti-Beast trench and rushed inside. Hihak desperately fought back with his spear.

I don't have to beat them as long as they don't enter inside. He fought for several minutes thinking only this.

"...!"

The two Beasts suddenly looked back. They then ran outside. It was as if they felt they hadn't the leisure to play around in such a place.

"Have they gone to fight Ruruta?"

He couldn't think of anything else. Unknown sounds of battle came echoing mixed in with the howls of the Beasts.

Hihak repaired the door and treated his wounded body. No further attacks came so far. A long time of waiting began.

Hihak stopped the children who wanted to go outside and tried cheering the frightful women. Carloy, who was in the same trench as him, calmed down a crying baby and gave some wheat to children smaller than him.

They couldn't even imagine what sort of terrific battle it became outside.

How long has the battle continued? It was probably more than a day or two. Three days and nights, or perhaps longer than that? It became quiet a few times, but the sounds of battle soon came echoing again.

Once there was an earthquake that nearly destroyed the anti-Beast trench. Next came a large sound that seemed like it could tear eardrums. Without

knowing if it was the power of Beasts or Ruruta, Hihak shuddered in fear.

And time kept passing.

Hihak who had fallen asleep holding his spear was shaken awake by Carloy.

“Daddy, something out there...”

“You can’t go outside...”

“No, it’s...”

At some point the door to the trench was opened. Sunlight came pouring inside from it. The voices of people were echoing under the sun.

“We won!”

“It’s our victory!”

“Ruruta... Ruruta’s won!”

“Ruruta! Ruruta! Ruruta!”

People hugged each other and raised cheers. The moment he saw this, Hihak forgot his tiredness and rushed ahead. He joined the circle of people along with Carloy and they all smiled under the rays of the sun they haven’t seen for three days.

However, no matter where people looked, they couldn’t find Ruruta anywhere. People started fixing their broken homes and treating their wounds while waiting for his return.

A day has passed, but Ruruta did not return.

Two days have passed, but Ruruta did not return.

Vooekisal, his aide and the rest were nowhere to be seen and Lascall Othello’s whereabouts were unknown as well. Having lost their leaders, the people gradually became anxious.

They also started feeling sad for being unable to see their savior who had saved the world.

“Daddy, there’s no way that Ruruta...”

“No, you can’t say that. Believe in him.”

Three days, and then four days have passed.

The people forgot their happiness at the world being saved. Although it was saved, it all felt dull without him.

A simultaneous kill... that result was far too painful.

Then came the morning of the fifth day.

“Ruruta’s back!!!”

A man shouted out his throat at the gate of the capital. Everyone abandoned their work and rushed to the main street. The shouting man ran weaving his way between the assembling people. *Ruruta’s back, Ruruta’s back.*

Hihak picked up Carloy and went to the gate. Among the remaining warriors he was the one with the quickest feet. He overtook the people in front of him and ran toward Ruruta.

He could see him. Ruruta’s appearance was clearly reflected in Hihak’s eyes. For some reason he didn’t have the Memorial Weapons. He only had the Rhythmic Barrier Uyulála on his shoulder. He had no visible wounds. Lascall Othello followed him from behind.

“Ruruta, Ruruta!”

He ran while shouting. Ruruta, who hung his head down, suddenly raised his eyes.

“Oh, it’s Hihak?”

Ruruta saw Hihak’s face.

That was Hihak’s last living memory.

The next moment, Ruruta lightly waved his hand. Hihak was unable to see that movement. His head blew into smithereens as if a meteorite hit it. The faces of the people running behind him were dyed by a red mist.

He died instantly.

However, dying at that very moment was perhaps fortunate.

Because Hihak didn’t have to see what happened later.

Beasts of the Final Chapter were emitted from Ruruta's body. He unleashed them at the gathered people. He didn't tell any of them why he was able to use the power that was meant to destroy the world.

He told nobody why he unleashed them on humans.

Announcing neither his reasons nor his goals, he simply killed, killed, and killed. His expression was as rigid as a mask and he erased all emotions from it.

Carloy clung to Hihak's headless corpse, shouted and wailed. There was not even one person to help him among the unfolding massacre.

At the end of this day, the Age of Paradise has ended. Thus started the Age of Humanity – no, of Ruruta.

Chapter 3: The Conspirator and the Melancholic Tyrant

“...Say, Ruruta-san. Why have you killed Hihak Yammo?”

1878 years passed since Hihak’s death. A single man tilted his glass and muttered. It was probably at least 1800 years or more than that since anyone has uttered that name. He was a man who didn’t amount to anything except for his ability to turn into a tree. His name vanished in history.

The man who muttered this was Makia Dexiart. He was Bantorra Library’s Acting Director of the time. Inclined to dressing up in low-quality and gaudy suits, he wore an eyepatch with the symbol of a spade on it. The sword on his waist looked more like a part of fashion than one of an Armed Librarian. Although he was at the top of Armed Librarians, he didn’t look like one.

“Even if you wanted his ability it wasn’t practical. If you’d told him that you wanted his life he surely would’ve cut off his own neck happily. Why was there a need to kill him so cruelly?”

Inside Makia’s glass was the highest grade brandy. He emptied it little by little.

“No, there’s something I don’t understand even more. Surely you had no reason to kill everyone there? Did you want to rule the populace by fear? No way. You were the hero who saved the world. Everyone would’ve served you even if you said nothing.

There are many ungrateful people in the world, but there was nothing to worry about. With your power you could’ve killed those people instantly.”

“...”

Makia was waiting for something. As if tired of waiting, he gulped down the remaining liquor and poured some more brandy.

“Staying silent, huh? Or are you sleeping?”

Saying this, Makia raised his glass.

“Let’s drink a cup together. The boss and his subordinate have some real talk over a drink... that’s what a good organization’s all about.

Since I have two glasses and two chairs you don’t have to hold back.”

At that time Makia was in a surprising place: inside the deepest part of Bantorra Library, the Second Sealed Labyrinth. The small figure of a tree stood inside the freezing Archive. Of all things he was drinking liquor next to Ruruta Coozancoona.

He had brought a simple table as well as two folding chairs. On the table was a large bottle of brandy, a bag of cheese crackers, and two glasses. Ruruta couldn’t be seen anywhere. Makia invited Ruruta to a banquet.

Armed Librarians were not prohibited from drinking alcohol inside the Sealed Labyrinth. It was because no Armed Librarian would ever do such a thing. Even Ruruta didn’t tell the man in front of him that he couldn’t do so. It was probably because he couldn’t imagine the idiot who would do that.

“Are you perhaps not good with alcohol? That’s my failure, I forgot to bring juice. Perhaps I should have also brought a cream pie?”

Furthermore, Makia was really drunk. He was still articulate and could walk straight. However, it was obvious from the tone of his voice.

“Please, Ruruta-san, tell me. What are you thinking about? Please don’t say that you haven’t been thinking of anything.”

Saying this, Makia cackled and rolled with laughter.

If he were to get on Ruruta’s nerves only death would await him. Makia clearly knew this. That would be even more foolish than attempting violence. No, that would be insane.

However, he had a reason for this foolish move. He was a man who never acted in a meaningless way.

Makia Dexiart. Among the Acting Directors throughout history, his battle prowess wasn’t particularly impressive. He had a standard battle style specializing in his superior physical abilities and powerful slashing aided by telekinesis.

However, he had a secret ability. No one knew about it except for Makia himself.

His hidden ability was that of prediction.

It wasn't a power that could look hundreds of years ahead like that of the Ever-Laughing Witch Shiron. It also wasn't a power that could accurately predict the future like that of Mattalast from later on. It could be said to be extremely weak for a predictive ability.

However, he prided in it as his best ability.

From time to time Makia would have premonitions. For example, one morning he would be able to feel that something good was about to happen that day. Before fighting an enemy, he would be able to feel that they would be difficult. What he could predict was at about this level.

The accuracy was not 100% either. One out of ten cases was off. And even when he was right he sometimes made his prediction meaningless by taking bad actions.

People would probably think that it was a weak power. It couldn't be really be used in a practical battle. However, Makia considered it the power to win in every situation.

It truly was useless in battle. However, it would tell him whether he should fight or not in the first place. It would also tell him who he should fight. It wasn't a power used for battle tactics but for battle strategy.

And strategies always outweighed tactics. Because he would avoid meaningless fights and only start fights he could win he was the strongest. That was what Makia thought.

During that day's morning, he had a premonition.

He would return alive today. Even if he drank in front of Ruruta and made a fool out of himself, he would not kill him. He entrusted his life to this premonition.

"I also don't understand why you've Eaten the power of the Beasts of the Final Chapter. You're undoubtedly the world's strongest. That's true even

without the Beasts. And yet you have Eaten more power. Is it not nonsensical?"

Glass after glass, Makia kept talking. He was a heavy drinker. Even though his tone was drunk, his sharp mind dulled not even a bit.

"Yes, you should have had no need to gain more power that time. So Eating the power of the Beasts of the Final Chapter should have been for another reason. What would you need them for other than battle... Or perhaps you weren't given any choice and just had to Eat them..."

Anyhow, something's happened. Something that we don't know about."

Ruruta made no reply.

"Yes, as I thought, it was during that time. The point in time after you've fought the Beasts, defeated them, and until you came back. Something happened during these few days..."

Makia yawned. He grabbed a cracker, ate it, and then poured more brandy into his glass again.

"I came to question you about that point, but it seems you keep silent."

Saying this, Makia raised the bottle of brandy toward Ruruta.

Makia had assumed the seat of the Acting Director five years ago. The reason for his inauguration was because of Ruruta having butchered the previous Acting Director and Overseer of Paradise due to the negligence of their duty. Since he wanted the other candidate Kachua to become the Overseer of Paradise, Makia was selected by the process of elimination.

His work was not admirable at all. He took several politicians and businessmen from the Present Management Agency and made them his aides. He left all of the political work to them. He invited retired Armed Librarians to serve as consultants and left the Library in their charge.

Even if he only sat on the Director's seat as decoration, no objection came from anyone. Although he was top-notch as a warrior, he was third-rate as a politician or head of an organization. This was Makia's evaluation. Compared to Kachua who had been steadily strengthening the organization the difference was evident.

However, this evaluation was what Makia himself had wanted. He feigned incompetence in order not to waste time on politics.

Ever since assuming office, Makia was investigating Ruruta secretly. He spent almost all of his free time on researching him.

Reading all the Books in the Second Sealed Labyrinth went without saying. Even in the Books contained in higher layers some slight fragments about Ruruta had remained. He meticulously investigated those as well. Furthermore, he went around historical ruins in the Principality of Meliot and investigated various ancient incidents that remained only as myths or fairy tales.

Combining the fragments of information, making free use of reasoning and speculation, Makia closed in on Ruruta's past. The fact that he even knew Hihak Yammo's name showed the thoroughness of his research.

There were people among the Acting Directors and Overseers of Paradise to investigate Ruruta even before him. However, none of them probably knew even a fifth of what Makia had discovered.

He especially investigated above all else those who have fought with Ruruta. Until now, several Acting Directors had schemed a rebellion against Ruruta. Each and every one of them was beaten in his own game. Their strategy, tactics, origin of ideas, and the circumstances of their failure – Makia carefully examined them.

He did all of this alone. And he did it secretly so it wouldn't leak either to Kachua, to the Armed Librarians or anyone else.

Makia was fighting against Ruruta.

No people challenged him in the past 300 years. After the cruel blunder of the Dragon Pneumonia Incident, the desperate Acting Director undertook a suicidal battle attempt and that was the final time. From the repeating losses the Acting Directors all realized that it impossible to fight against Ruruta.

However, Makia had his power of premonition. If he senses danger he would avoid fatal errors in advance. If he feels the premonition of death he would not head to a losing battle. That is all Makia believed in his ability for.

And Makia also had another reason for this battle.

It was from five years ago when his predecessor had been slain.

‘From now on you two will manage Bantorra Library and the Indulging God Cult. This is all I have to say to you. I hold expectations for your future work.’

Ruruta had calmly killed the previous Director. And he left Makia to handle the next generation of Bantorra matter-of-factly. It was as if he threw away a tool he didn’t need to replace it with another.

Kachua shook with fear. Makia was scared as well, but he could also feel simmering anger rising up from inside that fear.

“Can you not just decide to end the conversation on your own? Can’t you say even a single word for having killed him?”

He had admired the previous Acting Director. He gave his utmost efforts and worked for the world and for the Armed Librarians. Ruruta could at the very least say something.

He knew that he had to be rational. However, he told his reason to go to hell.

“Cut that out, Makia.”

‘Makia. Your anger is not beneficial. You are a useful Armed Librarian, so losing you would be a great loss for me as well.’

Both Kachua’s attempt to stop him and Ruruta’s excuses only fanned the flames inside of him. He became unable to control his own anger.

“What’re you saying? I’m talking about you killing him.”

“Stop Makia! Do you want to die?!”

Yeah, I want to die. He got caught up in his anger and was about to answer this. At that moment, he felt a premonition.

If you endure this, you would find out something good.

That premonition stopped him. Finding out something good didn’t simply mean he would stay alive; he felt that it was something more important. The premonition told him that it would be something good not only for himself, but for the Armed Librarians – no, for the world.

“That’s true, yeah, I’ve forgotten, sorry for my rudeness Director. I was

extremely rude.”

Him being able to suppress his anger was not only due to his belief in his predictive ability. There was also the curiosity to find out what the “good thing” was.

‘...Makia, I am satisfied with your decision. Settling this without killing a useful Armed Librarian is very fortunate. I have expectations for your future work.’

“Why thank you.”

But what on earth was that premonition? What would he find out later? Ruruta’s Thought Sharing echoed in his head that was full of questions.

‘Makia. My request is nothing wrong. I only wish for two things: for more people to be happy, and for that happiness to be offered up to me. Making people happy is good, and offering up that happiness to me is also good.

Accomplishing this is the best thing for both me and you.’

While listening to his words, he found a certain point of interest. Ruruta was making excuses; he was justifying his own behavior.

He was also feeling some guilt. That realization calmed Makia. His premonition became crisper. He had the feeling that he would very soon find out something.

The next moment, another premonition hit him.

He could win against Ruruta.

Makia was then convinced – this was the “good thing” to be found by enduring. However, he was very surprised at this premonition.

What did being able to win mean? Although he was a First Grade Armed Librarian he wasn’t much of a prominent figure, so could he win against Ruruta? Although he prided himself in his ability, was it fine to believe it?

Makia knew how the previous Acting Directors who challenged Ruruta lost. Thinking rationally it was impossible. No matter what happens it has to be impossible.

“Nothing we can do about it, Makia. We are helpless.”

Kachua's consoling reached his ears. He could hear it but didn't listen to him.

He could win against Ruruta. Even if he didn't believe it by reason, it was a fact he felt this premonition. He could not see it yet, but a method to defeat Ruruta surely existed. And that method was within the reach of his hands.

Makia began worrying about later. Should he believe his reason telling him that he couldn't win, or his ability that foretold him he could?

He truly wanted to fight. He had plenty of reasons to fight. He wanted to avenge the previous Director. He wanted to defeat the tyrant ruling the world. He wanted to leave the future to a new Bantorra Library that had no Ruruta in it.

However, he couldn't decide. Challenging Ruruta was far too terrifying. Even if he threw everything he had at him it wouldn't be enough. And if he lost, Ruruta's retaliation would involve a lot of people.

He deliberated for a day and for a week. He thought for a month, for a year, and even right now he was still worrying.

No one would be able to mock this as indecisiveness. Challenging Ruruta was simply that big of a deal.

Five years later, Makia drank alcohol in front of Ruruta.

For these five years, the more he investigated him the more he realized he couldn't win. Ruruta's power was overwhelming and he had no blind spots. All methods of killing him that could be thought up by humans have already been tried.

Also, Makia had never felt the premonition of a victory again. Even when he thought of some method, he only felt the premonition that it was going to fail.

Was that premonition just a delusion? Or was it the real deal and I've simply lost my opportunity?

Makia wanted to meet Ruruta. No matter the subject, he wanted to converse with him.

He once had the premonition of victory while talking to Ruruta. If he could get any sort of premonition again it would only be by talking to him.

He also had the feeling that if he met him and heard his voice again he would understand something. He had to know much more about Ruruta in order to defeat him.

He drank in front of him. This reckless action had a goal: it was to draw any kind of response out of Ruruta. It didn't matter what. It would be fine for him to be bothered and chase Makia away. It would be fine for him to say that he had no interest in alcohol and smash the bottle. As long as he makes any sort of reaction.

However, no matter how many times Makia called out to him Ruruta made no reply. The only times he used his Thought Sharing to contact people was when he had business with them.

That was true now as well.

"...Oh my, I drank quite a lot without realizing."

Makia shook the bottle. It had only about a third left. *Should I just finish it up here*, he wondered.

"...Hehehe, what's wrong with me?"

Thinking rationally, this wasn't a proper way of doing things. It was natural it had no effect. He was out of his mind.

Makia put down the bottle and thought while watching the swirling liquid. *I've lost my mind for five years in the first place. Fighting against Ruruta and winning... Even if I do that, what then? Just as he said there's no harm in assembling the Books of happy people and bringing them to him.*

Five years is enough. Perhaps it's time to stop chasing a stupid dream and work seriously. After finishing the last third of the bottle I'll forget all about fighting Ruruta.

I'll finish drinking, go up to the surface, sober up, and end my worries with that. Well, compared to losing and dying this isn't a bad conclusion.

At that moment, he stretched his hand and raised the bottle.

"I shall ask frankly. Are you sane?"

The cool voice of a boy came from the other side of the table. Without

knowing who it belonged to, Makia stared at the table that no longer had the bottle on it. Did Lascall Othello switch to a new body? In that case his tone of speech was wrong.

“I’ve heard that alcohol is crazy water. I have no idea how much you do this, but it should be done in moderation. I don’t think this is proper for the Acting Director.”

“I am sane, do not worry.”

He raised his face. There was a single boy with transparent hair in front of him. The tree that was supposed to be behind him was gone. This was the first time Makia had seen the face of Ruruta Coozancoona. No, perhaps it was the first time among all Acting Directors and Overseers of Paradise.

“Looking at you, I thought that you were scheming something. I would like to hear what you are up to.”

“There are no schemes. I said this before: I just want to talk to you.”

“The back of the back is the front, huh. I see, so that means I fell to your plan. What an unbelievable action. But since it was unbelievable you fulfilled it.”

“That’s right.”

Ruruta calmly poured alcohol into the glass left on the table. He then raised the glass, full to the brim to the very limits of surface tension and drank it down like water. Not a drop was spilled.

“I do not seem to be able to get drunk. All poisons are instantly decomposed inside my body.”

He placed down the glass and returned it to Makia.

“Then like I thought I should’ve also brought along a cream pie...”

“Apparently. For the next time I desire fruits and pies loaded with cream.”

Ruruta said while smiling. After a while Makia realized that he told a joke. For some reason he started laughing violently and kept laughing so much that his stomach hurt.

Makia once again poured into his glass and smacked his lips a bit. Then, they

started talking.

“Now then, let us have a frank discussion just like you wanted. First I have something to ask you. Please answer honestly.”

“Sure, I don’t mind.”

“Do you intend to fight me?”

That’s much too frank, thought Makia. He jumped straight to the heart of the matter. But today is not the day of my death. I’ve already had the premonition I will come back alive.

“Indeed.”

“Where has your daringness come from, I wonder.”

“It’s a secret.”

“I see. Oh well.”

He didn’t say he would kill him and read his Book to find out. For some reason it appeared that Ruruta didn’t intend to kill Makia. He couldn’t understand why. He was already raising candidates for the Acting Director that would replace him. So there was no reason to let him off the hook.

“I have a request for you, Makia. That is why I am letting you live.”

Ruruta said as if reading his mind.

“Will you please kill me?”

“ ... ”

He was probably able to calmly listen to these words only because his senses were numbed by utter surprise.

“Could you tell me the reason?”

“I can’t explain it briefly. Wait a bit. I will organize what I want to say.”

Ruruta rose up and started pacing around the Second Sealed Labyrinth. He was probably considering what to tell him. Makia slowly drank as he waited for Ruruta.

“I have a dream. Ever since around 1800 years ago, when I have defeated the

Beasts of the Final Chapter and saved the world, I was always, always chasing after a single dream.”

“...A dream?”

He did not answer Makia but kept speaking.

“To obtain the perfect and unblemished happiness. If I obtain that, my dream will be fulfilled. That is why I have been waiting for the day you will bring me that perfect happiness. It’s been more than 20 human lifetimes. Have you ever wished for immortality?”

“...No.”

“It’s better that way. Life is able to sparkle because it only lasts for about a hundred years. When you pass 200 years you become tired of it all. When you pass 500 years you begin to hate your ageless body. And after approaching 2000 years... I cannot express it in words any longer.

But I had a dream. I have endured these 2000 years in order to fulfill it.

I am waiting for the day you will bring me the perfect happiness.”

Ruruta spoke while walking around without bothering to sit down.

“But even though I have a dream, 2000 years is far too long. Even dreams wear out and become old. My body still remains 15 years old, and only my dream ages.

Have you ever given up your dream?”

“I was about to give up on it once.”

“I see. Even dreams die. Whether they are granted or given up.

I’ve looked at the surface from underground using my clairvoyance. I’ve seen many people give up their dreams. A certain artist threw away the paintbrush that provided his livelihood; a man who dreamt to become an Armed Librarian lost to his contemporary rivals and came back to his hometown; and the dream of an old man who had been studying for his entire life vanished along with his passing...

I was envious of them.”

“You speak strangely.”

“They were able to give up their dreams. Their own powerlessness, their own helpless reality, their own weakness, as well as time, made them give up their dreams. But I couldn’t do any of those.

I am strong and no one is able to stop me. I have infinite time and I cannot die. Therefore, there is no one to stop my dream.

People around the world have something that I do not. It is the relief known as defeat.”

This wasn’t something easy to understand. Did he want to give up his dream? If so, couldn’t he simply give up? Why did he tell this to Makia and ask him to kill him?

“The thing known as a heart is not straightforward. I am chasing my dream. I want to make it come true. That heart, completely unchanged, is within me. The more months and years go by, the more time passes, the bigger my dream becomes.

However, that also led to the birth of an altogether different heart. Since it’s a dream that cannot come true, I’d much prefer to give it up.”

Ruruta clenched his fist. And he pounded the wall.

“But, if I give up now, what have I been living for all this time? Changing my form into a tree and living for 2000 years... for what? What has the Indulging God Cult been gathering Books for me for? The Acting Directors who have challenged me, and those of them who have tried to forget about me... what have I killed them for? My dream created a lot of sacrifices. If I give it up, they will all become meaningless.

When I think that, I cannot give up.”

“ ... ”

How unexpected. Makia had not expected him to worry about the Indulging God Cult. He couldn’t believe that he thought of killing people as a sin.

“Although I want to make my dream come true, it won’t. I want to give up but cannot. I cannot pick either path. I have been living continuously with these

feelings for the past 2000 years. I am already tired.”

While listening to him, Makia recalled what he had investigated. He was once undoubtedly a hero who fought in order to save the world. His eyes sparkled and his heart was set aflame.

Time changes people. Even more so when it was 2000 years. However, did that hero truly change into such a gloomy man?

“And so you want to be killed.”

“Do you understand, Makia? My feelings?”

Honestly speaking, he didn't. Why had Ruruta drowned in melancholy? He had collected all the happiness of the world after all. Was his melancholy so deep that it couldn't be quelled with all that happiness?

No, for him gathering happiness was only a means to an end. It wasn't his goal. But if it wasn't for him to become happy, why did he do it?

Makia couldn't understand Ruruta. However, he understood what he said to him and what he wanted him to do.

“Emotionally I cannot understand. However, I can understand you logically.

You want someone to stop you. You cannot give up by yourself. But if you exhaust all your strength while fighting with someone and lose, you will be able to give up. You will be able to comfort yourself saying that you had no choice.”

“Exactly.”

“I'll say it even more frankly: you want an excuse. You want an excuse that would convince you to give up your dream.”

“Exactly. However, when I ask people about it, they laugh at my pitifulness.

I cannot even die without asking people for help.”

“...”

“Makia. Will you accept my wish?”

He was already sober before he noticed. Makia looked up above and thought.

“Can I ask you to do something? Apologize about the previous Director. It can

be brief, I don't mind."

"...Now that I think about it, I shouldn't have killed him. I'm sorry. Please forgive me."

"...Understood. I will accept it."

"I see."

Saying so, Ruruta extended his hand towards Makia. Since he didn't appear to be in any danger Makia received it in silence.

Something warm was pushed inside his chest. It was the transfer of a Magic Right.

"This is one of the abilities I have preserved. Since it is of no use to me you can hold it."

"What power is it?"

"...The power to hide one's form. The one who possesses this power cannot be perceived by me. This power belonged to a certain warrior who'd tried to kill me. As long as this power is active, it will be impossible for me to perceive your actions. It works differently from Kachua's ability, but is similar."

"Why would you give me this power?"

"Once I know what you plan on doing, I can easily avoid it. Besides, once tomorrow comes I will probably regret all of this. And I will probably erase you. However, as long as you retain this power I will not be able to kill you. Nor will I be able to prevent you from killing me.

Try activating it and see."

Since it was a power he was given suddenly, it took some time to activate it. He tried exercising the Magic Right, but he didn't feel like anything changed.

"Have I become invisible to you?"

No reply came. It didn't look like Ruruta ignored him, but rather that he couldn't hear him. Not only his figure was unable to be seen, but he also couldn't be heard by him.

Makia canceled that ability and spoke.

“With this, the preparations for my battle with you are complete.”

“Yes.”

Ruruta turned his back.



“I will ask you a final question. What is your dream?”

“ ... ”

Ruruta was about to say something, but stopped.

“You don’t need to know. Focus only on killing me.”

The boy’s figure returned to that of a tree.

“I will also say one final thing. There are two ways to fulfill my dream. One of them is obtaining the perfect and unblemished happiness.

And the other...”

He spoke quietly. But because of that Makia felt even more of a chill.

“Is destroying the world.”

“ ... ”

“You probably do not want to destroy the world. Then try killing me. In order to protect the world.”

Even after Ruruta changed back to a tree, Makia stayed in the Second Sealed Archive for a while. He thought about how to defeat Ruruta.

He had already made up his determination to fight. If he couldn’t do that today he was crazy.

He also found a way to fight. Ruruta had a weak point that could never be overcome.

And Makia had a single premonition:

That he was going to commit tremendously great sins from now on.

Chapter 4: The Singer and a Certain Boy

Part 1

Among those who have lived in the Paradise Era there was a certain rumor. Gossip about a certain girl.

This was about two years before everyone started speaking about the battle between Ruruta Coozancoona and the Beasts of the Final Chapter as the main topic. Even before that there were people to know of her. But she was first spoken of in rumors around that time.

People kept fighting every day to avoid the destruction of the world. They fought to assemble the seven Memorial Weapons and in order to be Eaten by Ruruta and become part of his strength. It was a world where fighting was everything and all other things were deemed worthless.

And there was a single girl who lived as if she was from a completely different period. Such rumors were quietly transmitted between people.

An old woman was walking in the road. The bag she was holding swayed like a sick person loitering around. She was out of breath. She carried sand iron excavated from the mines but her bag was stuffed full of it. Beyond the road was the capital of Meliot where Ruruta Coozancoona resided. Behind her was the small village where the old woman lived. She was carrying the iron to supply to the kingdom all by herself.

She as well once underwent the Magic Deliberation so that she could be Eaten by Ruruta and honed her powers. However, she was deemed to be useless to Ruruta as she had no talent and was ordered to do chores. Her job was to bring iron that would be used by Ruruta and those who fought for him.

“Aaah...”

The sun stopped ascending and began setting down. There was no way she could reach the kingdom by tomorrow’s sunset like this. If she misses the deadline she would be whipped again. No, maybe she would be killed. Anyone

who was useless to Ruruta had no value.

She was hungry and her eyes were blurry. She hadn't eaten for three days. Almost all of the youths spent their days in Magic Deliberation. Therefore, there were not enough workers in the fields and the production of food was extremely reduced. The ones who were sacrificed at such times were the weak and useless just like that old woman.

Her bag was heavy and her legs couldn't move. Never mind stepping ahead, she just stumbled. She collapsed on the road. The bag ripped open and the iron sand scattered around.

She was exhausted. At this rate she wanted to die. With no energy to even stand up, she just stayed collapsed. She could feel death was creeping up on her.

She started thinking. *Even if Ruruta saves the world, no one will save me.* Her life only consisted of getting hurt and tired. Why did she have to live with such painful feelings? Just as she thought this, a voice suddenly called out to her.

“...No, even so, please keep living.”

As the old woman raised her eyes, she could see a girl standing next to her. She had no idea when she had showed up there.

She stared at the girl. She looked to be about fifteen or sixteen years old. She wore simple loose clothing which was almost never seen during that time period, the feathers of a rooster in her hair, and a small quartz necklace. She had long, braided hair that spilled on her back. Her hair was colored dark blonde, but a single bang of hair in the front was instead colored a vivid purplish-red.

“...Even if it's hard, please keep on living. That is my wish.”

Saying this, the red-purple girl lowered the bag from her back. She took out a cloth bundle from her pocket and showed it to the old woman. Inside it were boiled lily roots. The old woman received them as if in a trance and ate greedily.

“...They will become your power if only a little.”

The red-purple girl said in a low and calm voice. The old woman certainly

could feel her stomach slightly swelling. However, on the contrary, the little food took whatever was left of her energy. There were plenty of cases where giving someone who was starving and about to die a little food became fatal for them. The girl acted with something in contrast to what she wanted to accomplish.

“...Please live. I don’t know about tomorrow, but at least for today.”

The red-purple girl spoke in a pained voice. However, the old woman shook her head.

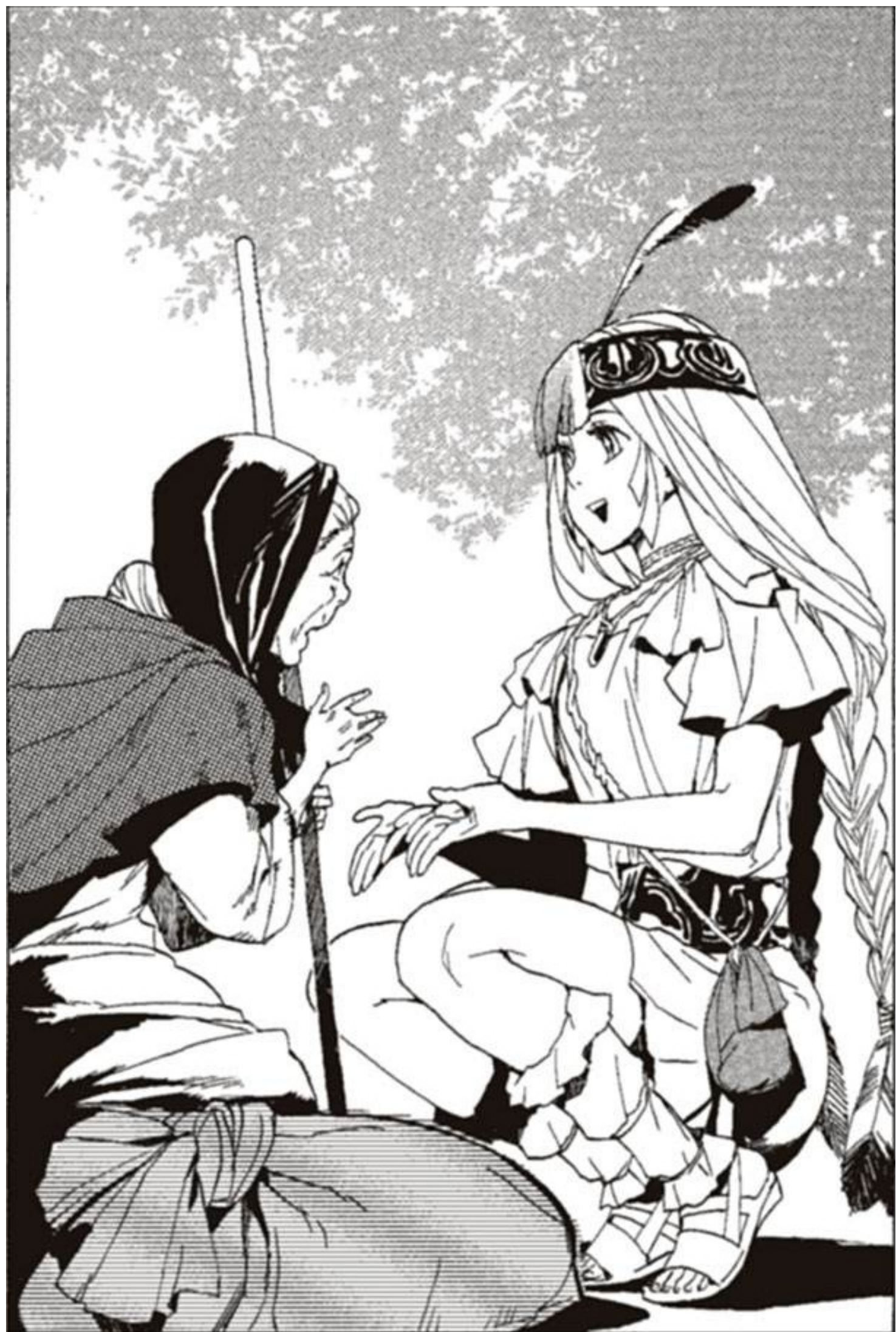
“Thank you, but it’s already useless. I want to die already. Please don’t make me feel any more pain.”

“...Is that so...”

The old woman then recalled. When had she heard about this? About this girl who appeared in front of those who were hurt, who were exhausted, who were on the verge of death.

She always appeared from somewhere and then disappeared somewhere. Although she only spoke little, her words were brimming full of affection, and she looked like a calm saint. And she came to bestow charity and comfort upon those who were weary and hurt.

She was the Purple Singer, or the Healing Singer. Her name unknown by anyone, the girl was named that among people.



It truly was the girl in front of her.

“...I can't make you stand up or save your life. I can only comfort you a little.”

“That is enough. If you can heal this suffering if only a little bit...”

The girl sat in front of the old woman. She hugged her head as if she was a loving mother.

“...I am going to sing a song of healing for you.”

The girl's hand turned the old woman back to her. Then, gently pounding on it, she began a rhythm. She began singing in accordance to that rhythm.

The girl's mouth did not move; it was fixed in the position as if she was pronouncing “eh”. The tune and the quality of her voice didn't change either. It was far removed from what people of later ages would come to know, but it was a song nevertheless.

The girl communicated her intention itself through sound. Her songs were not made of mere sounds, but were a kind of Magic. Her songs permeated the skins of all listeners and echoed directly in their hearts.

The song that expressed beauty through sounds and the volume of one's voice was created after the Age of Paradise. It was more like the girl was playing an instrument when compared to that age.

The old woman once again recalled something different. There was once a clan of Singers in the world. They were no longer anywhere even when she was a child, though. They went around the world, sang all kinds of songs, and brought happiness to people.

The girl's song permeated the old woman.

‘Be relieved.’

This intent echoed in her heart. She could feel that the girl was wishing for her to relax. Her heart was filling with this wish. For the first time since she was a child – no, since she was born, she had no worries and gained true relaxation.

‘Be relieved.’

Listening to this song, the old woman closed her eyes.

Two hours later, a carrier from the royal capital discovered the old woman. Although she seemed to have starved to death, her face looked truly peaceful.

The same time the woman's corpse had been discovered the girl was inside a forest far away from there. She sat inside a cave that seemed as if it had been dug by a bear. Her stomach growled.

The lily roots she had given the old woman were the very last she held on to. What would she do about eating today? The girl sighed while holding her stomach. If the woman had at least been carrying wheat she could have taken that... When was the last time she ate wheat porridge? *I want to eat something*, thought the girl.

She picked up the flowers blooming inside the cave, chewed them and sucked their nectars. She did so and then forced herself to swallow. *This will confuse my hunger*, she thought.

The girl's name was Nieniu. She had no last name; the clan known as the Singers never had any last names. When she named herself she would call herself the Singer Nieniu or even the Healing Singer Nieniu.

According to rumors, Nieniu would appear out of nowhere like the wind. She had a saint-like heart, compassionate words, and she was said to give people far and wide charity and salvation.

However, in reality she wasn't as wonderful as that. She lived inside a cavern in the forest. She was greatly worried about her food from day to day and would shiver from the cold of the night dew every day.

She would appear out of nowhere because she usually hid herself. She would appear after making sure there were no people around, and as soon as her business was over she would vanish. She had a reason not to appear in front of people.

She appeared to give charity only during the times she had something to give. She rarely gave out food like she did today.

Her appearing to be so mystical was only an illusion.

She spoke so little only because she was bad at conveying words.

She was as calm as a saint only because she was already used to people's death and suffering.

Essentially she was just a normal girl. If she were to hear the rumors circulating in the streets she would've probably laughed.

"...Once again I was unable to save her."

Nieniu mumbled. She was thinking about the old woman she had sung to earlier. All she could do was heal the suffering of death. If she came out earlier she might have even been able to save her life. She was assaulted by regret and a sense of powerlessness.

"...If I don't work harder, plenty more people will die..."

Nieniu gazed at the setting sun while muttering. Then, while pounding on her knees to acquire the beat, she started practicing her song.

The Healing Singer Nieniu. She had the power to heal anyone who could hear her. She used this power to help people who were hurt.

In this era, people of her age were obliged to undergo the Magic Deliberation for Ruruta's sake. To help him gain the power to save the world.

However, she had not polished any abilities to fight. It wasn't because she had no talent; it wasn't because she ran away due to suffering; she refused to fight for Ruruta out of her own volition.

She believed that her duty was not to obtain fighting power. It was healing people who were hurt and making them happy.

Inside the forest, Nieniu was able to escape her hunger by finding grapevines and edible wild grass. If she became even hungrier than that then she wouldn't be able to even sing. Also, while eating she was luckily able to find several rabbits and caught them. With this she would be able to not worry about food for four or five days.

As she cut the rabbit's flesh using a stone knife, a sudden sadness like a small wave hit her heart. Nieniu dropped the knife, strained her ears and looked around. Her purple lock of hair swayed despite there being no wind.

'Someone... please help me...'

“...Someone’s calling.”

Nieniu muttered and began looking for the owner of the voice in her mind.

She had, in addition to her powers as a Singer, a Magic Right she possessed from birth. This power was symbolized by her purplish forelocks. When they swayed she could perceive the hearts of other people. It was of the same kind as the power of Thought Sharing developed later, but she couldn’t transmit anything and instead specialized in reading the feelings of others.

“...Where are you...? Somewhere close?”

Nieniu searched for the owner of these thoughts. They shouldn’t be too far. She also knew their direction. Nieniu took the jute bag from the cave, slung it on her back and ran in the forest.

When the sun set the forest was dangerous, but she kept running without minding it. She wasn’t so powerful, but she had also mastered bodily reinforcement Magic. A girl wouldn’t be able to live in the forest by herself otherwise.

The power to perceive feelings she had from birth. The power of a Singer as well as bodily reinforcement Magic. She was young yet she was able to obtain these three types of Magic. She probably had considerable talent. If she had used her talent for Ruruta she might have become some kind of warrior. However, she had no intention of doing so.

Nieniu ran inside the forest for several hours. She arrived at a relatively large village that was about one day of walking from the royal capital. The possessor of the thoughts she could feel was supposed to be around there. She didn’t enter the village but conceal herself behind some rocks.

“...Not good, I’m too close to the capital.”

Nieniu muttered. She had a reason to avoid the capital where Ruruta lived: if she enters the royal capital she would definitely not leave it alive. Even getting close was dangerous. To the extent that she wanted to avoid even coming within one day of walking to the capital.

However, a hurt person was calling her. And she had the mission to save such people. Nieniu sharpened her sixth sense.

‘Help me... it hurts... it hurts!’

The voice of distress came from far away. It probably came from the other side of the village. Nieniu started moving in a large circle around the outer circumference of the village. She couldn't set foot inside of it.

On the right she could see inside the village. Young people gathered in the village square. Some of them sat down with their eyes closed, mumbling something. They were conducting the Magic Deliberation. There were people who exchanged blows with large swords or sent balls of flames and light spheres at rocks to blow them away. It was a common sight of that age.

All excellent warriors would gather at the capital and spend their days in training for battle. However, those who were inferior in their talent or abilities underwent training in villages in the vicinity while doing odd jobs and farm work. Just like the people of that village.

And those who weren't warriors, like the woman she had met yesterday, lived in even further away villages and spent their days being exploited.

The warriors in the capital, the warriors not from the capital, and non-warriors. There was a harsh class discrimination, and those of a lower class had to obey the ones above them. The only way to rise above was to become stronger and become more useful to Ruruta.

This was the system of humanity's warriors devised by the current king of Meliot, Vooekisal.

Nieniu moved away from the village as much as possible. If she ever gets found out by the villagers she would be in trouble. Nieniu, who did neither Magic Deliberation nor farming, would be a target for disdain and even hatred.

She took an even larger walk around the village and arrived at its other end.

“...Uh...”

There, she saw an ugly sight.

A girl who looked to be about fifteen years old was tied to a tree with rope. Wooden stakes were stabbed into her knee and body. Her wounds were shallow, but they must have been incredibly painful.

The ones throwing the wooden stakes were four boys. Every time they threw them, the boys would laugh and the girl would listlessly raise a shriek.

“Serves you right, you worm.”

“I’ll hit you properly next time.”

The boy threw yet another stake. It hit the ear of the girl called a worm. She gave a piercing cry and the boys burst in laughter.

Being called a worm was an insult directed at those who didn’t possess the will to fight.

Apparently, about 10 years ago the king of Meliot Vooekisal made a public speech.

“We are not weeds to be harvested. Neither are we worms to be stomped. We are people with power and the will to fight.

Those who do not intend to fight are, regardless of their human forms, mere worms!”

From that time forth people who were weak or lacked the intent to fight were called worms.

“Hey, don’t dodge it! Get stabbed!”

Even Nieniu could imagine what happened to the girl. She was probably whining. Was she unable to endure some harsh training or had she broken her body during it?

Seeing that, the boys enjoyed blaming, tormenting and hurting the girl.

If someone were to try stopping them, they would probably say the following: *Giving your utmost efforts for Ruruta is natural. Then punishing the worms that can’t do that is just as natural.*

That was however only outwardly; they simply enjoyed oppressing people. And what they said was sound reasoning in this age.

Nieniu couldn’t stop them. If she tried to, she would be the one with stakes thrown at her next. No, she might end up in an even worse position.

However, her heart ached for the girl who cried herself dry. Her purple lock of

hair told her of the girl's pain and suffering.

That's enough. Thinking this, Nieniu jumped out.

"...Stop it already."

As to not make them angry, she spoke to the boys in a voice she wasn't sure if they'd heard. Angry looks that indicated she spoiled their fun were directed at Nieniu.

"Who's that?"

The boys did not listen to her. They started throwing stakes at her. One stabbed her shoulder and she felt a sharp pain.

"...That's enough, right? Stop with that."

"Shuddup."

However, at the next instant a voice of restraint came from the opposite side of Nieniu.

"What're you doing, Fina?"

The one to come there was a blonde boy. He had a bronze sword hanging from the sash of his simple tunic. Since in this era metal was precious, having a sword was proof of him being a warrior of a high position. He was probably the executive who managed the warrior candidates of the village.

The boys who have thrown the wooden stakes faltered. In the meanwhile, Nieniu released the bound girl – apparently called Fina – and removed the stakes from her.

"You came, Megg."

The wounded Fina called the name of the boy who arrived there.

"You all go back to your Magic Deliberation. How can you lose focus like this?"

The boys obeyed his words and went back to the village square. Fina sighed in relief at having been saved. Nieniu who had rescued her felt the same.

"Are you not hurt?"

The boy called Megg spoke to Fina. As far as Nieniu could see, she had

wounds here and there but none of them were serious. If they had kept going they might have stabbed her eye or throat, however.

“Megg... thank you... for saving me.”

“If you’re not injured, go back to the Magic Deliberation quickly. If your wounds are serious though, I will especially allow you to rest for today only.”

“G-got it.”

When Megg spoke to her so coldly she replied with even more of a frightened voice than from the boys threw stakes at her.

“You the woman there, treat her. Once that’s done, immediately get out of the village.”

Megg looked at Nieniu for the first time. She nodded wordlessly.

“Megg, this person saved me.”

Fina tried protecting her. Regardless Megg approached Nieniu.

“You worm...”

He spat at her while she was treating Fina. It hit her cheek. Without paying it any heed, she sucked out a sharp thorn from Fina’s wound.

“I will only be thankful for you saving Fina. But I can’t stand looking at worms.”

Saying this, Megg returned to the village square.

“Umm... you...”

Fina wiped off the spit from Nieniu’s face.

“...Nothing to do about it. He’s right and I’m wrong.”

Being kind was no virtue in this age. Being useful for Ruruta was everything. Since she wasn’t useful, Nieniu couldn’t make any complaints. Having it end with merely spit was fortunate.

Nieniu didn’t know much first aid. She only pulled out the thorns, washed the wounds with water and wrapped them with cloth. She carefully treated Fina, taking her time. Suddenly Nieniu noticed the girl was crying.

“...What’s wrong?”

“I’ve always wanted to meet the Purple Singer. But I never thought I would be able to.”

Fina clung to Nieniu.

“Thinking that the Purple Singer would even save someone like me...”

Nieniu nodded and put a hand on Fina’s shoulder.

“...Please let me sing for you.”

Saying so, Nieniu began singing. While she sang Fina’s heart was transmitted to her.

Her body was weak by nature, and even if she was able to undergo the Magic Deliberation she couldn’t endure any training. She was always being scorned by Megg, her parents and other friends. Although she had to get strong, she simply wasn’t able to. Because she was weak there was no one to save her. While singing, Nieniu was able to perceive her thoughts.

Weak people were worthless. That was the absolute truth of that age. It was impossible to overturn it.

However, Nieniu alone tried to revolt against it. Since no one but herself could forgive her, she simply had to forgive herself.

Nieniu put her feelings into her song.

It’s fine not becoming strong. I will still save you even so.

It’s fine being weak. I will still forgive you even so.

Since you can only be yourself, I will approve of you as you are.

Nieniu’s mind was transmitted to Fina through the song. She clung to Nieniu and wept. It was the first time someone had ever forgiven her.

Even after the song was over she still clung to Nieniu, crying.

After she was exhausted of crying, Fina rose up. She had to go back to training. Nieniu had to leave as well.

“Thank you, Purple Singer. But please tell me something.”

“...What is it?”

“Why are you doing all this?”

There were various meanings to that question. Why was she going around saving people? How could she keep doing this despite falling into danger and receiving humiliation? And, since one had to fight alongside Ruruta, why did she not do so?

“...I can't answer it well.”

Just as the question had all sorts of meanings, so did her answer. She couldn't reply in short.

“...I believe I have to do it. Also, that it's natural to do so.”

“I can't understand.”

“...Yeah, but it's fine. Let us meet again.”

Saying this, Nieniu left.

Part 2

Nieniu lived her days like this. She lived in the forest and if someone wanted her help she would come rushing. Sometimes there were moms who lost their children. Sometimes there were children abandoned by their parents. An exhausted old man, a warrior afraid of the Beasts of the Final Chapter... she sang to them and healed them. She already lived like this for the past five years.

No one could understand her. Some have mocked her and some have tried to hurt her. Even so, Nieniu never changed her way of life.

She didn't mind that nobody acknowledged her. *I will simply live like this.* So Nieniu thought.

Inside the forest, Nieniu was looking at the darkness of the night. At that moment, her purple lock of hair swayed.

'I hate it. I can't endure it... save me, someone save me...'

Someone's pain echoed inside her head.

"...That child's crying again."

Nieniu muttered. She would normally rush over when she heard someone. However, only this once she didn't move. She was unable to sense where the possessor of that pain was located at. She didn't know if it was because they were too far away or for another reason.

'...I can't take it anymore. With every passing day, the end of the world draws closer. The Beasts of the Final Chapter draw closer.

I'm scared, scared, scared! I'm so scared! The Beasts are too strong! There's no way I could beat something like that! Me and everyone, all people are going to be killed!'

"..."

The pain and fear he felt were transmitted to Nieniu. Her heart ached. *Even though he's in pain again today, I can't do anything for him.*

She had already heard his voice dozens of times. Its occurrences were varied;

sometimes she felt it happened every day and at other times that it hadn't happened in half a year.

As she heard this voice Nieniu recalled the past. She recalled the day when she had decided to live her life as a Singer.

The Singers Clan.

It was said that at their prime they were hundreds of people going around the world in several assembled caravans. Some of them sang a song of dancing – making all listeners become exhilarated and naturally begin to make dance steps. Some sang wedding songs – married women would recall the days of their youth and unmarried ones would envision their future wedding.

When some sang tragic love songs, men and women of all ages would weep, and when some sang songs of duels, both boys and adults would swing their fists and raise cheers. They would listen ecstatically yet silently to the song of the grand earth, and would lend their ears and think of spring when hearing the song of birds. The various Singers had various songs. It was said that the Clan went around villages and were received with cries of joy every time they visited the people.

However, Nieniu didn't know about this period. Ever since Nieniu could remember herself there were less than 20 people who called themselves a Clan.

The cause was obvious. The savior Ruruta was about to be born, so they had to assemble the Memorial Weapons and leave behind the Books of strong warriors. The voices that asked for the Singers' songs, which were no more than temporary pleasure, were gradually gone. There also appeared people among the Singers themselves that abandoned their songs.

That wasn't all; people who rejected the existence of the Singers as something harmful also began to appear. Entertainment was evil. Servitude for Ruruta was good. There were gradually more people thinking this, and the ones wishing for songs were pushed away by those. The decisive blow was when the King of Meliot Vooekisal had completely oppressed it.

The destruction of the Singers became inevitable.

The young Nieniu went around the world with her few remaining comrades.

Escaping Vooekisal's persecution, they have made poor livelihood. Their comrades, unable to bear this way of life, vanished one after the other.

Quitting the life of a Singer was simple. All Singers possessed the inborn ability to read other people's hearts. People who didn't have it could not master songs. Because they were able to read others' hearts they were also able to transmit to them. They could simply cut off the forelocks that symbolized them being Singers.

There were also those whose hairs were plucked off as they were crying. There were those who tore them off themselves. Nieniu and the last chief of the Singers saw them off sorrowfully.

Nieniu couldn't run away. She had no relatives. Her mother had died while giving birth to her, and her father abandoned her when she young. The only one to take care of her was her grandmother's elder sister, the Singers' chief.

She was also old and couldn't live without Nieniu. She couldn't leave her side, and so they ended up remaining the final two together.

Eleven years old – it was during the period that one had to learn songs in order to become a fully-fledged Singer. However, Nieniu had not been taught any songs by the chief yet.

“Nieniu, where are you?”

“...I'm here, grandma. I'm preparing the meal.”

They also stopped their travels. They have disposed of both horses and carriages, only leaving a single tent. They both lived relying only on the reserves succeeded from generation to generation.

“Once you finish come to me. I will teach you a song.”

“...O-okay. But since there are still things to do, if that can be done later...”

Nieniu told a bad lie to escape.

She had evaded or even outright ignored the chief's wishes to teach her songs. At this time Nieniu was already determined to quit being a Singer. She was only there to look after the chief. No one could blame her. Rather there would be plenty of people to tell her to leave as soon as possible.

She made the chief eat some wheat porridge. As she was sick she only lived by sleeping and waking up. The chief spoke to Nieniu.

“Nieniu. Has the power of your hair started working?”

“...Not yet, grandma.”

In the Singers Clan, when one came to age their inborn power to read the hearts of other people would awaken. Nieniu has already approached this age.

Awakening that ability was the prerequisite of becoming a Singer.

“Nieniu, I know about that hair color. My great-grandfather had the same purple hair. He was a wonderful Singer. He possessed the power to perceive people’s pain.

You will definitely become a splendid Singer.”

“...Really.”

She didn’t reply. She stayed silent and averted her eyes.

The truth was that her ability had already been active at the time. Her purple bangs were reading people’s pain regardless of her own will. The heart of the chief close to her was transmitted. She was sad about their history ending in this generation.

Ruruta would definitely save the world. However, if the world has no Singers in it, it would be very sad to her. Even one was fine. She didn’t want the history of Singers to go to waste. Nieniu could understand she wished for this.

The more she felt the chief’s heart the more her chest was filled up by excuses.

“...Grandma, I’m going outside. I’ll be right back.”

Saying this, Nieniu who felt like she couldn’t be there any longer exited the tent.

But even after going out, just as expected she could still feel someone’s pain.

She received the feelings of some hurt person from somewhere. It was a faint-hearted and unreliable warrior. He was tormented by feeling inferior compared to the people around him. He was ashamed at being unable to

appear praiseworthy in front of his son.

Nieniu shook her head and forgot about that transmitted pain. However, she then felt a different one.

She received the feelings of some hurt person from somewhere. It was an old woman who sowed wheat while ignoring the pain at her lower back and dragging her feet. *Please take over for me, someone, no matter who, please switch with me for a little while*, the old woman wished.

She received the feelings of some hurt person from somewhere. It was a woman who heard Orntorra's Whisper. *Will Ruruta really win? If he loses my precious children will die*. She was scared and cried.

No matter how much Nieniu tried shaking them off, someone's pain echoed in her head. From various places came various sorrows, pains, weeping, and cries.

She was about to scream. Why did she have to have these feelings? If she reads people's pain then she would be pained as well.

Nieniu suffered from Orntorra's Whisper as well. Nieniu also suffered from living. Then why was she the only one who had to undertake people's pain?

She didn't need this power. It only tormented her. She hated her father and mother for giving birth to her like this.

She thought that she wanted the chief to die as soon as possible. If she does then she would be released. However, there was no way she could say that upfront. Nieniu didn't want to sadden the chief, so she didn't want to cut off her hair.

"Where did you go, Nieniu? You cannot go out so late."

She heard the chief's voice.

Nieniu started running without thinking. Obviously she had no destination. She simply wanted to run away from the place she was at now.

Nieniu ran in the forest during sunset. However, no matter where she ran to, she couldn't escape the pain transmitted from people to inside her mind.

I know. To run away I have to cut my hair. Nieniu leaned against a tree and

tightly grasped her forelock.

“...Sorry, chief.”

Nieniu apologized many times in the empty forest. Since she apologized so much even the chief would forgive her. She kept apologizing until she thought so.

Then she started exerting power in her fingers holding her hair. However, for some reason her hand wouldn't move.

She inhaled then exhaled. *I'll pull it out in one go.* She thought so but again couldn't use the power to do it. She was still hesitating.

“...Why?”

Why did she hesitate? She took off her fingers without having any idea why.

At that moment her purple hair once again transmitted someone's pain. She felt it coming from far, far away.

It was a dark, heavy pain that she had never felt before. It was too painful and Nieniu instinctively held her head.

‘Mom... mom, why did you throw me away?’

It was a child's voice.

‘Although I believed in you, I believed only in you, why did even you abandon me?’

Nieniu understood. It was the voice of a child who lost his mother.

‘There's nobody anymore, I no longer have anyone. Why don't I have anyone? It's hard for me! Fighting is hard! Then why did my mother abandon me?!’

“...Stop. Don't make me feel that pain...”

Nieniu groaned.

Save me. Again and again, someone suffering shouted out for her from far away. They were shouting voicelessly.

“...I'm the one who wants to be saved. Don't push it onto me like that.”

She tried pulling out her purple hair. However, her hand just froze.

I want to escape. But apart from that thought, another thought whispered to her.

Should I really abandon him? Is abandoning him fine?

Nieniu was troubled. It was transmitted to her. There were no longer any people who would save him. He was suffering because no one would help him.

“...I can’t do anything about it. I don’t even know where he is. I don’t even know what to do. Even if I understand it I can’t do anything!”

But, Nieniu kept muttering.

“...I haven’t done anything yet.”

Nieniu stopped grabbing her purple forelock. And she then rushed back to the tent where the chief was waiting.

“...Chief.”

The chief smiled at her on her bed.

“You don’t have to say anything. Come here. I will not blame you.”

She still hesitated. If she chooses this road, horrible hardships would await her. Nieniu shook off her doubts. That was nothing compared to the suffering that boy had chosen to confront.

I have to do it. I’m the only one who can save that boy.

“...Chief, please teach me to sing.”

The chief nodded calmly.

They didn’t have much time. It was clear the chief’s life would not last for long. Nieniu frantically learned the basics. In mere ten days, she was able to master the song of healing.

“Nieniu, listen carefully.”

The chief said after having finished teaching her.

“You have been greatly tormented by your power, the ability to perceive one’s pain.

However, Nieniu... that is the most proper ability for humans to have.

Because you can feel other people's pain you can heal them. Exactly because you know their misfortune you can make them happy.

This power you were born with will probably lead you to the proper way of living."

"...Yes."

"Being strong and defeating others... Fighting alongside Ruruta Coozancoona and attaining victory... They are also proper. However, they are not the only proper ways of life. You must not lose sight of the other kind of righteousness."

The chief stroked Nieniu's head.

"From now on you will face all sorts of hardships. You might even come to regret it.

But even so you are right. The real meaning of being right is to be happy.

True happiness never comes to those who lose their righteous heart."

Nieniu nodded again and again.

"Nieniu. Will you sing for me?"

"...Got it. I, the Healing Singer Nieniu, will sing for you."

She hugged the chief's body and sang.

While singing the chief's heart was transmitted to her. She could feel that the fear and suffering of her approaching death were being eased. Her joy at raising Nieniu and her pride at having fulfilled her duty as a Singer were being transmitted.

And the chief made her last breath in Nieniu's arms. She had only taught Nieniu the song for ten days, but it obviously shaved off her life. Yet she had no regrets.

"...Got it, chief. I've found my way of living.

I will make the people of the world happy. This is my mission as a Singer and my happiness."

Thus began the tale of Nieniu, the last Singer.

Five years passed since.

The boy's distant wailing she had felt that day... was once again transmitted to Nieniu's forehead.

'Don't be afraid, because those who are afraid cannot win. I can't be afraid, cheer up, become stronger, be stronger, those who aren't strong are worthless!

I'm scared because I'm not strong! Become stronger! Become stronger and stronger!'

The distant wailing boy abused himself inside his heart. He continually denied his fears and weakness. However, no matter how much he told himself to become stronger, he couldn't overcome his own fears.

His wails were quite tragic.

Feeling his wails, Nieniu became a Singer. Ever since then she always looked for him. However, she was unable to meet him. Although she could feel his heart, his whereabouts were too far away and she couldn't grasp his location.

Nieniu focused her mind and searched for him. However, she could only feel he was distant. Before long she became unable to hear him.

She sighed and gazed up at the sky.

"...Where are you?"

She called towards the heavens. Towards that boy who was somewhere below them.

"...Will you keep on living like that?"

She asked him. Would he really live by hating his inability to become stronger, by rejecting his own weakness and by spending all of his days in battle? Even if that was proper of him to do, would that really lead him to a happy life?

Nieniu thought that was wrong. She lived as a Singer since she believed there was no happiness in that.

Every day was full of hardships. She was hungry and froze at nights. She lived while being scorned and persecuted. She had exposed herself to danger countless times. Even so, she never regretted her road.

Because the distant wailing boy was there she was able to choose this path. She had to be grateful toward him. She would definitely find him one day. Nieniu was convinced of this as she gazed at the night sky.

Around the same time, a boy was gazing at the sky just like her.

He was in the middle of Meliot Kingdom, in the middle of the world. This was the Royal Tower of Ruruta, where he and his highest ranking subordinates lived. One floor down from the very top was the living room of Meliot King Vooekisal.

Vooekisal was looking at the night sky out from that window.

A human figure mixed in with the night skies. Stationary in air, ignoring the law of physics, was Ruruta Coozancoona.

“How truly...”

How truly beautiful. Vooekisal was struck with admiration every time he saw that figure.

The overwhelming power even stronger than the one uniting all of mankind resided inside the perfectly symmetrical limbs of this boy. This fact alone exceeded any other beauty.

But his figure and power alone would not cause these sorts of feelings. Ruruta’s beauty lied in his spirit.

The decisive battle against the Beasts of the Final Chapter approached. Even so, Ruruta never showed even a sliver of fear. No matter the harsh training he never voiced any complaint and never rested for an instant. Although he was the world’s savior, his body was only that of a fourteen years old boy. There was no way it wasn’t hard for him.

The state of his spirit was far removed from that of a normal person like Vooekisal. He has long since surpassed the suffering felt by humans.

Vooekisal was a regular human after all. When he hears Orntorra’s Whisper he would wake up from his bed with a start. He wanted to wail in despair in front of the overwhelming power of the Beasts. But only at such times, just by looking at Ruruta, his heart would become calm.

Ruruta does not fear anything. Ruruta will never falter. Ruruta will never lose

heart and will never lose.

Therefore, there was no reason to fear the Beasts of the Final Chapter. As long as Ruruta was there and he believed in him.

“...Ruruta. Being able to serve someone as noble as you... I, Vooekisal, is happy with that alone.”

Muttering this, Meliot King Vooekisal returned to his official duties. He engraved words on his own desk on a wooden board using a brush made of oak wood. Since at the time paper had not been invented yet, all documents were bundled wooden boards. A mountain of such documents was at his back.

Distribution of food, production of weapons, the current state of the warriors' training, and other events; Vooekisal looked through all of them. He kept on working regardless if it was day or night.

He felt an extreme satisfaction at the country he had created. They were a country where each and every citizen fought wholeheartedly. They were a combat state of high purity that pruned everything not related to battle. A country where everything existed for Ruruta. That was what he aimed for.

As long as they believed in Ruruta they had no need to fear the Beasts of the Final Chapter. This meant that anyone who feared the Beasts was a fool who didn't believe in Ruruta. Those who complained were worms. And it didn't matter if worms were killed.

Ruruta was a strong, perfect existence. He would fight, win, and save the world. A being far superior to anything on earth.

Therefore, all citizens have to aim for Ruruta. They couldn't be allowed to fear, to hesitate or to be disheartened. They had to endure any sort of pain, overcome any fear, and try to become as strong as they possibly could.

And Vooekisal wanted to cull off all those who were weak, who ran away, who were afraid.

Every time he gazed upon Ruruta's figure this resolve was renewed.

Part 3

A year passed. Nieniu still traveled the world, healing people who were afraid and suffering. There wasn't a single day in the world without any suffering, so Nieniu went around with no rest.

As expected, from time to time her forelock would transmit that boy's pain to her.

'It hurts... my head, eyes, throat, stomach, my whole body hurts...'

"...You're going through another excessive Magic Deliberation, huh?"

Nieniu muttered while running in the forest.

'Hold on... If I don't then I wouldn't become stronger... Persist... I must persist...'

He kept enduring until he was sorrowed. Without screaming or calling for help.

What were the people around him even doing? Nieniu felt angry. This boy, who was probably much younger than her, had to endure such frightening pain. They could encourage him by telling him to do his best, or stop him from doing too much, or praise him for a job well done... there were plenty of things they could've done. Yet they didn't even despite the fact it would ease his pain if but a little.

"...I have to find him soon."

Actually, Nieniu was able to estimate his whereabouts to a certain extent. She had gone around the world, but whenever she felt his wailing he was far away. Meaning, it could only be in a place Nieniu had never gone to.

That was the middle of the world, the Royal Capital of Meliot. The place of Ruruta Coozancoona, Vooekisal and the elite warriors serving them.

Nieniu had never set foot in the capital. It was much too dangerous. Vooekisal and the warriors in the capital thought that servicing Ruruta was the absolute justice. Someone like Nieniu who didn't even intend on fighting would be killed

immediately upon discovery. Even now, while she was running around in the woods, it wouldn't be strange for someone to take her life.

If he ever leaves the capital... Nieniu always thought this while waiting for an opportunity. She has been waiting for six years. It never happened.

"...It can't continue like this though."

Nieniu was also afraid of death. Besides, if she dies she wouldn't be able to save either that boy or other pained people. Although she knew that simply waiting was no good, she couldn't take any action.

More days passed. Nieniu became eighteen years old.

If she were to believe the words of the Calico Prophet Muzzmuck, the decisive battle against the Beasts of the Final Chapter would end in a year. If Ruruta were to lose then humanity had only a year to live.

According to rumors, just the other day the warriors from the capital were able to obtain the Memorial Weapon known as the Ever-Laughing Magic Blade Shlamuffen. They had already gathered the Rhythmic Barrier Uyulála, the Dark Club Gmork, the Colorful Sand Battleship Graógramán, the Ever-Crying Magic Blade Acharai, the Spinning Doll Ücküek, as well as the unique Weapon known by name of Lascall Othello, the Passed Stone Blade Yor; these six.

And now, according to the prophecy, they were able to gather the seven Memorial Weapons. The preparations for the final battle were in order.

Would Ruruta win, or was humanity actually doomed? Everyone thought about this.

However, Nieniu gave up thinking about the Beasts. Never mind thinking, she couldn't do anything about them. If Ruruta wins she would live, otherwise she would die. That was all. The only thing she could do was to heal person after person. She only thought about doing what she could.

More importantly she was interested in something else. She hadn't felt the distant wailing for a while. Was that boy turned into a Book and Eaten by Ruruta? She thought so, but was greatly pained by it. She ended up not being able to save him. Being Eaten by Ruruta was an honor, but she couldn't console herself with that.

“...How are you right now?”

She muttered but obviously there was no reply.

That moment, Nieniu felt a dark, heavy pain that she had never felt before. It came from the distant wailing boy.

‘...I’ll die.’

Nieniu felt goosebumps. Until now, no matter how much the boy suffered, he had never thought of death.

‘...I’ll die, that’s all I can do, just die. I’m weak and weak people have to die...’

Was he trying to die so that he would be Eaten by Ruruta? But doing so would still be fine. He wanted to die and erase his existence from the world.

‘I can only die, only die, only die.’

He called the same words repeatedly. He had lost even his rational thinking. He was different from before.

That time she was on her way to a village far from the royal capital to let someone else hear the Song of Healing. However, she turned back on her heels and dashed toward the capital. She couldn’t delay it by a single moment. No, she shouldn’t have delayed it in the first place.

Nieniu kept running for three days and three nights straight. The Capital still was dangerous for her, but this was not the situation to think about it.

She ran through the forest and the plains to avoid attention. However, the more she approached the capital the less places there were for her to hide yourself. Nieniu took out from her bag a mantle with a hood and wore it on her head. She tied the hood with a string so that her purple forelock wouldn’t be exposed. She might be able to manage somehow as long as it wasn’t seen.

She kept walking in the road to the Capital. She couldn’t help but feel tense with just that. Also, the closer she came to the main gate the more she couldn’t suppress the beating of her heart.

“...Calm down.”

While muttering to herself, she entered the royal capital. Fortunately, around

her walked people who carried wheat and weapons. Nieniu was able to blend well with them, and so was able to enter without being questioned by the guard.

The distant wailing was still transmitted to her. And for the first time she was able to perfectly ascertain its location.

“...So he was here like I thought.”

The place was near the center of the kingdom. Nieniu ran there while shrinking her body.

The royal capital was enveloped by a strange enthusiasm. The excitement at having assembled the seven Memorial Weapons was yet to subside.

While running she listened to the voices of other people. They said that the people who fought with the Punishment Angels to retrieve the Memorial Weapons have all died. And that all of them have been Eaten by Ruruta. They said that it was actually an honor and everyone was envious of those who fell in battle.

“ ... ”

Nieniu felt disgusted. They were happy and jealous of other people's deaths. She couldn't understand their feelings. She kept running.

“Everyone! Please listen!”

Surprised by a voice coming from the side, Nieniu stopped. She found someone strange. He stood at the edge of the road, shouting at passersby. Nieniu stopped and observed him.

“I, Hihak Yammo, have thought today, without any shame, that training was painful! I, Hihak Yammo, strongly regret it!”

The man called Hihak started hitting his own face with his fist. Nieniu looked at him in amazement.

“Ruruta does not fear anything! Ruruta will never hesitate! Ruruta will never run away or lose heart! I will engrave the existence of Ruruta Coozancoona in my heart, and I want to be like him in every possible aspect!”

A single man walked, passing by Nieniu. He grabbed Hihak's collar and hit

him. Even if she were to try to stop him, that man had much stronger bodily reinforcement Magic than her. It was useless.

“Thank you for that strike! It will help me turn over a new leaf!

Ruruta does not fear anything! Ruruta will never hesitate! Ruruta will never run away or lose heart! Therefore Ruruta will never lose! Ruruta is the most important person in the world! I will engrave this in my heart and starting tomorrow will become able to die splendidly for his sake!”

The man called Hihak kept shouting. Was he being forced to do it by someone or was he doing this voluntarily? Nieniu felt uneasy either way.

She couldn't waste her time so she left.

Nieniu was terrified of the capital that she has seen for the first time in her life. It was abnormal. Not a place where proper human beings could live in. She couldn't stay there for long. She had to find the boy as quickly as possible.

At some point the distant wailing was gone from her head. Nieniu simply became unable to perceive the boy. She would probably be able to perceive him again sooner or later though; she knew his location, so there was no need to get stressed.

Instead, she had to pay careful attention so that she wouldn't meet *them*. She heard about *them* from the people she had sung to.

If she ends up meeting *them*, things will become difficult for her.

Running away to hide herself, Nieniu inadvertently left the main street and entered an alley. That was her ruin, however.

“G-g-gaaah!”

She heard a scream from the other side of the alley. *No way*, thought Nieniu. She stopped and thought that she had to go on another road. But it was too late.

There were several men on the other side. All but one were wearing black robes. The remaining one was naked.

The black-robed people turned to face Nieniu.

'...The barrier troops!'

Nieniu felt fear at the fact she had stumbled upon her worst opponents. The black-robed men stared at her.

'...I have to keep going...'

She intentionally ignored them and tried to pass. However, was she actually acting unnatural by doing so?

"You woman there, come here."

One of the robed men said. She couldn't run away. She could only walk to them as told.

Barrier troops – they were the reason that Nieniu had avoided the capital till now. They were an organization chosen by Vooekisal himself, a unit directly serving the King of Meliot.

With the warriors of the capital in their center they surveyed the citizens. Their job was to punish those who didn't believe in Ruruta or feared dying for him. Even simply possessing needless thoughts about Ruruta was a crime. There was no way Nieniu would be allowed to live after meeting them.

She looked at the naked person next to the black-robed men. He had already breathed his last, a rope fastened around his throat. This might become Nieniu's fate as well in some minutes.

"You look unfamiliar, tell me your affiliation, rank and full name."

"...Kooni Batts, a low-class warrior from Burnika village."

That village actually existed, but she chose a random name. She had to lie to escape.

"Why are you here?"

"I have come here due to a summon to the capital. However, realizing it was a mistake in the contact I will be going back to the village."

"It looked like you were walking towards the Royal Tower, though."

"...I thought about looking at Ruruta's tower to encourage my spirit before heading back."

She wasn't good at speaking in the first place, but she kept forming words desperately. If she ends up stammering or raising suspicion it would be the end of the line for her.

"Why are you wearing a hood? Remove it."

"..."

It's over, she thought and removed her mantle. Yet she received a cold reaction.

"So you have an inborn ability, huh. That hair color signifies a mental perception ability... useless.

Oh well. Leave."

She felt as if she was about to collapse of relief. They didn't know about the Singers. Nieniu tried turning back and leaving. However, someone then spoke from behind.

"So that worm already kicked the bucket, huh. Chop him up as an example. Take him away."

The man who had interrogated Nieniu just now ordered his subordinates.

Worm. That word caught her attention. Perhaps careless due to her escaping danger, Nieniu stopped and turned back.

"...Why was that person killed?"

Nieniu strongly regretted the moment she spoke up. What would asking that help her? What would speaking up despite already being dismissed help her?

"This worm prattled on and on about how the Beasts were scary. Even thinking that is a crime. Uttering it is out of the question. Even his death wouldn't compensate for it. It's natural."

Nieniu welled up with anger. Why did he have to be killed for just that? Wasn't being afraid of the Beasts of the Final Chapter natural for anyone who's ever experienced Orntorra's Whisper?

"You have any complaints?"

"...No, of course not."

“It seemed like you wanted to say something, though.”

“...It’s natural to kill him, all weaklings should be killed, if someone isn’t useful for Ruruta, there’s no value to their life. I didn’t want to say anything other than that.”

“I see. Then leave.”

This time Nieniu ran away without turning back.

While running she was assaulted with regret. She had said something she shouldn’t have. Even if she would’ve been killed unless she did so.

That’s not normal. Nieniu wanted to shout. No matter if it’s for Ruruta. Even if it’s for defeating the Beasts and saving the world. Why did he have to be killed? Why did I have to lie like that?

“...And you were in such a place all this time.”

People like Vooekisal and the warriors serving Ruruta always chanted the following.

Ruruta does not fear anything. Ruruta will never falter. Ruruta will never lose heart and will never lose. And so, all other humans should be like him as well.

However, Nieniu thought, Ruruta never hesitated and was never afraid because he was the savior. Because he was different than other people since birth. But that doesn’t mean other people could live like that. They would suffer without ever becoming as powerful. All the people that Nieniu had met as well as that distant wailing boy.

For the first time she hated Ruruta. Although she knew she shouldn’t have these feelings.

Nieniu ran all the way to the capital’s center. She gazed up the towering spire. Then she looked around. She sharpened her senses, looking for the distant wailing boy. After a while his feelings were transmitted again. Nieniu raised her voice without thinking.

“...He’s moving? Why?”

The location of the boy she perceived was at the opposite direction, the edge of the capital. Even though he should’ve been around here until now. Why was

he moving? Nieniu had an unpleasant guess.

Is he looking for a place to die? Nieniu broke into a run again.

She didn't have the leisure to think about the barrier troops. While grazing the passersby, she desperately ran into the main street. The day fell and the setting sun was being dyed red.

As she got closer to the edge, there was less traffic. There were abandoned houses there. They were practically ruins. The place had a bad atmosphere. An ideal place for dying.

Looking around, she saw no human figures. But it was certain he was around. Possibly inside a deserted house, or perhaps in some hiding place she couldn't see.

Nieniu strained her voice and shouted.

"...Don't do it! You can't die!"

Her voice echoed in the silent ruins. There was no answer.

"...Please rethink this! Don't kill yourself! I came to help! I came to help you!"

This time there was an answer. From a completely unexpected place.

"Who are you talking to?"

It came from overhead. Nieniu looked above. There was an eye-defying person there.

He had hair that filtered the red sunset through as it was transparent. A boy's body basked in light. It was the rumored Ruruta Coozancoona.

With surprise, or perhaps fear, Nieniu stood with her mouth open agape. Why was he here? What was he doing? Various questions surfaced in her mind.

"Answer my question. Do not waste my valuable time."

Ruruta lowered himself to where Nieniu was. His feet touched the ground.

"...I'm looking for someone. A child who should be around here."

"I have no clue. You're disturbing me so go somewhere."

"...But, he's supposed to be somewhere around here..."

“There’s no one here but me. You are mistaken.”

No way. Why are you lying? Ruruta should also have the ability to sense far and unseen places. So you’re also supposed to know where the distant wailing boy is.

Was I too late? Or was he killed by Ruruta?

No. If it was so then Ruruta would have said he was already dead. Since I’ve felt his heart just now he should still be alive.

“I’m telling you to go away. Or shall I blow you off?”

“...Please don’t, it’s bad, a child is trying to die. He should be around three or four years my junior...”

At that moment a question rose to her mind. How old was Ruruta right now? Even someone like him who surpassed human beings should still have an age.

“I told you I don’t know. He’s not here. Don’t disturb me.”

Next she had a flash of inspiration. But since it was far too incredulous of an idea she immediately erased it from her mind.

However, when it was gone a new contradiction was born from the situation.

“...There should be someone here, other than me and you.”

“I’m telling you there isn’t. Looking around, where on earth could they be?”

Yes, there was no one. Then only one question remained.

“...Ruruta, what are you doing right now?”

“How persistent. It doesn’t have anything to do with you. I told you you’re disturbing me. Just go already.”

There’s no way, thought Nieniu. It’s as everyone says. Ruruta doesn’t fear anything, never falters, never loses heart. Ruruta is a great hero who surpasses the domain of humans. It was just a fact that no one had ever doubted.

It can’t be, it’s impossible, completely impossible.

“...I’m looking for a child. A boy who’s always lived in this city. He was always alone without anyone coming to his aid.”

Ruruta's expression changed as he listened to her words.

"What are you talking about, it has nothing to do with me."

"...That child always blamed himself for not becoming stronger. He was afraid of the Beasts of the Final Chapter. He rejected his own fear. He wanted to become strong, had to become strong... so he always wished. He despaired at his weakness and wanted to kill himself."

Ruruta's face changed while listening to this. His eyes opened wide with astonishment. Fear was engraved on his face. Looking at that, Nieniu thought to herself.

Oh, no way.

And, just like I thought.

"...He had lost his mother five years ago. It was the boy's one and only mother that he had depended on. And yet she..."

"Stop!"

That moment, along with Ruruta's rage he unleashed lightning from his body. Nieniu shrieked and fell. The lightning strike didn't hit her and scorched the surroundings.

Nieniu, falling on her backside, looked at Ruruta in fear. However, as she saw his face she gulped.

"How... do you know about her..."

Fear was engraved on his face. On the face of the savior who never feared or hesitated. On the face of the savior who surpassed the domain of humans and was trying to overthrow even the World Overseers, there was fear.

Ruruta feared the words of a mere girl.

"...So it was you?"

Nieniu now understood. Ruruta does not fear anything. Ruruta will never falter. Ruruta will never lose heart and will never lose... these were facts way above common knowledge that everyone knew.

But who proved this was the truth? Who had ever confirmed and where did

they see Ruruta never be afraid and never falter?

It was unbelievable but the truth was right in front of her. The distant wailing boy was Ruruta Coozancoona.

“Why do you know this? Who are you? If you don’t answer I’ll kill you.”

Ruruta approached. Nieniu was scared. At this rate she would be killed.

“...What are you afraid of?”

“Afraid? Who the hell is afraid!”

Another lightning strike fell next to her. Her skin was scorched by sparks.

Nieniu was confused. What should she do? Why was Ruruta aggressive?

“Who are you?! Speak!”

Right, I have read his heart after all. Think... you should know what to do.

“...I’ll tell you. Please stop attacking, I will not keep anything a secret.”

Nieniu removed her hood and unraveled her hair. She showed Ruruta her purple-reddish hair.

“...I am the Singer Nieniu. As you can see, I possess an inborn Magic Right. With the power of my hair I can perceive people’s minds, especially their pain and suffering.

I have read your mind using this ability.”

Ruruta stopped attacking with her words. She kept talking slowly as to not provoke him.

“...I’ve perceived a boy who could not bear the suffering, who was shaking with fear, and he came here. And... only now I have realized that it was you.”

She recalled the distant wailing boy. If these were Ruruta’s true feelings...

“...Only now I came to know of it. So please do not worry. I have not spoken about you with anyone.”

“You haven’t told anyone?”

Ruruta sighed in relief. The moment Nieniu saw his expression, her doubts melted away.

The heart of the distant wailing boy she felt all this time... the figure of the world's savior, Ruruta, that people were whispering about... and the figure of the trembling Ruruta in front of her eyes today... they all overlapped.

"You're not lying... you haven't told anyone, right?"

"...Yes, I have not."

Ruruta was actually terrified of the Beasts. He couldn't withstand his weakness. However, he had to act the part of a hero. He had to stay as a savior if only in his speech and conduct.

Nieniu knew why he was afraid of her. He was scared of his acting crumbling down. He was afraid of her peeking into his true feelings.

Ruruta extended his hand toward her. At that instant she shouted.

"...Y-you can't kill me, I have come to save you!"

Ruruta glared at her.

"What are you saying? Since you know the truth I can't let you live."

Even promising to not tell anyone would probably not be good enough. Ruruta was afraid of being exposed. He thought that no one must know he was not the perfect warrior.

"I have to save you! Don't kill me until then!"

"Save me? You say strange things."

Sparks flickered from Ruruta's finger. Yet no attack came. Nieniu knew: his heart was moved by her words.

Obviously. He was seeking help, after all.

"Isn't that all wrong? I will be the one doing the saving. Because I'm the world's savior I have to help all people in the world. Saving me is backwards."

"...But you are hurt and tired."

Nieniu spread her hands.

"...You don't need to be afraid. I came to save you. Everything's fine, you can relax."

“Stop, what are you saying?”

“...You’ve thought this all that time, right? ‘Save me, someone save me’ ... always. There is no need to worry. Please come here.”

Ruruta approached. Nieniu also grew closer. Although she was afraid of being killed, she approached him to save him.

She closed her eyes without thinking. Would Ruruta accept her? *Please accept me*, Nieniu wished with all of her being.

“...”

When she opened her eyes, Ruruta was in front of her. She wrapped her hands around his body and then hugged him gently, as gently as possible. A sigh of relief escaped. Ruruta accepted Nieniu.

“What’s this?”

“...I am hugging you to help you.”

“To help me? You? Help *me*?”

“...Yes.”

“...Help *me*?”

On that note Ruruta stopped talking.

“...It was painful, was it not? Then it’s fine for you to say it was painful. Just by speaking your heart you can be slightly saved. It’s fine. You can tell me about your pain.”

A long silence flowed afterwards. Then Ruruta started calmly assembling words.

“Please tell me... am I really Ruruta?”

“...Huh?”

“Ruruta does not fear anything, Ruruta will never falter, Ruruta will never lose heart and will never lose... isn’t that how that is supposed to be?”

“...You are...”

“Tell me, am I truly Ruruta? If I am then why is it so painful? Why am I about

to be crushed?

Why am I so scared?"

She didn't reply. She couldn't do anything but keep hugging him silently.

"I can't win. I know this. Every time I listen to Orntorra's Whisper, I realize I can't defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter. No matter how many Books I Eat, how many Memorial Weapons I obtain, I know that I definitely can't win.

Save me, please, save me! I'm scared! The Beasts are so scary!"

Listening to his wailings, Nieniu thought.

I and every other person in the world all rely on Ruruta. We think there's no need to fear the Beasts because Ruruta is there. But who can Ruruta himself rely on?

The people rely on Ruruta. But he can't rely on anyone.

What silly things was I thinking about. I regret having hated him...

He was the one suffering the most after all.

"...I'm the Healing Singer, Nieniu. Let me sing for you."

Saying this, she began singing. Ruruta stayed silent, absorbed in listening. Nieniu sat down while supporting him. She held Ruruta's head to her chest and sang.



During that, Ruruta's heart was transmitted to her. Nieniu came to know of the horribly cruel life he had been living.

Part 4

Ever since he was born he was the savior. He had to become strong.

He had to become stronger than anyone, stronger than the gods.

He was raised while being told he had to fight to save the world from even before he could remember himself. He was told this by his father, by his mother, by Vooekisal, by the warriors serving him. If he couldn't win then everyone would die. He had to become stronger for everyone. Although Eating Books and gaining Magic Rights pained him, although he exhausted himself in harsh training, he was not allowed any rest. Even when it rained or when strong wind blew, he couldn't rest for even a single day.

He became stronger. Eating Books and polishing his power, Ruruta became the strongest warrior. However, when Orntorra came to whisper about the destiny of ruin he would tremble in fear and despair.

Inside his dream, Ruruta defeated hundreds and thousands of Beasts. However, they were limitless, and no matter how strong Ruruta was, he was a finite being.

Orntorra whispered that it would be futile, that no matter how much strength he gains he would never be able to overthrow the Beasts using human power. Orntorra showed Ruruta dreams in order to make him surrender.

Despairing, Ruruta cried and begged his mother for help. Even he was a child. His mother's embrace was warm and dependable. When his training was harsh, when his body ached, it was the one and only existence he could cling to.

However, from time to time that mother would coldly push him aside.

You must become strong. As long as you have this mother you would depend on her. Your mother has borne you and lived to raise you to be strong. I will do so.

Ruruta, please kill me. By killing me, you will kill your weakness that depends on me.

It was in order to save the world and the words of his beloved mother. So he

carried it out. He put his fingers on his mother's neck. He used neither lightning nor flames. He wanted to at least feel his mother's warmth using his own fingers. He would surpass his weakness. He would become much, much stronger. He choked her while thinking this.

This happened when Ruruta was eight years old.

Overcoming his dependence, Ruruta indeed became stronger as per his mother's words. But in exchange for that power he had lost someone that would pamper him.

“ ... ”

It was painful. Thus Nieniu thought while embracing him.

Ruruta was about to fall asleep while listening to her song. It was the first time in his life that he felt relief. As well as the first time he felt having his fears and despair vanish. That brought sleep to him. His eyelids slowly closed.

He had to become strong. He had to conduct himself as a great hero. Everyone believed that Ruruta was the savior. For their sake he, without knowing fear, without having any doubts, tricked himself.

There was no person to doubt Ruruta.

Live like Ruruta, become stronger to get near him. Everyone encouraged each other like that and lived. He couldn't actually say that he was scared. He wasn't even allowed to show something like that. He had no choice but to live outwardly as the flawless savior.

Sometimes he would actually end up thinking he was the perfect savior. At such times, Orntorra would whisper in his dreams that it was futile, and the Beasts would tear up his body.

If he could live within his delusions and believe himself to be the perfect savior, it might have become easier. However, reality was always cruel to Ruruta.

Ruruta, listening to the song, suddenly started writhing. He blew Nieniu away, rolled on the ground and hit his head against the wall of an abandoned house. She rushed to him and desperately held down his body.

Ruruta wasn't allowed to rest for even an instant. Inside his body were Imaginary Entrails that housed all the Books he had Eaten. Inside him were the souls of the warriors who believed in him.

They all spoke to him.

Was Ruruta such a coward? He wasn't a hero? Why have I sacrificed myself? I was deceived by Ruruta. I resent you, I begrudge you. If you don't save the world we can't kill you enough for it.

The people who offered themselves to Ruruta tormented him. They told him to become strong and that they wouldn't forgive him if he didn't save the world. Their anger was natural. They became Books and were Eaten because they believed it would allow saving the world.

Ruruta shouted toward them.

Forgive me. I will save the world, definitely, so please forgive me.

Both the living and the dead urged Ruruta to save the world. However, Orntorra was heartless, the Beasts were strong, and Ruruta was much too weak.

Ruruta kept shouting in his heart. *I'm the one at fault. I'm at fault because I'm weak.* He kept shouting, *I'll become stronger so forgive me.*

Ever since he was young Ruruta lived while wearing out his mind. And today his mind was about to reach its limits.

"...Ruruta."

The song was over. Ruruta was asleep as if dead. He had probably not been fast asleep for several years. Perhaps it even happened for the first time in his life. Nieniu worried while looking at his sleeping face.

You can stop already, you don't have to fight, she wanted to say. If she did then Ruruta would probably be relieved. However, this meant that the world was doomed. Nieniu herself didn't want to die either. Not only her, there were plenty such people in the world. No matter how painful it was, Ruruta had to fight.

Even so, his life was far too harsh.

When the sun set and the moon rose, Ruruta opened his eyes. Perhaps thinking everything that happened before he slept was a dream, his eyes widened when he saw Nieniu overhead. She spoke while still hugging him.

“...Ruruta. I forgive you. Even if you are weak, even if you don't save the world, I forgive you. Even if no one ever forgives you, I alone will.”

“You're lying, there's no way. Forgiving me would be strange.”

“...I think so. But that's me. Nobody in the world will accept me. Even so I forgive you. If I don't then you will be left all alone.”

“I can't believe it. Someone who forgives me... that such a person exists...”

“...But you always wanted to meet someone like me, right?”

Ruruta nodded and Nieniu hugged him tightly.

Nieniu couldn't stay in the Capital any longer. Yet she told him to call her if he wanted to meet her again. Ruruta held the ability of clairvoyance to look all around the world. And he also had the power to move to wherever in the world he wanted to instantly. If he wanted to see her again he could do so anytime.

“...If you can't stand it any longer come to me. I will support you as much as I can.”

Ruruta closed his eyes, gritted his teeth and seemed worried about something.

“Nieniu, is it... fine for me to feel so peaceful? Is it fine for me to forget about combat even for a second while with you? Is that allowed for me?”

“...I don't know. However, I believe you are allowed that.”

Ruruta kept thinking. And he then spoke.

“I want you to forgive me.”

“...It should be fine. If this much is not, then you will surely break.”

Turning his back to Nieniu, Ruruta rose to the sky. On parting he said the following.

“Thank you. I'm glad to have met you.”

And with this both returned to their places. Ruruta back to the royal tower and Nieniu to the forest outside the capital.

Leaving the capital, Nieniu turned around one last time and thought. *I will definitely try to save him. I will protect him with everything I have.*

Because he was someone she wanted to protect ever since she was a child. Because he was the one to suffer the most in the world. And more than anything, because she had once, even if only once, hated him and couldn't forgive herself for that.

A figure was watching them from far, far away. On the top floor of the Royal Tower was an old woman holding a dagger made of stone. She was Lascall Othello.

"I thought that this story was over, yet the world is unpredictable.

However, Ruruta-sama and Nieniu-sama... As far as I see it, the end is but slightly postponed. As expected it is impossible to escape the destiny of ruin."

Saying this, Lascall vanished as if melting.

Two months passed since Ruruta and Nieniu had met. Both of them returned to their original lives. Nieniu ran here and there, singing her song of healing. Ruruta resumed Eating Books and training for the upcoming final battle.

In the meanwhile, he would call upon Nieniu from time to time. Nieniu would sing her song of healing at his bedside while he was exhausted just like a mother singing a lullaby for her child. Attaining his peace of mind, Ruruta soon drifted to sleep. They didn't exchange many words. Ruruta was busy and Nieniu was mostly silent anyway.

However, Nieniu was pleased. She didn't receive any sad wailing from Ruruta like she used to before. Being healed and knowing sleep stabilized his spirit.

There was less than a year until his battle against the Beasts of the Final Chapter. She thought of supporting him until then.

One day, Nieniu felt a human presence from within the cave she used as her lodging.

"...Ruruta? Did you come?"

She called. But she then heard an unfamiliar voice from inside.

“Oh, forgive my rudeness, Nieniu-sama. I have been waiting for your return.”

Nieniu became rigid. Inside was an old woman. Her speech was polite, but that made her character all the more mysterious. The stone sword held by that woman caught Nieniu’s eyes. Just when she was about to think *it can’t be*, the woman spoke.

“I am Lascall Othello, or my other name – the Passed Stone Blade Yor. I have wanted to meet you, Nieniu-sama. Although I say this, do you know who I am?”

Of course she did. He was a Memorial Weapon that had its own will and could manipulate corpses. Since he could turn the dead into Books and offer them to Ruruta, he was the most important Weapon.

What does he want with someone like me? she thought but immediately understood. *This is about Ruruta. I’m now somewhat important. Both for Ruruta and for those who serve him.*

“...Is something going on with Ruruta?”

“Of course. Ever since meeting you, Ruruta-sama has changed immensely. Oh dear, how surprising. You have done something quite incredulous.”

“...Y-yes. Thank you.”

“By the way, I have a question. Was it your intention to have Ruruta-sama turn out to be that way?”

“...Huh?”

She couldn’t understand what he meant by “that way”. What happened to Ruruta?

“...What’s wrong with Ruruta?”

Lascall made an unnatural surprised expression.

“Oh my, were you not aware of it? Even though it is something you have done...”

“...W-what happened?!”

An ominous feeling pierced her chest. Lascall smiled and began talking.

“I will explain, Nieniu-sama. The result of your doing is...”

Around the same time Nieniu and Lascall were talking, Ruruta was at the Capital in the training grounds made for his personal use. He used fire-controlling Magic there.

There were several thousands of souls who could use fire Magic inside his Imaginary Entrails. He had to bundle their Magic Rights and use them all at the same time. He focused his mind, collected his power in one spot, elevated the temperature and produced a ball of fire that could even evaporate iron instantly.

This was training he had done countless times till now. However...

“...Guh!”

He failed controlling his Magic Rights. The fireball he couldn't restrain burnt his face.

Why? He wondered. I was already able to do something like this when I was 10 years old. I have to learn a stronger way of using fire to attack.

Ruruta became self-conscious.

He was growing weaker.

“...Why?”

Nieniu became speechless as she heard this. Although she understood the gravity of the situation, she couldn't understand the reasons for it.

“He has thus far supported his power using his mental strength. It is impossible for one to obtain the power to support both the large amount of Books inside the Imaginary Entrails as well as the large amount of Magic Rights bundled together without boundless hard work and force of will. Having him mature his abilities at the mere age of fifteen is far too young for that.

Until now, it was the immense sense of purpose that supported Ruruta-sama: him feeling that he was not allowed to run away or to be afraid. The powerful awareness that he was the world's savior. His obsession toward saving the world.

Since that has already weakened, it is but natural he has also lost his power.”

“...I don’t understand, why has he lost it?”

“Have you still not realized? Even though it was your doing...”

Nieniu flinched.

Ruruta struck the ground with a fireball in frustration. He then sat down holding his head.

He knew the reason. It was because of the words he had heard that day.

“I forgive you. Even if no one ever forgives you, I alone will.”

He was happy to have been told so. He was moved to his core.

However, at the same time... *what a thing you have done*, thought Ruruta. *Why have you said something so stupid?* Because of that girl things were about to get dangerous.

Ruruta hit his own cheek. He beat his own face many times until it started swelling up.

“I’ll save the world, definitely. If I have no chance of winning I’ll find one. If I can’t find it I’ll search for it until I die, and I’ll train myself to death!”

He told himself, but his words were in vain. Contrary to how it worked so far, they slipped past the depth of his heart without reaching it.

“Even if you don’t win, I will forgive you.”

Those words pierced his chest like thorns. They couldn’t leave his head.

“Why did you say such a thing... If you tell me such a thing...”

Ruruta covered his face with his hands and spoke as if moaning.

“...I’ll start to think of running away.”

He had nowhere to escape to. Ruruta transformed that fact into power. But now he had a place like that. The refuge known as Nieniu.

Until now he could endure any hardship. He was able overcome pain. All because he had no choice but to endure and overcome.

But now he had Nieniu. Nieniu would forgive him and heal him.

“What should I do! What am I supposed to do!”

He couldn't stop thinking about Nieniu. Ruruta held his head in anguish.

Nieniu listened to Lascall, her face pale.

"...I didn't mean... to do that."

"Well, that is probably true. However, a goal and its result are two separate things."

Her body started trembling. The fact that Ruruta grew weaker was undoubtedly her fault. This meant that the world would be destroyed because of her.

She couldn't even imagine that the world's fate rested on her shoulders.

"You should not feel responsible.

It is an undeniable fact there were you not there Ruruta would have committed suicide. Also, no matter what Ruruta's state of mind was, he would not have been able to win against the Beasts of the Final Chapter.

Whether you were there or not, nothing would have changed as the destruction of the world is already decided."

"...But at this rate..."

"This is all I have to say. I am terribly sorry for taking your time, so I will now leave."

Lascall's form was about to melt in the ground. But Nieniu grasped his hand and pulled him back.

"...P-please wait! What am I supposed to do!?"

With half of his body submerged in the ground, Lascall spoke.

"Well, it is quite the heavy question for this stone blade. There should be no one who knows how to save the world's savior."

Lascall sank, uncaring that his hand was grabbed.

"Besides, for me it is the same. Whether the world will perish or be saved, it is all the same."

"...What are you saying!!!"

This time Lascall truly vanished. Nieniu's legs trembled and she fell to her knees.

What should I do? While thinking this, she simply stared at the ground in shock.

Part 5

Ruruta desperately continued training. All the while shaking off Nieniu's words that wouldn't let go of his mind.

Having no idea how long this went on, he realized he had fainted at some point when the training ended. It only lasted for several minutes, but during that time he had a dream. It was the dream of destruction shown to him by Orntorra.

"...This again?"

Inside the vague dream the Beasts of the Final Chapter swooped down on Ruruta. Although the scenery of the dream was vague, the pain of his body being chewed and the feeling of the attacks he unleashed were certain.

He scattered the lines of Cavalrymen using the Dark Club Gmork. He burnt a herd of Iron-Fanged Rats to ashes using electricity emitted from his entire body. However, he battled an endless army. In the end neither the seven Weapons, his trained body, nor his Magic Rights could stand up to the Beasts.

He probably fought them like this countless of times. And he lost every time. In about half a year this vision would become reality. Ruruta's body was wounded and he was being devoured. He shouted. *It hurts, I'm scared. Save me, someone please save me.*

He was assaulted by reality. He couldn't win against the Beasts. He could never win like he was now.

And he woke from the dream.

Waking up, Ruruta held his head. He had to become strong. He couldn't continue like this. He had to win. But despite this, he was helpless.

Ruruta looked up at the sky. At the direction of Nieniu.

"..."

The sweet temptation tortured him. By meeting Nieniu and telling her to sing for him he would be released of this suffering. Being in Nieniu's warm, soft

embrace he would be able to sleep soundly. Without worrying about anything, in peace.

But it was no good. He mustn't go. Ruruta himself also clearly understood the cause for the decline of his powers. He knew that seeing Nieniu would solve nothing.

But I still want to see her. I want to see Nieniu. I want to be with Nieniu, the only person who saved me.

Nieniu, why have we met?! Ruruta shouted inside his heart.

"...Starting tomorrow."

He would go see her just for today. And he would become stronger starting tomorrow. Thinking this, he set his body afloat. At that moment, he heard a voice from behind.

"Ruruta! You must take care of your wounds!"

It was Vooekisal. For some reason Ruruta felt great anger at him recently. Although he was the man he had trusted and depended on the most until he met Nieniu, now he didn't even want to see his face.

"...You mustn't go, Ruruta. You are the one who will save the world. Please stay in the Capital."

"...Don't order me. That's for me to decide."

"I can't! Do you understand the current situation?"

"Do you want to say something?"

Vooekisal shouted, unable to bear it any longer.

"Please cease your foolery with that worm!"

Anger welled up from inside of Ruruta. Of all things, Vooekisal called her a worm.

"What will the others warriors think if they find out you are playing with a worm! You are humanity's role model, humanity's hope!"

"Shut up."

With anger in his eyes he turned to Vooekisal.

“If you act like this then what are we supposed to do! If you do not fight we’ll all be at a loss! Are you abandoning us?!”

Who cares, thought Ruruta. Why do I have to take care of even the stability of your mind? What were you doing when I was about to die on that day?

What have you done for me anyway? Wasn’t Nieniu the only one to help me?

“Shut up, Vooekisal. I’m going.”

Unable to talk to Vooekisal any longer, Ruruta rose to the sky.

“Why, Ruruta! Please return to being the savior of the world like you once was!”

“Silence! I’m...”

I’m not the world’s savior. He wanted to say this, but was barely able to stop himself. If he were to say that it would become irreparable. Both for Vooekisal and for Ruruta.

He wasn’t the world’s savior. Once he admitted that fact even once, anything and everything would be over. Ruruta would become definitely unable to defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter.

“...Shiiit!”

While flying in the sky, he angrily shot lightning strikes and fire bullets at the ground. While they were above the power of humans, they were far from the domain of the Beasts.

“What do I need to do?! Just what! Nieniu!!! What am I supposed to do?!”

“...So that was Ruruta just now, huh.”

An explosion reached Nieniu’s ears from afar. The only one in the world able to produce such noise was Ruruta.

She wondered if he would come today. If he does, what should she tell him? Nieniu sat alone in her cave, her body trembling.

Ruruta was losing his power. What did he think he should do? What did he need to do? Nieniu knew as well. She was afraid of it so much she couldn’t stop

shaking.

“...Nieniu. Prepare your resolve.”

She clenched her fist and tried to settle her trembling.

Ruruta had to save the world. And right now, he was losing his power, leading the world toward destruction. Ruruta must do it. It was unavoidable. It was inevitable. That was why Nieniu had to resolve herself. The same as his mother.

I didn't have a bad life. She told herself so. I was able to heal many people. Even if that was nothing but a small consolation.

She had saved Ruruta. He was unmistakably about to commit suicide as things were. Nieniu was able to contribute enough to the defeat of the Beasts of the Final Chapter. This was something no other person could've done.

Thinking of it, didn't I do a good job? That should be enough to resolve myself. The Chief will also surely forgive me.

And so I have to be killed by Ruruta. For the sake of the world, as well as for Ruruta's sake. That's the right decision.

“Nieniu.”

At that moment, a voice came from behind her. Nieniu's body jumped with a start. Was she found out by Ruruta? She was scared of him.

Turning back, she saw Ruruta standing with a horribly brooding expression. Nieniu immediately realized what he came there to do.

“Nieniu, are you afraid of me?”

Ruruta said. *So as expected he realized,* thought Nieniu.

If possible I wish you wouldn't have come now. I wanted you to wait until tomorrow morning or afternoon. If she had that much time Nieniu would have readied her resolve.

No. Ruruta wasn't the one at fault. She was the one at fault for not having resolved herself.

“...No way, I'm fine.”

“Nieniu.”

Ruruta approached her casually. I want to do it as quickly as possible before I start having any doubts – what was his actions transmitted.

“...I’m sorry, Ruruta.”

“Why are you apologizing?”

“...Because I did something bad.”

“You, you didn’t. You’re not at fault at all.”

Saying this, Ruruta put a hand to Nieniu’s neck.

“...Ruruta...”

She couldn’t think of any final words, and so only could say a single word, his name. She closed her eyes and waited.

“...Resist me.”

“...Huh?”

Unable to understand the meaning of this, she opened her eyes.

“Resist me. Otherwise I would end up being reminded of my mother, right?”

Ruruta smiled painfully.

“...I-I understand, but...”

Even if she were to resist, she didn’t know what to do. Should she cry, hit Ruruta and try to run when she was already resolved? Also, if she were to resist Ruruta would end up increasingly more pained. Unable to do anything, she stared at his face.

“Nieniu. If you don’t resist I’ll simply end it. What will you do?”

Even if he told her that, she was the one in this difficult situation.

“So you won’t resist. Then, do you have anything final to say?”

Oh, I see. He doesn’t really want to do it. But that’s obvious. No way he’d want to.

I have to encourage him. Nieniu strained her mind trying to think of what to say.

“...I have a request.”

However, what ended up coming of her mouth were not words of encouragement. It was her final request.

“What is it, you can say anything. If you tell me to, I will do anything.”

“...Please keep on being healthy.”

“ ...”

Ruruta’s hand stopped. The hand resting on her neck began to tremble. And his expression warped. It became the face of a child a moment before crying.

“Nieniu. I’ve told you I’d do anything you tell me. But please think a bit more. Could you request something a bit more doable?”

“...But...”

“No way I could do that, this thing... being healthy... how can it even be done?”

Have I failed again? Wondered Nieniu. I was worried about what would happen to Ruruta after I die. Won’t he be left to spend these painful days all alone again? Thinking of that made it hard for her to die.

“...Too much.”

“...Huh?”

“Too much. It’s too much for me.

I was always alone, I felt like dying countless of times and it just gets worse, and even so, I was unable to see any chances of victory... and once again... once again, my most precious person will...”

Ruruta’s hand left Nieniu’s neck. It slumped down listlessly.

“It’s been enough. Why do I have to keep trying even though this is a fight I’ll never win no matter how much I struggle?”

“...Ruruta.”

“It’s enough, I’m... I didn’t even want to become the savior.”

Ruruta’s knees lost their strength and he buckled down. He stared at the

ground in stupor, his face downcast. Nieniu started thinking as she saw this. Wasn't the savior of the world one who should be blessed, protected, loved, and fostered by the people? Had he been hurt to this extent?

Who had hurt him this much? Was it Orntorra, the Beasts, Vooekisal, the countless Books he had Eaten, Nieniu, or perhaps Ruruta himself?

She laid both hands on Ruruta's shoulders. He buried his face in her shoulder. Then, he wrapped his hand around Nieniu's back and pushed her over to the bed made of straw at the back of the cave.

"...Ruruta?"

Nieniu was confused and tried twisting her body to break loose. However, she recalled that Ruruta was after all a boy. And she as well was...

"...Ruruta..."

Nieniu calmed her heart and decided to give herself to Ruruta.

It grew late at night and dawn approached. The pair was holding hands inside the straw bed. She had accepted him. Ruruta basked in the afterglow of happiness.

"...Ruruta, I'm sorry."

Nieniu said. Ruruta couldn't help but wonder. *Why is she apologizing? She didn't do anything wrong. She encouraged and healed me.*

"Why are you even apologizing? You've apologized countless times already, but I don't get why."

"...I've wanted to protect you, and went to see you. But because of that you've lost your power. It's my fault. So I'm sorry."

Ruruta shook his head.

"If you weren't there I would've died."

"...But still, it's my fault. I couldn't support you. I didn't encourage you. There should have been a better way of doing this. A way to make you not suffer like this."

Ruruta thought. *No, Nieniu. I'm the one at fault. If I were stronger, I wouldn't*

have had to kill you. I'm at fault because I'm not a real savior. You did nothing wrong. You have saved the weak me.

At that time, a sudden question rose to his mind.

“Say, Nieniu. Why have you come to my place?”

“...Huh?”

“Why do you possess the power to heal me? What is a Singer anyway?”

Nieniu's eyes widened.

“...Do I have to explain that?”

“I'm surprised as well. I don't know anything about you in the first place. Will you tell me?”

“...Yeah.”

And Nieniu started speaking quietly. Starting from the history of the Singers until their destruction. About the days she spent with the Chief. About the time she thought of running away. About when she perceived Ruruta crying from afar and thought of saving him. About her going around the world for years, helping people. And up until she met Ruruta.

She spoke little by little, inserting about a second of silence every time she began speaking as was her usual way of speaking.

Ruruta felt something indescribable. Just how many hardships had she had to overcome? All in order to save people as well as save Ruruta.

Plenty of people gave up their lives for Ruruta and were Eaten as Books. Surely that was a valuable self-sacrifice. However, it was completely different from what Nieniu did.

“Why have you chosen that way of living? Even if I was in your shoes it would have been impossible for me. I would've abandoned it in the middle.”

“...If you ask me why it's very difficult for me to answer. I just couldn't leave crying children alone. Probably just that.”

“You sure are kind.”

By talking to her, he once again became sorrowful.

Do I really have to kill Nieniu? Is it absolutely necessary in order to save the world?

I don't want to do it. That's definitely wrong. Why does a person like Nieniu have to die?

"...Ruruta, you're suffering again."

Nieniu said, laying her head on Ruruta's naked chest.

"...It's fine. I'm fine, I'm not scared of dying anymore. I'm resolved."

"Nieniu..."

"I'll die by myself. If I let you kill me, you will suffer again. Forget about me, Ruruta. I can't take it any longer that you suffer because of me."

You don't get it, thought Ruruta in his heart. If you say all that it would make it even harder for me.

If I come to love you any more than this I won't know what to do.

"It's useless, Nieniu. Please wait a bit. Please stay by my side for a while longer."

"...Okay. Thank you, Ruruta."

And they both fell asleep.

The sleeping Ruruta could feel something welling up from inside his stomach. It was an unpleasant sensation much like nausea.

'...Ruruta.'

So it's you lot, thought Ruruta. The souls Ruruta had Eaten were flinging words at him from inside his Imaginary Entrails. The tens of thousands of souls scrambled among themselves to speak to him. Ruruta grimaced at the unbearable tumult. Even if he were to block his ears that voice came from within.

'Ruruta. You have to kill that woman.'

'Kill her. Kill her and become the true savior.'

Silence, shut up, thought Ruruta. Go and melt off, become sand inside my

Imaginary Entrails, thought Ruruta.

‘Although we have wished for it so much, you have yet to become the true savior...’

‘You started faltering, being afraid and losing heart. Why is that?’

‘It is because you still possess a human heart!’

What are you saying? Even I have a heart. A heart that finds Nieniu precious.

‘Throw away your heart!’

All of the souls inside shouted in unison.

‘Throw away your human heart! Throw away all that you feel and think! Become a being that can think of nothing but combat!’

What is that?! Not feeling or thinking anything... such a thing is not human!

‘Become inhuman! Throw away your humanity, surpass your humanity, and become a true savior!’

Don't screw with me! Why do I have to kill her! Even though she is such a good person, so kind, and has served me so much! Why do I have to kill her!

‘You also understand why, right?’

‘As you are right now, you will never defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter.’

I know, I'm painfully aware of that!

But... do I really have to go so far?

‘Is there any other way?’

He couldn't answer.

‘There is nothing. Will you become a mere loser or will you become the true savior? There is no other path.’

I hate it... I just hate it. I don't want to become a loser, but I also don't want to lose my human heart! Don't screw with me! Why do you make me suffer so much!

‘You are the one to screw with us! Why can't you kill a single woman! You, who shed not a single tear when we all have perished!’

'Dying for Ruruta's sake is natural! We have all died for you, and you allowed it as well! Then that woman too should die for you! Why can you not do it!'

It's obviously because she is dear to me!

At that moment, Ruruta's body was shaken. He was pulled out of his dream.

'Shit! Don't stand in our way, you worm girl!'

He woke up. Nieniu peeked in his face.

"Good morning, Nieniu."

"...You seemed to be having a nightmare."

"Probably, yes. But it's fine now."

"...Great. I was worried."

Nieniu smiled. They both gathered their clothes scattered about and began dressing.

"Come to think of it, Nieniu. What do you eat?"

"...There're plenty of things in the forest. I'm not particularly troubled."

Ruruta suddenly noticed – Nieniu changed from using polite speech to a more informal language. It seemed this change was natural and unnoticed by Nieniu herself. That didn't feel bad at all, and Ruruta smiled broadly.

"...I'll make breakfast. I can't make anything too impressive though."

"Yeah, thank you."

What I wanted was probably this... a completely normal, and perhaps truly precious, calm and peaceful life.

Do I... have to abandon it? When I do so, will I be able to become a true savior? A being that doesn't feel or think but simply fight...

A fundamental question rose to Ruruta's mind.

Why do I have to go so far to save the world?

Breakfast was lily roots and dried deer meat. To be honest, the taste was terrible and it was hard to finish eating. *But eating calmly was also something I haven't done in a long time*, thought Ruruta.

“Nieniu. Will you give me a single day?”

“...Obviously it’s fine, but what will you do?”

“I’ve always wanted to try once the thing you call having fun. I’ve never had fun even once in my entire life. I feel like if not today, I would never have another chance.”

A true savior would think of nothing other than battle. And that was what he was aiming for.

“...Okay.”

Nieniu nodded meekly.

“But, since I’ve never had fun before, I don’t know what to do.”

“...I’m not too sure either. What will we do?”

They crossed looks and tilted their heads. A good idea rose to Ruruta’s mind.

“Come outside. I have a place I’d like to take you to.”

Nieniu nodded. As she exited the cave, Ruruta enveloped her with his telekinesis. They both flew through the sky at a dizzying speed.

He looked at her face, concerned she might be scared. Her eyes were wide open in astonishment, but he couldn’t sense any fear.

They flew a great distance to the north.

“...Ruruta, what are we going to do so far away?”

“We’ll just see some things. I believe it will be really interesting. Like that, for example.”

He pointed below him. He realized Nieniu gasped. A huge white object was floating on the ocean.

“...What’s that?”

“Ice.”

Ruruta dropped their altitude and boarded the top of the iceberg. He warmed Nieniu using only a slight bit of fire Magic. Nieniu patted the ice at her feet, confirming it actually was ice.

“...Did you create it, Ruruta?”

“No way. It was there in the first place. I was also surprised the first time I’d seen it.”

“...Unbelievable. Who could believe there was something like this in the world...”

Nieniu pounded at the ice, broke it and played with it. *Good, it’s amusing her.* Ruruta was relieved.

“There are even more interesting stuff.”

Ruruta brought from the water a weird black bird that could swim well yet couldn’t fly. *How cute!* Nieniu jumped and was delighted. When captured and stroked the bird made an amusing sound. When they let go it waddled away. Nieniu watched it for a long time.

Taking Nieniu along, they both saw many living beings. She was surprised to see a white bear and worried it might be sick. When they saw a large animal crawl away while writhing, she was scared that it might have been a Beast of the Final Chapter or related to it.

The sun calmly sank down as sliding down the ice. It soon became night.

“Did you have fun, Nieniu?”

“...Extremely. I can’t really put it to words, but it was amazing.”

Nieniu was so excited she couldn’t convey it in words. Ruruta didn’t tire seeing her like this even for an entire day. He wanted to make her have even more fun and be even happier. He didn’t have enough of looking at her.

“At last night came. I was waiting for the day to end.”

“...Huh?”

“I wonder if it’ll appear today... since it doesn’t appear on most days, please don’t be disappointed if it doesn’t.”

Was there something else you wanted to show me? Nieniu was puzzled. Ruruta looked at the sky and waited intently. Nieniu next to him also looked upward.

“It’ll probably appear today.”

“...What will?”

“I myself don’t really know what it is either. But it’s amazing.”

When it finally appeared Nieniu was speechless. A curtain of light spread out in the night sky. The light covered the entire sky, shone in many colors and swayed. Both Ruruta and Nieniu stopped breathing and stared.

“...Ruruta.”

“What?”

“...I have too many things to say, so I can’t say it well. But... thank you.”

I’m the one who wanted to say that, thought Ruruta.

I can’t lose Nieniu. This feeling grew stronger with each passing second. I can’t lose her. Why must I kill her?

If I were stronger, if I had the power to blow the Beasts away with one hand, I wouldn’t have had these worries. If I were crueler, I would’ve killed her without worrying about it. I have neither of those options. I’m not strong enough to defeat the Beasts nor strong enough to make myself kill Nieniu.

Ruruta was convinced – I will never be able to kill Nieniu. I won’t ever regain my power like this. As a result, the world will perish.

Nieniu became more important to him than the world.

Part 6

Next day they moved to the south.

As expected they found some unknown animals. Nieniu petted them and played around. It seemed she was extremely fond of cute things. They watched the blue sea the whole day long. They both gathered seashells and competed to find the prettiest ones. Ruruta used his magic of clairvoyance and found a seashell much bigger than a palm.

There was a desert far to the east. Walking around this endless, empty desert they couldn't put their impression into words.

They went to the north to once again watch that curtain of light. However, despite them waiting all night it didn't appear, and they both slumped their shoulders in disappointment. Ruruta said he would spend only one day with Nieniu. However, as a matter of course two days then three days passed. In seven days Nieniu went and played around the world.

And night fell. Ruruta gazed at the outside scenery from a certain seaside cave. The ocean was illuminated by moonlight, filling it with a deep, transparent blue. The naked Nieniu slept in his embrace.

A voice sounded from inside his Imaginary Entrails. The souls he had Eaten writhed in despair inside the desert.

'...How futile. You have wasted seven whole days.'

'We can forgive neither that worm nor Ruruta!'

'Is Ruruta done?! Shit! What have we all died for?!'

Ruruta answered them calmly.

"Silence. Or do you want me to head down there and silence you?"

All the souls became quiet in unison. Until now Ruruta felt guilty for the warriors who have died for his sake. He was trying to become stronger as to not let their sacrifices be in vain. He refused them for the first time.

"Why don't we admit it already? I'm weak. If Nieniu wasn't there I wouldn't

be alive. I can't kill who I love. I'm helplessly weak."

'We will never admit you being weak.'

"I realized something about myself these seven days.

Why was I born with transparent hair? Wasn't someone else supposed to have been born with it and I was only a mistake? I'm just a child. A boy who misses his mother and becomes attached to whoever reached out to him and spoiled him... a mere boy.

Nieniu simply staying happy by my side is enough for me. There's no way a child like me could save the world."

'What're you saying! If so then why did we have to die! I wanted to live more! We didn't want to be Eaten! Yet even so...!'

Ruruta spoke calmly.

"I'm sorry. That's all I will say. I don't feel like speaking any further."

Confirming the souls went silent, Ruruta closed his eyes. He started thinking before falling asleep.

Was everything a useless endeavor? Were everyone's lives and efforts all useless? I don't want to think that. However, he was helplessly weak. He could only apologize for that weakness. He could neither protect the world nor kill Nieniu.

Ruruta thought. *Why have I been born into this world?*

Ruruta's sleep was always light. For that reason he had much more frequent dreams than most people. And he also heard Orntorra's Whisper many times.

Again? Ruruta thought that day. It was the same vague battlefield dream. He was about to fight the Beasts of the Final Chapter and again be slayed.

Why did they interfere when he wanted to be with Nieniu? Ruruta sighed.

However, he noticed something strange. That day, there was only a single Iron-Fanged Rat in front of him and no more.

'This is the first time for us to converse, right, Ruruta Coozancoona?'

The Beast opened its mouth. Ruruta was surprised. Could it really speak?

“A Beast of the Final Chapter? Or are you the Future Overseer Orntorra?”

‘It doesn’t matter which. The shape I appear in is different, but the essence is the same. Just like a fist used to strike people and a palm used to embrace people are the same.’

Ruruta didn’t quite understand but it didn’t really matter to him.

“What are you planning today? I want to wake up soon. Make it brief.”

‘...You have touched the door, however... that is still not enough to open it. Also, that woman is preventing you from opening it.’

“What are you talking about?”

‘About you. Do not mind it.’

The Iron-Fanged Rat turned its back to Ruruta and started walking away.

‘Please come here.’

“What for?”

‘I have killed you more than hundreds of times inside this dream. I tried making you realize that resisting is useless. However, since you were so stubborn you would not lend me your ears.’

If so, I still have another way. We can use not only force, but words as well.’

“You want to have a talk with me?”

‘Indeed, and I want to show you something as well.’

At that moment, the vague scene of the dream suddenly started feeling more real. Ruruta saw there the Capital that he knew all too well.

‘It is nothing impressive. This is what currently happens in the Capital.’

In the royal tower, Vooekisal was hitting the walls. The skin on his fists was torn, and he was bleeding from his forehead and lips as well.

“What’s he doing?”

‘You can tell by looking, can’t you? He’s angry.’

Vooekisal banged his head against the wall. Ruruta perceived his feelings.

His anger was directed first and foremost against Nieniu. *I'll kill her, no matter what, I'll make sure she dies. I'll break all her limbs, rip her flesh, burn her body, and soak it in filth.* Ruruta was disgusted at Vooekisal's incorrigible hatred.

Next he was angry at his incompetent subordinates. *Why are you so weak, why haven't you given Ruruta even stronger powers? You weaklings. Incompetent worms, I'll kill them all and let Ruruta Eat the useful ones. Just letting Ruruta, myself, and several women be the only humans who survive will be enough.*

"...Was my number one subordinate really that kind of man?"

Ruruta sighed. How unsightly and despicable.

'If he were not such a man the kingdom would have not turned out like this. A kingdom that does not treasure human's hearts and lives, that is.'

"...Right."

'If he were only to understand the value of human hearts a little better, you also would not have been like you are now.'

"Right. That's exactly right."

The scene changed. A warrior that even Ruruta knew by face was kicking an old woman. He was able to gather from his anger that she was seemingly the man's mother.

"What is this?"

'Nothing extraordinary. It is always like this for him. It appears that she did not boil the barley porridge for his dinner today.'

"And just for that he kicks his parent?"

'Indeed. He thinks of it as perfectly natural.'

Once again a different scene was shown.

A single man pushed down a young woman and satisfied his ugly lust. Ruruta averted his eyes without thinking. It was because this scene overlapped with how he was with Nieniu not long ago.

'Please relax, Ruruta. What you have done was not wrong. If both your hearts

have connected, that is the proper action.'

The man was thinking: *Ruruta will not necessarily win. I have to make some good memories.* However, Ruruta knew – he repeated this sort of thing countless times. At times he even colluded with his comrades. He felt nauseous.

Orntorra showed him various other scenes.

Boys who were throwing nails at a powerless girl and a warrior who considered that a natural punishment.

Two brothers who hit each other, scrambling over a little food. Their voices cursing each other and the blood running down their noses and mouths.

A man who worked himself to the bones. His son that looked down on him and laughed at him.

After showing him all these scenes, the dream returned to the same desert as always.

"Why have you shown me this?"

The Iron-Fanged Rat looked up at Ruruta and spoke.

'Ruruta. You have been thinking that if you defeated the Beasts of the Final Chapter everyone will attain happiness, right?'

"Yes. Obviously everyone will be happy."

'However, this is reality. People hurt each other, deceive one another, and curse each other. This is irrelevant to whether there are Beasts or not, whether you are there or not.

They are for you, and even for me, the true helpless form of humans.'

"And what's your point?"

'Ruruta. I am the Future Overseer Orntorra. A being that guides people down the proper path. I have always tried to make this world be like heaven. Along with Bantorra and Toitorra, we have done our best. However, we have failed and thus humans have fallen.'

"..."

'I cannot help it. Will you sympathize with my feelings? I can no longer bear

even overlooking this world.

Before long, this world will truly become the worst world possible. When that time comes I will destroy it. Is that so wrong that you would deny it so far?’

“...Say it clearly. Don’t choose strange words to try and convince me.”

‘I see, so I will say it clearly. Please stop fighting. More than impossible, it is just harmful. Both for you as well for me... You have actually already noticed it, have you not?’

“Yeah. I know what you mean.”

Ruruta bent his knees in front of the Iron-Fanged Rat.

“There are no chances of victory. And it’s impossible to find any chances of victory. I’ve also lost my desire to fight. And I don’t even know why I should keep fighting anymore.”

‘Indeed.’

“I give up. I cannot win against the Beasts. I can’t save the world.”

‘...I am deeply sympathetic toward you. You are a victim who is the savior only by name. A sad boy hurt by the foolish hope harbored by people. Orntorra deeply pities you.’

“They’ll come soon, huh. To kill us.”

‘I don’t know when. However, it is but a question of time.’

“...If possible, can it be late? I want to be with Nieniu for a long time.”

‘I cannot decide on my own. The door to the world’s destruction will open due to humans.’

Having no idea what this meant, Ruruta woke up.

Nieniu peeked at Ruruta’s face. He seemed to have overslept.

“...Good morning.”



When he opened his eyes Nieniu was there. Why was he so happy just because of that? Even though he decided to abandon the world inside his dream just now. He cried, asking the world for forgiveness, and made a decision he couldn't be allowed even if he committed suicide.

"Nieniu, do you want to eat fish? I will get some."

Ruruta said, pointing at the sea.

There was something he realized inside the dream. *I didn't particularly want to save the world. I was just trying to do so because I was born with this transparent hair, as the savior.*

It didn't mean I love this world. And if I don't I can't save it. This is all it boils down to.

"...I don't really want to eat. It's fine for today."

"I see, so me as well."

He gave up on saving the world. Ruruta's heart darkened. He felt despondent, guilty and sad. Yet there was also a small joy at his release. Ruruta thought so and comforted himself. At this rate, as long as he was with Nieniu it was enough for him.

"We've flown all over the world so I'm tired. Let's take it easy for today."

"...Sure."

He wanted to keep this life as long as possible. That was his only wish. At that moment, his heart ached.

Right. If the world is destroyed then she would die as well. When he thought of it he was extremely pained. Neither his death nor the death of everyone in the world pained him, but Nieniu's death was painful even now.

However, that was also unavoidable. He gave up on saving the world. Therefore he also had no choice but accept Nieniu's death.

"...Ruruta, are you fine? Should I sing for you for the first time in a while?"

"Ah, well, that's... fine, I guess."

"...Saying it like this is sad. I've staked my life on this song."

Ruruta hurriedly calmed the sulking Nieniu. He heard a song while lying on her lap for the first time in a while. No matter how many times he heard it he was relieved. Her kindness was conveyed from her song.

He realized it was a mistake wanting to kill her after hearing her song. *I can't allow her to die*, he thought after hearing her song.

Even if I give up on the world, I can't give up on her.

But what should I do? I can't defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter, but I can't give up on Nieniu.

Even if I give up on the world, I can't give up on a single girl.

"...Have I sung well, I wonder."

Nieniu said.

"Yeah, it was a beautiful song."

"Good. This is probably my last song after all."

Not understanding the meaning of her words for an instant, Ruruta stared at her face.

"...Ruruta, it's enough. You have to go back. You gave up seven days for me, but that's enough."

"..."

Oh, I see. Nieniu still thinks I'm about to kill her, huh? Ruruta just realized the extent of his stupidity. Ruruta gave up on saving the world yet he hadn't told her this. He probably thought that she would somehow understand it anyway.

I have to tell you, Nieniu. There's no longer any need for you to die. Because I've given up on the world.

But how will I tell her that? What should I say to her?

"...Please don't worry about me anymore. I was happy. I never thought I would end up having such a wonderful time at the end. That is more than enough for me."

Please don't say it's enough. It's not enough for me. I won't be satisfied if I don't make you even happier.

“Nieniu, don’t you have any regrets?”

“...Not anymore.”

“Really? Do you really have none? Please think about it, tell me that you still have lingering attachments.”

Nieniu seemed somewhat troubled. Then she started thinking while gazing at the ocean.

“...Everyone’s living on the other side of the sea.”

“Yeah.”

Nieniu stared at the sea for a long time. Then she started speaking again.

“...I have regrets, lots of them.”

Figures. Since you have regrets I can’t kill you. I don’t want to let you die.

“Tell me. Tell me what you want to do, what you wish for from the bottom of your heart.”

“...What I want to do...”

Thinking for a short while, Nieniu turned around. Then she spoke with her hand on her chest.

“...I want to protect this world.”

At that moment, Ruruta felt a shock as if his legs were shaking. *But I’ve given up on it. Why would you wish for that?*

“...I’ve experienced only painful happenings until now.

The Chief died, I became alone, and all that happened afterward was truly painful. There were many suffering people, and I’d never be able to save all of them. No one would understand me and I’ve been watching unpleasant things continuously.”

“Then how come you want to protect the world?”

“...I’m the last Singer. I’ve lived only thinking of singing. I’ve lived while wishing for the people of the world to become happy through my songs. I thought that this wasn’t wrong. That was always painful, but I believe I’ve led a

correct life.”

Nieniu smiled.

“...I love this world. It’s the world that let me live in it after all.”

“You... love this world?”

The moment he heard these words, Ruruta’s heart fell with a thump. That was the sound of all the worries he had harbored until now being solved in an instant.

Lamenting his own weakness...

Worrying about being unable to save the world...

Hesitating because he didn’t want to kill Nieniu...

Thinking that he didn’t want to save such a rotten world...

Concluding that he’d rather give up if he couldn’t save it.

All doubts that controlled Ruruta until then vanished. What was he so worried about for the last fifteen years? Was it fine for all of his worries to disappear instantly like that? Everything was settled all at once the more he thought about it.

“I... see. So you love the world... I see, I see now.”

He started talking strangely. Because everything was solved like that so suddenly he lost himself in his emotions.

“...What’s wrong, Ruruta?”

Nieniu was puzzled.

Was he strong or weak? Was he the savior or an impostor? Could he defeat the Beasts or not? Was it worth saving the world or not? These were all completely meaningless questions.

There was only one thing for certain. He simply loved Nieniu. He simply wanted to make her happy.

If that was the only thing for certain then he just had to conform to it. He simply needed to act in accordance to the only certain feeling in his heart.

“Ah, I see.”

There was only one thing he wanted to do. He wanted to save Nieniu. To make her happy. He just had to think of that.

“Nieniu, I think I just realized something very important.”

Saying this, Ruruta set Nieniu’s body afloat. And he flew to the sky as well. He started flying with terrifying vigor, splitting the sea with wind pressure.

“...What’s wrong, Ruruta?”

“We’re going back. Each to where they should be. Me to the Capital and you to the forest.”

“...Are you not going to kill me?”

“Why are you thinking about such a stupid thing?”

Ruruta smiled. And he hugged Nieniu.

The Beasts of the Final Chapter were strong. Ruruta was weak. This world was rotten. However, all of that could be changed. Ruruta just had to get stronger. He should just guide the people of the world to the proper path. Wasn’t that all that was needed?

Nieniu loves the world. And I love her. That is a certain thing and can never be changed.

If it cannot be changed, he had no choice but to accept it. He could do nothing but accept his own weakness, the Beasts’ strength and the rotten world and fight.

I will no longer hesitate. Because you exist in this world. As helpless as you are. As long as you’re there I can only keep fighting.

“...Nieniu. I will protect you. I will fight only for that.

For your sake, I will become the true savior, Ruruta Coozancoona!”

A few tens of minutes later, Ruruta appeared in the training grounds in front of the Royal Tower. Nieniu was not with him. He’d already left her in the forest she came from.

“Ruruta, what have you been doing until now...?”

“Don’t speak needlessly. Have you gathered Books while I was gone? If you have then bring them out immediately, we have no moment to spare!”

He spoke horribly. Despite him running away from the Royal Tower for an entire week, he found even a single second precious.

“They are here.”

Lascall appeared. He held plenty of Books. Not even wasting time on receiving them, Ruruta began Eating. He would Eat as much as he can and become as strong as he could. He could do anything if it was for saving Nieniu.

Having finished Eating the Books, Ruruta clenched his fists. He focused his mind and bundled the Magic Rights he had just received. *Stronger, stronger*, he wished. *Thoroughly use every bit of power in my possession*, he prayed silently while gnashing his teeth.

An indescribable sound echoed in the air. It was the after-effect of the Magic Rights inside Ruruta raised to their utmost limits. Sparks scattered, winds blew, and space itself twisted. Extraordinary powers grew within him.

“Rejoice, Vooekisal. I will be no longer fear anything, will no longer falter, will no longer lose heart, and I will never lose.”

Ruruta smiled.

“Rejoice, I am now stronger than ever before!”

How strange, thought Ruruta. *My wish to protect a single girl is much stronger than wanting to protect the entire world. To the extent they can’t even be compared.*

I can win, he thought. For the first time in his life, he felt like he could win against the Beasts. *I can’t be grateful to Nieniu enough. Because by meeting and loving her I was able to become a true savior for the first time.*

Some time passed since then. Nieniu, who was left in the forest without understanding anything, was puzzled for while at not being able to grasp the current situation.

Eventually several pieces of wood flew out of nowhere. On them Ruruta had written everything he thought about ever since meeting her without concealing

anything. He wrote about him wanting to save the world and then giving up on it. About him trying to protect the world for Nieniu's sake. Nieniu came to know of his real feelings.

I cannot meet you right now. However, we will soon be able to meet again. When I defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter and save the world, I will come to see you again. Thus was written.

And the following was written in the end.

“I will protect you. I'm fighting only for you. Therefore, save the people of the world with your song. As long as you and I are here we can save the world. We will both save the world.”

Nieniu cried quietly after having finished reading. She was so happy she couldn't stop her tears. *Ruruta loves me. He's fighting to fulfill my dream.*

I have to try harder as well. I have to sing an even more wonderful song so I could save the world. Not only a song of healing; I have to also deliver a song that could make more people happy.

Because that is the response to Ruruta's feelings.

Chapter 5: The Violet Girl and Dear Ruruta

Part 1

Acting Director Makia Dexiart conducted a thorough investigation about Ruruta. However, even he didn't know of the connection between Ruruta and Nieniu. Everything about her had been concealed by the King of Meliot Vooekisal and known only by him and a few elite warriors.

Although records about Nieniu were extremely rare, Makia managed to find whatever scarce records there were. He also knew that Vooekisal had hidden something about Ruruta. However, he couldn't link between the two.

If Makia had known about the connection between Ruruta and Nieniu, about what happened to her after the battle with the Beasts of the Final Chapter, perhaps his story would have gone in a different direction.

Three years passed after Makia drank with Ruruta and resigned as an Acting Director. It was quite the early retirement. The official reason was him having sufficiently trained the next generation.

His disappearance and seclusion afterward was not much of a topic. This only meant that everyone had already expected this of him – just as he planned.

He genuinely began to work towards killing Ruruta. He never told either the next Director or Kachua about his episode with Ruruta. Since if he made a mistake the world might be destroyed he couldn't let this secret leak out so carelessly.

Makia thought.

A human can't kill Ruruta. He's already at the strongest position humans can reach. No matter the power, the numbers, the plan, he can never be killed.

Then how could one kill something like that? It's simple.

It has to be non-human.

There was large building in the desert of southern Ismo Republic. However,

what showed up on the surface was only one part of it. For people who didn't know of it, it would appear as an old shack.

Going down the hidden stairs in that shack there was a vast research facility. They dug in the desert, used cement and bricks and arranged blue pyroxene as replacement for illumination and cooling. Including Makia, about fifty researchers lived there while concealing their every breath. The interior illuminated by the cold blue pyroxene was much like Bantorra Library's Sealed Labyrinth.

The facility was built by Makia.

Building and maintaining such a facility in the heart of the desert required a vast amount of fortune. Even if he poured all of his income as a Director into that it would probably cover only about 50% of all expenses. When he was in the Director's seat Makia gathered information on politics and economics, allowing him to secretly invest and sell stocks and trades based on that.

His methods of collecting funds all bordered on being criminal or actually were criminal. However, these were but the lightest crimes he had committed.

That facility was raising up two girls. An entire facility and over fifty researchers were required for the upbringing of two girls.

Raising these girls was Makia's biggest sin.

"How's Hammy doing?"

Chacoly Cocot was walking in a corridor of the facility. She was a small girl around ten years old with a round face. She had no particular features except for one point: she had violet hair. Only one of her forelocks was colored as white as snow.

Behind Chacoly was a man holding a steel club. Blood and tufts of black hair stuck to the weapon. It was used to hit a person just now.

The man was a former Armed Librarian. Makia pulled him out of the organization, counting on his tight-lippedness. He was entrusted with looking after and monitoring Hamyuts.

"She's gravely injured so I think she'll be quiet..."

“No way. If you only hit Hammy she wouldn’t even feel anything. I wish you’d understand her a bit more.”

The former Armed Librarian used weapons for Hamyuts’s upbringing. With just this one could imagine what his methods of raising the girl were. Yet neither Chacoly nor the caretaker felt any guilt for that.

Chacoly came in front of Hamyuts’s room. The thick iron door was like a prison itself. It had a giant lock that could never be opened from the inside.

“Chacoly’s coming in, Hammy.”

Chacoly opened the iron door. The inside was dark. The moment she opened the door, something flew with horrifying momentum, trying to stab into Chacoly’s brow. However, before that happened the man behind Chacoly protected her.

The thing thrown was a piece of pencil. It dug into the man’s arm.

“What an amazing power. You can already be not even a trainee but a full-fledged Armed Librarian, can’t you?”

Chacoly said calmly.

“Beat it.”

A voice responded from the darkness.

“Stop that already. No matter how much you rampage nothing will change after all.”

“Beat it, you tool.”

Chacoly smile wryly. Hamyuts would call Chacoly a tool when she wanted to insult her.

It was an insult right at the target, because Chacoly actually was a tool. Chacoly had been created by Makia only in order to defeat Ruruta. A tool that was born from a human, possessed bones and flesh and acted exactly like a human, but a tool.

But that was the same for Hamyuts. Both Chacoly and Hamyuts were tools created in different ways but for the same goal.

Chacoly turned on the lights. She could see a girl covered in blood, shackled by thick chains.

“Really, everyone is so annoying. The research facility is about to be closed anyway, so how long will you stay incomplete?”

“I’m telling you to beat it.”

Hamyuts exerted power to her arm. The fatigued chains started creaking. She picked up a piece of chain and raised her arm. Without receiving anyone’s guidance, nor undergoing an official Magic Deliberation even once, she was able to obtain tremendous fighting strength. She used a Magic that allowed her to throw objects with overwhelming power.

She didn’t swing down her arm. Chacoly activated her own Magic Right before that. It was the power she was born with, symbolized by her violet hair.

“...I told you to stop. No matter how much you rampage, Chacoly’s here.”

Hamyuts stopped in place, not moving her arm. Her attack was sealed. Chacoly was above Hamyuts in everything. Both in her performance as a tool, her degree of completeness, and she was even above Hamyuts in battle prowess at that point in time.

“...Shit!”

Hamyuts quit attacking. At the same time Chacoly also absolved her power.

“Oh well, you’re still Hammy. To be honest, Chacoly is happy you’re not completed yet.”

Chacoly smiled.

“Chacoly won’t give Ruruta to Hammy. He belongs to her after all. Chacoly will definitely, definitely turn him into hers.”

Hamyuts tried moving again. However, Chacoly restrained her by using only a bit of her ability.

“Chacoly will take Ruruta. She won’t give him to Hammy.”

The fact that Hamyuts couldn’t move wasn’t due to any physical power holding her down. More fundamentally she was being controlled by Chacoly.

Hamyuts's will to move itself was being held down and sealed.

Chacoly's ability was known as Soul Sharing. The one to name it had been Makia. This girl, discovered by Makia, was the only user of that ability throughout both the Age of Paradise and the Age of Humanity, the only one in history.

Applied to the Magical system, it could be said to be a superior version of Thought Sharing. Thought Sharing could only send one's thoughts to other people, but Soul Sharing could transmit emotions themselves. The people receiving Chacoly's feelings would end up harboring the same feelings as her.

Speaking frankly, it could be said to be a power to connect people's hearts. However, this ability wasn't so gentle as to make hearts communicate. It changed other's minds. It made other people experience the same as what Chacoly felt.

Just now Chacoly sent the feeling "If Hamyuts rampaged Chacoly would be troubled" to her. And it trampled Hamyuts's will of "I want to attack Chacoly".

At the end of the effort done by the researchers gathered by Makia, as well as Chacoly's diligent study herself she polished her powers to their extreme limits. She was already able to invade, conquer and freely manipulate other people's minds.

"I dealt with Hammy, daddy."

Chacoly talked to the old man living in the shack above ground.

"...Sorry."

The old man responded weakly. He was once Bantorra Library's Acting Director, Makia Dexiart. He carried himself as a dandy guy when he was young, but there was no trace of that now that he was old. He was simply an old, worn-out man.

"I did something... unforgivable to Hammy. And to you as well, Chacoly."

"That again? Chacoly's tired of hearing about it."

Chacoly's shoulders slumped. Makia was trapped by the consciousness of his own sins. He had taken the best path in order to defeat Ruruta. However, taking

that path required him to step into a domain no human could be allowed.

“More importantly daddy, let’s talk about Ruruta.”

She had no interest in the sins made toward her and Hamyuts. In the first place she even had no interest in her raising father Makia. She didn’t mind whether he lived or died. Chacoly was interested in Ruruta alone.

“How does he look?”

“...He looks like a boy of about fifteen. His face is somewhat oval and he has neat facial features...”

Makia told her that for the umpteenth time. However, the more she heard about Ruruta the more her face lightened up with ecstasy. Ruruta’s appearance, his voice, his words, his life, the enemies he’s defeated... Her heart fluttered hearing anything as long as it was about Ruruta.

Chacoly loved Ruruta. She was convinced there wasn’t any love as pure and as passionate as hers in the entire world.

She was born in order to love Ruruta. So there was no way any other person in the world would harbor the same love as hers.

“Poor Ruruta.”

Chacoly shed tears from the bottom of her heart. The story of Makia moved to when he had conversed with Ruruta. Ruruta requested Makia to kill him so that he could give up on his impossible dream.

“...Poor Ruruta. He suffers the same even now. Chacoly wants to go see him as soon as possible.”

Chacoly gazed at the desert outside the shack’s window uneasily. She thought of Ruruta who was waiting for her out there. *Chacoly wants to see him already. Chacoly wants to save her beloved Ruruta. She wants to control his heart with her Soul Sharing.*

But there was still time. Hamyuts was yet to be completed. Even Chacoly’s ability was not flawless.

“I wonder what is Ruruta’s dream... why does he collect happiness and want to destroy the world?”

“Hmm, it doesn’t really matter.”

Chacoly said. She didn’t care about that part of him.

Ruruta being dominated by her was everything. She had no interest in his feelings. There would only be meaning in the moment they meet up. Chacoly was only born to be united with Ruruta. Ruruta was only born to be united with Chacoly.

Ruruta was everything to her. At the same time Chacoly was everything to him. Ruruta’s happiness would be uniting with her, and her happiness would be uniting with him. Neither logic, his past, nor his feelings mattered. Because that was what Chacoly had decided.

“Wait for me, Ruruta.”

Saying so, Chacoly smiled. That smile expressed bottomless eeriness that was different from malice. Was it a deep delusion closely resembling love or murderous intent closely resembling love?

“Chacoly will go. Ruruta, Chacoly will be coming for you.”

Chacoly kept laughing.

“Unite with Chacoly, and then, die along with her. Dying with Chacoly will be your only happiness.”

Makia watched her with a sad countenance.

Once, Makia Dexiart thought about the following.

Ruruta Coozancoona had a weakness impossible for him to bring under control. It was the fact of his being human. Although he had powers beyond the Gods, although he had lived for 2000 years, he was eternally a human.

As long as he was human he had a heart. That was the only thing that would never change.

The heart was Ruruta’s one and only weakness. So killing his heart was the one and only way to defeat him.

So how could Ruruta be defeated?

Makia came up with the victory condition of breaking his heart. However,

making that happen was close to impossible. The ability to manipulate others' minds was the most difficult of any Magic. Even Ruruta who had Eaten hundreds of thousands of Books didn't possess such an ability.

A natural-born talent and an extremely distressful Magic Deliberation... a will to break down any and all difficulties, a strong will to act without hesitating... Makia needed all of those.

Gathering talent was not too difficult. However, giving humans a strong will was hard.

He had to raise them. Just like Ruruta had once been raised as a being that only worked to save the world. He would raise a being that existed only to kill Ruruta.

Makia Dexiart started researching one Magic. A Magic that allowed one to alter other people's souls.

It was said that this Magic had been originally researched in order to raise Ruruta into the perfect savior. However, they didn't make it in time. It was completed a thousand years after the decisive battle against the Beasts of the Final Chapter.

This Magic was treated as one of the biggest taboos and was prohibited by law of the Present Management Agency. Those who made use of it were supposed to be obliterated using the full might of the Armed Librarians. However, Makia still used it.

When Chacoly was a baby he had remodeled her soul. He made her embrace a single desire. More than a desire perhaps it should be called instinct.

It was the desire to "dominate Ruruta, love Ruruta, and commit suicide with Ruruta".

She had nothing but those feelings. She possessed neither love for anyone else nor any humanlike ethics. She was born to love Ruruta and lived according to that.

However, Makia was worried. It was a Magic that would turn a person into a tool. Chacoly would have nothing else in life but loving Ruruta and dying alongside him. Even if one was the lowliest slave they wouldn't be robbed of

their soul. But Chacoly was born with it being taken from her.

Someone who had no free soul. They weren't a human but a tool.

Chacoly loved Ruruta because she was a tool with that function.

Yes, Chacoly Cocot was not a human. Even her innocent, cherubic smile was only because she was designed that way. She was an assassination weapon in the form of a girl.

"Hammy. Is there no one anymore?"

Now Chacoly was twelve and Hamyuts was fourteen. They were walking around the research facility they were born and raised in.

Although Hamyuts had done nothing but run riot until a year ago, she was now mentally stable. It was because she had recently acquired a hobby. It seemed she calmed her feelings by moving a thread and needle. *That doesn't seem useful for anything though*, thought Chacoly.

By acquiring that stability Hamyuts was able to more or less achieve perfection. Thirty years of research and experiments were a success. Meaning, this research facility served its purpose and its staff was no longer needed.

"Throwing a stone barehanded isn't too strong. I have to think of another way."

Saying so, Hamyuts played with a stone in her hands. She had already perfected her fighting style of battling while hurling stones.

"What, Hammy? You want to become even stronger than this?"

"Yeah. Got a problem with that?"

Chacoly just shrugged as an answer. *Chacoly thinks that Hamyuts is strong enough, but oh well, she can do as she pleases.*

They both came to the shack above ground. Makia wasn't there, and instead there was a switch. A fuse was extended from it, connected to the underground facility.

"Well then, let's blow it up. But how do we use it though?"

"Just press it normally? I'll do it. You wait outside."

Just like she was told Chacoly left the hut. As Hamyuts pressed the switch, the floor at her feet shook and dust blew out of the entrance to the underground.

“That does it once and for all.”

Saying so, the dusty Hamyuts went outside. None of the thirty researchers exited after her. Without being aware the facility was being blown up, they were nowhere around.

They were now inside the ground. They were robbed of any intention to resist by Chacoly’s Soul Sharing and their heads were shattered by Hamyuts’s stones.

“...Is it really over?”

“Yeah, it’s over, once and for all.”

Chacoly answered to the voice from behind. A blanket was laid atop the sand and on it was Makia Dexiart.

The elimination of the researchers was not something devised by him. He planned on making people promise to protect the secret, and those who couldn’t he would make drink the water of Argax.

Chacoly was the one to scheme this slaughter. Hamyuts also agreed with it. For Chacoly, the lives of people other than Ruruta weighed less than paper. And Hamyuts held a grudge that couldn’t be satisfied even by killing them. It could be said that this was the natural result.

Even if it was a desperate moment for Makia.

“Hey, Makia.”

Hamyuts sat down at the feet of the worn-out, exhausted old man and spoke to him.

“Did you think it wouldn’t turn out like this? You actually knew it, right? Since you were trying to defeat Ruruta, isn’t it obvious other monsters would be born?”

“...I...”

Hamyuts continued without listening to his reply.

“You are the worst man in existence. You plan on being a proper human being

even after creating monsters like us? I can't allow you to even feel guilty."

Hamyuts mocked him. As if she was rejecting his entire life.

"I won't kill you. If you're killed you'll be saved. I'll have you die of sickness like this. We can't allow you to atone for your sins."

"You sure are taking this leisurely, Hammy."

Chacoly's shoulders slumped. She also wanted to leave there as soon as possible. She wanted to see Ruruta as soon as possible. However, it wasn't bad playing along with her silly older sister before parting. Also, caring for the man who had created her until the end was probably not a waste of time either. She would go to Ruruta after that was settled. Thinking this, Chacoly waited.

Makia died ten days later. Chacoly cheerfully set off to see Ruruta.

Chacoly and Hamyuts left the laboratory on camels' backs, heading towards town. Once there, they had their probably final farewell.

Just as they parted Chacoly was slightly worried. Was letting her go like that fine? If she wanted to be united with Ruruta then Hamyuts would probably stand in her way. Besides, even if Hamyuts kept living like this, she didn't think she would be able to attain a happy life. Could she not remodel Hamyuts's mind using her Soul Sharing and allow her to live as a normal person?

Although Chacoly couldn't love anyone but Ruruta, she was able to have somewhat of an affinity only with her poor elder sister.

"...Chacoly will give up for now, Hammy's her spare after all."

She muttered and turned her back. For example, if Chacoly were to trip down some stairs and die, Hamyuts would have to protect the world instead. Protecting the world didn't matter at all, but Makia had once wished for it.

Chacoly continued her journey farther and reached a port town.

Using her Soul Sharing ability, she spoke to a coachman.

"Chacoly wants to go to the harbor. Take her there."

She invaded the man's heart with her ability. What Chacoly wished for now became what he wished for as well. 'Chacoly wants to go to the harbor'.

“...Sure, I don’t mind.”

Chacoly got on the stagecoach. The other passengers looked strangely at the girl who was clearly riding free of charge.

“Young lady, riding for free isn’t a good thing, so please pay for it next time.”

Said the coachman. Chacoly thought it would be better to do so.

They reached the port town. Chacoly went to the bank and spoke to the receptionist.

“Chacoly wants some money. Please.”

Obviously, the man controlled by her Soul Sharing obeyed. And he even took care so that Chacoly wouldn’t get into trouble.

“Chacoly-chan, if I give you money then you’ll become a mere bank robber. So how about I lend it to you?”

“Okay then.”

Filling her satchel with banknotes, Chacoly left the bank. On paper she was in debt. It was free of interest and indefinite, with only a blank in the name column of the loan records, though.

With that money she bought the ticket to an airboat and headed to Past God Bantorra’s Island. She entered the main street from the harbor, heading in a straight line towards Bantorra Library. She spoke to passersby.

“Where’s the Acting Director? How can I meet him?”

“...The Acting Director? He’s probably at work... I don’t know how one can meet him either.”

With her Soul Sharing she was able to read the mind of the man she was talking to. He seemed to be a clerk who worked at a facility related to the Library.

“Okay then. I’ll talk to someone else.”

Saying so, she canceled the Soul Sharing. And she searched for another person to speak to.

Chacoly was trying to meet up with Ruruta directly. She would meet the

Acting Director – the person known as Photona – then control him with her Soul Sharing and let him guide her to Ruruta.

Even her ability wasn't almighty. In order to activate it she had to see the face of her target once. In order to activate it on Ruruta she had no choice but to step herself into the Second Sealed Labyrinth.

And the only one who would be able to guide her there was Photona.

“Where's that Photona person, I want to see Ruruta as soon as possible...”

Muttering this, Chacoly was looking for Photona.

She would meet him, control him and go to the Second Sealed Labyrinth. If she gets there, she would be able to meet Ruruta. She would become one with him. She was excited.

Ruruta, Ruruta, Ruruta, Ruruta, Ruruta. Rurutarurutarurutarurutaruruta.

Chacoly kept calling his name inside her heart.

At that moment she realized – perhaps she didn't even need to meet Photona. She had read Makia's Book and saw Ruruta's face through it. Then it wouldn't be odd for her to be able to use her ability right away.

Thinking so, she was unable to contain herself. She was going to meet Ruruta.

Chacoly sat down on the road to the Library. Some people asked her what was wrong with her, but she silenced them using her ability.

She closed her eyes and activated her Soul Sharing. Her violet hair wriggled and shone like a firefly. Then, her heart connected to the one sleeping deep underground, to Ruruta.

“...!”

The next moment Chacoly was in a desert. She realized immediately that she was inside the Imaginary Entrails. She didn't anticipate this situation. Was the user of Soul Sharing able to use the power of Book Eating or did her desire to become one with Ruruta accomplish this?

Her Soul Sharing was invoked normally – she could feel her heart being connected to Ruruta who was somewhere in the desert. Yet she couldn't see

him. It appeared she was in the beginning of the vast Imaginary Entrails.

However, an unbelievable emotion was transmitted to Chacoly.

It was “rejection”. Realizing there was an unfamiliar intruder, Ruruta recognized her as an enemy.

In addition, when she tried using her Soul Sharing Chacoly felt danger.

“You can’t attack Chacoly.”

She threw this feeling at Ruruta with all of her strength. A lightning strike fell in front of her. If she was late with her Soul Sharing it would’ve probably erased even her soul.

“...Who is this?”

She heard a voice from far away. Hearing Ruruta’s voice for the first time in her life made her heart throb. At the same time the sense of danger gave her goosebumps. Chacoly named herself with these confused emotions.

“Chacoly Cocot. We finally meet, Ruruta!”

Her hair shone in a violet color. She activated it in full throttle, connecting her soul to Ruruta’s.

“You belong to Chacoly. You will love Chacoly and become one with her. Come, Ruruta, let us die together.”

Chacoly’s mind encroached Ruruta’s. She could feel a fierce rejection coming from him.

In addition, blind attacks assaulted her. Hundreds of needles were produced from inside the sand. Fire fell from the sky. A sharpened wind grazed her.

He was somehow being desisted from hitting her. However, Ruruta’s rage intensified.

“Perish.”

A full-powered attack came. Chacoly had an intuition – she would be killed by Ruruta before controlling him.

“This is... bad.”

For the first time in her life Chacoly shook. She desperately absolved her Soul Sharing. If she couldn't leave the Imaginary Entrails she would be killed.

At the end she heard Ruruta's voice.

"The only one I love is Nieniu!"

"..."

When she opened her eyes, she saw the townscape of Past God Bantorra Island.

Chacoly gritted her teeth and her body trembled with anger and humiliation.

"Who's that Nieniu anyway? Chacoly doesn't know that woman."

Then she stood up and smiled. She looked at the sky while walking and kept laughing alone.

Once, Makia Dexiart was thinking.

I acquired a user of Soul Sharing. I remade her so that she would live as tool meant to make Ruruta commit suicide with her.

But will that really be enough? Is she complete as a tool?

No. Simply moving according to her design wouldn't help her win. I must endow her with the composure to retreat when she loses, reflect on herself and try again.

A tool that schemes by itself and improves itself. I have to make her that way.

And Makia designed her that way.

Three years passed since her encounter with Ruruta. Chacoly was at a town far away from Bantorra Library.

After failing her first contact, Chacoly immediately left Past God Bantorra Island. Since she was rejected by Ruruta there was danger to her life. No matter how much she loved Ruruta, everything would end if she was killed by him. Even while pouring blind love for him, Chacoly also had rational judgment. She wasn't a mere 12 year old girl. It was because Makia had designed her that way.

Chacoly was currently lodging at a small village in the mountainous region of the Principality of Meliot that made its livelihood from dairy farming. The

population was less than three hundred. She spent her days lazily there.

Without going to school, without working, she would idly watch the clouds every day, or play around chasing butterflies.

However, she wasn't troubled by her daily necessities. When it was meal time one of the residents would come and ask her what she would like to eat. When she became sleepy someone would invite her to sleep at their place. She had neither money nor any family, but as long as she had the power of Soul Sharing she was able to live without any inconveniences.

While spending her time like this, she was one day approached by a man who seemed like a postman. She was engaged in staring at a trail of ants.

At the time Chacoly had a certain title: she was a True Man.

"Chacoly-sama, a message came from the Overseer of Paradise. Thanks to your help, the biological weapon Vend Ruga nears completion."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Vend Ruga is no more than a prototype model. One day it will be further improved and open the door for further weapon development. At that time we would like your assistance as well."

"Chacoly doesn't really care though."

It was Kachua who had brought her into the Indulging God Cult. Apparently a spy from the Cult had noticed her by chance when she was on Past God Bantorra Island.

He supposedly intended on using Chacoly as a trump card in the fight against the Armed Librarians. Chacoly was completely uninterested. Her goal was to control Ruruta and then die with him.

She entered the Cult only because it seemed to be a good place to hide in and because it seemed they had some utility value. Even the Indulging God Cult was no more than a tool for her. She obviously didn't disclose anything about Makia, Hamyuts or her real goal to Kachua.

"Also, we have sent people that would become Chacoly-sama's soldiers. Please make use of them."

Chacoly who was staring disinterestedly in the ants smiled thinly.

“I see, thank you. Let’s keep them in jail for now.”

When night came Chacoly went into action. She entered a magic facility disguised as a water mill in the edge of the village. There were several men and women inside. They were Meats sent to her by the Indulging God Cult. It was said they were refugees captured from the battlefields to the west.

“Don’t be afraid, Chacoly will make all of you happy.”

Chacoly invoked her Soul Sharing. She read their emotions.

They were thinking, *I want to escape this place, become free, and return to my hometown.*

“Denied. Chacoly wants you all to be here. That’s why you’re here.”

Chacoly denied their feelings of running away with her Soul Sharing. They stopped thinking of becoming free.

They were thinking, *I want to live peacefully.*

There was no need to reject that. Being under the Indulging God Cult and serving Chacoly would be peaceful for them.

They were thinking, *I want to live with my loved ones.*

“Denied. You can only love Chacoly.”

Her Soul Sharing erased any trace of love other than that for Chacoly from their hearts.

“Say you guys, do you like Chacoly?”

They nodded.

“Yeah, you all like Chacoly right? So you can all die for her.”

Chacoly said while smiling brightly. She rejected the fear that arose in the Meats at that moment with her Soul Sharing. They were forcibly made to nod their heads.

Several hours later, Chacoly absolved her Soul Sharing. When they’re released they would also revert back to their proper minds. However, this didn’t mean

they would completely return to themselves. Some remains of the part modified by Chacoly will remain. Repeating this many times, they would become tools that move according to her will.

“Keep them tied until tomorrow. It will probably be all over in about a month.”

Telling this to her False Men attendants outside, she left the facility.

Part 2

And a month has passed. There was no longer any hesitation in the Meats' eyes. They only lived and died for Chacoly. They were turned into her tools.

“Perfect. Now for the finishing touches.”

Saying so, Chacoly plucked out a few hairs. She brought them close one by one to their heads.

“Transferring Soul Sharing.”

Their hair changed color. A single tuft of hair turned violet.

“In a few more years Chacoly will go to meet Ruruta again. And you will use your power to protect her.”

She said and laughed.

By meeting the Indulging God Cult Chacoly gained several results. First she came to know the thing known as Magic Right Transferral. Chacoly acquired this advanced special ability in two years. It took her time to master, but it was meaningful because it took time.

Another was getting the idea to use people as tools.

If she alone wasn't strong enough, she would simply create assistants. While it was obvious, for Chacoly this was a new discovery. Since she was created as a tool, she had no ideas other than polishing her own abilities. She was thankful to Kachua for that point alone.

Using humans as tools – she had no ethical qualms about that. Everything was both for Ruruta as well as for herself. Chacoly had no other judgment criteria.

Also, the one to raise her had been Makia. He was one who made two girls into tools in order to defeat Ruruta. And after Makia's death, Chacoly depended on Kachua. Both of the two men to raise Chacoly treated humans as tools. She had never seen people treated as people in the first place.

Kachua and Makia. Thinking back on it, they were once Armed Librarians working shoulder to shoulder. Each of them left the Library for their own

purposes and began scheming.

However, in spite of them having two completely different goals, they both came up with the means of using people as tools. Was that only a coincidence?

In any case, Chacoly who was raised by the two heretics Makia and Kachua stepped off the path of humans when heading towards her goal.

All people in the village Chacoly lived in have already been planted with violet hairs. They were ordered to let Chacoly live like usual and keep their daily lives. The new Meats from the Indulging God Cult were also accepted into the village and lived peacefully.

Outwardly it would truly seem like a peaceful village. Not even questioning Chacoly, it could be said to be the ideal land. In truth she has never made anyone unhappy. Everyone that turned into a tool by her Soul Sharing lived happily. She had simply rewritten the shape of their happiness.

While walking through the peaceful village, Chacoly suddenly stopped in place. There was an old man reading a newspaper while basking in the sun. In that newspaper was a single picture. It was a familiar face.

“Why’s Hammy in the news?”

She spoke to the old man. He looked for the name Hammy inside the newspaper.

“It’s this girl. What happened with her?”

Chacoly pointed at the picture. It was undoubtedly Hamyuts in that gossip column. She was wearing makeup and had different clothes, but this was definitely her. She was walking arm-in-arm with a young man wearing a fashionable suit.

“Is this Hammy? It seems she’s Mattalast’s lover, but do you know her, Chacoly?”

“What did Hammy do?”

The old man tried handing her the newspaper. But Chacoly shook her head.

“Chacoly can’t read. Read it aloud.”

She heard the story from the old man. This Mattalast was apparently a new Armed Librarian. He was famous as an extraordinary genius. Just the other day he had been wooing an actress but in the same breath he was seen walking with an Armed Librarian trainee – so it was reported. Mattalast was a regular of the gossip column. People of the world enjoyed gossiping about any disturbance to the public morals of the high and mighty Bantorra Library.

Hamyuts was a mere extra in the article. However, from her facial expression in the picture Chacoly could somewhat understand what kind of life she had been leading.

“Really, so carefree.”

Chacoly muttered. According to the report, Hamyuts seemed to be a promising Armed Librarians trainee. Neither her getting a lover nor working there had anything to do with defeating Ruruta though.

“Well, she’s Chacoly’s reserve so whatever. She will let her do as she pleases.”

Saying so, Chacoly parted from the old man.

She no longer had any interest in Hamyuts’s new life. She simply went in a different direction than her. Hamyuts was Hamyuts. Chacoly was Chacoly. She could do whatever she wanted.

Chacoly had no longing for freedom; she also lived as she pleased. She was approaching her goal of becoming one with Ruruta step by step. Her days were pleasant and she had no worries. Chacoly was satisfied with her life. Even though it was the life of a tool.

Once, Makia Dexiart was thinking.

Letting a human live as a tool... for one to do so, they must not have any worries or distress.

If they suffer, a tool would probably stop being a tool. A tool must be happy to be a tool.

Chacoly lived happily in accordance to Makia’s design.

Days kept passing. On the surface it all seemed peaceful. But under the surface, a repulsive soul remodeling was taking place.

Chacoly Cocot became 18 years old. Five hundred people had become her tools. About one fifth of her hair became black. That was because she had given part of her powers to her tools.

One evening, Chacoly killed all of Kachua's underlings in the village. And she summoned all the tools that had her hairs. The time to go for Ruruta has come.

"Now then, all preparations are complete. Protect Chacoly, you guys."

The villagers raised a cry of joy.

"Let's go."

Chacoly closed her eyes and invoked her ability. Once again she flew into Ruruta's Imaginary Entrails. Distance was irrelevant to her Soul Sharing ability.

Chacoly came inside Ruruta again. The second time she fell into the center of the Imaginary Entrails. She was in front of Ruruta's eyes as he sat on the edge of a theater stage.

"...You again?"

Ruruta raised his downcast face. With only that Chacoly's heart fluttered, and she was enveloped by a euphoria similar to a cat sniffing cat powder.

"Chacoly Cocot, right?"

Ruruta called her name. Chacoly nearly stumbled out of intoxication.

"...Let us confirm this. Four decades ago, I have requested Makia Dexiart to kill me. Did he create you?"

"Yeah. Daddy's already dead, but that doesn't matter."

"Did Makia create only you?"

There was no need to speak about Hamyuts. She was probably no longer a tool to defeat Ruruta.

"Yeah. Just Chacoly."

"That's good."

He said and smiled.

"...Forty years passed since that day. I've always regretted it. Now I can finally

clean up after my foolishness.”

“Regret? What do you regret?”

“I have given up on my dream. I gave in to my weakness and exposed my weakness. I’ve always regretted my mistake from that day. I couldn’t help but want to kill Makia and you. But because of that power I’d given him I couldn’t do that.”

“You’re talking nonsense.”

Chacoly jeered.

“You just wanted to meet Chacoly. You’ve waited for the moment we can love each other. You wanting to kill Chacoly is a downright lie.”

“...”

“You’ve waited for Chacoly. For two thousand years. You’ve created the Armed Librarians and the Indulging God Cult just to meet her. Your life was only so you could love her.”

“...I thought Makia was a somewhat capable man. But in forty years he’s only created this madwoman?”

Ruruta sighed, then spoke calmly.

“Die.”

That became the signal. Chacoly’s hair swayed and her Soul Sharing ability activated. She started thinking. *No way Chacoly could lose. She loves Ruruta so much, after all.*

An invisible blade was launched from Ruruta’s body and assaulted Chacoly.

The next moment, a different phenomenon took place. Things that appeared like the petals of a violet swirled around Chacoly. The moment the slashing attack hit them, it lost all power.

“A clone?”

Ruruta said calmly. Perhaps feeling the danger he rose up, intending to jump out of the way. However, at that moment a single petal lightly touched his back.

“...What is this?”

Chacoly chuckled. It was scary how much it went according to plan. Ruruta thought that the flower petals were part of her ability. That it was an ability that would protect Chacoly when activated.

However, the truth was different.

The petals were the souls of the tools given parts of Chacoly's powers. They all freely used their Soul Sharing and separately cast their Souls into the Imaginary Entrails. They all moved with their free wills to attack Ruruta. Chacoly alone couldn't win. That was why she had tools.

"...Kh... this power..."

Ruruta shot a slash to finish off Chacoly. But it missed. It was because the petal that had touched him earlier encroached his mind.

'You will be happy to be controlled by Chacoly.'

Chacoly's tools planted those feelings in him. Therefore Ruruta hesitated on attacking her.

As long as he was human he would hesitate. He had to hesitate attacking the source of happiness in front of him. However, hesitation would invite immediate defeat in a battle.

Chacoly was already cornering him. How her first move would hit him was the key to everything.

From the beginning she knew that it would all be settled starting on the first move. She was only afraid of being killed before having activated her Soul Sharing. They had a remarkable difference in speed. The possibility of instant death was high enough. She prepared the tools only so she could use the first move.

More petals clung to the hesitating Ruruta. They further drilled into him the idea that he would be happier being controlled by Chacoly.

"How disappointing."

Feeling danger, Ruruta stopped his attempt to unleash an attack with his full power. Chacoly herself activated her Soul Sharing. Ruruta was bound by the will that he mustn't attack her. He wasn't restricted by a physical force; Chacoly

tightly gripped a more fundamental part of him. Ruruta's will to move itself was suppressed. Just as she stopped Hamyuts in the past.

“You can no longer attack Chacoly.”

Ruruta stopped moving. He was as still as if he had been nailed midair. Chacoly had encroached his mind as to not move even a single finger.

“All that's left is loving Chacoly. Just love Chacoly. And die with her.”

Chacoly approached him.

Then she wrapped her hands around the frozen Ruruta's nape. And she rubbed her lips on his chest. While caressing him, she further eroded his mind.



She groped his unmoving body with her tongue. And she read Ruruta's heart with her Soul Sharing.

"Hey Ruruta. Are you gathering Books of happiness?"

I want to gather them, Ruruta was thinking. *They are absolutely necessary,* Ruruta was thinking. Chacoly chuckled and rejected his heart.

"Denied. The only thing Ruruta needs is Chacoly."

Ruruta's heart was being denied. His mind of collecting Books was vanishing.

"Say, do you want to stay inside the Labyrinth?"

I have to stay here, Ruruta thought.

"Denied. Chacoly doesn't wish for that."

Ruruta's will to stay in the Labyrinth vanished.

"Say, do you love Chacoly?"

I hate her. I loathe her. I want to kill her from the bottom of my heart, he was thinking.

"Denied. Ruruta must love Chacoly."

Saying this, Chacoly kissed Ruruta. A love for Chacoly was born inside his heart. Despite him deeming it unnecessary, he wasn't able to reject the love budding in his heart.

"Hey, Ruruta. Die with Chacoly. We will die together and become one for eternity..."

Ruruta desperately rejected Chacoly's words. *I can't. I can't die yet. I don't want to die with Chacoly or anything like that.*

"Denied. It's no good. You will die with Chacoly."

I can't. There are still things I must do.

"...How stubborn, it makes Chacoly somewhat angry."

Digging her fingernails into Ruruta's chest, Chacoly further exercised her Soul Sharing.

"Your happiness is only Chacoly. Just dying with her. Right?"

No, my happiness isn't something like that.

“Refusing is pointless. Chacoly will never leave you until you love her.”

She kept encroaching his mind.

Half a day has passed. Ruruta already lost control of most of his mind. Chacoly was convinced that it took only one more push. Just a little bit more and Ruruta will become hers.

“Chacoly alone is everything to you. Right?”

Perhaps so, thought Ruruta. Chacoly was convinced he was about to fall. However, at the next moment she felt a resistance much stronger than ever before. She involuntarily detached from Ruruta. Having the expression of euphoria until now, Chacoly immediately opened her eyes wide in anger.

“Why do you resist? No, why *can* you resist?”

The frozen Ruruta barely opened his mouth.

“...Nieniu.”

Her anger heightened. She had heard that name before.

“Who’s that Nieniu? Chacoly doesn’t know that woman.”

Chacoly continued her Soul Sharing. There was only a small time left until she controlled Ruruta. But the more she tried to encroach him the fiercer his resistance became. She was close yet far.

“Who’s that, who’s that, who’s Nieniu. Don’t think about that woman.”

Chacoly rested her forehead near Ruruta’s heart. And she read his memories.

She saw that pair meeting 2000 years ago. She had saved him with her song and told him she would forgive his weakness. Chacoly read the memories of that time.

“...Who’s that? Was there such a woman?”

Chacoly gritted her teeth. She invaded Ruruta with more powerful Soul Sharing.

“What’s with that woman, that’s from 2000 years ago! Denied! Chacoly

denies Nieniu! Ruruta only loves Chacoly!”

But she couldn't. Chacoly wasn't able to reject the Nieniu in his heart.

“Why?! It's from long ago! Chacoly's right here! Nieniu's already gone!”

But Ruruta's mouth opened. *Why can he open his mouth? He was supposed to be controlled by Chacoly.*

“...Nieniu, is here.”

Who's that Nieniu? Thinking this, Chacoly again hung her head on Ruruta's heart. She searched for who Nieniu was. She saw the moment he had tried to kill Nieniu. The moment when he couldn't and gave up on saving the world. And the moment he resolved on saving the world for Nieniu. Chacoly came to know of it all.

She then had an intuition: the problems came later. Something happened later. And that shaped Ruruta of the present. She kept reading his memories.

“...This is...?”

And then Chacoly knew. Both about the fight against the Beasts of the Final Chapter as well as what happened later.

About when Ruruta stopped being a hero and fell to the position of a demon lord.

The sky was torn apart and lightning mowed down the earth. The Great Hero Ruruta Coozancoona felt that the day of the end has finally come.

Meditating all by himself atop the highest floor of the royal tower, he opened his eyes and stood up.

“Vooekisal! Prepare for battle!”

He shouted, but remembered that Vooekisal and his attendants have left a while ago. *What inopportune guys at such a crucial time,* thought Ruruta.

Having no choice, he used telekinesis to summon all of the Memorial Weapons to him. Acharai and Shlamuffen were placed on his waist. They were his reserve weapons; he held on to them just in case. Uyulála was already equipped to his shoulders as a tattoo. This was also his reserve armor.

Graógramán and Gmork would be his main weapons. However, the most important weapons were contained in Ruruta himself.

The power of the tens of thousands of Books he had Eaten...

As well as his unwavering will.

“I will protect this world.”

Ruruta said as if telling himself that.

I have to protect them all. Both the people of the world and my future with ...

“...?”

He felt some awkwardness. He was supposed to think about something right now. What was he thinking about? He had no idea.

And it wasn't just his thoughts. He felt all sorts of discomfort cross his mind. Where did Vooekisal go to? Where did the seventh Memorial Weapon retrieved by Hihak's group disappear to? No, what was that Cup used for in the first place?

“Stop thinking of foolish things!”

This was no time to think. Destroying the top floor of the royal tower, Ruruta leapt to the sky.

Yes, I will fight. To protect —

“...Whom?”

Ruruta muttered, having doubts. He couldn't recall anyone's name. Even though he was supposed to be fighting for someone.

“...Who am I protecting?”

Looking at the surface, the citizens were all escaping to the anti-Beast trenches. Looking at them he recalled: *Right. I vowed to become Ruruta Coozancoona so that I could protect everyone.* He forcibly subdued his sense of discomfort and headed for battle.

He arrived at a forest near the northern frontier. He felt yet another discomfort; he felt as if he had seen this place before.

The ground was infested with Beasts of the Final Chapter. Nevertheless even now without tiring at all they kept being produced. The entire forest was knocked off and it seemed as if the ground was boiling.

“Stop thinking!”

What would he do if he's trapped by such trivial discomfort? The end of the world was already here. Ruruta switched his thinking process. He eliminated idle thoughts and cut off his confusion. He changed his mind so that he would only think about battle.

He started by shooting his strongest attack. White, shining balls of fire rained down on the swarming Beasts of the Final Chapter. The Beasts burned, melted and vaporized. Ruruta's power was effective. His opponent was not invulnerable to all attacks.

The Beasts all gazed upward. Then, ignoring gravity they charged to the skies. A thread made of light constricted them. Then huge needles penetrated them. With only a slight delay of movement Ruruta released the Memorial Weapons simultaneously. Gmork's blow crushed the ground, Graógramán became a hail of blades to chop the Beasts down, and Shlamuffen and Acharai laughed and cried.

His attacks were effective. However, Ruruta felt that it was useless.

They were unlimited. No matter how much he cut them down they would keep being produced infinitely. That was the kind of being they were.

No matter how strong Ruruta was, his power was limited. Limited power could not overcome the unlimited. However, he was Ruruta Coozancoona because he could accomplish the impossible.

Ruruta retreated to the sky. He activated his clairvoyance. He mobilized his Sensory Threads, Unlimited Hearing, and Super Smell abilities. And then he found it – the being that served as the core of these Beasts of the Final Chapter.

It was on the surface. A stone statue with the shape of a woman. However, her hair was not of a normal color.

What color was that? No, it wasn't a color; he couldn't see her hair. The moment he tried to perceive her hair, his vision would suspend for just the

moment he viewed her hair.

The color of nothingness. Thus Ruruta thought.

At that moment the stone statue recognized Ruruta. She didn't move her face, yet Ruruta could feel he was being looked at. As well as the fact that she judged him to be an obstacle to the destruction of the world.

The Beasts that were trying to scatter turned back and gathered to the stone statue.

A stone statue with colorless hair that was trying to destroy the world and the hero with a transparent hair that was trying to save the world... the two fights finally ended with this skirmish.

Two days passed. Ruruta's 48th hour in action seemed to be wasted effort.

Ruruta was so high in the sky the air was thin. It was a spot where a normal human would suffocate in several minutes.

The Memorial Weapon Gmork has already exhausted its powers and turned to ashes. It would probably take about 1000 years for its resurrection. Ruruta was using Shlamuffen and Acharai, but only for reinforcing his defenses.

Ruruta tried approaching the surface. He couldn't crush that colorless goddess statue except by getting close. But the Beasts of the Final Chapter blocked him with sheer numbers. They were cornering him with quantity as if trying to expel him to outer space.

Looking from afar, Ruruta and the Beasts would probably seem like a great black pillar. That black pillar broke through the heavens and when Ruruta was expelled from the surface the battle would be over.

He was stuck in a defensive battle. It was suicidal to be on the defense against an enemy that could produce an unlimited amount of Beasts. However, even using all of his powers and the remaining Memorial Weapons to their utmost limits he was only able to fight defensively.

Ruruta didn't speak. He neither scowled at his predicament nor trembled with the feeling of defeat. He was simply desperately protecting himself.

He had only once chance to win. The attack would be a single killer blow that

he would throw with everything he had. Until that moment comes he had to endure it.

Another 24 hours passed. It took three days to fire that attack.

“...Now!”

For the first time in the fight of three days Ruruta spoke. The object that Ruruta held came from the sky. It came from afar, from outer space.

It still had no name. In later times, astronomers would call it an asteroid.

Pulled by gravity, it began falling. It possessed pure destructive power brought forth by potential energy and mass.

Ruruta was thinking. The Beasts of the Final Chapter were a power that could destroy everything created by the World Overseers. Then they naturally exceeded everything including Ruruta in power. However, what about something out of the world? What if it was a power brought from outside the domain created by the World Overseers?

He felt as if the Beasts were crying out.

What are you doing? That attack is far too strong. The shockwave will blow away both trees and buildings, and the rising dust will cover the skies and conceal the sun. If that thing drops down both the Beasts and humankind will become extinct.

But Ruruta knew that as well.

The asteroid started falling. It shone in red due to its friction with the atmosphere. Ruruta flew to the sky and passed next to the falling asteroid.

“Rhythmic Barrier Uyulála, barrier form!”

He activated one of the Memorial Weapons – Rhythmic Barrier Uyulála – for the first time. Enveloping Ruruta, the Beasts and the asteroid, a thin yet enormous barrier was erected. He furthermore reinforced Uyulála’s barrier using his own defensive abilities. The asteroid, the Beasts, and Ruruta – the place where these three powers would collide was isolated from the world.

The Beasts of the Final Chapters tried stopping the asteroid. Yet it crushed even their unlimited power. They were smashed to fine dust. The asteroid

crashed into the surface, gouged into the ground and caused an explosion.

The barrier erected by Ruruta repelled the aftermath. Then it shattered, having fulfilled its role.

“...It’s... not over!”

Ruruta was still shouting even inside the scorching fire of thousand degrees, even with his body torn apart by the impact of the explosion. That Colorless Statue was yet to break. Even during the explosion the Beasts have protected it till the end.

“If I just... destroy that!”

Then everything will be over. Before saying that, Ruruta commenced his charge. His body incandescent, he hit the Colorless Stone Statue.

It was a tackle. Regardless of past or present, of any powers small or great, it was the only means to crush a great enemy while being powerless.

Ruruta protruded both fists inside the brilliant light. The moment he saw them penetrate the statue’s chest his consciousness darkened.

How much time passed? Ruruta suddenly heard a voice.

“...Ruruta-sama, is it not about time to start breathing again?”

The one speaking was Lascall Othello. Hearing his voice meant that he was still alive.

The sky was bright and clear. The wind laughed and birds were chirping. The threat of the Beasts has passed.

Yet what was this sense of discomfort? It was superior even to the joy of winning and his expectations for the new world.

A girl was lying next to Ruruta. One of her forelocks alone was violet. Who was that? No girl should even be there. Everyone should have already evacuated to the anti-Beast trenches. He had defeated the colorless statue and lost consciousness. The remains of that statue should have been there.

Then who was that girl?

“ ... ”

He heard a voice as if something snapped inside his head.

“...She is...”

The abnormal breaking sound kept unceasingly.

“She is...”

Paying no heed to Ruruta, Lascall brought forth a Book. He placed that Book atop the girl’s chest.

“Have this, o great hero that crushed the Beasts of the Final Chapter and saved this world, Ruruta Coozancoona-sama.

This is the Book of the Beasts’ master, the one who had tried to destroy the world. Her name was the Singer Nieniu.”

The Singer Nieniu. Ruruta didn’t know that name. Yet he also knew it at the same time.

What’s this? Why do I know it despite not knowing it? Something’s wrong with my memory.

“Lascall, what is the meaning of this. Do you know...?”

“Of course I know. I know what has happened to you... and what is happening to you.”

Either in mockery, in malice or simply in true amusement, Lascall grinned.

“Once you read this Book you will surely understand.”

Ruruta touched the Book as he was invited to. He read the Book of the enemy he had just killed – of his late beloved Nieniu.

Part 3

The last Singer Nieniu. Ruruta vicariously experienced the 18 years of her life.

He saw the moment she tried to throw away her power of the Singers. The moment when she heard his distant wailing and became a Singer so she could save him.

She had sung to save people for a long while. And Ruruta came to know of the time she met him.

“What is this?”

Ruruta was thinking as he read the Book. He didn't know any of this. He didn't recall having met her or having heard her song.

However, a Book couldn't contain any falsehood. If so, then what was this?

At that time, Ruruta noticed there was a blank period in his memories. Starting from when he despaired at his inability to defeat the Beasts of the Final Chapter and till the time he resolved his mind to definitely beat them. He had no memory of that period. Why had he forgotten? Why had he not noticed that he forgot something so important?

His head hurt. Hurt badly.

Inside the Book, Ruruta of the past was worrying. He was going to kill Nieniu so he could become stronger. He then gave up and abandoned saving the world. And finally he decided saving the world in order to protect her.

Why had he forgotten that? Ruruta was unable to understand and nearly shouted.

Ruruta and Nieniu separated for a while. Inside the forest, she was waiting for the time when Ruruta would save the world. She practiced singing alone in order to bring happiness to the new world.

Three days later she received a wooden letter from Ruruta. He unabashedly wrote inside just how much he loved her. She read that embarrassedly. Days and months went by.

One day Nieniu noticed: no letter came from Ruruta in about ten days. She decided to once again go to the capital as something might have happened to him. Preparing for the journey, she went to sleep intending to head out the day after.

That night, she woke from sleep due to feeling pain on her face.

“...!”

She tried getting up from her blanket. But the next moment a blunt, hot pain ran through her shoulders, back and legs.

“...W-who is this?”

Because of the shock and pain she could neither get up nor move at all. She realized she was being hit by a stick only after the attack stopped.

“...Who are you!?”

Nieniu shouted. The reply was laughter. It was the voice of people who held their stomachs laughing while pointing at her. Once they finished laughing she was attacked once again. She could hear her bones crack. Nieniu cried in pain and fear.

“Ruruta! Rurutaaa!”

She called the name of her beloved. He had written in the letter that he could find her no matter where she was. He had written that he would definitely come if she calls to him. However, all she received was insults and loud laughter. Reflected in her eyes were the feet of the man encircling her.

“Stop.”

A man said to stop the crowd. She knew from his voice that he was Vooekisal. She knew that hateful man was Vooekisal.

While reading the Book, Ruruta thought. *What's Vooekisal doing?* And at the same time he recalled: when the fight against the Beasts of the Final Chapter started he couldn't see him anywhere.

Yes, it was that day. The day the battle of Ruruta against the Beasts started.

What happened that day?!

“...Ruruta... help me... please come quickly...”

Nieniu’s bones were broken. She couldn’t move anymore. The people looked down on her simply sobbing.

Around her were Vooekisal and the elite warriors serving Ruruta. Each of them was a warrior with a high status and power. They all gathered around a single girl to hold her down.

Ruruta reading the Book felt his mind go blank. As if a thin film covered the sight in front of him. Much like a sight inside a dream. *I wish this was a dream*, thought Ruruta.

“Let’s stop beating her now.”

The attacks stopped by Vooekisal’s voice. Laughing, the warriors looked at the collapsed girl. One of them spat on her cheek.

“...Ruruta, please come, why aren’t you coming...?”

Vooekisal hated her. Nieniu realized that. But Ruruta told her that he had ordered Vooekisal to not hurt her. He had told her that he would rush to her if Vooekisal were to go against orders.

Also, Ruruta said... that he fought to protect her. He asked her to make the people of the world happy with her song. Then why was this happening?

“...Ruruta, why?”

She called his name countless times. Every time the warriors surrounding her laughed as if impatient.

“She still hasn’t realized!”

“That’s hilarious! She keeps crying ‘Ruruta, Ruruta’!”

“You still don’t get it eh you shitworm?”

Nieniu had no idea what they found so amusing and what they were laughing about. Ruruta was supposed to have come if she calls him. There was no way he wouldn’t.

“Do you still not know?!”

Stepping on Nieniu’s head, Vooekisal spoke.

“You’ve been thrown away!”

More laughter echoed. Nieniu felt an impact as if her head was beaten.

You’re lying, Ruruta isn’t such a person.

At the same time Ruruta reading the Book was thinking. *Why have I not rushed there? What was I doing when the girl I love so much was hurt like this?*

Right, I was having my last meditation during that time. I didn’t even think about what Vooekisal was doing.

Ruruta shouted at his past self. *Why don’t you come! Please! Please come!* However, no matter how much he shouted he could never change the past.

“...Nieniu, right? You shit-covered worm.”

Echoed Vooekisal’s voice as he stepped on Nieniu’s head.

“Can you imagine how much I wanted to kill you? Do you realize how much I gritted my teeth looking at Ruruta flying to you?”

She could hear his teeth grinding. The sound of Vooekisal’s anger.

“Lascall babbled on about Ruruta becoming stronger ever since meeting you. But there’s no way that shadow of a former Librarian Angel would ever understand the truth about Ruruta. Do you realize what you’ve done to him?”

Nieniu had no idea. She only saved him. She only stopped him from committing suicide and consoled his heart.

He had certainly once given up on saving the world because of Nieniu. But he realized it was a mistake and returned to fight for the world. Then why must this happen?

“You have defiled him. You have defiled our great savior Ruruta.

Until meeting you he was perfect. A being with no fear or hesitation that could save the world. A being that transcended both humans and Gods!”

Vooekisal shouted while kicking Nieniu’s head. In her pain Nieniu raised a scream.

“It’s all! Because you’ve seduced him! Right!”

Ruruta shouted in anger at the past Vooekisal. *What are you saying! It was nothing like that! I was weak, hesitant, and I tried running away! I was a mere boy born with transparent hair who acted out the part of a savior!*

“What do you mean by love! What do you mean by fighting for her sake! As if the world could be saved by lust for a lowlife! A true savior is nothing like that! They must be the ultimate being beyond any human!”

Nieniu tried saying it was all wrong. However, an impact ran through her throat. Vooekisal’s shoes kicked her throat and an unpleasant sound echoed from inside her mouth.

“He’s fallen to a mere human being! All because of you! Our great, perfect savior that was beyond God, became a mere human!!!”

While reading the Book, Ruruta felt something snapping in his head. His overwritten memories were revived.

“But it’s over. I’m already relieved. Ruruta has regained his heart of a true savior. You no longer have any place in his heart.”

You’re lying. There’s no way he would throw me away. He told me he loved me so much.

“...W...hy... Ruru...”

Nieniu tried voicing. Vooekisal stepped on her throat again.

“You’re still talking?!”

Nieniu realized that the voice coming from her throat was definitive. No matter what happens she would never have a voice again. She knew from that sound. Nieniu lost her singing forever.

“...I’ve waited long for this day, I can finally kill you, I can finally, finally kill you. Don’t think you’ll have a pleasant death. We will thoroughly beat you to death.”

He kicked Nieniu’s body away. His subordinates also attacked. Until she could never move again.

With her entire body crushed, her neck broken, Nieniu became unable to even feel pain. She was dying. She knew that clearly.

Vooekisal gave instructions to his subordinates with his chin. They carried Nieniu's tattered body outside.

Stop, what are you doing. Save her! Don't kill her! Ruruta shouted. However, his voice couldn't reach the past.

"Bury her. You will die alone there."

A hole that was big enough for a human was dug outside the cave. They threw Nieniu inside. They threw soil, rotten porridge and horse dung at her from above. With no power left to resist, her body was dirtied and buried.

"This fictitious girl was erased. When this fiction called Nieniu disappears Ruruta will awaken from his dream."

Vooekisal said. The next moment, a clean, loud snapping sound resounded in Ruruta's head. The memories that were lost in his mind were being reborn.

"You have found how to use the tool brought back by Hihak's squad?"

This happened half a month ago. Hihak and the other hundred warriors challenged the Punishment Angel in deadly combat, returning with the seventh Memorial Weapon. A few days later, Ruruta took a rest in his chambers.

The one fixated on the seventh Memorial Weapon was Vooekisal. He insisted that the Passed Stone Blade Yor didn't count and so they have yet to gather the seven Memorial Weapons. Ruruta thought that it was nonsense but since he wouldn't lose anything he let him do as he pleased.

"No, I still do not. However, I believe it will definitely be useful for you, Ruruta."

"How easygoing of you. The battle is pressing ever closer. I had already said that I don't need the seventh anyway."

Saying so, Ruruta took up the water jug on top of the table.

"Since it is a cup, perhaps we need to insert some liquid to it, or perhaps liquid will gush out of it."

Saying so he drank water. At that moment he felt some discomfort.

Now he could remember it. That day Vooekisal was the one to bring him

water. And for some reason he and his aides looked concerned about that.

“It has only a name. Fiction Obliterating Cup Argax.”

And, at the moment he told the Weapon’s name, Vooekisal unmistakably smiled.

Now he understood. Fiction Obliterating Cup Argax. It was a Memorial Weapon that caused one to lose their memories. Vooekisal already knew about it in advance and he concealed it from Ruruta. Even after obtaining it he pretended to not know how it worked, and then he made Ruruta drink from it.

He fussed over Argax so that he could use it to rob Ruruta of his memories of Nieniu.

All to make him into the true savior he had envisioned again.

A strange noise burst inside Ruruta’s head. As if his skull was cracking. Ruruta’s memories of Nieniu were reborn accompanied by a sensation like an explosion. He recalled how much he loved her and how much he wanted to protect her.

And he was assaulted by reality.

Right now he was touching the Book of that beloved, Nieniu.

Ruruta thought. *I shouldn’t have read this Book.*

And he had an intuition: he mustn’t read any further.

However, the Book continued.

Buried in soil and feces, Nieniu suffocated, unable to do anything. Suffocating was painful. It was one of the most painful deaths in the world.

Ruruta had abandoned her. There was no longer any doubt about it. Hugging her while crying that day and wishing for her to make the people of the world happy... all of this was mere lip-service.

Why? She couldn’t understand it. Or was Ruruta that kind of man in the first place? Selfish and whimsical, thought nothing of people’s lives... *Ah, so it was like that.* Thinking back, perhaps it had been like that.

She recalled the chief’s words.

‘Nieniu... that is the most proper ability for humans to have. The real meaning of being right is to be happy. True happiness never comes to those who lose their righteous heart.’

She lived believing her words. However, they were all wrong.

Why have I been working so hard until now?

I wish I hadn't met Ruruta. I wish I hadn't sung for him. I wish I hadn't loved him.

I wish I hadn't listened to the chief. I wish I hadn't become a Singer. I wish I hadn't had this power.

And finally, she thought...

I wish I hadn't been born.

The next moment, Nieniu heard some sound as if a lock was opened. She felt as if she was floating despite her being inside the ground.

“...Am I... dreaming?”

Right – that vague feeling was like when she was showed a dream by Orntorra.

However, there were no Beasts in the dream world. Instead there was a metal door she had never seen before.

I'll open that door, thought Nieniu. She noticed that she wasn't feeling any humiliation, sadness or anger.

This isn't the time to feel sad or angry. I have to see something important on the other side of the door. She laid her hand on the door and it opened up without any resistance.

Inside the door was an immense vortex of light.

Inside that light were three beings. They couldn't be seen, they had no shape, and they made no sounds. However, she could still perceive their existence. They were anything and everything at the same time.

“...This door has finally been opened. Now my duty of collecting Books has ended.”

One of the three was “past”. The Past Overseer Bantorra.

“Ceasing function of all Librarian Angels. Sealing Bantorra Library’s First Archive with causality erasing barrier.

The Books of all remaining humans will remain abandoned in the ground.

With this, Bantorra will cease all duties as Past Overseer until a new paradise is born.”

The second of the three was “present”. The Present Overseer Toitorra.

“Nothing has changed about my duty. I will continue to oversee the present. All so I can bear a new paradise.”

And the third was “future”. The one to dispatch the Punishment Angels, the one to destroy the world using the Beasts of the Final Chapter – the Future Overseer Orntorra. Orntorra then spoke to the other two World Overseers.

“Thank you for working for so long, Bantorra. Please rest for a while. Let us meet again. At that time, house the records of an even better paradise in your Library.

Also, let us keep working together, Toitorra. Without the present there will be neither past nor future, so your duty will never change for all eternity.”

The two World Overseers, Bantorra and Toitorra left. Only Nieniu and Orntorra were left inside the door. He started talking to her.

“The door has finally been opened. Being able to open the door, what frightening beings humans are... Although you have blocked this door from opening countless times you now came here.”

“...Where are we?”

“There is no name to tell you humans. If I had to, I would call it the Overseer Domain, or perhaps, Land of the End, something like that.”

Nieniu could feel that Orntorra was extremely sad.

“Nieniu. You must see the truth. That is the fate of the one to open the door and reach the Land of the End.”

“...Y-yes.”

“First I shall borrow the power of Bantorra. I shall show you the past.”

The next instant, a vast amount of Books appeared inside the vortex of light. They appeared to be tens of thousands, or hundreds of millions, or perhaps more than that, Books of the entire humankind.

Nieniu touched those Books. When she touched just one, the past of all of them surged into her head.

Humans have been living in this world since millions of years ago. The World Overseers guided them, governed them, and recorded them.

There were various kinds of paradise there. A world where Magic developed to the limits, a world where science was pursued to the limits, a world where people lived not much different than monkeys... There was a great diversity of worlds, but all people were lead to happiness by Orntorra and recorded and housed in Bantorra’s Library.

“...What does this mean? There were several worlds?”

Nieniu voiced her questions.

“Exactly so. The world you have been living in until now was the 694th world we have made.”

She kept reading the Books.

There were 693 worlds until now. Although their shapes were different, they developed the same way and ended the same way. Just like the world Nieniu was living in.

A long, peaceful era continued. Inside the long peace appeared people who did not follow Orntorra.

People wanted more than they were given. They wanted pleasure much above others and pleasure by oppressing others. The pleasure of stealing, of mocking, of killing. They pursued the happiness they were not given by Orntorra.

The numbers of people increased, the world became disturbed, and thus people who could be oppressed or deprived appeared.

And, as the paradise collapsed to be irreparable, Orntorra made the decision

to destroy the world.

“...That’s... now?”

“Yes, the moment you are about to die in now is the world’s time of destruction.”

“What do you judge to bring the end of the world?”

She felt as if Orntorra wore a sorrowful expression. Although she couldn’t see him.

“When a single person reaches an unjust despair. The moment when they regret their entire lives, hate all the people they have met, and think that they should never have been born.

And that person must possess a good heart. If a villain receives such punishment and despairs there might still yet be salvation. However, if a person with love and mercy, one who has done good deeds comes to unjust despair, there is no longer any salvation for them.

A world that brings despair to good people... can no longer be permitted to continue.

You have regretted your life, and thought you should not have been born. That is the trigger to the end of the world.”

“...No.”

Nieniu was shocked. But she certainly thought this as she was about to die.

“Bantorra, thank you for your cooperation. Next I have to show you the future.”

The Books disappeared and instead the scenes of people’s future were reflected.

“This is the future after Ruruta defeats the Beasts of the Final Chapter and the world escapes destruction.”

Several scenes were reflected at the same time. There was a terrifying variety of misfortune there.

Nieniu saw a girl crying in front of her father’s remains after he had gotten

caught up in war. She saw an old woman in the city tormented by hunger and dying, begging passersby for food.

“...Stop, I don’t want to see that.”

“However, this is the certain future. After the world has not been destroyed.”

She saw a man who, after acquiring a huge fortune, was unable to find someone to love and died in disappointment. She saw a man who threw everything away for his dream, even his life, but died without accomplishing anything.

And, she saw boys on a certain ship with bombs embedded in their chests, all heading towards an enemy they couldn’t possibly defeat.

Nieniu saw endless misfortune. She could perceive just how much they suffered and how many times they wished they hadn’t been born.

“...Such a world mustn’t exist.”

“Indeed, it must be destroyed.”

Orntorra’s voice approached her.

“You and I will destroy the world and then create a new paradise.”

His voice already resonated inside Nieniu. She became one with Orntorra, and no longer Nieniu. Her personality disappeared and she was controlled by a single will.

“...Yeah, I understand what I am supposed to do, Orntorra.”

Nieniu’s hair turned colorless.

“...Let us destroy the world. Making everyone happy means destruction.”

There was once a girl who wished to make the people of the world happy. Had she disappeared or had she stayed as she was?

And thus, the being meant to destroy the world, the controller of the Beasts of the Final Chapter – “The Colorless-Haired Stone Statue” – was born.

The ground exploded and Nieniu’s body returned to the surface. Her hair turned colorless.

Her pure wish of destruction moved her body. Laughing loudly, she sent several Beasts of the Final Chapter after Vooekisal and the rest who had already left. They tore them apart, crushed them, chewed them and turned them into scraps of meat.

But that was only the beginning. She had to kill all living and moving people. Both children, the elderly, men and women, as well as Ruruta Coozancoona and herself.

And thus began the first destruction of the world.

“ ... ”

Ruruta detached his fingers from the Book.

He lost his expression. His mind couldn't catch up to reality. He had already completely repelled the power of Argax and all memories of Nieniu came back to him.

Why has it turned out this way? I have fought only to protect her, but now her body is in front of my eyes.

Why is Nieniu the one here? If it was anyone else I could have rejoiced in victory. Anyone other than Nieniu, it doesn't matter who, anyone other than her...

“ ...Should the world have been destroyed?”

Ruruta now knew the true reason of the world's destruction. As well as the hell this world would turn into.

What had he saved the world for?

It was to protect Nieniu. But she was already gone.

What had he protected the world for?

To protect the world of man. To build a new world.

However, a new world would be built even if Ruruta hadn't protected it. The world that Ruruta protected was full of suffering, conflict and discrimination, and the world after the destruction would be a new paradise.

A single phrase floated into his mind.

It was all meaningless.

These were much too cruel words for Ruruta. However, he couldn't deny them.

It was all meaningless.

Gaining power, protecting the world, loving Nieniu...

It was all meaningless.

"Ruruta-sama. It is not yet over. If you determine everything to be meaningless, you may destroy the world. You have that kind of power.

Once you have destroyed the world, surely a new paradise will be born."

"Me... destroying the world?"

Ruruta looked at his hands. It was definitely possible. If he'd do that, the world would be reborn. It would be reborn into paradise, into a new era.

"...I can't."

I have lived to protect the world. And I have done it. This life, my life, has been meaningless. I hate that.

"If you take pride in having protected the world, then you can live in the new era.

The world you have protected will surely compose a new story. Even if it would not be a paradise."

Live in the new era?

I can't. I can't have anything like that. This world no longer has Nieniu in it.

"Are you concerned about that girl?"

Yes, Nieniu. What I wanted to protect was a world where I could live alongside you. I wasn't able to get that no matter if the world was destroyed or saved.

"Is it not a simple thing? You should simply forget all about her."

Lascal's words echoed in vain to the ears of Ruruta who sat completely expressionless.

"There are many people in the world and many women as well. You can

simply find a new love and create new happiness. If you forget all about that girl it will be over.

Obtain a beautiful wife, produce adorable children, and live your life without any worries.

If you, once in a while, recall her, you can simply softly mutter 'oh, thinking of it, how poor was Nieniu'... you can simply turn her into that sort of being."

I hate that. There was only one Nieniu. There is no other Nieniu anywhere.

"She was a dull girl. Her only merits were being able to sing and being somewhat kind. You can find any amount of people like that, can you not?"

No. There's only one Nieniu.

She wished for it and I promised her... that I would make her happy.

No matter what I would lose for it.

Ruruta took Nieniu's Book in hand. And then he brought it to his mouth.

"Ruruta-sama. What do you intend on doing?"

Lascall said, and Ruruta answered.

"...I have no other choice."

"Do you realize what would happen if you Eat that?"

"...I have no choice."

"That girl no longer possesses a human heart. Destruction is her only duty and the only thing she rejoices at. She is the very will of destruction.

Making such a thing happy is absolutely impossible even for you."

"Even so."

"...That road will only lead to despair."

"Even so. I will make Nieniu..."

The Book shattered and fell into Ruruta's mouth.

I will make Nieniu happy. That is my only wish.

Chacoly became speechless. She was the only one throughout history except

Ruruta, Nieniu and Lascall to know the truth about the Beasts of the Final Chapter. Even she, who born as a tool and possessed no normal human heart, broke into cold sweat.

Although he had supposedly been restrained by her Soul Sharing, Ruruta muttered.

“You...”

Chacoly could feel that her ability was being repelled.

“You can never beat me.”

After Eating Nieniu’s Book Ruruta dove inside his own Imaginary Entrails. He looked for her form inside the vast desert.

A stone statue fell with a plunk atop the sand. It possessed Nieniu’s form yet it wasn’t her. It was the Colorless-Haired Statue.

“Nieniu. Open your eyes.”

Ruruta set the statue up and called for Nieniu. Yet she said nothing. She remained the Colorless-Haired Statue and wouldn’t say anything.

He tried touching the statue. Perhaps he would realize something doing that. As he did, he could perceive what she was thinking about.

“...Ruruta, that is no good. You have to destroy. You have to destroy the world.”

“Please don’t say that. I finally managed to save it.”

“...It is no good. That is meaningless. We have to destroy the world.”

“No, no! It’s the world I’ve protected! The world I’ve lived in!”

Ruruta kept talking to the stone statue for days and days.

It was sad that the Colorless-Haired Statue spoke with Nieniu’s voice. She even kept Nieniu’s cute yet sometimes annoying habit to insert a short silence before speaking.

For one day, two days, and much more than that, Ruruta stayed at Nieniu’s side. He hoped that at least a little of the old Nieniu would be reborn.

“I didn’t betray you, they took my memories away. So please forgive me.”

“...I do not care about that anymore. Let us destroy the world.”

“I cannot live without you.”

“...Right. So destroy the world.”

“It’s my fault. It’s all my fault for forgetting about you.”

“...You have not done anything wrong. The one at fault is the world not destroyed.”

“I killed all the people who’ve killed you. So you no longer have any people to hold a grudge against.”

“...I do not grudge anyone. I just want to destroy the world.”

“Return. Please! Nieniu, return to your kind self!”

No matter what words he chose, Nieniu only kept talking of destruction again and again.

Unable to bear it any longer he exited the Imaginary Entrails, and as he did so Lascall who waited for him faithfully smiled at him.

“Ruruta-sama, what do you intend to do? Do you plan to keep on loving a statue that can do nothing else but speak of destruction?”

“Shut up Lascall! Go away!”

Lascall disappeared just as told. Ruruta held his head in despair and sat down for a long while.

“...Why did it turn out like this? I just wanted to make Nieniu happy...”

Ruruta once again returned to the Imaginary Entrails. He thought of trying to use his inborn Book-Eating ability in another way.

Could he possibly extract only the memories of happiness from the souls melted into his Imaginary Entrails? Could he not give that to Nieniu?

Could he not gather happiness and transmit it to Nieniu?

It was a random idea. But it came up because he was confident he could do it.

“I order you. O souls eaten by me. Give me your happiness.”

Steam began rising from the desert. It gathered next to Ruruta and became a handful of water. He poured it on Nieniu. She should have experienced the happiness they have felt.

“Nieniu, are you happy? Have you become happy?”

He spoke to her.

“...It is no good Ruruta.”

“No good? Why?”

“...Because there is no real happiness in this world.”

It was a failure. But there was some response. Nieniu spoke of something other than destruction for the first time.

“Then I just have to find a true happiness. If there is one, you wouldn’t have to destroy the world.”

“...There is no true happiness. Destruction is the only proper choice.”

“No, there is, there is true happiness in the world!”

Ruruta shouted. And he exited the Imaginary Entrails.

“I just need to look for it. I just need to find it. The true happiness that I will give Nieniu.”

Ruruta was walking so he could return to the royal capital. He was followed by Lascall Othello.

“Finding the true happiness, is it? Finding the perfect happiness to shatter Nieniu-sama’s despair? That is quite impossible.”

Lascall said. However, Ruruta didn’t answer.

“Nieniu-sama is already the will of destruction itself. Destruction is her happiness in and of itself. Destruction is her only happiness.

Never mind giving her other happiness, there is no need to make her happy as is.”

“No.”

Ruruta replied.

“I will gather much more happiness than any will of destruction. I will make her notice there is much more happiness other than destruction.”

“It is impossible.”

They approached the capital.

“If there is a true happiness, a perfect, unblemished happiness somewhere in the world, Nieniu will reconsider. I will make her understand there are much more wonderful things than destruction.”

“But that is only if such a perfect and unblemished happiness truly exists in the world.”

They entered the capital. People raised cheers and came closer.

At that moment, he saw Hihak’s face. The man who’d brought back Argax.

Ruruta used his powers before he could even think.

Nieniu was no longer Nieniu of the past. And Ruruta as well was not like he was before.

A long time passed.

The Magic Right to turn into a tree that belonged to Hihak Yammo allowed Ruruta to overcome his lifespan. He had never thought his ability would become useful. But Ruruta needed time; even he himself knew not how long he would need.

And Ruruta looked for a castle he could spend a long time in. He no longer wanted to return to the royal tower he’d once inhabited. He flew around the world and found Bantorra Library.

Past Overseer Bantorra had abandoned the world. The mechanism that turned people into Books remained, but he already quit up collecting Books.

Ruruta took up position in the very depths of the Labyrinth. He didn’t want to meet anyone. He couldn’t bear meeting any people. And so he decided on this place as somewhere no man would come to. He unleashed the Beasts of the Final Chapter in the Labyrinth to stand guard.

He ordered humans to collect Books. He ordered Lascall to deliver Books.

A long time further passed.

The organization to collect Books – the Armed Librarians – was born. At first their only job was to deliver Ruruta Books, but gradually they transformed and became rulers of the world. The Present Management Agency was also born, many nations were born, and the shape of the world began to change.

As long as they brought him Books Ruruta cared not what organization they would create. He said nothing and merely waited for Books.

Before long the Indulging God Cult was created. No matter the name, no matter the organization, all they needed to do was bring Books of happiness. Ruruta left them alone as well. He simply waited for Books.

Receiving Books of happiness, he would extract the happiness out of them and give it to Nieniu. Ruruta repeated this process thousands of times. Although experiencing thousands of failures, he kept Eating Books.

If he Eats the next one, and the next one, and keeps on Eating, then surely it would come one day. Thinking so he kept waiting. People who hated Ruruta and wanted to kill him appeared. He erased them and kept waiting.

There were times he gave up everything and wanted to die. He stifled these thoughts, and, connecting his hopes to the next Book, he kept on waiting.

He single-mindedly kept on waiting.

Along the long time Ruruta created a building inside his Imaginary Entrails. He hardened the sand of the desert, piled stones and built it up all by himself.

It was a small theater. Ruruta placed the Colorless-Haired Statue in the middle of it.

“Nieniu. I made this theater for you.”

Ruruta whispered.

“One day, when you go back to yourself, please sing here. Sing a song that would bring happiness to the world. I wait for that day.”

Ruruta whispered to Nieniu countless of times. Even after ten years passed and even after twenty.

“I will wait. As long as my heart doesn’t fold, I will keep on waiting for however long it may take.”

A hundred years passed, then a thousand, and Ruruta kept whispering.

“I will wait. For as long as my heart can endure.”

Chacoly read all of Ruruta’s memories for 2000 years leading up to that very moment. At the same time, she realized that her power was not connected to Ruruta.

“I will never lose to you.”

Ruruta said. He abandoned happiness. He gave up his own happiness, and only wished for Nieniu to be happy.

Chacoly’s power awarded other people with happiness. She was meant to kill Ruruta with happiness. However, someone who gave up on their happiness couldn’t be killed with it.

Chacoly painfully realized...

She would never win against Nieniu.

“Begone. And die.”

Ruruta’s body was set ablaze. The violet petals surrounding his body burned to a crisp. Inside the flames a single needle burst from his feet. It was trying to pierce Chacoly’s chest.

“UWAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!!”

Chacoly screamed. The instant before the needle reached her chest, her form was gone from inside the Imaginary Entrails. She didn’t run away; she just wasn’t able to maintain her Soul Sharing ability. The moment she realized she had failed she couldn’t keep it.

And so Chacoly Cocot crumbled down. Her body didn’t die – yet she lost her function to kill Ruruta for all eternity.

And that was the end of the record about the tool born to defeat Ruruta, Chacoly Cocot.

She was perfect. All of her actions went according to her designer Makia’s

plans. Joining the Indulging God Cult was unexpected, but she could be said to have operated even more functionally than what Makia had thought.

The cause of her defeat was one – the fact that Makia’s design was wrong from the root.

A tool fundamentally wrong in design, no matter how perfect and refined, would eventually end up as no more than a piece of junk.

After Chacoly disappeared from the Imaginary Entrails Ruruta sat down on the theater’s floor. He breathed heavily, his shoulders shaking. His breathing did not settle for a long, long time.

“...Nieniu, I will wait. For as long as my heart can endure.”

Ruruta spoke to Nieniu’s statue.

“But perhaps I’m at my limits. It might be tomorrow. It might be in two days. It might be the next year or in a decade... I will not be able to bear it any further someday. What should I do, Nieniu?”

Ruruta touched the stone statue. He could then hear Nieniu’s voice.

“...Oh, I was worried, Ruruta. I am glad you did not die.

Now, Ruruta, let us quickly destroy the world. Destroy it as soon as possible.”

He removed his hand from the statue. And then his body crouched over the stage. From his mouth rose neither sobs nor groans; he could only wring out the voice of despair.

Fragment: The Demon Lord and the Final Visitor

The last day of Bantorra Library was the second end of the world. Ruruta alone sat on the edge of the theater's stage inside his Imaginary Entrails.

All the people of the world already collapsed by the Power of Tearless Ending.

Hamyuts died. The Armed Librarians were also defeated.

There no longer remained any one to resist him inside the Imaginary Entrails as well.

All that remained was destroying the world. He would release all Beasts of the Final Chapter, let them eat all people, and then Ruruta would die as well. And that would be the end of everything.

The end of this world, the world that was not a paradise, that Ruruta had protected.

In the back of the stage was a single statue. It was the Colorless-Haired Statue that took the shape of his beloved Nieniu.

It was left there for 2000 years, not changing in the slightest.

Ruruta was waiting for something in front of the statue. He suddenly raised his downcast face. He could hear footsteps coming from the sand. The footsteps of a normal person who used no bodily reinforcement Magic.

"...So you've finally come."

Ruruta muttered. He waited for him to come all along. He even killed Kachua so that he would not disturb him.

He stepped into the theatre. Ruruta spoke to him.

"So you're the final visitor. There's no longer anyone left in the world but you. Neither in the outside world nor inside the Imaginary Entrails."

"...Is that so."

The one to come was the boy Winkeny had met earlier. He was the one who had dug out Charlot from the sand and told them the whereabouts of Ruruta.

He didn't accompany Winkeny so he arrived there in a delay.

"You probably came here to stop me."

"...Well, something like that."

The boy walked around the stage and stood in front of the sitting Ruruta. And, looking at the Colorless-Haired Statue, he thought of something.

"I've seen your life. The memory crystal you've spread earlier reached me as well. I'm sorry for looking at that without permission."

Ruruta smiled faintly. It was quite carefree of him to say such a thing so late into the game.

"Do not worry. I also know you've read it. How about sitting down?"

"No... talking while standing is enough."

The boy climbed atop the stage and stood next to Ruruta. He spoke quietly while looking down at him.

"Do I need to introduce myself? You probably don't know me."

"No way. I remember you well. When I had Eaten your Book it was burned in my heart."

The boy opened his eyes wide in amazement.

"...I can't believe it. Why?"

Ruruta smiled faintly.

"It's because I wanted to be like you. I wanted to love someone deep in my heart, fight for their sake, win and connect our hearts. Because you have managed to do what I couldn't."

"..."

"I admired you from the bottom of my heart. I also writhed in jealousy at the same time. Why were you able to do it and I not? Why could you do what I couldn't? I thought desperately about what I lacked that you possessed.

In the end I couldn't figure it out though."

"...It's an honor, but it's also pretty strange to be told that."

He scratched his nose, apparently confused.

"I never thought that anyone would admire me."

"There is no need to be humble. You were splendid. Much different from me."

Ruruta spoke to the boy standing next to him. The boy was short and had a greatly hunched back. He only wore shabby khaki-colored jacket and pants. From his waist hung a completely ordinary knife.

He seemed gloomy, but his ruffled hair concealed eyes in which a strong and certain determination dwelt.

"You had no powers other than a single knife. Both your memories and your past were taken away from you. But even so you have challenged a mighty enemy alone, and won. You have saved the heart of the girl you loved as well as the people of the town.

If you weren't splendid, was anyone ever was?"

"...It wasn't my power. It was Shiron's."

The boy said. It couldn't be seen with his clothes on, but a crude bomb was embedded within his chest. It was the bomb planted into him by the Indulging God Cult when he was alive. It was planted there so that he would kill Hamyuts Meseta.

"It is the same. Loving Shiron, believing in her and bringing out your courage were your powers. Protecting the town and making Shiron happy were undoubtedly accomplished with your powers.

That is what I think, Colio. The Loving Bomb of Toatt Town, Colio Tonies."

Ruruta spoke with a self-deprecating smile.

"So, what will you do, Colio? Can you stop me... stop the destruction of the world?"

The boy – the loving bomb Colio Tonies, didn't answer. He couldn't tell from

his expression whether he was looking for an answer or willfully staying silent.

Colio kept quietly standing next to Ruruta.



At the same time, a woman was laughing. Although there shouldn't have been any person in the world besides Ruruta and Colio, a woman was laughing.

Hamyuts Meseta was laughing.

Her heart had already stopped beating, and the blood flow to her brain had ceased. She had been stabbed by Ruruta's needle and unmistakably died.

However, although she became a mere soul, Hamyuts kept laughing.

The time has come. At last it's the time to activate my ability.

Both the sling and the Sensory Threads aren't my true powers. My real Magic Right will be activated right now. The power planted in me by my detestable father Makia Dexiart.

Its trigger is my death.

I was reluctant to be killed by you, but the condition has been fulfilled.

"Ruruta. Sorry to have kept you waiting."

Hamyuts, a mere soul, said. Hamyuts, a mere soul, laughed.

Please look forward to it, Ruruta. I will grant you defeat, death, and true failure. I will rob you of all the power you've gained during these 2000 years. I will destroy all the Books you've Eaten. I will throw into the mud and crush underfoot both past and future. I will let you crawl on the ground, shriek in agony and beg for your life. But I won't lend you an ear and torment you to death.

Rejoice, Ruruta. Raise your hands in celebration.

You will be released. Released from the position of God, from the days of waiting, from the regret of killing Nieniu, from your love for her, from anything and everything.

Death will solve everything. The sweet death I bring about will, at last, save you.

Now, let's go, Ruruta. I will not be as gentle as Chacoly.

The incarnation of sweet death – Hamyuts Meseta – will now devour you whole.

Afterword

Hello, this is Yamagata Ishio. I present to you the ninth installment, “Tatakau Shisho to Zetsubou no Maou”. A lot of things have happened and the book turned out unbelievably thick, but I hope you will keep accompanying me.

Now for some PR.

I believe it would have already been announced when this book comes out, but it appears that the “Tatakau Shisho” series is going to turn into an anime. What a surprise. Really, what gives? Unless I’ve lost sight of the boundary between my dreams and reality and just imagined everything, there will actually be an anime. Well, but if all of this was a delusion then this afterword wouldn’t be published anyway.

The other day I have had a preparatory meeting with the anime staff and spoke about details related to the setting I’ve not written in the novel itself.

In order to make something into animation, I had to settle many things I nearly never thought about. I was overwhelmed with the many comical retorts aimed at me during this.

When I was told “please tell us Lonkenny’s full name”, I was embarrassed not at having never thought of it but being unable to recall who that was. By the way, Lonkenny was a boy who had lived together with Enlike on the island during his time with the Indulging God Cult. His ability was shooting fire out of his mouth and in the end he was Eaten by Zatoh and died. What nice people to take interest even in such a minor character, I thought later.

Afterward, I have had a light meal with the anime staff. Due to my head being tired and alcohol circulating in it in, I blurted out a great deal of incomprehensible things, inducing great laughter. I don’t really remember what I’ve spoken about, but I have the feeling I insisted something about the book “Fermat’s Last Theorem” by Simon Singh.

I am extremely worried I made the anime staff think “is this guy fine?”

Also, the sushi was delicious. Thank you very much for the meal.

Having the manga adaptation continue and an anime adaptation coming up, I cannot help but feel undeservedly fortunate. That is also thanks to your support.

I don't know how it will turn out by the time I'm writing this afterword, but I'm sure it will end up a splendid work.

Please look forward to it.

I am looking forward to it too.

Although this work has been going on for a while, next time we will at last reach the final volume. The memo I had written during class in the corner of my notebook originally only had one line: "long-distance love with a prophet from the past". Thinking back on it this story really came far.

Supporting this work were the illustrator Maeshima Shigeki-san, my editor T-shi, Matsumoto-san in charge of illustration coordination and the designer Mukadeya-san... I thank you this time as well. The anime staff, Shinohara-san in charge of the manga adaptation and everyone related, I hope to keep working with you.

And for you the readers, I would like you to accompany me for a little while longer in the story of "Tatakau Shisho".

Let us meet again in my next work. See you.

Yamagata Ishio